



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 138 • NUMBER 072 • 2nd SESSION • 37th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, March 18, 2003

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 18, 2003

The House met at 10 a.m.

[English]

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[English]

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to table, in both official languages, a number of Order in Council appointments made recently by the government.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 10 petitions.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108, the committee adopted a resolution and agreed on Monday, March 17, 2003, to report to the House.

It concerns a request that we had already presented to the House—but it contained a small misprint—to reduce the committee's quorum from nine to seven members. Now that the misprint has been corrected, one of the seven must be an opposition member. It was my clear understanding that this matter would be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

PETITIONS

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of a number of Canadians, including from my own riding of Mississauga South, on the subject matter of stem cells.

The petitioners draw to the attention of the House that thousands of Canadians suffer from very debilitating diseases which need to be addressed and that Canadians support ethical stem cell research which has already shown encouraging potential to prevent and to cure many of the illness and diseases that they hold.

They also point out that non-embryonic stem cells, which are also known as adult stem cells, have shown significant progress without the immune rejection or ethical problems associated with embryonic stem cells.

The petitioners therefore call upon Parliament to pursue legislative initiatives in support of adult stem cell research to find the cures and therapies necessary for Canadians.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 118, 144, 148 and 149.

[Text]

Question No. 118—**Mr. Rick Borotsik:**

What, in detail, are all of the funding options being considered regarding the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in the Province of Manitoba, and with respect to this process: (a) how many road and/or highway construction projects has the government approved in Manitoba; (b) what was the dollar amount for each project; and (c) what work has been carried out under each project?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Transport Canada is currently managing a highway construction program, the Strategic Highway Infrastructure Program, or SHIP. Under the SHIP, \$500 million is available for strategic improvements to the national highway system, or NHS, which includes the Trans-Canada Highway. Under the agreement, the total federal allocation for Manitoba is \$20.2 million for capital highway improvement projects on the NHS, to be cost shared on a fifty-fifty basis with the Province of Manitoba. It is the responsibility of the Province of Manitoba to submit projects for funding under the SHIP. The eligibility criteria require that projects be major capital improvements on east-west or north-south trade routes of Canada's NHS, meet engineering standards and environmental assessment requirements, and be supported with detailed justification.

To date, two projects have been announced for funding under the Canada-Manitoba SHIP agreement: twinning of Highway 1, the Trans-Canada Highway near Virden, \$3.15 million federal/\$3.15 million provincial, and rehabilitation/safety improvements along Highway 16, the Yellowhead Trans-Canada Highway between Neepawa and Minnedosa, \$8.15 million federal/\$8.15 million provincial. Construction along Highway 1 involves completing the twinning of 12 kilometres of the Trans-Canada Highway, starting near Virden and finishing 1.2 kilometres west of the Highway 1/Highway 83 junction. The project also includes intersection work at the same junction and installing a new culvert under the Trans-Canada Highway at Scallion Creek, just west of Virden. The project has an estimated total cost of \$7 million, \$6.3 million eligible, and is expected to be completed in 2003, with 57% of the project scheduled to be completed this fiscal year.

The Highway 16 project involves safety-related improvements and rehabilitating 28.1 kilometres of Highway 16 between Highway 10, near Minnedosa, and Highway 5, near Neepawa. This includes adding four 1.8 kilometre long passing lanes, two eastbound and two westbound, improving the intersections at Highway 466 and Highway 464, constructing fully paved shoulders, and improving the load-bearing capacity of the road to accommodate growing truck traffic. The project has an estimated cost of \$18 million, \$16.3 million eligible, and is expected to be completed in 2004, with 18% of the project scheduled to be completed this fiscal year.

There remains \$17.8 million in unallocated funds in the Canada-Manitoba SHIP agreement. No formal proposals have been received to date for this funding.

Question No. 144—**Mr. Grant McNally:**

What did Canada Post pay in tuition, time off and for any other expenses associated with the professional development training of Ms. Pierrette Ringuette-Maltais during her employment with the corporation?

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Canada Post values the contribution of its employees and actively supports their development. The details requested constitute personal information about Ms. Pierrette Ringuette-Maltais and would be inappropriate to disclose.

Canada Post has operated without government funding since 1989 and all its expenses are self-funded. The corporation is committed to providing universal, affordable postal service while sustaining a financially healthy business.

Question No. 148—**Mr. Werner Schmidt:**

What was the total cost of the expense accounts of the Honourable André Ouellet, P.C., Q.C. President and CEO of Canada Post Corporation during the fiscal years 1995-1996, 1996-1997, 1997-1998, 1998-1999, 1999-2000, 2000-2001 and 2001-2002?

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Canada Post has operated without government funding since 1989 and all its expenses are self-funded. The corporation is committed to providing universal, affordable postal service while sustaining a financially healthy business. The details of the corporation's activities are considered privileged and commercially sensitive and cannot be specified.

Question No. 149—**Mr. James Lunney:**

What was the total cost of the expense accounts of Vivian G. Albo, Chairman of the Board of Canada Post Corporation, during the fiscal years 1995-1996, 1996-1997, 1997-1998, 1998-1999, 1999-2000, 2000-2001 and 2001-2002?

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Canada Post has operated without government funding since 1989 and all its expenses are self-funded. The corporation is committed to providing universal, affordable postal service while sustaining a financially healthy business. The details of the corporation's activities are considered privileged and commercially sensitive and cannot be specified.

[English]

Mr. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I seek permission of the House to revert back to the introduction of private members' bills. I realize I need unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is it agreed that we return to the introduction of private member's bills?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

●(1010)

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-410, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (mandatory labelling for genetically modified foods).

She said: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to introduce a bill to amend the Food and Drugs Act with the specific purpose of legislating mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods.

The bill flows from the government's continued refusal to act on Canadians expressed concerns about the rapid entry of genetically modified organisms into the marketplace without the benefit of long term safety studies and without public information.

Our knowledge of the impacts of genetic modification is far from complete and mandatory labelling to identify and trace these items is the only way long term safety can be verified. Soon wheat, a staple of both our diet and trade, may be added to the GMO products available, with huge implications for both consumers and producers.

The bill provides for the full public disclosure of all genetically engineered products and gives Canadians the same right to choose as that enjoyed by the citizens of the 36 other countries that now require mandatory labelling.

I would like to credit the work of other members of the House who have repeatedly brought forward bills and motions to seek to have this issue addressed. I think all this shows the growing concern in Parliament for this matter and the urgency for a full public debate on the issue.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION ACT

The House resumed from February 27 consideration of Bill C-13, an act respecting assisted human reproduction, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 2.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Group No. 2 amendments to Bill C-13, an act respecting assisted human reproductive technologies and related research.

First, this is my first opportunity to speak to this bill in any form. I would also like to thank my colleague, the member for Yellowhead, who has shepherded the bill through its many stages on behalf of the Canadian Alliance.

Group No. 2 amendments encompass Motions Nos. 13, 14, 16, 17, 20, 22 to 24, 26, 27, 40 and 47. I will address each in turn in what time is allowed.

Let me assure the House that the Canadian Alliance supports these amendments because the government brought in a flawed piece of legislation. The opposition knows this, as do Liberal members across the aisle. In fact, with the exception of Motion No. 17 which was brought forth by the Canadian Alliance member for Calgary Southeast, all these motions we are discussing today were brought forth by the Liberal member for Mississauga South.

Unfortunately, although all parties recognize the necessity of rectifying the government's flawed piece of legislation, the arrogance of the Prime Minister and his whip makes them believe that they do not have to take Parliament seriously.

Whenever a Liberal backbencher gets uppity and propose reasoned amendments like today, what is the Prime Minister's response? It is a vote of confidence. In other words, he is saying to Liberal backbenchers to vote how he tells them or he will force an election and not sign their nomination papers.

The Prime Minister flouts this institution and he flouts democracy. The Canadian Alliance is willing to take a stand and challenges the

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Prime Minister to allow his MPs to vote freely on the bill and this group of amendments.

Speaking of the Group No. 2 amendments, I will start by saying that I will deal with the motions thematically and not numerically as some of my colleagues have chosen to do.

The major themes within these motions are human cloning, the creation of embryos for research purposes and transgenics, the science of mixing human and animal DNA to create hybrids.

Motions Nos. 13, 22 and 40 deal with cloning.

First, Motion No. 13 expands the prohibition on the creation of a human clone in paragraph 5(1)(a) with the addition of "by using any technique", to achieve greater clarity. It also specifies that no one shall transplant a clone into any non-human life form or artificial device. This is important because the current wording only prohibits transplanting a clone into a human being.

The Canadian Alliance supports Motion No. 13 because we will support any and all efforts to close possible loopholes in the prohibition on cloning.

Motion No. 22 expands upon the provisions already in the bill, preventing cloning for research purposes. The amendment simply expands the definition to include a ban on cloning of embryos for research or reproduction.

Motion No. 40 also deals with cloning. It adds specific prohibition on therapeutic research cloning. The bill already bans both reproductive and research cloning but for purposes of certainty this amendment should also be passed.

I will also try to deal with Motions Nos. 14, 16, 17 and 24 regarding the use of embryos.

We support Motion No. 14 as it amends a very important aspect of the bill. Currently the bill's existing clause would allow creation of embryos for purposes of improving or providing instruction in assisted reproduction procedures. We oppose the creation and use of embryos for research purposes. This is simply wrong.

Like Motion No. 14, Motion No. 16 strengthens the prohibition against creating embryos. Current wording of the clause in the bill prohibits creating an embryo from a cell or from part of a cell of another embryo for the purpose of creating a human being. The amendment removes "for the purpose of creating a human being" to ensure there is no creation of embryos for any purpose, not merely that of creating a fully mature human being.

Motion No. 17 is the one that I mentioned earlier. The amendment moved by my colleague from Calgary is well thought out and reasoned, and I would encourage the government to support it. Basically this clause adds a prohibition on embryonic research: no person shall "experiment on or harvest an embryo". The current wording in the bill says that embryonic research can be undertaken under licence if the agency is satisfied that such research is "necessary".

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•(1015)

Embryonic stem cell research is ethically controversial and it divides Canadians. It ultimately results in the destruction of the embryo. For many Canadians, this violates the ethical commitment to respect human dignity, integrity and life. It is unnecessary as adult stem cells have been proven to be a safe alternative to embryonic stem cell research. They are being used today in the treatment of Parkinson's, leukemia, MS and other conditions.

Motion No. 24 is very important as it puts time limits on embryo storage.

Finally, I will deal with the remaining Motions Nos. 20, 23, 26, 27 and 47 which deal with transgenics and the mixing of human and non-human DNA to create hybrids.

Motion No. 20 is another reasoned amendment to this bill as it deals with the almost science fiction premise of mixing humans and non-humans, something I would have hoped the minister would have considered before rushing this bill out. Unfortunately, as is usually the case with the government, she did not. Motion No. 20 prevents the transplantation of sperm, ovum, embryo or fetus of a human being into a non-human life form.

Motion No. 23 is another motion that seeks to prevent the mixing of human and non-human DNA by adding a new prohibited activity, transgenics, combining any portion of the human genome with any part of the genome and non-human species. This motion is in conjunction with Motion No. 47 which I also hope is passed.

Motion No. 47 deletes clause 11 on transgenics, corresponding to Motion No. 23, moving transgenics to prohibited activities. As the two motions come hand in hand, we will support them as a group.

Yet another motion dealing with the combining of animal-human hybrids is Motion No. 26 and I have dealt with that.

Motion No. 27 is very important. It adds a prohibition on reproduction and links as well with Motion No. 26.

Once again as I wrap up, I would just like to emphasize that the government needs to allow MPs to vote freely on this bill. This is a very important moral decision for all MPs and they must be allowed to vote their conscience and their constituents' wishes.

As an example, even in my own office I have had many people write to me with their concerns on this issue. They believe that science should have a role in trying to make life better for people with debilitating diseases. However they are concerned as well for the protection of the sanctity of life and what sort of measures this place can put in place to move forward with science but with the respect for life. That is something about which all MPs should have a say.

We should have that vote and we should be able to vote freely. I think most Canadians would only expect that from Parliament, so I hope that will be considered as we continue to deliberate on this bill.

•(1020)

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise this morning to address Bill C-13. It is my first chance to speak to the legislation. As my colleague who spoke just a moment ago pointed out, it is important

legislation, legislation about which many Canadians feel very strongly. We have to be sensitive to different points of view when we talk about this particular issue.

The issue addresses a number of different aspects and there are a number of aspects to this issue. This has to do with human cloning. I want to say at the outset that the Canadian Alliance opposes the idea of human cloning. We see it as an affront to human dignity. I think most right thinking Canadians believe the same thing, which is that we should not trifle with something like human cloning.

It also deals with the issue of stem cell research. It draws a distinction between adult stem cells and embryonic stem cells, or at least it has to do with that issue. My party believes that we should draw a distinction between adult and embryonic stem cells.

Before I get into some of the particulars of the motion, I want to ask you, Madam Speaker, to consider for a moment what it would be like to be the technician in the laboratory who has to dispose of an embryonic stem cell. Let us say that it is a stem cell that arose as a result of in vitro fertilization. Let us say the legislation is now in place and at the end of 14 days you are charged with disposing that embryonic stem cell. I wonder, as you go to place that embryo in a disposal container of some sort, if you would for a moment feel some hesitation about doing that, or perhaps you would feel a twinge of regret at having to do that.

If people are in that position, are thinking about this and find that perhaps they would at least hesitate for a moment, I think it is quite appropriate to ask on what grounds they would hesitate. Why would they feel any regret at all about doing that? Perhaps they have been raised to believe that there is absolutely no scientific evidence to suggest that this is anything but a mass of cells. However, if for a moment they feel that regret or they hesitate and perhaps do not even understand why, then I think it is appropriate to ask themselves why they feel that regret.

I think a lot of people would suggest that it might be something niggling at their conscience if they are in that position. There would be some twinge of conscience that would cause them to feel that regret. If in fact that is the case, even as we do a kind of mind experiment and ask ourselves what it would be like to be in that situation, then I think we have to wonder whether what we are doing is correct.

For thousands of years people have wondered why some actions feel right to them, some actions feel wrong to them and why their consciences bother them when they do certain things. People have thought about this for a long time. People like Plato, completely outside the Judeo-Christian tradition rather obviously, spoke about divine laws that operate on all mankind at all times, as did Cicero and other great thinkers. Of course that tradition is carried on in the Judeo-Christian tradition as well.

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I want to suggest that if people go through that thought experiment to which I have just referred and sense that they might feel some level of regret, then maybe they understand why the Canadian Alliance has deep concerns about legislation that would allow research on embryonic stem cells, stem cells that were perhaps created initially for use in in vitro fertilization. If they were not used for that purpose, they could then be used ultimately, according to the legislation, for research.

● (1025)

A lot of us have deep concerns as we go through a thought experiment like the type I proposed. We wonder whether it is correct. We wonder if there is not some spark of dignity in that embryo. If we wonder at all about that, then it is incumbent upon us to put restrictions in place that prohibit the use of embryonic stem cells for research.

I want to draw a line here between embryonic stem cells and non-embryonic stem cells, or what a lot of people call adult stem cells. There is nothing at all morally troubling about using adult stem cells for research because there is no potential life that is being destroyed or, if we take a different perspective, life itself that is being destroyed.

We are urging the government to do a number of things. As we pointed out in our minority report, we would like the government to show respect for the human life that we believe is in a human embryo. We would like the government to put the emphasis on adult stem cell research, and there is more than just a moral reason for doing that. There is a reason that has everything to do with how effective treatments are today.

To this point, there has never been a single person who has been helped by embryonic stem cells when it comes to improving their health. Adult stem cells are used routinely, whether it is for leukemia or multiple sclerosis. A whole range of different diseases are treated by adult stem cells, and that is fine. We have no problem with that. We support that. We believe strongly that we need to find ways to help people. However, as of yet, the use of embryonic stem cells has not led to any kind of cure or help for people who are struggling with disease. That is one reason that we are very concerned about the legislation and why we would like to see some changes to it.

I want to speak now specifically to some of the motions that are being proposed here. I want to note that we in the Canadian Alliance support Motion No. 13. We like the idea of seeing some tighter language on the cloning prohibition. Back in September 2001, the Canadian Alliance asked for an immediate ban on human cloning. Why we needed that became apparent during the recent press conferences where the Raelians were suggesting that they had actually cloned a human being. People were horrified. Whether they did I am not certain, but suffice it to say that public reaction indicated that this government should have acted a lot faster than it already has when it comes to the issue of human cloning.

With regard to Motion No. 14, the bill's existing clause would allow the creation of embryos for purposes of improving or providing instruction in assisted reproduction procedures. We oppose the creation and use of embryos for research procedures. We think that denies the dignity of that human life. We do not think life should be created in order for it to be destroyed later.

With regard to Motion No. 16, the current wording of the bill prohibits an embryo from a cell or from part of a cell of another embryo for the purpose of creating a human being. The amendment removes for the purpose of creating a human being to ensure that there is no creation of embryos for any purpose, not merely that of creating a fully human, mature being. We believe that if people have gone through that thought experiment that I proposed a few minutes ago, if they felt hesitation at destroying that embryo, then perhaps somewhere in their mind they believe that there is a human life at stake.

● (1030)

Therefore, for all the reasons that I have laid out, we have some obvious concerns about the legislation. From the thousands of petitions that have come in, I think many people in this country feel the same way. They oppose human cloning unconditionally.

However, on the other hand, they have concerns that go beyond that. They want to see some importance attached to human embryos, period. They are concerned that we are being too cavalier with human embryos. They believe and I believe that these are human lives and that they should be protected.

For those reasons, we are supporting a number of the motions today because they all take us toward more protection for human embryos which we believe is critically important. Overall, we will be opposing Bill C-13, or at least certainly I will, speaking on behalf of myself and my constituents.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, insofar as I am a mover of one of the principal motions, Motion No. 17 in Group No. 2, I would seek the indulgence of the House for the convention which is to allow a mover of a motion twice the normal time to address his motion. Therefore, I seek unanimous consent for 20 minutes, as has become the convention on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is there unanimous consent for the hon. member to extend his time to 20 minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, I rise to address the Group No. 2 amendments at report stage of Bill C-13. There are many good amendments in this section that would go a long way toward improving the bill.

In particular, I wish to draw the attention of the House to my own amendment, Motion No. 17, which would have the effect of prohibiting destructive research on human embryos. If my amendment were to be adopted as clause 5(d.1) of the bill it would read, "No person shall knowingly experiment on or harvest an embryo". This means that no researcher or biotech company could take an embryo, even a so-called spare embryo, and destroy it in the name of science.

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This amendment may seem like a radical overhaul of the bill, much of which is concerned with the regulation of this kind of research. I would submit that this amendment would help bring the bill back to its central purpose, which is not to allow the biotech industry unfettered access to genetic material to manipulate but rather to help infertile couples to conceive. There is absolutely no need for this bill to open the door to destructive research on human embryos that would in fact result in the death of living human beings.

Up until now Canada has had a moratorium on the funding of this type of research. If the bill were to pass unamended the signal would go out to companies and laboratories that it is now open season for embryos and for the first time taxpayers' dollars would go toward funding this destructive research. Let us as parliamentarians reject taking this dangerous downward step on the notorious slippery slope of genetic experimentation.

I oppose any embryonic stem cell research that results in the destruction of a human embryo for at least three principal reasons: first, it is unethical; second, it is unnecessary; and third, it would have grave and perhaps unforeseeable unintended consequences.

Destroying the human embryo is unethical and immoral because at the most basic level this is deliberate destruction of human life, admittedly nascent human life but human life nevertheless.

I believe that human life is a continuum which extends from conception to death and that the deliberate destruction of innocent human life is an intrinsically evil act. What embryonic stem cell research means, even on spare embryos, is that we take an embryo that has been created as part of an attempt by a couple to conceive a child and decide that this embryo, this tiny male or female human being with a unique genetic identity of its own, is not worthy of life or even of a decent, dignified death, but that it is merely raw material for genetic research, for commodification.

We take other embryos, the brothers or sisters of the one we are researching on, and implant them into the womb of a mother with the hope that they will become children. However, the embryo that is left over we do not treat as human, but as a mere object worthy of nothing but disposal.

Some will object that surely it is absurd to treat an embryo, a tiny clump of cells they would say, that can fit on the head of a pin and treat those cells as a fully human being. I would follow that great moral authority, Dr. Seuss, who in *Horton Hears a Who*, which many of us who have children or once were children remember, says that a person is a person, no matter how small.

The size of embryos does not matter. They are all human. I submit that is scientifically undeniable. They are the offspring of human parents. They could be of no other species but homo sapiens. Understood either scientifically or philosophically, they are living human beings. Every single one of the 301 members of the House was once an embryo, no bigger than the head of a pin.

As I said in the House last May when we debated this bill at first reading, a human embryo is a living human being. Human life is a continuum and that continuum begins at the moment the ovum is fertilized by the spermatozoa. That moment is the beginning of a unique unrepeatable human life. The question we must ask ourselves

in this debate is, what dignity and what worth does that unrepeatable human life have? I suggest that it has an intrinsic dignity and worth that we cannot deny.

•(1035)

Many religions, not only Catholicism and other Christian faiths but Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and many others, teach that from the moment of conception the physical embryo co-exists with the spiritual soul. But even if we do not believe that all life has the sanctity of a soul, surely we can all agree that human life has at least some intrinsic dignity. We are all part of the human family. We share a common ancestry. We are all brothers and sisters in this human race whether we are athletes or parliamentarians; mentally handicapped people; patients on respirators; tiny, helpless infants; tiny, helpless pre-born infants; or indeed the most nascent human beings, tiny embryos.

If we accept that human life in the laboratory does not enjoy the dignity of our common humanity but can be used as a mere raw material for scientific research driven by multinational biotech companies, then we undermine the dignity of all human life. We diminish the dignity of the severely handicapped, the sick, the elderly, and those who some cultures and political ideologies have taught to be racially inferior. If these living human beings do not have intrinsic worth and dignity, at least in the eyes of some, then what is to prevent them too from being used simply as objects for research. For all of these reasons I believe embryonic stem cell research to be gravely unethical and immoral.

I believe the evidence is overwhelming that this research is unnecessary. There may be some members in this House who do not share my conviction about the absolute dignity and worth of the nascent life of the human embryo, but still feel that it has some dignity and worth, and should not be used and abused arbitrarily in the name of science. That is part of the reason why this bill seeks to limit embryonic stem cell research, to so-called spare embryos left over from attempts at in vitro fertilization. It is why the bill seeks to prohibit the creation of embryos by cloning or other means solely for research purposes.

That is why we have asked the scientific community to justify why it believes it is necessary to use human embryos for its research. That is why we have sought amendments at committee and here at report stage that would require scientists seeking access to embryos created ostensibly for reproductive purposes to make a compelling case as to why they need access for those embryos and why the science to be done with those embryos could not similarly be performed with non-embryonic, that is, adult stem cells, as a moral and ethical alternative, not requiring the destruction of life.

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I suggest that this bill does not do enough to ensure that human embryos are only used as a last resort and that there are no other substitutes which can function as well. The evidence has shown to the contrary, that there are almost no cases where it is necessary to use embryonic stem cells for therapeutic purposes. In fact, almost all of the promising research on stem cells to date has involved adult stem cell lines.

I particularly commend my friend opposite from Mississauga South for his compilation of research on this question into an informative booklet which summarizes the overwhelming science on this. I commend him and my colleague from Yellowhead and others for their insightful questioning at the Standing Committee on Health where they drew out of the many expert witnesses the undeniable fact that adult stem cells, non-embryonic stem cells, have furnished much greater and clearer scientific advantages than the putative ones attributed to embryonic stem cells.

● (1040)

Dr. Leon Kass of the University of Chicago, the chairman of the U.S. presidential advisory commission on bioethics and the author of what is probably the leading accessible text on this question *Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity*, has said:

One of the regrettable things about the stem cell discussion, if I may say so, was the hype that the proponents used, taking advantage of desperate people's desires for cures and seeming to promise them cures overnight or just around the corner.

He goes on to say:

But truth to tell we don't even have animal examples of anything remotely resembling a cure for any of these diseases. And this would not have been the first time. Fifteen years ago it was fetal research which was supposed to solve all of these dilemmas and help the lame to walk and the demented to think again. So we've got to be very cautious.

Dr. Kass should make us reflect, do we really need to be destroying embryos, the earliest stage of human life, to develop treatments or are there alternatives? Almost every week it seems there are articles confirming the promise of non-embryonic stem cells and articles saying that research into embryonic stem cells has been disappointing, has not lived up to the expectations and hype of some, a minority in the scientific community.

Adult stem cells have already been used to develop promising therapies for Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, cancer, diabetes and spinal cord injuries. Hundreds of patients have already benefited from these technologies which have no ethical complications and do not involve destroying human life in any way, shape or form.

Meanwhile, how many people have benefited from treatment from embryonic stem cells? Precisely none. Even in lab animals, results with embryonic stem cells have been extremely disappointing. Embryonic stem cells transplanted in animals have caused tumours or have been rejected by their hosts, so there are many dangers that would have to be overcome before we could even dream of human trials using embryonic stem cells, which this bill seeks partially to recognize in statute and which my amendment, Motion No. 17, seeks to prohibit.

Given these results and given the tremendous promise of adult stem cells, surely it makes sense for members of Parliament who have any qualms about the ethics of destroying embryonic human beings to insist that adult stem cells be used exclusively until we

have fully exhausted their enormous potential. Adopting my amendment would lead to Canadian science directing itself on this more promising and less ethically troubling path.

Finally, allowing embryonic stem cell research would inevitably bring about unintended consequences. Let us consider just a few. The bill as it now stands would allow research on embryos left over from in vitro fertilization. Once this research is allowed there would be a demand from researchers and companies to participate, to have a piece of the embryonic research action and funding. However, at the same time, improving IVF technology would result in fewer and fewer left over embryos being created.

Therefore, undoubtedly, if we were to allow this research now we would see lobbyists before us in a few short years asking us to open the doors a bit wider to allow the creation of embryos for research purposes or to allow so-called therapeutic cloning. Once we open the door to therapeutic cloning, reproductive cloning is of course a very short step behind.

If we are truly concerned about the possible science fiction consequences of genetic technology of animal-human hybrids, human cloning, or attempts to create a genetic super race, then let us stop higher up the slope and not resist further steps down, steps that could slip beneath us as we slide inexorably toward the brave new world foreseen by Aldous Huxley.

I suggest the natural stopping point is to prohibit any research that would destroy human life. As I have argued, it is unethical, it is unnecessary, and it would have grave unintended consequences.

Many of my colleagues, principally in my party, fought long and hard in committee at the draft report stage when the initial draft legislation was introduced by the previous health minister.

● (1045)

Since Bill C-56, now Bill C-13, was introduced and brought before the health committee, they have also fought vigorously for a three year moratorium as a modest measure to allow the scientific community to fully expend the enormous scientific opportunities and possibilities posed by non-embryonic stem cell research before crossing that moral Rubicon of destroying life for utilitarian purposes. They sought this three year moratorium in motions at committee put forward by my friend from Yellowhead, who has done a yeoman's job on the bill, but unfortunately members of the committee, principally in the government, voted against the moratorium.

Government Orders

That is why I sought this amendment, which is admittedly more restrictive than the stated policy of my party. I bring it forward not as an initiative of my party but of myself, because I submit that for legalizing a practice which involves an ethically questionable and clearly immoral technique of destroying a nascent human life, the onus is on the proponents of that sort of research to demonstrate that the putative benefits of that kind of morally offensive action are significant to society.

And even if they were, let me address this. While I believe that there are actually many supportable provisions in the bill, while I appreciate that many measures of the bill would in fact create legal parameters, where none now exist, on the manipulation of human life for commercial and other purposes, nevertheless, lying at the heart of the bill is a very basic but tremendously profound metaphysical error. The bill reflects a misunderstanding of the nature of man and his dignity. When I say man I mean, of course, the species *Homo sapiens*.

I submit that my amendment reflects this conviction that every human being, in theological terms as expressed by I think all of the great religions, is created in the image and likeness of God. That is religious language to express what secular Liberals would regard as the notion that every human being possesses an inviolable dignity, a dignity that is not granted by the state, not endowed by a court, not given by majority consent, and not recognized arbitrarily by scientists or even by parents who are in a physical sense the co-creators of that life. However, there resides in that life by the virtue of its very humanity an inviolable, inherent and inalienable dignity. For us in this place to begin to pass legislation which seeks to alienate that inalienable dignity crosses a moral Rubicon, the consequences of which we cannot possibly foresee.

I submit that we must learn from the lessons of the last century, the "century of tears" as some have called it, the most horrific period of which of course was the Nazi regime, which began and ended in an effort to manipulate human life for utilitarian purposes, to seek to improve the quality of life of those fully grown human beings deemed perfect, at the expense of those deemed imperfect.

• (1050)

When the state begins, as we might in this bill if we defeat this amendment, to deem some human lives as possessing that inherent dignity and others without it, others that are subject to this kind of utilitarian experimentation, I submit that we are on a slippery slope to very great danger.

I therefore seek support for my Motion No. 17, which would radically improve—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Before we resume debate, I just want to clarify something that was said earlier. There is no precedent in the House for allowing 20 minutes on 10 minute debate. There is the unanimous consent of the House that is requested, but that does not set a precedent. I just want to clarify that in case there was a misunderstanding. The House is its own master. Once unanimous consent is given, then I follow the orders of the House, but there was no precedent set earlier by any other unanimous consent agreement.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I believe if you were to seek it you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That at 5:30 p.m. this day, when the Speaker puts all necessary questions to dispose of second reading of Bill C-24, the bells to call in the members shall ring for not more than 15 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*Translation*]

ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-13, an act respecting assisted human reproductive technologies and related research, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 2.

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my remarks will deal specifically with cloning and research, which are very critical to this debate. I think that it is important to look at what we want to accomplish with Bill C-13, which, in fact, does not take half measures in regard to cloning.

Bill C-13 prohibits all human cloning. In fact, it prohibits all types of cloning, be it reproductive or therapeutic. Different types of cloning have been mentioned. Bill C-13 prohibits all cloning methods that could be used to create a human clone. No matter what the objective or the method, this legislation prohibits the creation of a human clone.

I think that we must be extremely clear that human cloning is out of the question, no matter what the method or the reason behind it.

Bill C-13 sends a warning to the Raelians, who were in the news over the holidays. Obviously, they are being sent a very clear message: Canada is opposed to human cloning, no ifs, ands or buts.

Once Bill C-13 is adopted, the government will be able to crack down on any human cloning experiments, which is why it is important for this bill to become law. Currently, these people can pretty much do as they please.

By prohibiting cloning, we are banning any activity involving reproduction or research that would contribute to this objective.

We consciously avoided banning specific cloning methods knowing that if we did, scientists would find other methods for cloning that we would not have anticipated. This would leave the door open for cloning. Once again, this bill prohibits cloning. That is why we did not go into detail to define all the methods. We are simply providing a generic definition and eliminating any possibility of cloning.

Government Orders

Motion No. 40 is superfluous. All cloning methods including somatic cell nuclear transfer—so-called therapeutic cloning—are banned under Bill C-13. I think it is important that this also be very clear.

Furthermore, some of the proposed amendments would have unintended and perhaps harmful consequences. I will give you some very specific examples.

Motion No. 14 would endanger the lives of Canadian women. In fact, without the possibility of creating embryos in order to improve assisted reproduction technologies, women themselves—our wives, sisters, neighbours or friends—will be the research subjects. Do we want to them to be guinea pigs? I think not.

As for Motion No. 23, which would ban transgenesis, this would have the effect of immediately, and permanently, putting an end to the efforts of numerous Canadian researchers and laboratories to develop therapies for the treatment of a number of dread diseases, among them cancer and Alzheimer's. Do we really want to put an end to this promising research? I think not. I think that is absolutely not what we want to do.

Motion No. 26 would ban such things as sperm motility testing. As we know, this test is often able to explain why a couple is infertile. Without that test, the woman is subjected to treatments that have no chance of being successful. Do we want Canadians to be treated needlessly? I do not think Canadians want that.

I repeat, Bill C-23 bans all human cloning, regardless of method or form. It prohibits all human cloning, without exception, as well as protecting the health and safety of Canadian women who wish to use assisted reproduction procedures.

I believe that, regardless of what we are hearing said on all sides, there is no question of allowing human cloning in this country. That is why banning any type of cloning makes it impossible for someone at some point to find a way to get around this, because only certain methodologies have been defined.

Let it be clear to everyone: with Bill C-13, all forms of human cloning will be banned.

• (1055)

[English]

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The question is on Motion No. 13 in Group No. 2. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): As agreed to earlier in the House, the recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 14. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 16. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred. The recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 18 and 21.

The next question is on Motion No. 17. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Government Orders

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 20. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

• (1100)

The next question is on Motion No. 22. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 23. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 24. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 26. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 27. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 40. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

● (1105)

[*Translation*]

The next question is on Motion No. 47.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): In my opinion, the nays have it.

And more than five hon. members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

[*English*]

We will now proceed to Group No. 3.

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 28

That Bill C-13 be amended by deleting Clause 6.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 29

That Bill C-13, in Clause 6, be amended by replacing line 5 on page 6 with the following:

“such services, except for medical or legal counselling services received in support of informed consent.”

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 30

That Bill C-13 be amended by deleting Clause 7.

● (1110)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 32

That Bill C-13, in Clause 7, be amended by replacing line 26 on page 6 with the following:

“for the purchase of an in vitro embryo, a foetus or any foetal tissue; or”

Motion No. 33

That Bill C-13, in Clause 7, be amended by replacing lines 26 to 28 on page 6 with the following:

“for the purchase of an in vitro embryo, or any part of one; or

(b) sell, offer for sale or advertise for sale an in vitro embryo, or any part of one.”

Motion No. 36

That Bill C-13, in Clause 7, be amended by replacing line 28 on page 6 with the following:

“in vitro embryo, a foetus or any foetal tissue.”

Motion No. 39

That Bill C-13, in Clause 8, be amended by adding after line 16 on page 7 the following:

“(4) A donor may not transfer to another person the ownership, or any of the rights or obligations of ownership, of an embryo or any other human reproductive material.”

Motion No. 44

That Bill C-13, in Clause 10, be amended by adding after line 38 on page 7 the following:

“(4) No person shall, except in accordance with the regulations, adopt an embryo for the purposes of human reproduction.”

Motion No. 45

That Bill C-13, in Clause 10, be amended by adding after line 38 on page 7 the following:

“(4) No person shall, except in accordance with the regulations and a licence, use human reproductive material or an embryo, or any part of one, for the purpose of providing education or training related to assisted human reproduction.”

● (1115)

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 46

Government Orders

That Bill C-13 be amended by adding after line 38 on page 7 the following new clause:

"10.1 (1) No person shall, except in accordance with the regulations, pay consideration to a female person to be a surrogate mother, offer to pay such consideration or advertise that it will be paid.

(2) No person shall, except in accordance with the regulations, accept consideration for arranging for the services of a surrogate mother, offer to make such an arrangement for consideration or advertise the arranging of such services.

(3) No person shall, except in accordance with the regulations, pay consideration to another person to arrange for the services of a surrogate mother, offer to pay such consideration or advertise the payment of it.

(4) No person shall, except in accordance with the regulations, counsel or induce a female person to become a surrogate mother, or perform any medical procedure to assist a female person to become a surrogate mother, knowing or having reason to believe that the female person is under 21 years of age.

(5) This section does not affect the validity under provincial law of any agreement under which a person agrees to be a surrogate mother."

Motion No. 49

That Bill C-13 be amended by adding after line 7 on page 8 the following new clause:

"11.1 (1) No person shall, except in accordance with the regulations, purchase, offer to purchase or advertise for the purchase of sperm or ova from a donor or a person acting on behalf of a donor.

(2) No person shall, except in accordance with the regulations

(a) purchase, offer to purchase or advertise for the purchase of an in vitro embryo; or

(b) sell, offer for sale or advertise for sale an in vitro embryo.

(3) No person shall, except in accordance with the regulations, purchase, offer to purchase or advertise for the purchase of a human cell or gene from a donor or a person acting on behalf of a donor, with the intention of using the gene or cell to create a human being or of making it available for that purpose.

(4) In this section, "purchase" or "sell" includes to acquire or dispose of in exchange for property or services."

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 51

That Bill C-13, in Clause 12, be amended by adding after line 22 on page 8 the following:

"(3) No person shall reimburse a surrogate mother for a loss of work-related income incurred during her pregnancy, unless

(a) a qualified medical practitioner certifies, in writing, that continuing to work may pose a risk to her health or that of the embryo or foetus; and

(b) the reimbursement is made in accordance with the regulations and a licence."

Motion No. 95

That Bill C-13, in Clause 65, be amended by replacing lines 12 to 14 on page 30 with the following:

"(e) for the purposes of subsection 12(1), respecting the reasonable expenditures that may be reimbursed under a licence;

(e.1) for the purposes of subsection 12(3), respecting the reimbursement of a loss of income;"

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in view of the substantial number of report stage motions that I have submitted, I would like to ask for the unanimous consent of the House to have a 20 minute speaking period.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Does the House give its consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate but I will try to do this.

Motion No. 32 seeks to make an amendment because there is a prohibition in the bill to purchase embryos or to sell them but it does

not relate also to fetuses or fetal tissue. I believe the bill should be amended to ensure there is no buying or selling of human reproductive material.

Motion No. 33 states that not only can one not purchase an embryo but one cannot purchase any part of an embryo which itself could be manipulated to become another embryo. It just says any part of an embryo. It is an important scientific fact to be known by members that to deal with human embryos or any part of them should be covered by the bill.

Motion No. 35 adds a new prohibited activity which prohibits the transfer of ownership of an embryo or any reproductive material to another person. There is a provision in the forms of the Ottawa Fertility Clinic whereby if the donors of a sperm and egg for reproductive purposes wish their eggs to be available for research but they have not paid rent for storage, it specifically states that the ownership and the control of that human embryo would transfer to the fertility clinic. It is unconscionable that anyone would contemplate the ownership of a human being is something that we can deal with and that we can transfer ownership of a person. This is a very important motion and I hope that members will support it.

Motion No. 44 adds a new control activity which would permit the adoption of embryos. California has a program called the snowflake program. People who cannot procreate themselves can adopt human embryos which have been in storage and are no longer necessary for the reproduction of the donors of the sperm and egg, in other words the embryo. It is exactly the same as adoption of a born child except that the embryo would be implanted into the woman seeking to adopt and she would birth that child. This is adoption, and I think that the use of human embryos should be considered for adoption certainly way before we would consider for them to be thrown in the garbage.

Motion No. 45 adds a new control activity to the effect that embryos for education and training shall be subject to strict guidelines. Presently the bill states that embryos can be used for research and education purposes. However we are talking about the utilization of human beings. There should be rules and regulations to ensure that it is appropriate and ethical. The change is necessary.

I am sorry I did not get the additional time. I wonder if I could ask yet again if the members would permit me to extend the balance of my time to a full 20 minutes?

● (1120)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The House is its own master. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The hon. member for Mississauga South has 16 minutes.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, this is the last group of debate at report stage. This is a very important bill. We are dealing now with the controlled activities but the linkages are enormous to the entire bill. The prohibited and controlled activities are the most important part of the bill.

I want to lay out for the House my concerns with Bill C-13. I hope that members will seriously consider what I am suggesting today.

Government Orders

First, the bill does not ban all forms of human cloning. If the bill does not ban all forms of human cloning, there is only one disposition of the bill, and that is to put it in the garbage.

I asked an hon. member this morning what he thought about the bill if it did not ban cloning. He said that it did. He said that clause 5 stated that "no person shall knowingly create a human clone". What could be more simple? Absolutely, but what is a human clone?

There is a definition in there of human clone so that we cannot just take that statement on its face and say that it is a human clone as we all understand a human clone; a genetic identical organism to someone who is either living or deceased. The government's definition of human clone is stated in the bill and it includes an important word. It says chromosomes from a "single" embryo, fetus or fetal tissue.

It came to my attention on February 27 that members of the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill to ban human cloning. How did they address it? They said that a human clone could not be created. However, their definition of human clone means human asexual reproduction accomplished by introducing nuclear material from one or more human cells into an embryo. Our bill states from a "single" cell, a single human being. It talks about one.

Dr. Dianne Irving presented materials to the health committee. She said that we had a bill that had problems with its definitions and terms used. With regard to cloning, she laid out that things like somatic cell nuclear transfer, parthenogenesis and twinning, et cetera, were not prohibited by the bill, and Health Canada finally got it.

At clause by clause, after all the witnesses and all the expert testimony, it tabled an amendment to the definition of human clone. However the definition it put in was still not comprehensive. In fact we have a definition now that still permits four different types of cloning. It still permits: pronuclei transfer; formation of chimeras and backbreeding; mitochondria transfer; and DNA-recombinant germ line transfer or, in other words, eugenics.

The parliamentary secretary said earlier that the scientists were moving very quickly and that they were coming up with new ways of doing this. Why have we redefined human clone to be something specific rather than to say that it is asexual reproduction that creates a genetic identical organism to someone who is living or deceased? Why can we not be clear? Why did the officials do that? Why have they changed the medical definition of human clone? Why have they changed the scientific definition of human clone to be something else?

• (1125)

The same exists with regard to chimera. Chimera is the combination of an embryo and a cell. It is also referred to generally between humans and animals that cannot be combined. The bill says that creating a chimera is prohibited. The medical and scientific dictionaries say that chimera means animal into human or human into animal. If we look at the definition in the bill, it says we cannot create a chimera. The definition of chimera is that a non-human life form cell cannot be put into a human embryo, but it does not prohibit putting human cells into a non-human life form, a non-human embryo.

Why has the bill changed the medical definition of chimera? Why has it changed the scientific definition of chimera? The terms and the definitions in the bill are wrong. They should have been reviewed more carefully and they have not been.

The United States bill shows clearly that it must be the asexual reproduction by one or more cells. We only have a definition that says one. The conclusion is this bill does not ban all forms of cloning. It is a problem that must be fixed if this bill is ever going to see the light of day.

For further evidence of that, the New Jersey state assembly also in the last month had a bill to ban cloning. That bill was also withdrawn because Dr. Irving, who advised our health committee also advised the state assembly and pointed out the problems and they could not fix it. They had to yank the bill and will have to rework it to make sure that the bill accomplishes the objectives.

Conflict of interest is a very serious issue in this matter. An agency is going to be set up. That agency is going to have members on the board of directors. Our bill right now has the provision that a board member cannot be a licensee or an applicant for a licence or have a relationship with anyone who wants to be a licensee. That is all it says.

The health committee said that did not go far enough. What we should do is prohibit anyone who has any pecuniary interest in anything that goes on beyond the researchers and fertility clinics. I am talking about pharmaceutical companies, biotech companies and those who are going to commercialize the research of genetic technology. The bill should make sure that there is independence in the board of directors.

The minister has a motion before this place to delete that health committee amendment. That means the Minister of Health would like us to approve a bill which says that pharmaceutical companies and biotech companies can be members of the board of directors of the reproductive agency. Pharmaceutical companies and biotech companies can be members of the board. How ludicrous.

The justice officials advising Health Canada were told, "We would like to see these people file conflict of interest statements and declarations". What did they say? "They are not paid enough and they will not do it. They are only part time. It is only the president and the chairman that are full time. It is a real inconvenience for the part time members".

I am sorry, but I thought every member of the board of directors had one vote. I thought every vote was important and that their decisions were important. Why is it that if it is too inconvenient for a member of the board of directors to file a conflict of interest statement that we would not look to someone else who was prepared to put on the table what his or her pecuniary interests were in the research that he or she would be making decisions on?

Government Orders

The bill does not define what is necessary research. It was probably the single most important question that members raised. In the minister's statement to the House on what I believe was Bill C-56 at the time, she said that a research ethics board or a reputable ethics board was going to determine whether it was necessary. That is not what the bill says. The bill says that the agency will determine whether research is necessary. The Standing Committee on Health in the report on the draft bill said that necessary should mean that there is no other biological material that could achieve the intended research objectives.

• (1130)

That makes sense. It probably should be expanded to also include the fact that if research has already happened in that area, we should not be repeating research that has already been done. It makes so much sense but we do not want the definition of "necessary" in the bill. Why is that? We must have the definition of "necessary" to determine whether or not research on embryos or any part of embryos is necessary. We are talking about human beings.

When we looked at this meaningful research, one of the things that came out was that Dr. Françoise Baylis said that only half of the frozen embryos would survive the thawing process. She estimated that there were only about 500 embryos in storage in Canada today and only half of those would be available or qualify for research. Of those 250, 125 would die, would not survive the thawing process. Of the 125, she went on to say that only nine of them would have the ability to generate a stem cell line that would be useful. Of those nine only about half, so let us say five, would be able to produce stem cell lines which met the quality requirements of the researchers.

The situation in Canada right now is there are 500 embryos and out of the 250 that might be available for research, only five or 2% of those embryos are going to generate enough research material. If there are not enough embryos to sustain meaningful research, we should not be killing embryos, period. Why do we not have that?

The science is being developed to freeze or to store women's eggs, the ova. If we have the science to freeze or to store women's ova and only fertilize those eggs that are necessary for in vitro fertilization, there will never be any surplus. Why does the bill not say that should the ova storage techniques be as successful, i.e., only 50% successful, as it is with embryos, this would be the process that would be used and that we could not store human beings cryogenically?

That is one of my motions. I believe we should do it. It would be our full and final declaration that human embryos should never be created for research purposes. If we are able to store ova but we continue to store embryos, it is indeed someone's intent to use human beings for research purposes. It is just not acceptable.

Regarding informed consent, the bill defines consent as whatever the existing laws of Canada say. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research provided guidelines in March 2002. They went so far as to say that consent has to happen before anything happens. Before there is any contribution of any sperm or eggs, they have to be informed. Not only that, they have to be informed of which researchers are going to get the embryo. They have to know what contracts and what institutions that research has a relationship with. There have to be

declarations right down the line and there has to be consent at every benchmark point. Those people can back out at any point.

What does the bill say now? The bill will not even define who the donor of an embryo is. The donor of the sperm and the egg are the human beings who donated them but when they are put together to make an embryo, the bill says the donor of an embryo is not the couple who created that embryo; it is whoever we say it is in the regulations. What nonsense.

Does that mean we are going to follow up with the Ottawa fertility clinic and say that if it does not pay its rent, then we own and control its embryo, we own that human being? Where are the principles in the bill? We need to deal with those things.

I cannot do this subject justice in the time remaining. I know other members want to talk and I want to hear them talk.

Finally, this bill permits the implantation of human genetic material into non-human life forms. The minister has put out a piece of paper explaining that we have to do this for research. We should not be putting human life form or any genetic material into non-human beings.

• (1135)

Dr. Baylis at the UNESCO parliamentary round table said that down the road she could see that we would be granting personhood, moral status to hybrids of humans and non-humans. This is where the research mind is. They are doing it because they can do it.

I have worked on the bill. I have done the best that I can. I have nothing left to offer other than that tomorrow, members will be receiving in their offices, in both official languages, in plain language the intent or effect of each and every one of the 50-some report stage motions on which they will be asked to vote so that they will know the essence of those report stage motions.

I believe that many of those motions must be passed in order to save the bill. The bill is on life support and very soon it will be on the death watch. If we do not make substantial progress in dealing with the definitions and in passing many of these important report stage motions, I do not believe that I will be able to support Bill C-13.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and speak to the bill and these motions.

I wish to congratulate my colleague from Mississauga South for the motions he has brought forward, the passion he has brought to the debate, and his analysis of the issues. He has done a tremendous amount of work on all of this and he deserves to be recognized for it.

I wish to acknowledge my friend from Calgary Southeast who is very interested in the bill. He has done a tremendous amount of work on this issue and has done his best to draw public attention to the bill. I also wish to acknowledge the member for Yellowhead, the Canadian Alliance critic for health. They have all done a lot of work on the bill. I appreciate their efforts to draw attention to some of these issues.

Government Orders

When we talk about these issues we should talk about them in a tone of humility. We are talking about the essence of human life here. Sometimes we are completely cavalier in how we approach this whole subject.

In the group of amendments that we have before us right now there is talk about paying people to be surrogate mothers. In the previous group of motions my friend from Calgary Southeast was seeking to prohibit the use of embryos for research and the commodification of human embryos for research. The member who spoke a moment ago was talking about those sorts of things.

When we see where Bill C-13 is going, and how the government is specifying particular ways for industry and in some cases individuals are specifying particular ways for private industry to come and commodify human life, we should be concerned. We should approach this with some reverence and some awe, and appreciate that there is a mystery at the centre of human life and science will never plumb the depth of it.

I am concerned when I see people acting in such a cavalier manner about these things that are greater and above individual people. There is something that springs from something greater and above this. Coming from a Christian perspective I would argue that it comes from God and I caution people to be mindful of this.

As I mentioned before, and I do not know if I said it very well, if a lab technician were asked to dispose of a human embryo would there not be a twinge of conscience there? Would there not be some apprehension about doing that? Would there not be a momentary pause wondering whether or not it was correct to dispose of a human embryo?

Even in the legislation the government says that these embryos may be disposed of up to 14 days. This suggests or implies that after 14 days all of a sudden there is some human dignity involved here.

Why is it 14 days? Why is there that cut-off? It seems rather arbitrary. I wonder if perhaps it does not suggest that the government on the one hand is troubled by the fact that it knows at some point that this thing, a human embryo, has some dignity. The government is afraid to say that it starts when that egg is fertilized. We should be cautious in how we approach this. We should approach it with some reverence and I do not think that we do that.

The member for Mississauga South made some excellent points when he spoke a moment ago. One of the things he has pointed to and it deserves the attention of the House and the public almost as much as anything else in this legislation is his reference to the fact that the bill does not ban human cloning. He has laid out all kinds of examples.

● (1140)

I submit that when the Raelians had a press conference not very long ago, just at the beginning of the year, where they were claiming that they cloned a human person, people were horrified around the country and around the world that this could happen.

We need to move with tremendous speed to ban all kinds of human cloning, to close off all opportunities for human cloning. My friend from Calgary Southeast talked about this as well. We must ensure that any legislation that comes forward does not leave a

loophole for this to happen because the nature of science is that if it is possible to do it, scientists will do it. To be fair to scientists, science is about finding the limits of human knowledge. It is about exploring things to the limits of human knowledge. That is what scientists do today and it is what they have always done. They do not always think about the ethical and moral considerations, so if there is any kind of a loophole it will absolutely be found.

The members for Mississauga South, Calgary Southeast and others have pointed to some of these problems. We should be extraordinarily careful about proceeding while we have these kinds of clouds of uncertainty hanging over our heads as parliamentarians. I would hate to say that I had participated in the crafting of a bill that allowed human cloning and I am just worried that perhaps that is where we are headed.

I want to address some of the specific motions in Group No. 3. There are things that my friend from Mississauga has proposed, for instance, that there be no buying or selling of human reproductive materials. Let me clarify that Motion No. 32 would add a prohibition on the purchase of fetuses and fetal tissue.

As I mentioned at the outset, I am concerned again that what this bill would do is allow the commodification, the industrialization, of human life. Some people seem to be okay with that. We have some people who are arguing that it is not a problem to pay surrogate mothers all kinds of money to go out and have children. I personally am deeply concerned about that. Motion No. 32 seeks to stop the selling of fetuses or fetal tissue. Any kind of extra protection we can give to that is very important.

Another thing that the member for Mississauga South is proposing to do is to block the transfer of the ownership of a human embryo from the parents to, for instance, a fertility clinic. The member for Mississauga South gave a very specific example of that. When talking about something as precious to people as their children, or a potential child—depending upon how we look at it, I think of a human fetus as an actual life—members can imagine the potential for lawsuits and disputes if this is not made clear in the legislation. The member for Mississauga South has made it very clear that there is a huge loophole and that we need to find ways to close that up. He has pointed to other problems as well.

In closing, members of Parliament should approach this issue with a little humility, a little awe, and a little reverence for the dignity of human life. We should ensure that all possible prohibitions are in place to ensure that cloning is not permitted in any way, shape or form. We should not allow some of the nightmare scenarios about which many people have already talked about. We should take into account some of the common sense proposals from different members around the House who are speaking on this and advocating particular points of view to ensure that human dignity is respected. That is what we are asking.

Government Orders

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have good news for you. I just learned that our colleague Jean-François, who looks after question period for us with the House leader, will soon become a father. Since we are talking about assisted human reproduction, I thought I would share this with my colleagues. I am sure that everyone in this House will want to join me in extending our congratulations to him. Of course, no artificial processes were involved here, as far as I know. The child will be born some time in November. I will come back to that in due course.

This bill underwent a rather long gestation period. We debated it in committee for 18 months, but have yet to see it through report stage. We, and the minister's parliamentary secretary in particular—who is the father of this bill to some extent—look forward to a timely delivery. We look forward to that happy event in the near future.

It has not been easy for the Bloc Québécois to come up with a position on this bill. Members will recall that the member for Drummond, whom each and everyone of us in the House is fond of, has been in the vanguard of this debate. Back in 1995 she tabled a private member's bill inviting the House to legislate and set out provisions in the Criminal Code to protect us from therapeutic cloning. We now realize, with the passage of time and some perspective, just how much of a visionary the member for Drummond was. I think that is the appropriate word.

During the Christmas break, we were given a scare because of claims made by a company called Clonaid. No one here would have wanted embryo cloning to be possible. However, if what the spokesperson for Clonaid was saying had been true, unfortunately there would not have been any recourse available to Parliament, because the Criminal Code does not contain any relevant provisions.

It is a bit sad that the government has taken so long in legislating. Ten years have gone by since the report of the Baird commission, the royal commission of inquiry on reproductive technologies. I think this is reasonable. We would have expected the government to have introduced a bill to deal with the pressing issues, at least.

True, it is not easy to look at every consideration and every aspect of a bill such as this one. It involves ethical values. One's perspective will depend on one's idea of family.

Of course, we have to bear in mind that when dealing with assisted human reproduction, one in five couples in Canada has fertility problems. Therefore, one in five couples could benefit from assisted human reproduction. We must also acknowledge that for the first time in the history of humanity that it will be possible to reproduce without there being sexual intercourse between two people. That is what is troubling when we look at how we must perceive this debate.

There are other important elements. First, with respect to this bill, the Bloc Québécois asked, quite early on, that the bill be split.

If it had been, we could have voted rather quickly on provisions to add to the Criminal Code. I think that there is consensus in the House regarding the 13 prohibited activities. Some activities are unan-

imously condemned by all parliamentarians, be they members of the Canadian Alliance, the government party, the Bloc Québécois, the Progressive Conservatives or the NDP. We could have voted rather quickly on these activities.

For example, there is the issue of cloning, of maintaining an embryo outside a woman's body for not more than 14 days, because the central nervous system forms after that.

• (1150)

There is the issue of paying consideration to surrogate mothers. There is also the issue of not taking human reproductive material and mixing it with that of an animal to produce what is called a chimera.

There are, therefore, 14 prohibited activities in the bill that members unanimously agree on and that could have been voted on rather quickly.

That is why the Bloc Québécois had asked that the bill be split. If we had been able to split the bill, perhaps it would have been passed already. Perhaps it would have already gone through the Senate and received, naturally, royal assent. Because we have been asking for many months now that this be done.

Today, we find ourselves in a complex situation because the Canadian Alliance does not like the bill. This bill is like an unwanted pregnancy. And as with all unwanted pregnancies, the father refuses to step forward. The Canadian Alliance is doing everything possible to prevent labour. We are being made to undergo a C-section. People want to force the bill into existence despite the protests of the Canadian Alliance. That is why, if the bill had been split, we would not be in this situation.

The Bloc is also in an uneasy position because we would like there to be provisions in the Criminal Code, but at the same time, we are uncomfortable with the assisted human reproduction agency of Canada. This agency would receive \$10 million a year and interfere in provincial jurisdictions.

Allow me to give a few examples. If this agency were created, it would be incompatible with 14 pieces of legislation in Quebec, all of them important to the National Assembly.

One of these is the Civil Code of Quebec. What are the differences between the bill and the Civil Code of Quebec? The Civil Code of Quebec states that under no circumstances will surrogate mothers be reimbursed for expenditures. Pregnancy is an altruistic act. If you want to give life to someone, bring a child into the world, it cannot be for monetary or commercial reasons. It has to be a purely altruistic act. There cannot be reimbursement for certain expenditures.

Bill C-13 states that under certain circumstances, if receipts are provided, the agency may agree to reimburse certain expenditures such as for consulting a psychologist or travel. Some expenditures could be reimbursed. This is not consistent with the Civil Code of Quebec.

Government Orders

There is another extremely significant interference. The bill, especially the regulations that will govern its implementation, sets out not only the conditions under which gametes (the sperm and the ova) will be maintained but the conditions under which health professionals will be able to make technologies available and carry out medical procedures.

The National Assembly—the only true parliament for Francophones in North America—amended the Act respecting health services and social services. Quebec's Health and Social Services Minister was given authority for designating institutions for the exclusive delivery of certain services, including medically assisted human reproduction.

The conflict in jurisdiction is obvious. We have the federal government, which clearly has no valid constitutional jurisdiction over the delivery of services involving medically assisted human reproduction.

I am not denying that the federal Parliament has a responsibility when it comes to health care for aboriginals; the federal government has a fiduciary obligation to aboriginals. I am not denying that the federal government can intervene on matters of defence and the military; the federal government is responsible for the Canadian military. I am not denying that the federal government can intervene when it comes to research; the Supreme Court has recognized it as a valid power.

• (1155)

However, the federal government cannot intervene to provide health care services in hospitals, in research institutions or in university facilities. That is not right.

That is what the Bloc Québécois finds reprehensible. We want the Criminal Code to contain clear provisions to prevent cloning. Imagine living in a world where everyone started cloning and that threatened every human being's uniqueness.

The bill goes much further than that. It allows for changes to the Criminal Code, but it also makes other changes.

Madam Speaker, given the good news I just announced, would you please see if there is unanimous consent in the House for me to extend my speech for ten minutes? I would appreciate that, and it would be a fitting tribute to the child that Jean-François is expecting.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Does the House consent to allowing the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve to speak for another ten minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Réal Ménard: Madam Speaker, it is always very touching to see the great spirit of comradeship in this House. Surprising, sometimes, but still very pleasing.

So, on to the crux of the matter. We had hoped, as I have said, for the bill to be split. That was defeated. We introduced the standard motion in the House to that end. The government did not see it our way and we respected that. Today, however, the issue is still unresolved as far as the Bloc Québécois is concerned, because again we are hoping to see provisions in the Criminal Code. We do,

however, have questions about the consequences of having a regulatory agency.

Let us talk about the Government of Quebec. As you know, Madam Speaker, it is an excellent government and one that may retain popular support for a third mandate. The outcome will be known on April 14. I will have an opportunity to speak of this again.

What is worrisome is that, if the Bloc Québécois votes in favour of this bill and regulations, it will mean the superimposing of structures one on top of another, and there will not only be the Criminal Code, but also an agency responsible for application of very important regulations.

I was in the process of listing inconsistencies between the agency, Bill C-13 and legislation passed by the National Assembly. I mentioned the Civil Code. This is an important piece of legislation because there is a world of difference between the common law tradition and Quebec's civil law tradition. What makes Quebec different, besides its blueprint for sovereignty, which will see it become a sovereign state as soon as the people make that decision, is its legal system.

In Quebec civil law, it is not up to judges to decide the meaning and interpretation of legislation; it is up to the National Assembly, which, through elected representatives, adopted a type of law called positive law, which is codified in its Civil Code. English Canada is not governed by the Civil Code, civil law, but rather by common law. This means that when there is a dispute and a court is asked to settle it, it may not necessarily be what the lawmaker provided that prevails, but precedents, tradition, custom. Judges are not required to take into consideration what was decided by an assembly of parliamentarians, but do take into consideration how their colleagues ruled in similar cases. That is what the common law tradition is all about. That is not what we have in Quebec.

That is why the Civil Code of Québec contains provisions prohibiting surrogacy agreements. One cannot give birth to a child and say, "I will not be its mother." There are provisions against that in surrogacy agreements.

So, there are major inconsistencies between Quebec law and Bill C-13. These aspects are not compatible with our Civil Code and the Act respecting health services and social services, which was amended by the National Assembly a few years ago to allow the Government of Quebec to determine which facilities will provide medically assisted reproduction services. There is the Université de Sherbrooke and its health care facilities for instance, but the National Assembly and the minister determine who is authorized to provide services.

If we were to pass Bill C-13 with the related regulations, the federal government would then be able to determine which facilities, while not under its jurisdiction, may provide medically assisted reproduction services. This, of course, is a problem.

The debate with regard to the Privacy Act is extremely important. In the bill, the government says that there is no obligation to disclose the identity of donors. Individuals who donate at fertility clinics can and should maintain their anonymity. The child of a donor will not know who the donor is.

Government Orders

In committee, we heard the testimony of children born through such technologies who told us that this makes no sense.

• (1200)

In legal terms, this is called the right to know who you are. Are children born through these technologies entitled to ask fertility clinics about the donor's identity?

This is the subject of much debate. The government says that it does not want to force donors to disclose their identity for two reasons. It says that, in places where this has been done, donations have decreased, and fertility clinics have experienced a shortage of donors. This has created problems in the supply of sperm and eggs.

If we look at the situation in Australia and New Zealand in the months after donor disclosure became a requirement, we see that supply really was a problem.

At the same time, some point to a whole new area of law opening up. For instance, I recently read a document for the European Convention on Human Rights that said that the act of withholding the identity of the donor is inconsistent with human rights, not to mention what this means for psychogenesis. For his development as a human being, an individual, a child needs to know not only his social father, the man who raised him and took care of him, but also his biological father.

In our report to the Standing Committee on Health, we asked the government to lift the ban and make identity disclosure mandatory. The government did not listen to the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Health. If passed in its present form, the bill would not require disclosure of the donor's identity, except in emergencies.

Clearly if the child born of these technologies goes to the hospital for a blood transfusion and he needs to know his father's blood type, a national registry would exist for that purpose. This registry would make it possible to search and find the identity of his genetic father, his genetics, and of course, his blood type.

Over and above such urgent considerations, there is no provision in the bill for disclosure of donor identity.

We also note major incompatibilities with laws in place that have been passed by the National Assembly. I have already referred to the Civil Code, the Health and Social Services Act, and the Act respecting the Protection of Personal Information. I could now talk about the Act respecting medical laboratories, organ, tissue, gamete and embryo conservation. There is also an extreme incompatibility concerning the right to one's origins, in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I could also refer to the physicians' code of ethics, the guidelines of the Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec, or FRSC, and the ministerial action plan for research ethics and scientific integrity.

As you can see, it is not easy to gain a grasp of a bill like this one. We had good intentions, and were convinced that the government was prepared to split the bill, but it did not do so.

So we find we are faced with an incompatibility as far as the Health and social services act is concerned; a superimposition of criminal penalties onto the practices of our civil law; interferences

with certain provisions of the Quebec Civil Code, particularly those relating to adoption. I am thinking of sections 538 through 542.

Then there are problems with qualifications, as found in the various statutes on professional practices, as well as the addition of an administrative framework to which researchers will be subject, as defined in the regulations as set out in the bill.

Madam Speaker, you are indicating that my time is up. I do not want to take up the time of the House further, particularly since it is an important law and I have already had 10 minutes. I will come back to this at third reading. I assure you that, obviously, in this matter as in others, we are going to defend the interests of Quebec to the best of our ability.

• (1205)

[*English*]

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have a few words to say on Bill C-13. Like many who have already spoken in this debate, I too am against experimentation on embryonic stem cells. I just do not believe that the creation of the human embryo for the eventual destruction of it is an ethical procedure that we should be involved in here in Canada.

We have, as we are all very much aware, received many petitions in the House of Commons. I have received many from my riding of St. John's East urging all of us to oppose Bill C-13 and to concentrate our efforts on adult stem cells. We have seen hundreds and hundreds of petitions coming to the House of Commons on a daily basis.

We have heard a great deal about adult stem cells and the fact that this kind of experimentation holds great promise for cures for many diseases, like Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, cancer and diabetes, and for the reversal of damage from spinal cord injury and stroke. That research, as many people have been saying, would benefit a great deal from greater resources being put into it. It would make sense to put greater resources into adult stem cell research. This should be given greater priority by government.

By contrast, of course, there is an ethical dilemma arising from embryonic stem cell research. We are told that the benefits of embryonic stem cell research are sheer speculation at the moment. The controversy is expending a great deal of energy that I feel could be better redirected toward more promising pursuits like adult stem cell research.

Many ethical questions remain unanswered, not the least of which is the question of what happens to the embryos that remain unused in this experimentation. I have heard many points of view, some very good, put forward today regarding the beginnings of life. There are many, including me, who believe that life begins at conception. Given that belief, which is held by many, and given that these small beginnings of life have the potential to grow into full human beings, then from my point of view government should be coming up with some way to protect these very beginnings of life.

Government Orders

What is the reason we are not putting greater energy and greater resources into, if we will, pro-life? I happen to believe that we in the 21st century unfortunately are living in a culture of death. We seem to have very little respect for human beings and very little respect for the beginnings of life.

It probably stems from the fact that we have been fed a steady diet of violence and death on a daily basis. We have become desensitized by the images of death all around us. When we see, for instance, hundreds of dead bodies floating in a river in Rwanda, when we see thousands of dead human beings stacked one on top of the other in an image from the second world war and the Jewish holocaust, when we see hundreds of thousands of people on the brink of starvation and death in Somalia, or when we see bodies strewn in the streets from a chemical attack, then society becomes very desensitized, and things like abortion become just another procedure instead of the destruction of a human being, a living, moving human being.

•(1210)

We can see, then, how embryonic stem cell research works its way on to the floor of the House of Commons. Assisted suicide and euthanasia will probably find their way here as well. Why? Because we live in a desensitized world, I believe, which embraces the culture of violence and death, and that is quite unfortunate.

There are many scientific risks surrounding embryonic stem cell experimentation. Initially scientists thought that real progress from stem cell research would come by way of embryonic stem cells. Today, however, it is known that while adult stem cells are already being used successfully in some human treatments, embryonic stem cells have yet to be associated with any kind of successful human trials. Embryonic stem cells are far from the utopian medical breakthrough that many people are suggesting. Embryonic stem cells appear to be subject, for instance, to a random and uncontrollable growth. On the other hand, adult stem cells seem to be more predictable in responding to the growth factors and hormones that function to redirect their development. Embryonic stem cells have been known to grow into the wrong types of cells, for instance, so the method for steering stem cells in the right direction still needs significant improvement.

Where should we go from here? I believe that due to the scientific risk and the ethical dilemmas associated with human embryonic stem cell experimentation, a moratorium on funding such research should be issued and we should be putting society's money into adult stem cell research. We are talking about human life. I think that we have an opportunity here to show respect and protection for the very beginnings of life.

It is far more beneficial for us to be concentrating our efforts on adult stem cell research. Let us stop for a moment and have a look at what we are doing here.

•(1215)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the motions contained in Group No. 3 deal with a number of important points. First, they ban paid surrogate mothers, intermediaries who make surrogacy arrangements, and ovum or sperm donors. They also deal with the donation of in vitro embryos to couples who want to have a family and whether or not these

embryos should be considered property. Finally, there is also the scope of Bill C-13 itself. I will speak to each of these points.

Banning payment for assisted human reproduction is a central element of the bill, which contains an outright ban when it comes to paying surrogate mothers as well as ovum, sperm or in vitro embryo donors.

These issues have already been debated at length by the Standing Committee on Health.

I believe that Bill C-13 treats all of these issues in a balanced manner. It prohibits payment for assisted reproduction and clearly states that children are not property to be bought or sold. This position received overwhelming support. The recommendation to prohibit paid surrogacy was always supported by the royal commission on new reproductive technologies in the 1990s, and the Standing Committee on Health supported that position several times.

Also, the bill was drafted in such a way as to not prevent altruism. As such, a woman who wants to help her sister, a friend, or even a perfect stranger, need not bear all the costs of her altruism.

Clearly, a surrogate mother who acts out of the goodness of her heart has expenses to cover, like any other pregnant woman. For example, there may be expenses for psychological counselling or other consultations related to the birth, there are costs related to drugs and vitamins that are taken during pregnancy. Under the provisions for regulations and the issuing licences, Bill C-13 will provide for the reimbursement of reasonable expenses related to the pregnancy of the surrogate mother. Incidentally, under the current version of the bill, an altruistic surrogate mother would not be eligible for any compensation for other costs, such as missing work.

The bill will also ban paid intermediaries. It is important to note that this does not include doctors or counsellors who give professional advice and medical services to surrogate mothers.

Intermediaries, or brokers, are organizations or individuals who get paid to arrange for the services of surrogate mothers for potential parents or make contractual arrangements for such services for commercial purposes. That is making money off of human reproduction, pure and simple. This is why we feel it has absolutely no place in Canadian society.

Under Bill C-13, it would also be prohibited to purchase sperm or ova for reproductive purposes, and to purchase or sell embryos. We do not think that the trade in human gametes and embryos should be permitted in Canada. Neither do we want to see human ova sold to the highest bidder on E-Bay, like antiques and collectibles.

In addition, Bill C-13 recognizes that, like altruistic surrogate mothers, ova and sperm donors incur legitimate costs that ought to be reimbursed subject to the regulations. The fact that a donor should not financially benefit does not mean that he or she may not be reimbursed for transportation and other reasonable expenses supported by receipts. The regulations will set out clear parameters with respect to these expenses.

Government Orders

To conclude my comments on trade, I wish to remind the hon. members of the wording of this Parliament's declaration concerning Bill C-13. Clause 2(f) states:

trade in the reproductive capabilities of women and men and the exploitation of children, women and men for commercial ends raise health and ethical concerns that justify their prohibition—

I would now like to address the issue of in vitro embryos donated to couples looking to start a family. Given the current state of scientific and technological expertise, the production of surplus embryos is the almost inevitable outcome of IVF procedures.

●(1220)

This bill will allow couples, who give their free and informed consent, to donate embryos they no longer need to other infertile couples who want to have children.

Motion No. 44 is pointless, in my opinion. Bill C-13 provides for embryo donation. I would also like to draw the attention of hon. members to the fact that, legally in Canada, the term “adoption” refers to the adoption of a child and not to donated in vitro embryos. Furthermore, child adoption is clearly a provincial responsibility. Therefore, it is incorrect, legally, to talk about embryo adoption.

Now, I will address the legal concept of property as it relates to in vitro embryos. During discussions at the report stage of Bill C-13, members discussed how very inappropriate it would be to let market forces operate unfettered in the area of procreation. I find it very odd that Motion No. 39, on transferring the ownership of in vitro embryos, has been introduced. This government does not feel it is at all appropriate to consider in vitro embryos as property subject to property law.

The third point I want to briefly mention is the scope of Bill C-13. This is raised by Motions Nos. 32, 33 and 36.

This bill is limited solely to in vitro embryos. It is not regulating embryos in a woman's body, nor fetuses, nor stem cell lines. These are clearly outside the scope of Bill C-13.

Bill C-13 takes a balanced and reasonable approach to the issues raised by the motions in Group No. 3. This is a Canadian approach. Let us address these matters judiciously and help advance this country's legislative system.

●(1225)

[*English*]

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we are back debating Bill C-13, a very important bill, an act respecting assisted reproductive technologies and related research, as it came to be known. It started as Bill C-56 and our health committee spent a fairly extensive period of time discussing this issue. It came to us in a rather appropriate form as draft legislation. The health committee spent the better part of a year dealing with the very technical aspects of the bill. We came up with a report that we entitled “Assisted Human Reproduction: Building Families”. It was tabled in December 2001. We spent a lot of time dealing with this comprehensive report.

Today, the Group No. 3 amendments with which we are dealing address a significant aspect of the bill. There are quite a number of issues that are being addressed here that are important to the outcome

and the application of the bill, and to the effect that it will have on Canadians and certainly on the industry. We want to address these important amendments that have been brought forward.

In our report “Assisted Human Reproduction: Building Families” members of the Standing Committee on Health were united in wanting an end to commercial surrogacy. It happens that the members for St. Paul's and Vancouver Centre were not members of the committee at the time, and these new members of the committee are responsible for some of the amendments that we will be addressing today. The report stated that:

It is contrary to our thinking to treat human beings or human material as commodities that can be regarded in terms of their economic value rather than their intrinsic worth. In particular, we feel that children can never be objects to be acquired or exchanged. Women and men need to know that their bodies and their reproductive material are not for sale or barter.

Some of the amendments that are being addressed here, particularly Motion No. 28 by the member for St. Paul's, would delete prohibitions on surrogacy from the prohibitions and would allow it to be dealt with in regulations, which would allow compensation and commercialization of this aspect of reproduction. Motion No. 29 from the member for Vancouver Centre would allow for the payment of legal and medical services.

There are aspects of the bill that we certainly, as a health committee, were not inclined to want to see advanced. For example, the payment for sperm and gametes. These amendments would allow for donor compensation, but basically we are talking about selling human cells and human life.

A website of a Canadian company working out of Toronto is offering sperm donors—although it is not called compensation, it is just for their expenses in making a donation—\$65 per sample. It is recruiting on university campuses for young men to make a donation and allows them \$65 for their trouble. They may leave up to three samples weekly. That would total about \$200 a week for a university student. That is pretty good part time income we might say, about \$800 a month for someone who wanted to take advantage of that.

Furthermore, successful donors are referred to the company by their friends or fellow students. Referrals can be an excellent source of revenue, it says here. If individuals are comfortable talking with others about being a donor, they receive a \$10 referral fee for bringing in a friend, but if the friend is accepted as a qualified donor, they receive a \$100 finders fee.

This is what our health committee was concerned about. We did not want to see human reproduction commodified. We did not want to see people selling human cells or human parts. For example, we do not pay a kidney donor for a kidney and we do not think we should be paying people for materials to produce babies or for babies themselves, as these amendments would allow.

●(1230)

I am quoting again from the committee report:

Women and men need to know that their bodies and their reproductive material are not for sale or barter. The Committee does not support any elements of trading, exchanging, buying or selling of human reproductive materials. We are aware that, in recent years, commodification, and in many respects, commercialization, have occurred in the field of assisted human reproduction. We want to ensure that the legislation will prevent the commodification of children, women's bodies, human reproductive material, and reproduction.

Government Orders

The fact is commercialization is already taking place in the United States. People who have a desperate need for a baby are able to buy one with the help of numerous surrogacy agencies.

A quick Internet search under “surrogacy” returns over 54,000 website hits revealing the vast amount of commercial businesses available to people who are willing to buy and sell babies. How much are people willing to pay for someone to have a baby for them? What should be an altruistic gift to an infertile couple could wind up costing that couple as much as \$50,000 U.S. or even more if they want twins or a surrogate mother that is experienced.

How much can a woman sell her baby for? The going rate for a surrogate mother in the United States is about \$20,000 U.S. and more if the woman has experience or if she is willing to carry twins.

Is that what we want to pursue in Canada, the buying and selling of children? That is really what it amounts to. That is what will happen if the amendments that the members would like to bring in are passed. They would take out the clauses that prevent sale, surrogacy and commodification. That is what will happen if the legislation is amended to reflect the motions put forward by the member for St. Paul's and the member for Vancouver Centre.

Ms. Phyllis Creighton is a member of the Health Canada Advisory Committee on the Interim Moratorium on Reproductive Technologies. She spoke to the health committee on September 25, 2001. I would like to reflect on some of her comments. She stated:

Canada should learn from the U.S. experience, with its unsavoury catalogues of surrogates and Internet marketing. Sound public policy must be based on the principle of the best interests of children. Baby brokers are not in the best interests of children.

Commercial surrogacy is vitiated by its morally unacceptable premise that a baby is a product to be exchanged and transferred for money. Brokers may claim that payment is for the reproductive service that the surrogate mother renders, but since she's not paid the full sum agreed to in the pre-conception arrangements until the baby is received into the custody of the commissioning parents, it is the baby who is being paid for.

Ms. Creighton concluded:

We do not pay the expenses of kidney donors for their donation in circumstances of life-threatening need. Childlessness is anguishing and worthy of compassionate help—

We certainly agree with her on that.

—but it is not a life-threatening condition. And it ought not to be done unless the best interests of children are secured.

The issues raised in these amendments are very important ones. There is donor compensation and whether we want to pay people for their gametes. Furthermore, other aspects of the bill allow for the import and export of gametes. Why, we might ask, would we allow for gametes to be imported from other countries where we cannot control the quality of the collection or the persons they are being collected from? We did hear evidence at committee that semen samples that are arriving at sperm banks in the U.S. are being sought out and also received from prisons in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, we are addressing some important aspects of the bill. I am wondering, given the importance of these amendments, whether I might receive unanimous consent from the members to continue my comments for five more minutes.

•(1235)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent for the member for Nanaimo—Alberni to have an extra five minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues. I appreciate their indulgence.

We might ask why we are importing gametes from outside Canada, gametes that we cannot control, and why, when women go to a medical facility trusting that they are getting the best care, going through the anguish of the fertility experience itself, being exposed to very caustic drugs in many cases to enable them to produce an ovum to be fertilized, to then use sperm that has come from a sperm bank which sperm has come from prisoners in the United States. We do not know where this material comes from. We did hear such testimony at committee and it is alarming. Why are we allowing that?

Very important issues are being addressed by this bill. If we look at some of the information available on surrogacy in the United States, there are reams, pages of information on parenting service fees: \$15,000, \$5,000 paid at the time of signing up, \$5,000 paid when matched. Another website says \$7,500 for signing up and another \$7,500 when matched. One says \$5,000 at heartbeat. A surrogate mother monthly allowance of \$2,000 while pregnant, that is about 10 months times \$200. A psych group when she is pregnant, \$300 or \$75 each month. Reimbursement per cycle \$750, or each attempted transfer. There is a whole billing schedule for people wanting to be involved in the baby business. Life insurance for the surrogate; health insurance premiums; OB care and delivery \$2,500. Cost of the surrogacy is approximately \$51,000.

Our concern on the health committee and my personal concern is that surrogacy has been said to be altruistic, that is, to help someone. Certainly many people are agonizing with the problems of infertility and they deserve compassion. To turn it into an industry with fee schedules and payment for producing babies is something that is unpalatable to the committee and it is unpalatable to most Canadians.

Motion No. 28 would take away prohibitions on surrogacy. We will certainly be opposing that. Motion No. 29 would also allow for payment of other expenses. We are opposed to bringing in payment for a whole industry that is related to this.

There are some very good amendments. Motion No. 32 from the member for Mississauga South and Motion No. 33 would have prohibitions on the purchase of fetuses. Motion No. 33 adds no purchase of any parts of embryos. Motion No. 36 adds a prohibition on the sale of fetuses or fetal tissue. We certainly would support this.

A very important one is Motion No. 39 which adds that there would be no transfer of ownership of embryos or reproductive materials. There are clauses in the bill that would allow the ownership, as if we could talk about ownership of human beings or preborn human beings, if a failure to pay for storage or for handling procedures, to revert to the clinic.

Government Orders

There are very important aspects being addressed in this group of amendments. We ask that all members look at the bill carefully. There are some very serious aspects to the bill. It needs to be amended the right way to make sure that the proper controls are there. The wrong amendment should not be passed to undo the good work of the committee.

• (1240)

Ms. Judy Sgro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to set the record straight on a couple of issues that have been addressed during the debate today.

I will begin with human cloning since it is one of the rare issues on which the House agrees. We are united in our opposition to human cloning. Canadians have clearly shown that they too support this goal.

The only area of disagreement seems to be whether Bill C-13's prohibition on human cloning is complete. It is. There are no loopholes. Bill C-13 would ensure that no human cloning takes place in Canada, period. Patricia Baird, an internationally respected geneticist and former chair of the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies, has made this crystal clear. Professor Baird said:

Based on incorrect science—

—and I think part of what is being referred to throughout this debate in the last few days is the issue of incorrect science—

—some have suggested that the bill doesn't ban cloning, but in fact, on careful reading, it clearly does.

All forms of human cloning would be banned, irrespective of whether the goal is to produce a child or to undertake research. The prohibition would capture every cloning technique, whether currently known to us or a new method still to be invented.

Therefore, the motions that were discussed in Group No. 2 are clearly unnecessary in reference to Motions Nos. 13 and 40.

I will now turn to the issue of embryo research. It sometimes seems that in the debate over the bill we are losing perspective of what it is actually all about. Bill C-13 first and foremost is legislation that seeks to protect the health and safety of women and men who walk through the doors of Canadian fertility clinics, people looking to start a family or to help others to do so.

The work we do in the House reflects the values and the principles that we share as a nation. Canadians believe that children and families are critically important to us. The government has made helping children and their families a priority in its long term commitment to a better quality of life. Healthy children, secure families and vibrant communities are all essential in defining quality of life in Canada.

Estimates suggest that some one in seven Canadian couples face the challenge of infertility. Many of us take the ability to have children for granted, but for them, starting a family is not at all a simple matter. Many of them have to turn to fertility clinics. They should be able to do so, knowing that there are the same solid safeguards in place whether they visit a clinic in Moncton, Toronto or Montreal. They should be able to do so knowing that everything

possible is being done to make the procedures as safe and as effective as possible, not only for those undergoing them but also for any children born from them.

If we want the procedures used in fertility clinics to be safe, doctors, nurses and other health professionals must be able to learn how to do them safely. These professionals also have a duty to improve the assisted human reproduction procedures in ways that strengthen safety and further protect the health of the women undergoing them and that of any resulting children.

As the standing committee recognized, this work will sometimes require the creation of embryos. This would be permitted under clause 5(1)(b) but would require a licence and be subject to strict regulations and inspections, which are currently not happening.

We as a society have accepted assisted human reproduction procedures as a way to treat infertility. We cannot prohibit the research used to improve the safety of these procedures. That would be analogous to saying that we accept kidney transplants as a treatment for renal failure but do not accept the research needed to improve the safety of the transplants.

Indeed, I urge members to support Bill C-13. A lot of it is based on what Dr. Baird has accurately termed “incorrect science” that we hear from many of those who continue to be in opposition.

• (1245)

Let us move forward in a timely fashion with this legislation to protect the people whom we are here to protect and to define our intentions.

Timeliness is key. As it stands today, Canada has no law to prohibit or regulate activities relating to assisted human reproduction. This has immense implications, not only for the infertile Canadians and for those born from reproductive technology but also for our society as a whole. Recognizing this, Canadians have said clearly that they want national leadership in this area. They have been waiting for over eight years for legislation that would protect Canadians.

Let us give them the leadership, for without Bill C-13, there would be no legislation or regulations governing embryo research. Without Bill C-13, there would be nothing to prevent the Raelians or others from attempting to clone human beings on Canadian soil.

I ask that members reflect upon this and on the alternative that the solid science that Bill C-13 represents, and on the immense need for us to have legislation to protect Canadians and to assist the many couples in our country who want to have children and create a family.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and a pleasure to speak once again to Bill C-13.

It is important to understand that this is the sixth and last round of amendments. We are trying to recap where we have been up to this point, and address the sixth grouping of amendments.

Government Orders

It is important for members to understand how many amendments we have looked at report stage. Over 70 amendments have been put forward by members of the House who have said that this legislation has failed in committee. It has failed in what it has brought forward to the House because it has not adequately reflected the views of Canadians or the whole area of reproduction with which the bill has attempted to deal.

It is true that the bill is very wide ranging in its scope. Some members say that it is all about reproduction and that it is to help individuals who have difficulty in conceiving a child. Part of the bill does deal with this and part of the bill deals with what happens with the leftover embryos. However part of the bill also deals with science related to that. The science is of great concern to most members of the House. It will change the ethic of a nation when we say if we are prepared to create human life for the sake of research.

If we do that, then we are moving to a place where we are saying that it is all right perhaps even to commodify life. Perhaps it is all right to even produce eugenics or be allowed to create a specific human, one that is tailor made for us, one that gets around the idea that God is the creator of human life and that we may be able to produce tailor made individuals.

This is something that has been tried many times in our history. It is also something that has that potential. It is alarming in the way some of the amendments have come forward in this group. It sets me back when I see the way this group has been put forward because it really says that the whole area of surrogacy should be opened up.

I know the intent is to be able to put it into regulations. However, if it is put into regulations, we do not know exactly what will happen. We are very concerned about what might happen in regulations. The regulations do not give us the intent of the bill. If we truly wish to do something about our concern with surrogacy and allow individuals to modify human life from that perspective, then it must be in the legislation.

Some of the amendments state that we should allow ourselves to purchase a surrogate and there is no real price tag on that. When the members of the committee went through the area of surrogacy, we were told that they should be paid \$20,000, \$40,000 or perhaps \$100,000. It would depend on what they were paid in their workplace and how long they would be away from work. We have not defined in legislation what would be an appropriate reimbursement for having a child.

If this is allowed, then we have to set parameters around it. This is something on which we fought long and hard in committee. The committee had some of the best witnesses from Canada and around the world. Committee members were able to question the witnesses on this question and other important issues.

The area of surrogacy is very important. Either a person is on one side of the fence or the other when it comes to surrogacy. A person is either saying that surrogacy is all right, that it is all right to purchase a womb or an individual to have a child. The other side is that it is something that could or would be exploited. We see the exploitation of females for sex. People say that it is the oldest occupation and that it has been around for many years. We hope that would not be

extended to the idea of having a surrogate, but perhaps we should think again.

What potentially could happen is women might have the opportunity, and certainly would be flirting with the idea of having a child, of taking an egg from them and a sperm from a super model or superstar, put those together and create the perfect child. This would be a child who would have the traits that would see as more of a toy rather than a living human extension of themselves.

• (1250)

People are on one side or the other on this issue. Either we allow it to happen or we do not. I think there is a strong division in the House on whether that is okay because some people think it should be up to the individual to choose. Other people ask if we go down that road, where do we stop? If we allow it there, then why are we stopping the idea of sex selection, for example, and we say that is a deplorable thing, although the practice happens in other countries around the world. They try to take a picture of the child in the womb to discern whether it is male or female and then they keep aborting it until they get the sex they want. This also happens in Canada to a degree and it depends to what extent. This legislation will bulk us into that sort of idea with the kind of amendments that are before us in this group.

I would also ask, Mr. Speaker, if I could get an extension of my time. This is the last group. I have put a lot of time into it over the last couple of years. Could I have an extra 10 minutes?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The member for Yellowhead has asked for unanimous consent for an extra 10 minutes. Some members say 5 minutes. Do members agree to give the member 5 more minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Mr. Speaker, you sound a little like an auctioneer, and I will take the five. Sold, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the grace of the House in extending my time. I know that other members who have been given an extra ten minutes have not put into this the time and energy that we have had the privilege and pleasure of doing over the past year and a half. This is a very important piece of legislation.

I have talked briefly about the idea of surrogacy in this piece of legislation, so if I have only five more minutes I would like to move forward and talk about what would happen with the other piece of these amendments, which talk about the idea of buying and selling of either fetal tissue or embryos or any of these combinations. It is very important that we discern whether it is appropriate for us as a nation to be able to buy or sell fetal tissue. We know that it is happening in the United States. It is really interesting when we start discerning what might be happening in the area of fetal tissue or the area of tissue donation.

Many of us are aware of what happened with the ear bank in Canada, which was just closed down because of not having the right regulations and standards in place, with things being inappropriately done. I had an opportunity to sit on a plane this past weekend with an individual who was involved with that whole process. Some of the things he told me with regard to the breach of standards in the area of tissue donation would raise the hair on the back of one's neck. This can be very appalling.

Government Orders

In fact, he was telling me how embryonic stem cells could be used in the area of islet transplants. He also used the example of the Edmonton protocol for diabetes. For that procedure alone, some researchers have been offered \$2 million U.S. by individuals wanting to have that procedure done to their wives. There are examples of how procedures can be bought and sold and how that can be applied to tissue donation or to the area of embryos. This is alive and well in many places in North America and is alive and well in Canada. We have to fight against that.

This piece of legislation gives us the opportunity to either put a stop to this or allow it to continue. I do not believe that Canadians want to live in a society where this is allowed and I believe that most Canadians do not understand the repercussions of this piece of legislation because it is so complex. I do not blame anyone for not being able to follow it, and I have been absorbed in it as much as anyone could possibly be because of the work done in committee over the last two years. In committee, 100 amendments for changes were tried. The 70 that we are working with now in report stage are not here by accident but because this piece of legislation is flawed. If it is put forward in its present state, it will fail Canadians because it will not reflect their values and will be exploited.

I will give the House another example of this because the United Kingdom is a little further advanced. In fact, the United Kingdom is about 10 years in advance. In that 10 year period, it started with a piece of legislation similar to this, with no therapeutic cloning and no reproductive cloning. The United Kingdom now allows therapeutic cloning and the possible creation of an embryo solely for the purpose of research. What ethical argument will we have if this legislation allows us to destroy an embryo for the sake of research? What ethical argument will we have if we are allowed to grow it for 14 days, kill it, and take the stem cells from it to try to do research, especially since that research is a long way from being proven effective? There is no proof of it working in animals yet. Nonetheless, the United Kingdom is allowing that now. What ethical argument will we stand on to say we cannot create them solely for the purpose of research?

We know that if we harvest them before they go into a refrigeration state the potential of them surviving the 14 days and being viable to grow stem cells is much more successful than it is now. It is only about a 5% success rate for those that are frozen and that this piece of legislation deals with. This piece of legislation says we should use them rather than destroy them, but let me say that this is a slippery slope. It is very dangerous for us to move to that degree. If we do not understand it as a nation and as a society, we will fail society because we will not have informed it of where we will likely go.

• (1255)

I am very nervous about where this piece of legislation is going, and in particular where this group of amendments is going, because it would allow the commodification of human life. It would allow for the buying and selling of fetal tissue, for the buying and selling of embryos, and for the potential for those embryos to be transferred to different ownership. We have to say that this is either just a group of cells and tissue or it is the beginning of human life.

Biologically, we cannot say anything other than “this is the beginning of human life”. How much value we place on human life at that stage is a fair argument and a fair debate which we could and should have here, but whether it is human life is not arguable. It is just a fact of biology. If the House fails to protect human life at its most vulnerable stage, then who is going to stand up and protect human life at that stage? What other safeguards do we have if the House fails to do its job?

I do not think it reflects Canadian values to be able to take the most vulnerable in society and bring in a piece of legislation that will deliberately destroy them. That is not a Canadian value. It is just that most Canadians do not understand this, especially when there is an alternative, non-embryonic stem cells, which are a great opportunity for tremendous research.

I have had people from the Canadian Diabetes Association and people concerned with Parkinson's and muscular dystrophy in my office talking about how impressed they are with the use of embryonic stem cell research. As I told them in my office, it has yet to be seen that there is any proof that the embryonic stem cells are any more viable. In fact, there are many more problems with them because they are so elastic that at this present time they cannot be triggered into growing what they are intended to grow. Until we see it in the embryos coming from animals, we certainly do not have the science there to be able to move into an area of using human life as that kind of an experiment. We should be very cautious in this area.

Growing an organ from an adult stem cell, or a non-embryonic stem cell, was proven this last summer in July in Minnesota. They have been able to take those stem cells from bone marrow and grow them into any organ in the body. That is very exciting, because there is no ethical dilemma there. We can save the nation the gut-wrenching decision of being able to say that we have to destroy human lives for the sake of saving them.

One member of Parliament told me that his brother is dying and he knows that embryonic stem cells could save his life, if the scientists are right, which they are not, but he said, “Never destroy one baby for my life”. Many Canadians would feel that same way.

I am saying that in many countries in the world human life is very cheap. It is not very valuable. We are at the brink of war as a nation, as a world, and we see that some of the things going on around the world are detestable. But a fundamental Canadian value is to place a value on human life. This piece of legislation would move us into an area that would destroy that value. Because of that we need to have the appropriate amendments in order to be able to put forward a piece of legislation that would reflect Canadian values and limit the amount of research done, research that would be in the best interests of all Canadians. Because of that, we say that some of these amendments absolutely have to be put forward and have to pass or this piece of legislation will falter and will not be appropriate for Canadians.

• (1300)

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to say at the outset that this is, for the most part, a good bill. It is a bill that sets out to place a legal, ethical and regulatory framework around very complex research and a technological set of new ideas that have come about in science.

Government Orders

As a physician I know only too well the agony and heartbreak that some couples face because they are unable to have children, to reproduce. The stress placed on these couples by society, by family expectations, and by their own desires and their dreams for children for the continuity of their family line, is very emotional.

New reproductive technologies and some of the research we are talking about in the bill are able to help couples like these in many ways. In effect, therefore, the good that the bill can do, the good that these technologies and this research can do, however, must be balanced by the recognition of the harm it could do to society as a whole. The bill sets out to find that fine balance and I think it has done so very well.

For instance, the commodification and the commercialization of reproduction carries with it the risk, as we of course have heard everyone speak about, of exploitation, especially of vulnerable young women. Young women who need money, who are in penurious circumstances, and not so young women who are in penurious circumstances, could be exploited for use as surrogates or as donors. For instance, because of the authority figures within a family, a young woman could be made to become a surrogate whether that young woman wishes to or not. Clearly one must set guidelines in which we do not allow for exploitation, in which we do not allow for commodification, and in which we do not allow commercialization to create an incentive for exploitation. I think the bill has done that.

Many people have suggested that donors of ova or sperm and surrogates should be driven purely by altruism. That is wonderful, but that is not what happens in the real world. The bill recognizes that realism. It recognizes that we cannot only ask people out of the goodness of their hearts to donate without protecting them in some ways. I think that the bill, to some extent, allows for that. In fact, it allows for the anonymity of a donor while at the same time ensuring that the elements of a family history and a medical history are there to protect the future well-being of any children born of these technologies. I think that the bill is in fact very good in all of these aspects.

Where I believe the bill falls short is on the issue of surrogacy. Surrogacy, unlike some of these other interventions, is not simply a donation. In surrogacy, a woman agrees to carry a child to term. Altruism alone does not play a part in this, because we all know that inherent within a pregnancy there are risks, risks that are expected and risks that may not be expected.

In Motion No. 51, I have suggested that we move to recognize some of those risks. If a surrogate faces any sort of complication due to pregnancy, such as toxemia, abruptio placenta or any one of those threatening problems that can occur during a pregnancy, and needs to take time off work, she should be compensated and reimbursed. At the moment the bill only allows for reimbursement of actual expenses such as taxis, going to the dentist, getting food, et cetera. We need to look realistically at some of the risks that could occur and ensure that the surrogate, the mother and the child are protected so that a healthy child will be born and so that women do not take undue risks. If we do not protect them, we will find that we will be able to say in the bill that surrogacy is allowed but it will never happen in fact, because no one would want to put themselves at that

kind of risk if they are not assured that the risk is taken into consideration in the bill.

Similarly, I also want to say that in Motion No. 29 I am clarifying something that is extremely important. When we look at some of the issues of technology or issues dealing with sterility, surrogacy or any of the technologies involved here, there quite often is a need for informed consent from the patient, the couple needing the services, or the surrogate, a need to have counselling by a physician or by a legal counsel to allow them to make the right decisions, to allow them to make informed consent. Informed consent is a very important part of any kind of medical intervention. I think this is important and I do not believe it is very clear in the bill. I think that Motion No. 29 would clarify it very clearly so that physicians and lawyers doing their jobs on informed consent would not feel that they would be liable to prosecution.

● (1305)

The parts of the bill, however, that deal with research, cloning and stem cells et cetera, have been subjected to a great deal of misunderstanding and I would say misinformation, but I would sometimes believe it is disinformation. I hope that this is because the complexity of the science is often too great for some people to really grasp it clearly.

For example, paragraph 5(1)(a) states:

No person shall knowingly (a) create a human clone, or transplant a human clone into a human being;

It works in tandem with the definition of a human clone that states:

"human clone" means an embryo that... contains a diploid set of chromosomes obtained from a single—living or deceased—human being, foetus or embryo.

A diploid set of chromosomes means the full set of 46 chromosomes that are present in every cell of an embryo, in fact, in every cell of each and every human being. Some members of the House raised concerns about this definition not being watertight. I would like to speak to and zero in on some of those concerns.

It is suggested that it is problematic to define a clone as an embryo that replicates the complete set of chromosomes of another single human organism. Members raised the spectre of cloning techniques that use more than one source of DNA, but this is not science. This is bad science. To create a human clone a scientist must, by definition, obtain all 46 chromosomes from the same organism but not necessarily from the same cell within that organism. That is what a clone is, a copy of an entire human being.

For example, if we wanted to clone you, Madam Speaker, we would need all of your chromosomes, not just some of them. It does not matter if we get the chromosomes from one of your cells or from a handful of them, as long as the complete set of chromosomes comes from your body we will have created a cloned Madam Speaker. But if we mix your chromosomes with the chromosomes of someone else we will not be able to produce a clone.

It is suggested that the bill's cloning ban would not cover newer approaches such as mitochondrial cloning, pronuclei transfer or parthenogenesis to create a clone.

Government Orders

Let me say for the record that it is not possible to create a cloned human being from cloned mitochondria. A mitochondrion is a little structure found within every cell. It supplies energy to the cell, a sort of genetic battery. Mitochondria have their own DNA separate from the 46 chromosomes found in the nucleus. We cannot create an entire cloned organism by cloned mitochondria. It is like saying that if we cloned the battery we could get the whole energizer bunny. Well, we cannot.

On the other hand, it is in theory possible to create a human clone through pronuclei transfer. There is a pronucleus containing 23 chromosomes in every human egg and sperm. Following fertilization the two pronuclei will come together and provide the 46 chromosomes of the developing human organism. Using two pronuclei from the same human organism would, theoretically, produce a clone. Such a procedure would obviously therefore be covered by the human cloning prohibition found in the bill and thus would not be allowed in Canada.

There was concern about some things that are not possible and some things that are already prohibited in the bill. Bill C-13 would ban the parthenogenetic creation of a cloned human embryo. Parthenogenesis is simply a method for asexually reproducing an entire human organism. It is not a means of creating sperm and eggs as Motion No. 27 wrongly suggests.

I want to address the suggestion that the cloning prohibition would not ban chimera. This is in fact quite true. Chimeras are not clones. By definition they consist of cells drawn from more than one entity and chimeras are specifically banned under paragraph 5(1)(i).

• (1310)

The cloning ban in Bill C-13 is comprehensive and it is scientifically sound. Unless there be any further doubts, allow me to quote Dr. Patricia Baird, an internationally respected geneticist, who as many members will know chaired the royal commission on reproductive technology. Professor Baird said:

Based on an incorrect understanding of the science, some have suggested that the bill doesn't ban cloning, but in fact on careful reading it clearly does.

Madam Speaker, a lot of my colleagues have been given an extra five minutes. I would wrap this up if I could be given another three minutes, please.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is there unanimous consent to allow the member to have an extra five minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, I thank hon. members for allowing me this extra time.

I want to turn to some other motions. While I agree with the spirit of Motions Nos. 46 and 49, proposed by the member for St. Paul's, new subamendments would bring them into line with the principles of the section on controlled activities. Currently it needs to have the words "and a licence" in order to bring it into line.

At the end of the day, we will move forward and medical science will begin to push forward the boundaries that will allow us to take care of diseases that we have never been able to in the past. There are so many diseases right now that used to be a cause of death and

extreme morbidity that we are now able to deal with very early in a human being's life, diseases that we can treat and prevent.

Medical science pushes that envelope forward. It continues to seek ways to improve the quality of life of human beings to protect them from diseases that are preventable, to cure diseases that are not preventable, and to improve the human condition. As we push that envelope forward, we always come up with new technologies that would improve human life. There will be a good in those technologies, otherwise we would never seek to bring them forward.

As always, with every good we will need to protect society from a harm that might be inherent, whether intended or not, in those technologies. We will constantly have to examine these every time they come forward. We will constantly have to find ways to regulate and set clear guidelines for the use of newer technologies as time goes on.

I am proud that our government has brought forward this bill because it tackles head-on and for the first time that kind of medical progress, while allowing us the ability to take the good in technology and protect us from harm. This bill is not carved in stone. I am sure that as we find newer ways of dealing with human reproduction in the future this bill may be revisited. But we will have set in place and in motion a process by which governments can continue to regulate and find the good in science while protecting humans from what could be harmful.

• (1315)

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the constituents of Surrey Central to participate in the report stage debate on Group No. 3 amendments to Bill C-13, an act respecting assisted human reproduction.

Every year thousands of babies are born in Canada using assisted reproductive technology, everything from simple insemination to cutting edge in vitro fertilization. But there have been no laws governing any kind of regulations leaving doctors and infertile couples to come up with their own guidelines.

This long overdue act would now regulate some activities, such as research involving human embryos and criminally ban others, such as commercial surrogacy, non-medical sex selection, and all forms of cloning involving human reproductive material.

Since 1989, Canada has been attempting to define the proper legislation and regulatory controls to govern assisted human reproductive technologies through the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies. According to a Léger marketing survey, 84% of Canadians were against the cloning of human beings, compared with just 5% who favoured the controversial practice and 11% did not know or refused to answer.

Human reproductive cloning represents a profound disregard for human dignity, individuality and rights. In effect, it is an affront to the dignity of human life and reduces its value to that of a commodity. That is not acceptable.

Government Orders

The Canadian Alliance minority report recommended that the final legislation, which we are now debating, clearly recognize the human embryo as a human life and the statutory declaration include the phrase respect for human life.

For many years, adult stem cell transplants have successfully been used to treat a variety of diseases such as Parkinson's, MS, leukemia and Crohn's. Adult stem cells are a safe, proven alternative to embryonic stem cells. Adult stem cells include those collected from umbilical cords, placenta, brain tissue and bone marrow. Embryonic stem cells, on the other hand, are those extracted from an embryo in a procedure that kills a tiny but 100% genetically human living being. Despite the hype embryonic stem cells have never been successfully used in clinical trials.

As the member for Mississauga South said earlier, Bill C-13 would not ban human cloning. Thus, the bill belongs in the garbage and I agree. That is why we in the official opposition are opposing the bill.

Besides regulating the use of embryonic stem cells, Bill C-13 would ban the practice of paying a woman to carry a pregnancy. It would make it illegal to pay a man for his sperm or a woman for her eggs: gamete donations, as both are known. An estimated 50 to 100 babies are born through surrogacy every year in Canada while hundreds more result from gamete donations.

I will proceed to deal with all the motions in this group. The House has been very generous today and I would like to ask for an extra five minutes if I could, Madam Speaker.

• (1320)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is there unanimous consent to allow the member to have an extra five minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal: Madam Speaker, I thank the members very much. I will take my time to go over all these motions now.

We oppose Motion No. 28. The sponsor, the hon. member for St. Paul's, believes women should receive some compensation for surrogacy. This amendment would delete prohibitions on surrogacy in order that they could be dealt with in regulations. The health committee, in its report "Assisted Human Reproduction: Building Families", was united in wanting to end commercial surrogacy. The sponsor respectfully was not on committee at that time. Surrogacy should be altruistic. There must not be any payment for children, no commodification.

We oppose putting off decisions on commercial surrogacy to the regulations. We should not always leave all the details of legislation to the regulations.

I would like to comment here that it is the habit of the government to table legislation in the House with little substance. Only the intent of the bill is there and generally the regulations are not tabled along with the legislation in the House. Therefore the will of the members is imposed upon the legislation but the regulations are ignored, so they completely escape the scrutiny of the members and input from the members on the regulations.

I always say that the government is ruling through the back door, not governing from the front door. It is an affront to democracy and it should be a habit in the House that all regulations be tabled along with the legislation so the members can read them, make comments and have input into the debate.

Motions Nos. 30 and 49, also moved by the hon. member for St. Paul's, both correspond with each other. They would delete the prohibitions on payments for gametes or embryos, again in order that this area be dealt with in the regulations. It should be retained in the bill, not left to the regulations. We oppose opening the door to payment for gametes or in vitro embryos. We do not want any commodification around assisted human reproduction, so we oppose those motions.

Similarly we oppose Motion No. 46, again moved by the member for St. Paul's, because the motion corresponds with Motion No. 28. The new clause would place exceptions on prohibitions on procuring a surrogate, arranging a surrogacy and inducing a female to become a surrogate, namely, except in accordance with the regulations. We oppose leaving controls on commercial surrogacy to the regulations.

Motion No. 29 from the member for Vancouver Centre would allow payment for legal and medical services in arranging surrogacy. The health committee was united in opposing such payments and the hon. member again was not a member of the health committee when it came up with the recommendations. There should be no such payments around surrogacy.

Motions Nos. 51 and 95, again from the member for Vancouver Centre, would open the door to compensation to surrogates for work-related loss of income. It would open a can of worms. The health committee heard testimony that compensation for such expenses could be greatly inflated.

How much compensation is reasonable for loss of work-related income? It is a very difficult issue and the health committee decided not to include it. The health committee recommended that there be no such compensation for surrogacy. Surrogacy must be altruistic, not for payment. There should be no commodification of children according to the recommendation. We have to oppose the three motions from the member for Vancouver Centre.

Motions Nos. 32, 33 and 36 would add prohibition on the purchase of fetuses of fetal tissue. We support checks on the commodification of human life. Therefore we support those three motions.

Motion No. 39 would add no transfer of ownership of embryos or reproductive materials. This supports the goal of preventing commodification around assisted human reproduction. Therefore we support this motion.

Government Orders

Motion No. 44 would add that the adoption of embryos should be restricted except as provided in the regulations. Embryo adoption is a possible alternative to the destruction of or research on so-called excess embryos, though not without its own complications. We will support this motion.

●(1325)

Motion No. 45 specifies no research on embryos for reproductive research, except as provided in the regulations. We oppose research on human embryos for any purpose and, therefore, support the earlier amendment as Motion No. 14. If Motion No. 14 fails, then I would support Motion No. 45.

In a nutshell these are the motions on which I wanted to touch. I would mention here that the Canadian Alliance supports some aspects of the bill. Some of the things in the bill are actually good. We support the banning of human and therapeutic cloning, chimera, animal-human hybrids, sex selection, germ line alterations, buying and selling of embryos and paid surrogates.

We support the recommendation that the health and well-being of children born through assisted human reproduction should be given top priority. This is all about children and children who are to be born. We believe that human life should be recognized in the embryo.

The children are a part of the legislation. However the bill is far from perfect and needs amendments, including those amendments we are considering here now.

I heard that there were over 100 amendments. The hon. member from the opposition, as well as members from other parties, worked very hard to put forward those amendments. We must carefully consider and support those amendments.

Given the great moral sensitivity of the decision, I believe the government ought to allow the conscience of every individual member of Parliament to be freely heard. This means that there should be a free vote in the House on the bill, and I recommend that.

We on this side of the House oppose the bill until all the amendments are accepted.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in debating Bill C-13, the Assisted Human Reproduction Act, we realize that infertility is still one of the most misunderstood, invisible and nonetheless distressing problems that Canadian couples are faced with. I do not know of any other complication for which friends, colleagues and decision makers—although well-meaning and normally compassionate—simply advise couples to forget about it and move on.

[*English*]

As we debate Bill C-13, an act respecting assisted human reproduction, it is clear that infertility remains one of the most misunderstood invisible, yet poignant situations facing Canadian families. I cannot think of another health problem about which it seems so easy for well meaning, usually empathetic friends, colleagues and policy makers to just say “Get over it”.

As a family doctor, I was often overcome by the tremendous reactive depression, inability to function and relationship disharmony precipitated by the realization that again this month she was not pregnant. There were also those moments where I, in giving the diagnosis of a cancer, or a genetic problem like Turner's syndrome, or a severe medical problem or disability, had to deliver the additional devastating news that woman would never be able to carry a pregnancy.

Bill C-13 was brought forward to help those women who would need some extra help in trying to have a baby and to ensure that happened in a safe and ethical environment. Unfortunately, a great deal of the debate of Bill C-13 has been hijacked by those anti-choice members who are obsessed with obstructing the use of embryos produced for the purpose of reproduction being used for research instead of being discarded.

There is no question that society wants reproductive cloning banned totally, which Bill C-13 does by placing it in the category of prohibited activities with penalties enforced by the Criminal Code.

The debate however, ongoing since the Royal Commission on Reproductive Technology and the health committee report leading to the present bill, is whether other activities should be prohibited, that is criminalized or regulated, thus requiring a licence.

The bill deals with a very specialized area of health care in which the practitioners, the fertility doctors, are highly qualified medical practitioners who would be losing their right to practise their profession if found to be performing these controlled activities in violation of the regulations. I believe that physicians take these responsibilities very seriously and for us to now possibly criminalize the activities of these practitioners and their patients amounts to the government once again trying to dictate to women what they can and cannot do with their bodies and a naive failure to recognize that not all those requiring assisted human reproduction will have willing voluntary donors or gestational carriers.

The number of pregnancies requiring AHR is small and the number of pregnancies carried by gestational carriers in Canada even smaller, with estimates ranging from 60 to 100 attempts resulting in only about 30 pregnancies a year. Only about 500 eggs are donated per year and surprisingly only about 1,500 to 2,000 pregnancies result from donor insemination. This is certainly a manageable number of assisted pregnancies that has been self-regulating for years with the clinics' own codes of conduct and certainly could be meticulously regulated without requiring criminal penalties.

Even without regulations, the maximum reimbursement for gestational carriers in Canada has been \$20,000, much less than the \$30,000 to \$40,000 paid for international adoption once the legal, travel and counselling have been paid. Reimbursement for egg and sperm donors has remained equally modest compared to the American reproductive industry whose example seriously appalled the members of the health committee during their hearings. I think the intent of the bill could have been achieved within a tight regulatory framework.

Government Orders

I hope the new proposed agency will get up and running quickly so there will be no unnecessary delays for the women and their families needing help or for the researchers to carry on their invaluable work. I hope that we will continue down the road to a registry that will provide the much needed medical information of the donors leading to successful pregnancies and that the agency will have the capacity and the mandate to keep that information updated so that the offspring will be able to find out their evolving family histories, such as breast and colon cancers, heart disease and eventually actual genetic information.

The debate around additional identifier information should continue and in the meantime there should be a voluntary offspring registry. Indeed some infertility patients may want to choose donors who would agree to a full open model.

We have a lot to learn from the experiences of adoption. In AHR we should apply the imperative for honesty about a biologically different beginning to the children, a plan for disclosure without retroactivity, expert counselling and guidelines for the information available at intake.

At our town hall meeting on assisted human reproduction last year in St. Paul's, the panellists and the audience presented compelling stories of the need for a better understanding of the challenges facing the infertile community.

• (1330)

The responsible use of gestational carriage for the women, who would otherwise be unable to carry a pregnancy because of trauma, cancer, genetic problems, was compelling. To assume that these women will be able to have a sister or find a friend to perform the role on a voluntary basis is naive. To close the door to gestational carriers with a modest compensation will drive these law-abiding citizens underground or to the United States.

I ask all hon. members to take the time to hear these stories, such that they will feel comfortable supporting Motions Nos. 28, 30, 46 and 49 that take the issue of surrogacy and egg and sperm donation from the prohibited category to that of controlled acts, and allow these families the opportunity of genetically related children and grandchildren.

Every day in Canada the dream of having a child genetically related to the parents is being fulfilled in families where it would have once been impossible. We must continue to ensure that our society becomes more educated and supportive of the one in eight couples in Canada who need help fulfilling their dream in a safe, affordable and ethical environment. The issue of a wanted pregnancy must be seen and responded to as yet another important issue of choice.

• (1335)

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, it has long been the NDP position that the commercialization of human reproductive services should be halted.

As a women's health issue, infertility should be given the full weight of government support through campaigns to inform the public of the causes of infertility and initiatives to eliminate those causes when possible.

In a recent article by Abby Lippman, who is a well-known expert in the field of reproductive technologies, she writes:

—the regime being developed to oversee the development of these technologies is not being created within a framework of women's reproductive health.

We see the co-opting of the idea of choice—this idea that reproductive technology automatically increases choices. In terms of being able to have children, reproductive technologies are one kind of choice offered to women who can afford them. But if we want choices, why don't we deal with where the source of the problems are... instead of at the end of the road saying, "You can have this technology now that you're infertile..."—that's a limited menu.

That is what we seek to achieve in this legislation, a women's reproductive health framework. That is what is missing in the bill and why the New Democratic Party remains concerned about Bill C-13.

Members would expect that those of us in the New Democratic Party believe firmly and with conviction that for profit health services have no place in our universal public health care system. It also will not come as a surprise when we say that the value of human health, of women's health, must be primary and unchallenged by competing commercial values.

Leaving these services to the for profit marketplace, irrespective of the compliance with specific quality regulations, will undoubtedly limit the number of Canadians who have access to infertility treatment, and for us that is totally unacceptable. Limiting access to quality reproductive health services only to those who are well off, runs counter to the very foundation of our public health service.

As the House has heard from many members on this side of the House, the government's record on protecting public health care in Canada, up to and including the recent health accord and the federal budget, has been shown to be totally untrustworthy. We only have to look as far as the revelations today on CBC radio and TV about clinical trials being conducted in this country and a drug being used in those clinical trials, when the government had the information and knew full well that deaths had occurred in another country as a result of that drug being used in clinical trials.

We only have to look as far as the failure of the government to act on the recommendations flowing from the death of an Ontario woman who had taken the drug Prepulsid, and having been failed by a system that did not require mandatory reporting of adverse reactions. Time and again, when it comes to health protection, the government has failed Canadians.

The House will also know that part of the debate is about patents. A strong concern has been expressed throughout the proceedings that the patenting of human reproductive materials and processes would have a severe impact on the question of financial barriers, yet the government has done nothing to tie the legislation to consequent clarifications of the Patent Act.

This legislation and the values it represents cannot be left in competition with the conflicting values on property rights within the Patent Act.

Government Orders

• (1340)

We only have to look as far as the well-known developments around Myriad Genetics, a company that isolated two genes which can help identify women at particular risk of developing hereditary forms of breast and ovarian cancer, a company that has sought to achieve maximum commercial benefit from the control over patent of that information.

It is an affront to human dignity and the integrity of our human heritage to commercialize human reproduction, and this bill does not adequately shut the door in this respect.

The government's position is revealed in its attempt to remove conflict of interest language proposed by the NDP and accepted by the standing committee. This measure would have ensured that government policy and reproductive technology would not be influenced by the commercial considerations of its advisers.

There is no question that without that amendment, without that strong language in Bill C-13, representatives of the pharmaceutical and biotech industries could possibly be permitted to sit on the board of the agency governing this field of endeavour.

In that context, I again want to refer to the remarks made by Abby Lippman in a recent article entitled "Conceivable Options" when she says:

Women's bodies are a natural resource for the biomedical industry because of the scientific possibilities to commercialize human reproduction, human DNA and develop increasing numbers of genetic tests to be used in combination with in vitro fertilization.

The dangers are clear and the problems are evident without further action by this government. We express great concern and displeasure at the failure of the government to adequately represent the hard work of the Standing Committee on Health and to respect the democratic process.

The issue of surrogacy was debated and discussed at length in the Standing Committee on Health's examination of the bill and the government's no-name predecessor proposal. The committee concluded that surrogacy should be banned. To ban something is to shut down any avenues that will facilitate it happening. Motion Nos. 28, 29 and 51 in particular, appear aimed at relaxing the impetus within the bill to prohibit surrogacy. They send the wrong message, a message that must be unequivocal so that Canadians have a clear sense of what is acceptable and what is not.

Obviously it would be wrong for any of us to promote a piece of legislation that on the one hand said it was wrong for sperm donors and surrogate mothers to engage in any kind of commercial activity and on the other hand allow large corporations in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology spheres to patent life forms and make millions of dollars from their discoveries.

It is important that we be consistent on this principle and that is what we propose today in speaking to the bill and through our previous amendments.

Regrettably, the government has resisted our attempts to ensure that women's health is adequately protected in the bill. We proposed that the precautionary principle be incorporated as a fundamental principle of the bill and that it apply throughout. The government

voted that proposal down in committee. What better way of ensuring that women's safety is the primary consideration in every decision?

We are all too familiar with the fact that women undergo many different drugs and treatments that can have an adverse impact on their health and it is our call today to ensure that all such drugs and treatments be allowed on the market only when proven to be safe beyond a reasonable doubt.

Madam Speaker, I wonder if you could give me permission to have three or five extra minutes to finish my remarks on this important matter.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): It is not up to me to give you permission, but are you are asking for the unanimous consent of the House?

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Yes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is it agreed to allow the hon. member to have a few minutes to finish her remarks?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Madam Speaker, we proposed that at least half of the board of the agency charged with overseeing the application of the bill be made up of women, as a form of a safeguard that decisions would be sensitive to women's health priorities. In this case we won committee support but the government wants that change scrapped.

A proactive approach to inspection and monitoring is needed if the regulatory nature of the bill is to be a factor. There is no sense in the bill that the approach or the resources will be there to ensure the protection to women's health that such a proactive regulation would provide.

Similarly, our attempts to bolster the independent counselling available to women has been resisted. Decisions about the options available throughout infertility treatment are in many instances exceedingly difficult and informed decision making is vital, especially when our desire for children makes us vulnerable to the influence of those offering services.

I will reference one other concern that has not been addressed by the bill. It is important for ongoing policy work in this area.

Many Canadians, in conjunction with discussions on the bill, have expressed concern that the current legislation does not adequately regulate genetic screening, testing and counselling. They are distressed because the current bill does not specifically address the need to protect vulnerable populations, including persons considered to be "abnormal" or "defective" from being labelled as undesirable and targeted for elimination.

Furthermore, they are concerned because the bill fails to consider fully the harm done to persons and families living with conditions labelled as undesirable and to the national psyche as life is reduced to a commodity subject to quality control.

I join with those Canadians in calling on the government yet again to ensure that it acts. It has the regulatory authority to act and must do so now.

Government Orders

Clearly, Health Canada, the Government of Canada, has an obligation and a responsibility to initiate a national strategy for the management of genetic screening, testing and counselling services. That is absolutely imperative.

I conclude by saying that for nearly 10 years New Democrats have been urging the government to bring in legislation to regulate reproductive technology. It was urgent 10 years ago for the protection of women's health and to provide guidelines for a burgeoning industry. It is even more urgent today given the unregulated developments in the interim. That we have come so close after all this time to achieving our goal but remain faced with a seriously flawed bill is both frustrating and disheartening. The pressure to buckle under and accept is immense.

We take our responsibilities seriously in this debate. The bill in the form now presented to us is unacceptable. We will be voting against the bill unless the government shows it has the fortitude to reinstate some of those progressive amendments that were advanced by the New Democrats and others in the House and accepted by the Standing Committee on Health.

• (1345)

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have some subamendments to Motions Nos. 46 and 49. To ensure that these amendments conform with the writings of this section on controlled activities, I wish to propose a subamendment to these amendments. I move:

That motion 46 be amended by adding in clause 10.1(1), (2), (3) and (4) after words: "except in accordance with the regulations," the words: "and a licence."

I move:

That motion 49 be amended by adding in Clause 11.1 (1), (2), (3), after the words: "except in accordance with the regulations," the words: "and a licence."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The subamendments to Motion Nos. 46 and 49 moved by the hon. member for Kitchener—Waterloo are in order.

The updated voting pattern is available at the table. This will change the order of the voting on the motions.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to address some remarks to Motion No. 72 which deals with subclause 26(8) of the bill.

In listening to the debate today, it is clear that all parties are engaged on behalf of Canadians and that the issues contained in the bill are of great importance to Canadians. As we look down the road into the current new millennium, those issues are leveraged highly with risks and benefits for Canadians and for the human race. How we manage to organize ourselves in the field of cloning and human reproduction will almost certainly affect how the human race evolves.

Motion No. 72 deals with a section of the bill that attempts to deal with conflicts of interest for members of the board of the Assisted Human Reproduction Agency. As we know, that agency is formed for the purpose of issuing licences and dealing with licence applications for those who work in the field of in vitro fertilization and fertility clinics. This set of regulations is established to regulate that field so the interests of Canadians generally can be protected

from activities that would not be in our national interest or in the interests of any one particular Canadian.

The original bill contained a provision that would deal with conflict of interest. Conflict of interest rules are put in place generally, as we all know, to prevent self-dealing by those who work in the public arena. Not only is it to prevent self-dealing but it is also to prevent the appearance of self-dealing because the appearance of self-dealing would undermine the integrity of the process, which in this case is the issuing of licences. Of course we want Canadians to have confidence in the integrity of all government processes.

The original bill contained a provision that stated that no member of the board of directors of this licence issuing authority could be an applicant for a licence or a licensee, or a director, or officer, or shareholder, or partner of a licensee or applicant for a licence. That sounds well enough and it goes a good distance to both preventing self-dealing and the appearance of self-dealing. However the health committee, which studied this, came to the conclusion that there was a category of individuals who might, as a director, part time or full time, of this agency come up against this issue of self-dealing or the appearance of self-dealing.

At committee amendments were moved and the committee adopted an amendment that would expand the ambit of the relationships which would prevent self-dealing or an appearance of self-dealing. The relationships were expanded by adding a section that stated:

No member of the board of directors shall, directly or indirectly, as owner, shareholder, director, officer, partner, or otherwise, have any pecuniary or proprietary interest in any business which operates in industries whose products or services are used in the reproductive technologies regulated or controlled by this Act.

This would of course extend to persons associated with pharmaceutical companies or biotech companies.

That amendment is well-intentioned and pushes out the net, the barrier, the protection and the conflict of interest guidelines to exclude persons whose companies, businesses or partners provide services into the reproductive technologies field.

There is an amendment now, I believe it is to Motion No. 72, which would roll back that provision, at least if not all the way, most of the way. I have concerns about that. I believe the committee is well-intentioned and that the provision is well-founded.

• (1350)

I know there have been discussions about the impact of this provision, this paragraph 26.8, on the ability of the government to obtain good, qualified and expert people to sit on the board. As I mentioned earlier, the two top executives on this government agency, the chair and the vice-chair, are full time positions. The other directors are part time.

S. O. 31

One suggestion was, if we had conflict of interest guidelines that required board members to file full personal financial disclosure, that it would be a barrier to obtaining good people to come on the board. For a part time position, it is likely that people who are busy in their respective fields would not want to go to the trouble and bother of having to make a whole personal financial disclosure to allow them to become a director, which is in fact just a part time position.

However at the end of the day that decision making body would make its decisions with the part time members. Therefore the involvement of the part time member in decision making and the vote of the part time member in the decision making is not a part time vote and it is not a part time discussion. It is a full time vote and a full time discussion. A vote is a vote. There is no such thing as a part time vote. When they vote on the board of directors, when they make decisions and participate, it is important that Canadians and the people who work in the field see the board as independent and not influenced commercially by undue influence of their partners, the companies of which they are shareholders, their fellow executives or their fellow directors.

I for one believe that the state the bill is in now, as amended by the committee, adequately covers that. Even with the additional conflict of interest guidelines, the board and the agency will find their own way, will find qualified people to serve and they will serve with distinction and do a good job.

I will close by complimenting a number of members around the House for their assiduous work in all aspects of this bill. It is a tough bill.

When I came to the House in 1989, I remember saying that somewhere in this world there was somebody working in a closet laboratory who would ultimately generate a mutant of the human species. It was clear, at least to me and many other people then, that this would happen. Since then we have had Dolly the sheep and other things. We have been a little slow getting to it. The bill has been around for a few years. This is our attempt to put it to bed. I hope my comments on this amendment will be useful to the House.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1355)

[English]

CANADA WINTER GAMES

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a young lady in my riding recently showed the nation what constitutes true sportsmanship during the 2002 Canada Winter Games in Campbellton-Bathurst, New Brunswick.

When Amanda Bulman from Miscouche, P.E.I. saw an athlete from Saskatchewan lying unconscious at the bottom of a large hill, she sacrificed her own finish in the race by going in search of help and waiting there until help arrived and successful treatment was administered. To honour this young lady's action, she was awarded with the highest honour of the games, the President's Pin.

Furthermore, P.E.I.'s athletes brought home eight medals this year which was the most won by the province ever in a single games.

Matthew Coe, Alicia Wilbert, Tyler Marchbank, Mitzi Mitchell, Frankie Gallison, Christine Wilbert, Darcy McKenna and Matthew Lemon all won awards.

Team P.E.I. was awarded the Jack Pelech Award for combining competitive performance, sportsmanship, fair play and friendship.

I ask the House to join me in congratulating these wonderful athletes. Islanders should be proud of team P.E.I.'s performance.

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the public accounts committee hearings into the billion dollar firearms registry fiasco, the President of the Treasury Board had the gall to accuse members of Parliament of not doing their job. She should direct her concern to her Liberal colleagues on the justice committee.

This morning, the Liberals voted down a Canadian Alliance motion to hear from the justice minister on why he is asking Parliament to support his cash management program to replenish the money for the firearms registry that he took off the table. That is like shuffling credit cards to pay the bills.

The Canadian Alliance has been asking tough questions for years about how much the registry has cost Canadian taxpayers and how much it will eventually cost Canadian taxpayers. What is clear is that Parliament has not been able to get a handle on the cost of the registry because, in the words of the Auditor General, "Parliament has been kept in the dark".

The President of the Treasury Board should take these words to heart.

* * *

• (1400)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Oxford County farmers have built a strong reputation for their efficient, innovative and environmentally responsible farming practices. On March 5 the agricultural community in my riding came together to recognize those who have made particularly significant contributions to this reputation.

I would like to recognize today the following winners of this year's Oxford County Agricultural Awards of Excellence. Large agribusiness: Green Lea Ag Centre Incorporated; small agribusiness: McMillen's Iris Garden; farm innovation: Greiden Farms Limited; family farm: Clefthaven Farms; food processing: Bright Cheese and Butter Manufacturing Company Limited; conservation: Shelwood Farms Limited; and the president's technology award: Minitube Canada.

In addition, an award for community service was presented to Mrs. Ruth Skillings for her many years of faithful work on behalf of Oxford farmers.

Congratulations to all of this year's finalists.

ST. CATHARINES ROWING CLUB

Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize the St. Catharines Rowing Club which will celebrate its 100th anniversary this year, and to Stan Lapinski whose book entitled, *St. Catharines Rowing Club: 100 Years in a Row*, honours this momentous occasion.

Rowing in St. Catharines has a very rich history. People become involved as rowers and their interest often becomes lifelong. Many rowers have been awarded scholarships to further their education at numerous North American universities.

The rowing club has attracted many enthusiastic volunteers over the years. People like Henley Island steward Jim Minards; boat repairman George Manoogian; Clint Page; Sue Erskine; John Newman; John Dewar; Harry Edmonston; and many other volunteers.

There have been many changes to the club itself over the last 100 years. Since 1904 there have been five different shell houses located either at the course starting line, near Michigan Avenue, and the current location on Henley Island. Numerous Olympic rowers have come through the club.

I would like to congratulate the St. Catharines Rowing Club on its 100th anniversary of rowing in St. Catharines.

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ENDEAVOUR HYDROTHERMAL VENTS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans on the establishment of Canada's first marine protected area, the endeavour hydrothermal vents area, southwest of Vancouver Island.

Canada is responsible for a submarine area equal to 50% of our huge land mass. This newly protected area, the first of 13, is an important step in the protection of the three oceans which surround us.

In protecting the endeavour hydrothermal vents, the minister is identifying a unique biological area where new species have been discovered recently. This is a part of the ocean which is of very special interest to scientists around the world.

I congratulate the minister as he sets in motion a system of marine protection areas which will one day rival Canada's very special system of national parks on land.

* * *

CURLING

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): They won, Mr. Speaker, and what a win it was.

I speak of course of the champion Randy Ferbey curling team who won their third in a row Canadian Men's Curling Championship a week ago. It was an awesome, breathtaking, amazing, fabulous win. Not only was it the third consecutive win of this tournament, for Randy it was the fifth time he was on the winning team.

This win was made more significant by the fact that it was no cake-walk. The runner-up team of Mark Dacey from Nova Scotia put

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up one gallant fight. They were a formidable team to beat, yet the Ferbey team won a fabulous 13 games in a row.

There were many crucial and absolutely spectacular shots.

You might be surprised, Mr. Speaker, to learn that three of the four members live in my riding. Who says that no good can come out of Elk Island.

Congratulations to the whole team: skip Randy Ferbey, Marcel Rocque, Scott Pfeifer, and David Nedohin. We are very proud of them.

* * *

JOSEPH HAYWOOD

Mr. Ivan Grose (Oshawa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's veterans deserve our thanks and gratitude for their military service. Many of them continue to serve their countries through their community service.

One such veteran is Joseph Haywood of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Last week at a ceremony at Deer Lodge, Mr. Haywood received the Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation. Mr. Haywood was recognized for his work on post-traumatic stress disorder and related conditions. He has conducted cross-country tours speaking to veterans organizations, Canadian forces bases and hospitals on post-traumatic stress disorder, addiction and recovery.

As the minister said of Mr. Haywood, his devotion, care and genuine concern for veterans and their families has touched the lives of many and his unfailing commitment is a source of inspiration to us all.

We give thanks to individuals like Joseph Haywood.

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● (1405)

[*Translation*]

IRAQ

Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the federal government finally confirmed that it would not take part in the war that the United States and England are preparing to wage against Iraq. Nonetheless, the Canadian position does not entirely ease the fears expressed by hundreds of thousands of people who demonstrated on Saturday.

The people of Alma also responded to this call for solidarity which saw more than 5,000 people take to the streets to protest the war. They called for a peaceful solution to this conflict.

The federal government has a duty to pursue this. Taking a position not to take part in the war is one thing, but taking a position opposing the war is another.

Canada must not limit itself to helping victims and assisting in reconstruction. The Prime Minister must exert pressure within the UN to ensure that international law is respected.

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[*English*]

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, March 8 is designated as International Women's Day.

I would like to join with other members of the Canadian Committee on Women, Peace and Security, a joint initiative of parliamentarians, government officials and civil society representatives, to recognize Canadians who took the time to consider the plight of women in situations of armed conflict.

These women are often portrayed as victims of violence or as helpless refugees. Yet women take on many roles during conflict. They are peacemakers, combatants, negotiators, leaders and activists.

United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security was passed unanimously in 2000. It reaffirms the important role that women play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. It calls on member states to involve women in all aspects of negotiating and implementing peace agreements.

I call on my colleagues to recognize the important role that women have always played in conflict resolution and encourage a greater voice for women at peace tables around the world.

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ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Mr. Takao Tanabe of Errington, B.C. received the prestigious Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts.

Mr. Tanabe is a landscape artist of international reputation and an influential teacher of younger generations of Canadian artists. He was born in the small fishing settlement of Seal Cove near Prince Rupert, B.C. Of Japanese ancestry, Tanabe and his family were unfortunately among those interned during the second world war.

Mr. Tanabe has studied and painted in Winnipeg, New York, England, Italy, Denmark and Japan, and has served as the head of the art department at the Banff School of Fine Arts. His work is represented in more than 50 public collections in Canada and 120 corporate collections internationally.

In 1980 Tanabe took up permanent residence on Vancouver Island. He is described as the "poet of the ocean shore". There is little doubt that his images of the mist-shrouded coastlines are among the most striking of his accomplishments.

On behalf of the constituents of Nanaimo—Alberni and the residents of Errington, B.C., it is a great pleasure to extend congratulations to Mr. Takao Tanabe, laureate of this year's Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts.

* * *

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night the Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts were once again presented at Rideau Hall. The awards, first awarded by Her Excellency the Governor General on March 23, 2000, aim to honour

the best in Canadian visual and media arts. Former Governor General Romeo LeBlanc first conceived them.

In presenting the first awards, the Governor General said, "Canada is a better place when such selective prizes, properly juried, duly deliberated, take their place in our national life".

This year's laureates are: Robert Archambeau, a ceramicist from Winnipeg, Manitoba; Alex Colville, a painter from Wolfville, Nova Scotia; Gathie Falk, a painter and sculptor from Vancouver, B.C.; Betty Goodwin, for her drawing, from Montreal, Quebec; Walter Harris, a sculptor from Hazelton, B.C.; Takao Tanabe, a painter from Parksville, B.C.; Suzanne Rivard Le Moyne, an educator and arts administrator from Montreal, Quebec.

* * *

• (1410)

MIDDLE EAST

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday 23-year-old American Rachel Corrie was bulldozed to death by Israeli troops demolishing a Palestinian physician's home in Gaza. This tragic, horrifying death has garnered international condemnation. Even the U.S. is demanding an Israeli investigation.

Middle East experts have repeatedly warned that an illegal U.S. led attack on Iraq could result in a call from the Arab world for widespread retaliation, an escalation in violence between Israelis and Palestinians and a heightening of anti-western sentiment; in other words, an explosion of violence throughout the Middle East and well beyond.

Canadians recognize that this illegal attack on Iraq will have profound implications for achieving a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We need the Canadian government to intensify diplomatic efforts to yet avert a war on Iraq by leading a coalition of the living instead of falling into line with the Bush led coalition of the so-called willing.

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[*Translation*]

METROSTAR GALA

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the MetroStar Gala honoured television artists, as selected by popular vote. The event was brilliantly hosted by Stéphane Rousseau, who was funny and entertaining. To round out six years of work on *Un gars, une fille*, Guy A. Lepage was voted male personality of the year, while Sophie Lorain came away with female personality of the year for the fourth time, as well as the Artis award for female character in a televised series.

Sophie Thibault was the first woman ever to be honoured for her work as newscast anchor.

Others honoured on that occasion included Paul Arcand and Jocelyne Cazin, Clodine Desrochers, Véronique Cloutier, Gildor Roy, Guy Mongrain, Benoît Gagnon, Roy Dupuis, Denis Bouchard, Élise Guilbault and Luck Mervil.

The Bloc Québécois salutes all nominees and congratulates the winners.

[English]

IRAQ

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise in the House and thank our Prime Minister on behalf of all Canadians for showing us the true responsible statesman he is even in these most difficult times.

Yesterday during question period the Prime Minister announced the position of the Government of Canada. It was a clear and solemn statement that was consistent with this government's support and especially the Prime Minister's personal belief in a multilateral system which is the only guarantee for a more peaceful world.

Our Prime Minister has been steadfast in his efforts to build a consensus among those who are entrusted by the world to deal with issues of peace and security. We are proud of his tremendous work to try to find a diplomatic and peaceful solution to the Iraq crisis.

I believe the Canadian position expressed yesterday by the Prime Minister received the general support and enthusiastic approbation of the Canadian population. I was also pleased to witness the support from most members on both sides of the House.

In these difficult and pressured times, our Prime Minister made sure that Canadian values are respected.

[Translation]

Bravo, Prime Minister, and thank you.

* * *

[English]

GANDER WEATHER FORECASTING STATION

Mr. Rex Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls, PC): Mr. Speaker, the downsizing of the weather forecasting station at Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador is another step by the Liberal government to hurt rural areas. A primary employment industry, the fishery, has been mismanaged. Now the latest is the downsizing of our weather forecasting station in Gander.

Those of us who live in Newfoundland and Labrador appreciate the force of our weather and the impact it has on our lives. Because weather changes frequently and quickly, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador require the best and most detailed weather information possible. For the safety of those in transport, offshore oil, the fishery, search and rescue and for the travelling public, the Minister of the Environment must reverse his decision.

If the federal Minister of the Environment does not change the course which he is pursuing, the negative impact it will have on Newfoundland and Labrador will be seen for many years.

I call upon the minister to reverse his decision and stop the downsizing of the weather forecasting station in Gander.

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CANADIAN RADIO MUSIC AWARDS

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the crucial role that private radio plays in supporting the development of Canadian music stars.

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The incredible success of artists like Céline Dion, Nickelback and Diana Krall in Canada and around the world is well known. Radio plays a big part in those and countless other artists' success stories. Radio provides name and song recognition to artists who often have little or no promotional resources. The love of music is what drives private radio broadcasters to promote local and rising stars.

The love of music was recently showcased on March 1 when Canada's private radio broadcasters celebrated Canada's hottest up and coming music stars at the sixth annual Canadian Radio Music Awards. The big winner at this year's awards was Napanee's own Avril Lavigne, who received five awards. Other award winners include Theory of a Dead Man, Crush, Remy Shand, Doc Walker, Sam Roberts and Nickelback.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating private radio broadcasters for their ongoing commitment to Canadian music and Canadian talent.

* * *

●(1415)

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Centre for Research and Information on Canada asked, "Should Canada's national firearms registry be retained or should it be abolished?" In response, 95% said that it should be abolished.

The public knows what the government refuses to admit. It is all about the wise use of public money for a helpful social purpose, value for money.

Since the government did not want to expose its plans to full parliamentary scrutiny, as it was just making them up as it went along, disproportionate spending was put through under supplementary estimates and not identified in a line item as a clear major crown project in the main estimates process. The government will have spent a billion on the long gun registry by 2004-05.

The department obtained about 70% of its registry funding through the supplementary estimates, an admission that it had no idea about unfolding costs.

The Liberals made a wasteful, hurtful mistake because of their political blindness and ideological stubbornness. The spending behaviour of the justice minister reveals once again that the Liberals are not competent to govern.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD***[English]***IRAQ**

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the allies gave Saddam Hussein 48 hours to leave Iraq. This is the only way now for the world and for Iraq to avoid war. It is the one chance for the butcher of Baghdad to do something useful for his country and for the world.

Has the Prime Minister been in touch with the government of Iraq, urging Saddam Hussein to leave office and preserve peace?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Saddam Hussein is very well aware of the situation of Canada. We have always said to him very clearly that he has to disarm. There was a process for disarmament. The Americans and others have decided that diplomacy is over. We are disappointed with that because we thought there was a possibility to have a bridge between the two different opposing views.

However Saddam Hussein knows today very clearly that if he does nothing, there will be some terrible consequences.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister does not seem to understand is that Iraq will never disarm as long as Saddam Hussein is in power. Everyone else has figured that out.

Less than a week ago the Prime Minister appeared on national television and said that Saddam should be allowed to stay in office. Given what has now occurred, does the Prime Minister now regret that statement and admit that he should have been one of the world leaders pushing Saddam to leave office?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always have spoken very clearly that the position of changing of regimes in different countries is not a policy that is desirable any time. I think there are other leaders in the world who are not my friends and I just avoid them all the time. In the present system, it is for the local people to change the government. It is like that around the world.

I think diplomacy could have solved the problem, but some people did not agree with me and decided to proceed, and I will respect their judgment.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister may think diplomacy would succeed but even in 1991, when the United Nations Security Council was fully behind action, this Prime Minister would not stand up to Saddam Hussein then. He was firmly defending him, just as he is defending his right to be in office today.

Let me ask another question and it is about the government's attitude toward its own troops. It is one thing to not stand by our allies, but quite another to not stand by our own troops. Yesterday the defence minister said, "The world is on the brink of war, with thousands of lives at stake, and here we are talking about 31 Canadian military officers. I think we should maintain perspective".

How can the government explain to the families of these 31 personnel that it does not consider them important?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ignorance of the Leader of the Opposition is sometimes amazing. In 1991 we voted with the government after the United Nations passed a resolution to sanction the intervention in Kuwait at that time.

Of course we are preoccupied about the 31 Canadians who have been lent to the armed forces of the United States. We have these exchanges with them. There are 150 soldiers from other countries within our army. They take orders from our commanding officers—

• (1420)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Saddam's behaviour to date indicates that he will not honour diplomatic solutions so long as they are not accompanied by a threat of intervention. Canada cannot stand on the sidelines at such a time. The members opposite can heckle my comments but they are the very words of the Prime Minister. He said them in 1998. He was very clear. He was giving unequivocal support to the use of force against Saddam Hussein in 1998, without UN approval. Now he says that we will sit on the sidelines and not be counted with our allies.

What is—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was in 1998. Now, at this time, we were of the view that Saddam Hussein was disarming. The question is, that some thought it was not fast enough. We are still of the view that the diplomatic process was bringing positive results. That was the view of this government; it was not obviously the view of the United States. We can have a disagreement there but I am still of the view, given some more weeks, disarmament would have been achieved.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, he is more of a menace now, and I am talking about Saddam Hussein, than he was in 1998, and the Prime Minister thinks diplomacy will work.

Saddam Hussein again has publicly financed Middle East terrorism with a gift of a quarter of a million dollars to terrorist families. He also harbours the deadly Abu Nidal group, the al-Qaeda connected Zarquawi network and the Palestinian Liberation Front.

Yesterday the Minister of National Defence said that our troops are in the region to fight terrorism but not Saddam Hussein. Would the Prime Minister please tell us how Canadians can fight terrorism without fighting one of the biggest sponsors of terrorism, Saddam Hussein himself?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we start to go and change every government that we do not like in the world, where do we stop? Who is next? This is something on which we have to reflect.

The situation at this time is that this person in 1998 was not disarming. After pressure was put on him with resolution 1441 and because of the fact that there were 250,000 troops around, he was disarming, and we were of the view that some more weeks would have achieved the goal. We think that it is better not to have war as the first instance but as the last instance.

Oral Questions

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada's decision not to take part in the war against Iraq does not relieve the government of its responsibility to promote peace. Instead of referring to the failure of Canadian diplomacy, as he did yesterday, the Prime Minister needs to take advantage of the 48-hour window of opportunity available to him to intervene in favour of peace.

Given the impasse in the Security Council, is the Prime Minister going to work to maintain peace and call upon the United Nations General Assembly to address the Iraq crisis immediately, as resolution 377 allows?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we need to be realistic. At the present time, certain countries are attempting to organize another Security Council meeting. If one could be held, we fully agree that it might perhaps prove useful. It seems, however, that it will be virtually impossible for the Security Council to meet prior to the U.S. decision.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the UN General Assembly is meeting at the present time. All that is required for the matter to be brought before the General Assembly is for seven members of the Security Council to support a request to Secretary General Kofi Annan, or for half of the member states to agree to it being brought before them. It is therefore possible to do this, if we try. I have every reason to believe that such an initiative would prove successful. This will not necessarily avoid war, but the matter could be debated in the current sitting of the UN General Assembly.

Can the Prime Minister make a commitment to do this?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no country not currently sitting on the Security Council that has worked harder for peace than Canada has over the past four weeks.

We can pass the hon. member's suggestion on to our ambassador. I am not sure how valid it is, but we will look at it and see whether it can be of any use.

• (1425)

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, President Bush reiterated yesterday that the objective of the war he is about to wage on Iraq was overthrowing Saddam Hussein. But, overthrowing a regime is illegal under international law.

Does the Prime Minister not believe that the American intervention is setting a dangerous precedent, and, what is more, that toppling a regime goes against international law?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we stated clearly that it would have been highly preferable to have the support of the Security Council, which is why we will not be taking part.

But, as to whether it is legal or illegal, I might point out that, when we took part in the war in Kosovo alongside NATO, there was no resolution from the Security Council.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, President Bush is going over everyone's heads, and he considers the war on Iraq to be essential for the United States. However, many world leaders, including the Prime Minister, do not share his opinion.

Does the Prime Minister intend to tell President Bush and the Americans that Canada, like numerous other countries, believes that the current American position is a mistake, a violation of international law and a threat to the future of international relations?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a year ago, I told President Bush that Canada was not going to support a war on Iraq without the Security Council's authorization.

In our communications over the past 24 hours, American authorities, have informed us that they have been very clearly aware of Canada's position for the past year. We have always been clear on this. We have always said that a war in Iraq should have the Security Council's authorization and that is not the case here.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the right hon. Prime Minister. Could the Prime Minister could tell the House what the government is doing in order to make sure that Canadian Forces personnel who are participating in Operation Apollo are not put in a position where the Canadian government's own position with respect to the war in Iraq is compromised? Are there new rules of engagement being developed for personnel involved in Operation Apollo to make sure that they are not drawn into the war on Iraq?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they have received instructions that are very clear, and they shall not be involved in Iraq. They are there to help in the situation of Operation Apollo, dedicated to fight terrorism and help the situation in Afghanistan, not to work on the problem of Iraq.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that there might be a need for very clear rules as to how that ought to be achieved. For instance, are there new rules of engagement being developed with respect to our surveillance aircraft and the sharing of information?

Why was the decision taken last week, apparently, that our ships are able to range farther north than they were before? Perhaps the Prime Minister or the Minister of National Defence could explain just how the government's objective in this respect is to be ensured.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they cannot do anything that they are not authorized to do, and the only authorization they have is to work on the problem of Afghanistan and terrorism. They are not authorized to work on the problem of Iraq at all.

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's policy on the war is to stand aside, but we cannot stand aside from putting back together what war will tear apart. I hope the Prime Minister would agree that the work of reconstruction in Iraq and its neighbours would be best coordinated by the United Nations and not another country, but the UN would need specific new authority from the Security Council to undertake reconstruction.

Will the Prime Minister put his officials to work now on helping prepare a resolution for the Security Council so the United Nations can establish a reconstruction program which other nations could join?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before working on reconstruction we might wait for the war to start. We said yesterday, and we said publicly, that if there is a need for reconstruction, and I hope there will be no need, obviously Canada will be there. We will not be alone. We will work with the other nations and of course we will do whatever is possible to make sure that it would be done under the authority of the United Nations.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, there was a time when Canada had a policy to do something other than wait for others to lead.

Last night, Sir, Canada's position on Iraq changed again. The foreign affairs minister said, and I quote him precisely, "...at this time we do not believe that the use of force would be appropriate without a clear indication from the Security Council itself...". Why did the minister say "at this time"? Are there circumstances in which the Prime Minister would change the position he outlined yesterday?

•(1430)

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the right hon. member is very knowledgeable about international affairs and I think he knows very well that things change regularly. We have an opinion which has to, and our position has to, reflect the reality on the ground at any one given time.

I think our policies have been extremely strong. The Canadian people support them. The majority of opinion supports them. Our position has clearly been that we do not wish to see force used. We have struggled against that consistently. It has been the policy of the government. It remains the policy of the government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister announced that Canada will not be taking part in a military intervention in Iraq. This Liberal government is the only western government lacking an official point of view on the legitimacy of a war that could start as early as tomorrow.

Will the Prime Minister finally take a clear stand and tell this House whether or not he believes that the use of force by our traditional allies in order to disarm Iraq is justified?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as far as their position is concerned, I can state clearly that it is not justified. Had it been justified, and backed by a Security Council resolution, we would have said yes. When we said no, it was because we believed they had not made a case for the necessity of waging war on Iraq at this time.

[*English*]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, how can the Prime Minister expect anyone to take him or Canadian foreign policy seriously as he continues to make it up as he goes along?

Last month the Prime Minister said "resolution 1441 will authorize" military "action", but yesterday he said that authorization had vanished because a subsequent draft resolution was not voted on. Could the Prime Minister explain to the House the logic behind his view that authorization for the use of force in resolution 1441 was somehow trumped by a vote that never took place?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government came to the conclusion that nobody has established clearly that there was no disarmament proceeding in Iraq at this time. We have, over the last few weeks, heard the inspector say that there were no nuclear armaments there. There was the destruction of the missiles that was in processing. We have suggested clear points to be debated within a certain number of weeks to make sure that biological and chemical arms of mass destruction were to be checked, found and eliminated, but they decided to proceed before this at—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Friday we learned that the Government of Canada authorized a small group of Canadian soldiers to serve with U.S. and British ground forces if the U.S. and Britain decide to attack Iraq. This information was even confirmed by a spokesperson for the Department of National Defence.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what Canadian soldiers are doing there on the ground with the Americans on the eve of an assault against Iraq when the Prime Minister is saying that Canada will not take part in the war?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member is referring to the people who are in contact with our allies or if he is referring to our soldiers who are there to protect one of our bases.

If he is referring to the latter, those soldiers are there to protect a base we set up months ago. I have been there. It is there for the war against terrorism. That is the objective and that is why they are there.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am talking about the Canadians who are currently in combat units in Kuwait that are preparing to attack Iraq. Americans are going to attack Iraq in a few hours and Canadian soldiers are at their side.

If the Prime Minister wants to be consistent with what he said yesterday, why does he not call back all these troops immediately?

Oral Questions

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can provide new information about the Canadian Forces stationed at that base.

We have three transport aircraft there. We have given extremely explicit instructions that these planes cannot be used to transport materiel for Iraq or for the war in Iraq. This is very explicit. They received these instructions just recently.

• (1435)

[*English*]

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says that Canada is opposed to military action to enforce 17 Security Council resolutions because he now claims the UN has not specifically authorized such action, but that has never troubled him before. In 1990 he opposed the effort to liberate Kuwait, even though it was specifically authorized by a UN resolution. He later supported bombing campaigns in Iraq and Kosovo without UN sanction.

Why the flip-flop? Why does he now claim to care so much about yet another UN resolution when that concern has never before governed his policy or actions?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): In 1990 we voted in favour of the resolution of the government of the day because it had an authorization from the Security Council. I have said that all along, that they needed the authorization of the Security Council. On resolution 1441, nobody has clearly established that the inspectors had terminated their work and rendered a final judgment on that. They might think that they were right, the Americans, but I think that for us we thought that more weeks of inspection would have resolved the problem.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I wonder what planet the Prime Minister is living on. No country believes that Iraq has complied with resolution 1441.

Four years ago, the Prime Minister ordered our air force to bomb Serbia for three months without approval of the House or the Security Council, but Serbia did not possess any illegal weapon stocks. It had not signed a ceasefire promising to disarm, it did not pose a threat to our allies, and its program of ethnic cleansing was modest compared to Saddam's genocide.

Why was it right for Canada to bomb Serbia without any UN sanction, but wrong to forcibly disarm Iraq now on the—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he knows what happened at that time, that when we went to Kosovo it was to stop genocide. It was not to have a change of regime. In fact, after the bombing was over and peace had been restored, the people of Serbia kicked out Milosevic in an election. The activity was not for a change of regime. It was to stop genocide.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. The question and answer have been given. We now have another question from the hon. member for Roberval.

Mr. Michel Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, the government made the decision to opt out of an armed conflict in Iraq. We supported this position, but we know that Canadian soldiers are in fact integrated with American and British combat units.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Given the official position of Canada, why are these soldiers not being brought back?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have never hidden this fact, which has existed for decades. For decades, we have always had exchanges with our allies to wage battles together. You never go to war alone, it is a joint effort.

As for these 31 persons, they are not in positions that involve direct combat. They do not have the right to use force, except in self-defence. That is the situation.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, given that Canadian soldiers are integrated with combat units, and given the official position of the Government of Canada, would it not be best, and would it not send a clear and meaningful signal, if the Minister of National Defence were to bring them back, to prevent them from taking part in the war in Iraq—a war that we do not support and that the government is not supposed to support? I think this is a clear request.

• (1440)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, such action would be an insult to our allies from the two world wars and a sign that we are not a dependable ally. That is not the position of the Government of Canada. As I just said, our soldiers will not be involved in direct combat. There are only 31 of them. We support our allies, even though we do not agree when it comes to the situation in Iraq.

[*English*]

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government cannot have it both ways. Yesterday the Prime Minister said he does not support our allies in the impending war against Saddam Hussein, yet his government has authorized Canadian troops to remain attached to U.S. and British troops participating in the war. Why are Canadian troops fighting along with our allies in a war that the Prime Minister has said he opposes?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, there is more than a tad of hypocrisy in that question, because there are two options in front of this government: to yank our soldiers out of these co-operative arrangements or to leave them there. The position of the government is to leave them there.

Oral Questions

Is the Canadian Alliance, the most hawkish party we have, the party which denigrates our contribution to Afghanistan as second tier, suggesting that we should pull them out? If not, it agrees with the position of the government and I do not know what the question is about.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will spell it out for the government. The Prime Minister has apparently made the decision to put Canadian lives at risk to deal with the very real threat posed by Saddam Hussein. It is a contradiction for the Prime Minister to take a political position against involvement in the war. If the war in Iraq is just, why is Canada not sending a meaningful contribution? If it is not just, why is Canada sending our troops into Iraq at all?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I regret to say that the hon. member is deluded, because the Canadian position is a principled one based on two strong, robust principles. First of all, we stand by our multilateral principles in the United Nations. Second, we stand by our commitment to the war on terrorism and we do not desert our allies when the risk of terrorism is rising. We do not move south and leave our allies in the war against terrorism in the lurch. That is the position of the government and I am proud to be a part of that government.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and it has to do with the biosafety protocol.

So far 44 countries have ratified the Cartagena protocol on biosafety. Fifty are needed for it to come into effect. In view of perceived conflicting agricultural interests, could the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food indicate when he will give the green light so that Canada can finally ratify the biosafety protocol?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada signed the biosafety protocol in April 2001 and we are on a plan to ratify it.

However, before ratifying it we need to resolve some uncertainties in the agreement. We are doing that in consultation with the agriculture and the agri-food industry. Based on those consultations we have drafted an action plan to identify and deal with those uncertainties.

There is still more work that needs to be done, but we are committed to resolving those uncertainties that may impact the agriculture and agri-food industry before we ratify.

* * *

IRAQ

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, contrary to some naysayers in this House, Canadians overwhelmingly support the peaceful disarmament of Iraq. They want the government however to go beyond rejecting war by a so-called coalition of the willing. They want Canada to join, even lead, a proactive coalition for the living.

Will the government commit today, in the Pearsonian tradition, to introducing an urgent uniting for peace resolution in the United Nations?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the government has demonstrated over the last month an incredible determination both to work as hard as we can for the preservation for peace and to exhaust every multilateral avenue available to us. The Prime Minister spent his time on the telephone with leaders and on his instructions we all worked with all our levels to get a peaceful resolution of this terrible situation we are in.

We will continue our efforts and explore all possible avenues. We will relentlessly pursue the need to have peace as we work through our multilateral institutions to achieve them.

* * *

• (1445)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always difficult to reach consensus among farmers but the government has managed the near impossible. Farm leaders are unanimous in their opposition to the risk management program being foisted on them in two weeks, saying the proposals are much worse than what exists now. With 22 major Canadian farm groups arguing they have not been listened to, the only farmers the department has not alienated are those it has not met.

Farmers want current safety net programs to remain in place for one more year. What is wrong with this very reasonable request by Canadian farmers?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was very vocal in stating that, for example, the Canadian Farm Income Program was not effective. He was very vocal about that in the past.

The government has moved toward and is proposing a new, far more effective program. That disaster program has been there in the past and will not be there this year. The government will ensure that farmers in Canada have a disaster program for 2003 that they deserve to have.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IRAQ

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, President Bush stated yesterday that the United States was giving Saddam Hussein 48 hours to leave Iraq or else it would launch a military offensive. There are 36 hours left.

The American government and the Department of Homeland Security have said that they were stepping up airport, port and border security.

Since this government has condemned the American action, I would like to know what agreement Canada and the United States have reached to ensure that these measures will not result in any discrimination against Canadians or present a barrier to trade—

The Speaker: The hon. the Deputy Prime Minister.

Oral Questions

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I have already had the opportunity to speak today with Secretary Ridge. His officials spoke to our officials yesterday evening before the President gave his speech.

We have made the necessary arrangements between organizations on both sides of the border to ensure that trade will continue and that the level of security will be adequate for each of us.

* * *

[English]

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, in his televised address last night President Bush said he was "...taking further actions to protect our homeland". The last time the United States heightened security Canadian goods were stopped at the border and Canadian citizens were detained and interrogated.

The Deputy Prime Minister says he has talked to Mr. Ridge, however what guarantees has he secured from the United States to ensure that our commodities will cross that border and our citizens will not be detained?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over a year ago we entered into an action plan with the United States that has been implemented on both sides of the border toward creating a smart border. We have seen significant progress in the creation and the implementation of the NEXUS and FAST programs to ensure that regular crossings of the border are unimpeded as a result of the special measures and the technology available to us.

It is clear that issues related to security will remain top of mind and on both sides of the border we will need to take the measures necessary to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton North.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the core of Canada's contribution to the war on terrorism consists of a handful of capable ships, but they are equipped with 40 year old Sea Kings. That would be a tad past retirement age, I would think. Recently, a Sea King crash resulted in injuries to our pilots and embarrassments to Canada.

I would like to call ship to shore to the minister and ask, how does the government expect us to believe that Canada's Sea Kings are able to perform safely and effectively alongside our allies?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, as one relatively new to politics I thought that the hon. member's statements and announcements about her impending departure were extremely well taken, and I would like to congratulate her on that. Maybe that did not come out sincerely. I mean it sincerely.

On the Sea King question, I actually have good news to announce. While it had been said that we did not have a Sea King to spare, I can

announce today that this week we are indeed sending a Sea King by ship to serve on the *Iroquois*.

• (1450)

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we would wonder how it is getting there, that is for sure.

Our Sea King helicopters are also involved, as the minister knows, in search and rescue operations. Inadequate or decrepit vehicles and aircraft could cost the lives of people as well as Canadian military personnel. Given his comments yesterday, perhaps this is not a big concern for this minister, but it is serious.

Expertise and daring have allowed our Sea King crews to rescue many people, but we have to locate the people before we can rescue them. Does the minister honestly believe that our Sea Kings are properly equipped to save lives at sea in all conditions, day and night?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Sea Kings have performed a long and venerable service in a number of different areas. It is true that we are moving heaven and earth to replace them—the maritime helicopters—as fast as possible, which is why we moved from two contracts to one contract.

Indeed, on the search and rescue front we already have replaced them. I would say that the new Cormorants probably do a better job than the old Sea Kings in terms of search and rescue operations or else we would not have spent all that money to replace them.

* * *

[Translation]

HEATING OIL PRICES

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the threat of war in Iraq has driven gas and heating oil prices skyward. The federal government is not doing a thing about it, in contrast to its reaction in the fall of 2000, on the eve of a federal election, when the increase was much less drastic.

Now that the price of gas and heating oil is prohibitive, what is the government waiting for to put in place a contingency plan to help all those who bear the brunt of these increases, namely truckers, taxi drivers, farmers and heating oil users?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec has established an energy authority called the Régie de l'énergie, which is responsible for monitoring and setting gas prices in Quebec.

Is the hon. member suggesting that the federal government should substitute itself to the authority established by the Government of Quebec? I hope not.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has put forward a practical suggestion to send each Canadian household \$130 through energy distribution companies.

Is the federal government prepared to dip into its contingency reserve to help consumers face this intolerable increase, and send this \$130 credit as soon as possible?

Oral Questions

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think it necessary at this time to take the kind of special measure the hon. member is suggesting.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to return to this Ferrari contract with Health Canada to talk about aboriginal issues.

Yesterday, the health minister said that Joanne Meyer had no relationship with the department after January 2002; in other words, not my problem. That was wrong.

This individual had a contract with her department in February 2002. Will she explain that?.

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any contract that my department had with this named individual in February 2002. To honour a commitment made as part of her existing contract, the contractor, Joanne Meyer, was permitted to participate in and attend a meeting on suicide prevention last January 2002. The contractor was paid approximately \$1,000.

As I indicated yesterday, my department is reviewing the facts of this matter. If the hon. member has facts that could help in this—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Macleod.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I can understand the minister's reticence to cover for a predecessor. I do have quite a lot of facts here that would help the minister a lot.

Here is my question for the minister. Yesterday she said her department was looking into this issue. Today is her opportunity to report to the Canadian public about this bizarre contract, another Liberal contract mess.

• (1455)

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can respond because—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. I know all hon. members want to hear the minister's answer. We have to be able to hear the minister. We cannot with all the yelling.

Hon. Allan Rock: Mr. Speaker, this dealt with a member of my staff.

It is important to know that when I became Minister of Health in June 1997 Joanne Meyer was already in the office of the minister when I arrived.

She was an expert in aboriginal health medicine and served on the staff of my predecessor. She had more than 25 years of public service, years spent in aboriginal communities as a health care professional. I wanted her on my staff because of her expertise. I asked her to remain and she did. We entered into contracts. I expect they complied with Treasury Board guidelines, as always. She did the work and was paid the remuneration. She worked in the public interest.

HEALTH

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Health.

Canadians are concerned with the recent diagnosis of severe acute respiratory syndrome in some recent travellers from Asia. This appears to be a form of pneumonia.

Can the minister inform the House what measures Health Canada is taking to fight the virus producing this pneumonia, if it is a virus?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is obviously a serious public health concern. We, at this moment, have 11 confirmed or suspected cases, and that includes, unfortunately, two deaths. We are employing our state-of-the-art laboratories as well as our national surveillance system to monitor the situation.

I think, as the hon. member is aware, there is very little known about this disease at this time. My officials are working with officials around the world to try and learn more about the nature and cause of this disease. We are also working very closely with our provincial and territorial public health colleagues—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton Southwest.

* * *

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canada Steamship Lines sent three ships to Hibernia as part of a multi-million dollar contract. According to the Prime Minister, Hibernia was the finance minister's responsibility. But according to the former finance minister's leadership team, it was the responsibility of the junior finance minister.

If indeed all Hibernia issues fell under a junior minister, why did the Prime Minister send correspondence letters to the former finance minister?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance of the day had delegated the responsibility of making decisions on this file to the junior minister in his department and it was according to the rules. He did not want to make a decision himself and he asked the junior minister to make a decision for him.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that raises the question again why the Prime Minister, in a letter to the former premier of Newfoundland Brian Tobin, sent the correspondence to the finance minister and not the junior minister.

Yesterday, the ethics counsellor said that it would have been all right for the former finance minister to be involved in Hibernia because Canada Steamship Lines was only a subcontractor on the project.

Oral Questions

My question for the Prime Minister, is it really the position of the government that it is okay for cabinet ministers to be in an apparent conflict of interest as long as they are only one contract removed?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we sent a letter to the former minister of finance. He received all sorts of letters and when he saw in any letter that it could be causing a conflict of interest, he delegated the authority to his junior minister and it was for him to decide accordingly. He knew his business. I did not know. I wrote to him and he sent the correspondence to the one who was authorized to make a decision under these circumstances, and it was the junior minister.

* * *

[Translation]

IRAQ

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the situation for women in Afghanistan has not improved since the new government was put in place in Kabul. Women are still limited in their movements and freedom of expression, and mass rape persists.

Knowing that the Iraqi regime commits systematic and extremely serious violations of human rights, what does Canada intend to do in the event of a military intervention in Iraq to ensure that the Iraqi people receive more support and help than the people of Afghanistan did?

[English]

Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, yesterday we announced an additional \$250 million to be committed to Afghanistan for the next two years. Part of that money will go for peace and security and maintaining the rule of law. We are working very actively on the constitution in Afghanistan. Money that we have already contributed is going toward fixing it. We recognize that the women in Afghanistan have a large problem and that is why we are very convinced that constitutional law is one area where Canada can have some input and have some respect. We hope to be able to ensure that women have access to education and other opportunities in Afghanistan as well.

* * *

• (1500)

[Translation]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Ms. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, Ind. BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

On February 21, after the financial fiasco of the gun control program, the government unveiled its plan of action. Among the measures that will be implemented, the Department of Justice will try to combine the processing sites located in Montreal and Miramichi.

Instead of creating another administrative structure, which will surely be as ineffective as the last one, what is the minister waiting for to suspend firearms registration and take the time to overhaul the current ineffective system?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the firearms registry system and the firearms permit system reflect values that are dear to the Liberal government. But they also reflect distinctly Canadian social values.

I am pleased to see that my colleague referred to our plan of action. The plan will move us in the right direction and allow us to introduce some changes based on the Auditor General's report and all her recommendations. In terms of the different sites, we are talking about consolidating—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and it concerns very serious allegations of negligence in Health Canada's controls on clinical trials of new drugs. It took months before cancer patient Oscar Mulder was finally given a revised consent form for the drug Iressa, despite many deaths from the drug in Japan.

Why this long, possibly life-threatening delay and what action is the minister taking to ensure that the patients in clinical trials give fully informed consent before they participate so that they are aware of the risks they take before they take these new drugs?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): In fact, Mr. Speaker, the issue of fully informed consent as it relates to clinical trials is a very important one and one that is largely within the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories to ensure, but clearly the hon. member does raise a very serious question, and one which my officials are working with their provincial and territorial colleagues in relation to, to ensure that nothing but the highest standards are in fact in place and observed as related to clinical trials.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Joaquim Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of laureates of the Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts: Mr. Robert Archambeau; Mr. Alex Colville; Ms. Gathie Falk; Mr. Walter Harris; Mr. Takao Tanabe; and Madam Suzanne Rivard Le Moyne.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

The Speaker: I invite all hon. members to join them in Room 216-N for a reception.

Speaker's Ruling

● (1505)

VACANCY

LÉVIS-ET-CHUTES-DE-LA-CHAUDIÈRE

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely, Mr. Antoine Dubé, member for the electoral district of Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, by resignation effective March 17, 2003.

Pursuant to subsection 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you could satisfy my curiosity as to why in question period a question put to the Minister of Health was answered by the former minister of health.

The Speaker: There are curious things that happen in question period. The right hon. member knows that under the rules any member of the ministry can stand and answer any question. It is not for the Speaker to decide who should or should not answer, or for the member asking the question to demand that so-and-so answer. Any minister is free to rise and answer a question. If that happened in question period, of course these matters are things that are quite invisible to the Chair. I am sure the right hon. member with his vast experience in government probably had something like that happen to him once or twice too when he was a minister.

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Speaker, am I then correct in assuming that it would be appropriate in the future for members of the opposition to put questions to ministers with respect to their former portfolios?

The Speaker: I think the right hon. member knows that would be contrary to the rules and practices. Putting a question to somebody and getting an answer from somebody else are two different issues. I know the hon. member will want to have a careful read of Marleau and Montpetit tonight and then he will not have to ask this kind of question tomorrow or leap to that kind of assumption.

THE BUDGET—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised by the hon. member for St. John's West on February 26, 2003, concerning a change in the budgetary policy of the government. I would like to thank the hon. member for St. John's West for having drawn this matter to the attention of the Chair, as well as the hon. government House leader for his comments.

The hon. member for St. John's West referred to media reports of a statement made by the Prime Minister. The hon. member asserted that the quotes attributed to the Prime Minister contradict the budgetary position of the government as set out by the hon. Minister of Finance on February 18, 2003. The hon. member points out that no formal notice of any alteration to the budget had been made in the House and, on this basis, he maintains that the government cannot

ask hon. members to vote on the motion "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government", which stands as ways and means item number two on the Order Paper. The hon. member claims that the House cannot be asked to reach any decision on this motion until the government has clarified its position and taken the appropriate steps formally to amend the budget.

[Translation]

The Chair appreciates the great seriousness surrounding any charge concerning budgetary matters. The Speaker has a special responsibility to ensure that the procedures and practices relating to financial procedures are respected and that the traditional privileges of the House in these matters are not violated.

[English]

It is perhaps useful to put in context House of Commons practice with regard to the budget. I should say that the Chair is well aware of the current controversy surrounding this question in the Ontario Legislative Assembly and I would not want these remarks to be construed as a comment on the situation at Queen's Park. The Chair has no wish to embroil itself in matters arising in another jurisdiction.

Our rules here at the House of Commons make provision for the Minister of Finance to give a budget presentation, and the practices with regard to the presentation of the budget are well anchored in parliamentary practice. Still, our rules do not, strictly speaking, require that the minister make a budget speech nor is there any procedural necessity for such a speech to be accompanied by supporting documentation. Both the budget speech and the tabling of background documents are, in that way, voluntary actions of the government.

In the case before us, the hon. member for St. John's West takes issue with the apparent contradiction between a statement in the document entitled, "The Budget Plan 2003," tabled by the hon. Minister of Finance on February 18, and statements made outside the House by the Prime Minister.

Specifically the document stated that:

—this budget will invest \$10 million in the next two years for additional support to Canada's elite athletes in the event that the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic bid is successful.

Media reports indicate that this condition would be lifted but no statement to that effect has been made in the House itself.

Neither the hon. member for St. John's West nor the media reports themselves suggest that this discrepancy represents an instance of the House being deliberately misled. The question is whether or not our procedure requires a statement in the House to correct or explain the discrepancy.

● (1510)

[Translation]

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, at page 379, states:

A Minister is under no obligation to make a statement in the House. The decision of a Minister to make an announcement outside of the House instead of making a statement in the House during Routine Proceedings has been raised as a question of privilege, but the Chair has consistently found there to be no grounds to support a claim that any privilege has been breached.

*Government Orders**[English]*

The government can alter its policies as it sees fit at any time. The obligations that our rules impose concerning financial legislation, while they are strict, do not relate to how the government sets its policy objectives. That the supporting documents are no longer completely accurate is not sufficient grounds on which to challenge the right of the House to continue considering the budget motion. I must therefore rule that there has not been any breach of our rules or practices in this case.

I would also add a word with regard to the notices of ways and means tabled by the Minister of Finance on budget day. Standing Order 83(4) requires that any enabling budget legislation to be brought before the House must be based on the provisions set out in those motions as adopted. If the government, as a result of a change in policy, wishes to propose legislation different from that which it had earlier intended, then it will have to file a new notice of ways and means. At present, however, the House does not appear to be faced with a need to insist on a new ways and means notice.

What the hon. member for St. John's West has drawn to the attention of the House is an apparent change in policy with regard to the terms under which the government will invest in elite athletes.

Members who wish to seek clarification of the government's position on the funding of amateur athletes have a number of avenues open to them, notably, the budget debate and of course the oral question period. Meanwhile, I am ruling that there is no procedural requirement for the government to table revised documents in the House reflecting its change in position.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

TRANSPORTATION AMENDMENT ACT

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.) moved that Bill C-26, an act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act, to enact the VIA Rail Canada Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to be here today to speak on Bill C-26, amendments to the Canada Transportation Act and the establishment of the VIA Rail Canada act.

[Translation]

I rise in this House today to discuss a document entitled "Straight Ahead: A Vision for Transportation in Canada", which I tabled in the House on February 25.

Throughout our history, governments have embraced a succession of bold transportation visions - national railways spanning the continent, an international seaway, the Trans-Canada Highway, and transcontinental air services.

Our national transportation system, linking every corner of this country, opened our doors to the rest of the world and to the commercial markets beyond our borders. As our nation has evolved, we have built a world-class transportation system.

Transportation practices in Canada have evolved over time, as required by the times and circumstances. Where required, we have brought in reforms and taken aggressive and innovative steps to improve the system and increase its efficiency.

[English]

Changes in the way airports and ports are managed, the commercialization of the air navigation system, the privatization of other infrastructure have all contributed to making the transportation system stronger and more dynamic. The results speak for themselves. The productivity growth in transportation over the past 10 years has been truly phenomenal. In fact, it has doubled in that period of time.

Canadian ports are forecasting \$700 million of capital investment over the next five years. More than \$5 billion of private money has been invested in airport capital projects since 1997. Also, price and cost trends in the transportation sector have consistently been lower than the rate of inflation, and we have also succeed in eliminating most transportation subsidies.

What this has meant for Canadians is better quality and greater choice in transportation services. Safety and security, accessibility, economic efficiency and environmentally sound performance have all become cornerstones of our transportation system, but we cannot become complacent with these very impressive results. We have to ensure that our policies continue to adapt in the face of new trends and new challenges.

In our policy document, "Straight Ahead", we talk of the culmination of an initiative that began in 2001 to review the transportation policy for the next 10 years and beyond. "Straight Ahead" proposes a vision to guide the continued development of a sustainable transportation system for the country. It also conveys the government's response to the 2001 report of the Canada Transportation Act review panel.

The amendments to the CTA that are introduced in this bill are an important step in moving the vision forward. "Straight Ahead" reflects a careful consultation with the industry, users, provincial and territorial governments and of course, parliamentarians through the various committee appearances that I have had with members of the House and Senate Standing Committees on Transport.

It also reflects the results from earlier consultation efforts on the transportation table on climate change, Transport Canada's second sustainable development strategy and the millennium transportation conference, which I hosted in Toronto in the year 2000.

● (1515)

[Translation]

During these consultations, participants agreed that Canada's transportation policy is basically sound and headed in the right direction.

While it may not be necessary to overhaul the policy extensively, new challenges arise and our policy must adapt. Among these challenges are growing concerns about the impact of congestion on our quality of life.

Government Orders

The need for infrastructure in good condition to continue to support trade and the realization that our world-class transportation system is facing new challenges in a world where safety and security considerations force us to be more vigilant and to use new technologies.

The main sources consulted, which account for the proposed changes to the Canada Transportation Act, were general public information and research programs of the Canada Transportation Act Review Panel.

The panel received more than 200 submissions and held townhall meetings in every province and territory. Meanwhile, the research program called on experts to examine policy issues and options. The result was a series of well thought-out opinions on the state of the transportation policy, future challenges and options for efficient intervention.

[English]

All this activity shaped the deliberations and recommendations of the panel. In addition to this, I convened a number of round tables across the country where I met with key members of the transportation industry, both the big companies and organizations, and representatives of the smaller transportation companies. I met with shippers, professors and academics who were concerned about transportation policy. My officials have been engaged in dialogue as well, not only with stakeholders but also with the provinces and territories.

Policy directions were also discussed at the annual meetings of the Canadian transportation ministers in September 2001 and September 2002. By and large, I am very happy to note that provinces and territories have been supportive of the many changes proposed in "Straight Ahead". Certainly they will reflect some of these changes within their own jurisdiction in their legislative and policy changes.

"Straight Ahead" lays out the basic principles that will guide transportation policy development and for future planning and activities affecting the sector. They include the highest practical safety and security of life and property, guided by performance based standards and regulations when necessary; the efficient movement of people and goods to support economic prosperity and a sustainable quality of life based on competitive markets and the targeted use of regulatory and spending interventions; a clear focus on environmental issues with specific measures, such as promoting vehicles and fuels that produce few emissions, increased use of alternative modes of transportation for passenger travel and more efficient transportation of goods to support the government's climate change plan; user pricing that better reflects the full costs of transportation activity and transportation infrastructure decisions that meet user needs based on governance models that provide for stakeholder involvement and transparency; reasonable access to the national transportation system by Canada's remote regions; accessibility in the national transportation network without undue obstacles for persons with disabilities; and finally, partnerships and integration among the jurisdictions and with the private sector.

These principles will guide our action in five broad areas: safety and security; marketplace frameworks; infrastructure; the environment; and innovation and skills.

Let me now turn to some of the specifics.

Having a safe and secure transportation system has long been a central objective of our transportation policy and the number one priority for Transport Canada. By virtue of the co-operation of transportation stakeholders, Canada has one of the safest and most secure transportation systems in the world. That is particularly germane at this point in time given the difficulties that we have faced since September 11, 2001, and the ongoing unsettling atmosphere that we have because of pending hostilities in the Middle East.

However I can assure Canadians that not only have we taken exceptional safety and security measures in the system in the last 18 months, but we have adopted new measures that will be and are being put in place as the current situation evolves.

I would like to turn to some of the specifics on the issue of marketplace frameworks. With regard to rail freight, we will make remedies more easily accessible for shippers by removing the requirement that the Canada Transportation Agency must be convinced that shippers would suffer "substantial commercial harm" before relief can be granted. We will expand the availability of final offer arbitration and we will improve the conditions under which a shipper can ask for traffic to be transferred to another railway. At the same time we will maintain all other existing remedies.

I should say that we did not accept the view of some to enhance the current running rights provisions within the Canada Transportation Act because we felt that it would place an undue burden on the system, that it would be unworkable and, certainly, that it would have the obverse reaction to the one that would be desired.

• (1520)

A series of legislative amendments will be proposed in the legislation that will strengthen publicly funded passenger and commuter rail services, including giving publicly funded passenger rail operators, such as VIA, Go Transit, West Coast Express and others across the country, recourse to the Canadian Transportation Agency when commercial negotiations are unsuccessful with respect to the terms and conditions of operation on federal rail lines.

You may remember, Mr. Speaker, the controversy over the last couple of years with West Coast Express, which was subsequently resolved, between the operator and Canadian Pacific Rail, but at that time no remedy was available for West Coast Express. This now says that publicly funded passenger rail systems will be able to seek adjudication from the Canada Transportation Agency.

Another measure is to make contracts of publicly funded passenger rail services public to improve transparency and to maintain the integrity of rail corridors for possible public transit needs by improving the rail line discontinuance process in urban areas.

Government Orders

We think these legislative amendments support rail as a viable choice for passengers, thereby contributing to both the government's climate change and the cities' agenda.

In support of passenger services, VIA Rail's existing mandate and powers will also be confirmed in new legislation. Unlike the majority of other crown corporations, VIA Rail did not have its own legislation. I feel particularly badly about that because in 1977 I was vice-chairman of the House of Commons standing committee on transportation and communications, as it then was, and was one of the proponents for the government to take the CP and CN passenger operations, the losses for which were 80% funded by the federal government, and put it in a dedicated company. The minister of transport at the time and the government did that. Unfortunately they did not go the extra step. They did not give VIA its statutory base. I believe VIA has suffered as a result over the last number of years.

Therefore we want to make sure that the statutory base will ensure that if there are any substantial changes to VIA's service in the future they will be the subject of public debate in the House. I think all members should applaud that. In fact, this was one of the recommendations that came from the Standing Committee on Transport a few years ago in its landmark report "The Renaissance of Passenger Rail in Canada".

We think the new VIA Rail act accomplishes all of the goals that the committee members set out and, combined with other initiatives, will demonstrate the government's continued support for inner city passenger rail services across the country.

I should state that we are also working on some other initiatives, which have been commented on frequently in the news, with respect to making VIA services in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor faster. I would hope to be able to say something more substantial on that at a later time. However the fact is that we are committed to enhancing passenger rail and providing that option for Canadians.

We are also introducing two initiatives that are multi-modal in nature. We are proposing to adapt and expand to all modes the mergers and acquisitions process that currently applies for the air industry.

The House will remember that in 2000, after the merger of Canadian Airlines and Air Canada in the then Bill C-26, we brought forward a merger and acquisition strategy that covered the merger of Canadian Airlines and Air Canada.

We propose to adopt that particularly ethos and apply it to other transportation industries. Frankly, this really came about because we realized a few years ago, when Canadian National entered into a partnership merger, as it was called, with Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, that there was no statutory base upon which to review that merger outside of the Competition Act.

While the Competition Act is important for obvious reasons, there are other public interest issues that need to be addressed when we have mergers of such magnitude, including the impact on communities and the impact on workers. We found the odd situation of Canadian shippers having to go to Washington to make submissions to the surface transportation board, which was then reviewing the proposed merger under U.S. law. What kind of a ridiculous situation was that when the sovereign country of Canada

was not able to have its own process and its shippers had to go to a foreign country to make their case?

● (1525)

Once we pass this bill that will not happen if we see in the future, as I think we will, further mergers in the rail industry within North America. The Canadian national interests will be addressed by virtue of the statutory changes that we have brought forward.

One of the most interesting files I have had over the last number of years is the evolving one with respect to air policy. I remind members of the House that in an earlier version of Bill C-26 in the year 2000 there was support from all parties in the House for the concept of a made in Canada solution to develop competition to Air Canada.

That policy, supported by all members on both sides of the House, was working on September 11, 2001. We had Canada 3000 at the time with its largest booking day in its history the day before. Of course we know that with the tragic events, the entire society was impacted, but nowhere was it more impacted than in the transportation sector and particularly the aviation sector. As a result, Canada 3000 went bankrupt. Air Canada's market share went from 82% at the time of the merger to around 65% on September 11, 2001 and then bounced back up to 78%. Since that period in time, Air Canada's domestic market share has declined. Some will say it is in the low 60% range and at some point it will bottom out.

Of course there are issues facing Air Canada which have to be settled by the unions, the workers and management. There are issues the government can be helpful with and we are prepared to play our part. We emphasize that at the moment there is a process going on with respect to the airline getting its costs under control.

Certainly with the restructuring that is going on, I would hope that we will be in a better position to have a more viable national carrier, Air Canada. Of course it is one of the world's great carriers and has been faced with the same problems as other great carriers in the world. I think Air Canada has done a much better job in handling the challenges than many of the other carriers, including the ones in the United States.

We are proposing some amendments to the CTA that would facilitate market entry for carriers. Through these measures a dominant carrier would be required to interline and agree to joint through fares with other carriers on domestic services and permit ongoing access to its frequent flyer program on reasonable commercial terms. This is not just targeted at Air Canada; it is targeted at any dominant carrier that reaches that position. Certainly with the fluidity we have seen in the industry, we will see other entrants come forward and have the critical mass that will provide viable competition to Air Canada.

Government Orders

We are proposing amendments that would ensure that the advertising of air fares is transparent and accurate. That is something that has really frustrated a lot of travellers. People in the House are much more knowledgeable about the air industry than are ordinary Canadians and therefore we are perhaps more circumspect when we look at the advertising. Ordinary people just open the newspapers or look at television and the price they see is the price they think they have to pay, but of course it is not. That is why we are proposing amendments to deal with that in this legislation.

Current ownership rules are not going to change. The raising of the limit from 25% foreign ownership is not an answer. It is not really required. In fact I am told that Air Canada's largest foreign stakeholder owns less than 10%, so where is the thrust?

I know there are some who will say, "Who cares whether we have an airline with a flag on it and it is called Air Canada?" They are entitled to their view, but I beg to differ. I believe Air Canada is one of the great symbols of this country. It is our flag carrier around the world. It brings us pride. It takes Canadians around the world.

• (1530)

The government is committed to keeping the Canadian air industry owned and operated by Canadians, so current ownership rules will not change. Perhaps something will occur in the future to change our minds, but we do not think it is a solution that is required right now.

On the international front, we will continue to work with other countries to gradually liberalize Canada's bilateral air agreements using as a model the successful open skies agreement that we had in 1995 with the United States. A lot of people say that we are not prepared to broaden the agreement with the U.S. Of course we are. I have told this to my counterpart, Mr. Mineta in Washington. I have told Ambassador Cellucci that we are prepared to sit down with the U.S. any time to talk about the broadening of the current open skies treaty. People often confuse that with the issue of cabotage, the ability of a foreign carrier to take passengers from point to point within a foreign country; Air Canada could take passengers from New York to Los Angeles, or American Airlines could take passengers from Toronto to Vancouver.

This is an issue that has cropped up in the last few years. Everybody thinks it will be the panacea for competition and that it will better the Canadian flying environment. The fact is the large foreign carriers, especially the Americans, once they get reorganized, will only be interested in the major core routes. They will not be interested in serving smaller communities, unlike a company like CanJet that goes into Deer Lake, or Jetsgo that is now going into Charlottetown and Timmins. They would not be interested in those smaller communities, so where is the advantage?

We already have significant competition in the major markets. The biggest and most profitable one is Toronto-Vancouver and then Toronto-Calgary, so why do we have to do it? In any event, it is a moot point. I raised it with Rodney Slater, the Democrat secretary of transportation in the Clinton administration. I raised it two or three times with Norman Mineta, who is the current secretary of transportation. Mr. Mineta, who has served 20 years in Congress, said, "Look, just do not bother talking about this because there will be no appetite in the U.S. Congress to allow cabotage". I will tell you

why, Mr. Speaker, because in the U.S., the U.S. unions view Air Canada as a high quality, low cost operator that will be a significant challenge to them.

Also, if they did it, they would have to extend that same kind of privilege to airlines in other countries, for example, British Airways, Air France, KLM and Lufthansa, so it is just not on. I am prepared to discuss anything, including that, but when the other side does not even want to discuss it, there is not much I can do about it. People just do not seem to get that message.

With respect to infrastructure, this has been the subject of some debate, certainly since the budget. This country now has a transportation infrastructure second to none. That does not mean to say it cannot improve, but we see the new airports being built. We see the ports improvements. We see the fact that the federal government is recommitting money to major highway projects across the country. We see the infrastructure programs that we have had with provincial and municipal governments since 1993. Some \$800 billion has gone in there.

In the budget announced a few weeks ago there is \$3 billion that my colleague, the Minister of Industry, will oversee. There is another \$3 billion in the Kyoto envelope for the Minister of the Environment. Much of this money can be applied to transportation initiatives and transportation infrastructure in the country.

I know there are some who wanted more money, particularly the municipalities. I have to say quite frankly that when the municipalities reacted to the budget, they did not read the document. They did not read the fact that there is \$6 billion for infrastructure in that budget. They did not realize all the other initiatives, whether it is housing, for which I have responsibility, or the homeless, for which the Minister of Labour has responsibility. There is an increase in moneys for affordable housing for the SCPI program and for the RRAP home renovation program. All of this helps Canadian cities.

On the transportation front there are moneys available. In fact a couple of weeks ago the Minister of Industry and I, along with the Minister of Justice, announced in Montreal the A-30 autoroute. The A-30 autoroute has often been raised in the House, particularly by my friends from the Bloc. This is a major piece of infrastructure that is national in significance, because it will allow trucks and cars to bypass the downtown streets of Montreal. That was done under the auspices of the infrastructure program.

Government Orders

•(1535)

Let us not buy this phony argument that somehow the federal government is not involved in providing for federal infrastructure improvements. We are doing it through policy changes that allow local authorities, whether it is the ports or the airports, to borrow on the open market. We do it directly, like the subsidy to VIA Rail of an extra \$402 million, or we do it through infrastructure programs as I have just described. As more money becomes available, it will be applied to transportation. I think that 60% or 70% of the money that came out of the 2001 budget that we are working on with officials at Industry Canada is applied to transportation projects.

I am not going to say anything about airports today because I am about to introduce another bill very soon that will deal with providing a statutory base for Canada airport authorities across the country. In the 1994 national airports policy, this was done under existing statutes and the Financial Administration Act and another statute, but there was no statutory base for these airports. We are taking the 29 largest airports and making them come under a new statute that will have as its goal improved accountability, improved transparency and improved governance. When people see the bill, in a matter of days hopefully, they will see that we are trying to put our airport authorities on a very sound footing.

As an accompaniment to that, we have been reviewing the issue of airport rents. We hope to have that review completed very shortly. We are also reviewing our policy on remote airports which will include the viability of regional airports. We want to make sure that smaller airports do not get left out in the cold. We did it right in broad terms in 1994 with the national airports policy, but there are a lot of loose ends. The loose ends require a statutory base for the big airports. For the smaller airports it requires further reflection and study and perhaps assistance.

There are other issues that will come up in committee and will be raised in debate here about user charges and how they affect the airline industry and the airport charge and all the rest. I will be pleased to answer those questions when we get to committee.

We are also having a review of the Canada Marine Act. Members may remember that in 1998 we passed the Canada Marine Act. It was somewhat controversial but has been a great success. It has enabled the creation of 19 Canada port authorities across the country. It allows them to borrow money. It allows them to manage their own affairs and to dictate their own marketing strategies. The results are incredible for big ports and for small ports.

For the big ports it has been truly remarkable. The three great ports of this country in terms of volume, Vancouver, Montreal and Halifax, have done incredibly well. Business has increased. Efficiencies have been made. Money has been made and ploughed back because facilities like airports are still owned by the people of Canada.

Vancouver, for example, is the single most successful port on the west coast of the Americas. My friend over there from British Columbia, who I know is going to speak after me, should be happy about that. It beats all the American ports on the west coast and any other ports south of the United States. Halifax and Montreal have

similar competitive advantages to many ports on the east coast of the United States.

We will have the marine act review completed shortly. Then we will probably begin statutory changes to the Canada Marine Act. The bill we are introducing today is the precursor to the airports act and amendments to the Canada Marine Act.

•(1540)

We are not only interested in our ports, airports, and putting more money into highways. We have announced highway extensions in New Brunswick, Quebec, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and I am sure there will be many more across the country under the infrastructure programs and the program that we administer at Transport Canada.

However, we are also concerned about the need for new bridges or tunnels to the United States. That is one of the reasons why we have amendments in this bill to establish a clear approval process for the construction of new international bridges and tunnels to ensure they meet the trade and transportation needs of the Canada of the future.

I want to make a few more points with respect to our overall policy.

[*Translation*]

Future strategic investments in the transportation sector will focus on reducing urban congestion and bottlenecks along trade corridors. At the same time, these investments will ensure we reach our climate change and clean air objectives.

We also intend to work hard to find alternative delivery models for public transportation infrastructure in the areas of marine navigation, highways and public transportation.

Our infrastructure must also service Canada's remote regions. An important part of the national transportation policy has always been and will continue to be guaranteeing that remote regions have reasonable access to the national transportation system, with respect to their circumstances, size and particular location.

I am fully aware, Mr. Speaker, that you have an opinion on this policy because you represent a large remote riding. It is very important for us to ensure that our policy addresses the problems faced by remote regions throughout the country.

[*English*]

Another area of concern of course is the environment. I would be very remiss if I sat down and did not say anything about the environmental impacts that come from transportation. We must keep this issue at the top of mind. In fact, we debated this in the House for many months and the work still has not been concluded.

Government Orders

We have now adopted the Kyoto protocol and made a commitment to Kyoto, but now the tough work has begun with respect to ensuring that we meet those objectives. Clean air, clean water, improved fuel efficiency standards and increasing the awareness of Canadians are among the many elements of our strategy to contribute to the government-wide environmental agenda.

Transportation, as members know, is the single largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions in the country. It is about 28% versus about 33% or 34% in the United States, so progress on Kyoto will require real gains in transportation. Transport Canada will provide leadership in the sector and encourage the development of innovative solutions.

We will work with industry to better understand the social costs of transportation because understanding these costs is the first step in reflecting them more accurately in the prices paid by users. As a clear signal of our commitment to the environment, we will enshrine the principle of respect for the environment in the national policy declaration section of the Canada Transportation Act.

Another area that is very important, and I cannot underscore this enough, is the need to deal with innovation and skills requirements of our transportation industry. Success in the areas of marketplace frameworks, infrastructure, environment, and safety and security will depend upon the sector's ability to innovate and develop the skills of its workers.

After all, transportation moves \$1 trillion worth of goods a year in Canada and is a key enabler in many sectors. Innovation in transportation will enhance Canada's competitiveness and contribute to meeting broader social and economic goals, such as reducing congestion and limiting environmental degradation.

Our efforts will focus on fostering innovation and intelligent transportation systems and logistical systems that support the efficient and seamless movement of people and freight. We will also work with the sector to increase the awareness of high skilled requirements of the transportation system of the future.

● (1550)

We have gone through a period of time in the last 30 or 40 years, certainly in the period when I was growing up in the late fifties and early sixties, where people assumed that a better job was always an administrative job, a white collar job, a desk job, and that somehow those people that serviced planes and trains, that laid the ballast or the track for the rail or worked on the ships, or worked below deck in the boiler rooms, that these people somehow were doing work that was less acceptable and less relevant to society.

I come from the school where every job in society is of equal value. Not everyone can be the Prime Minister of Canada. Not everyone can be the president of Canadian National or Air Canada. People have to do what they are comfortable in doing. Whether it is sweeping the streets in our cities, driving a bus or working computers in the control centres of Canadian National or the airlines, all of these jobs are very important.

An interesting thing has happened in the last few years. Transportation has become high tech in its own way. Has anyone sat in the cab of a modern truck to see the instrumentation that is

available? It is not as complex as a cockpit of a plane, but that instrumentation is much more sophisticated than it ever was before.

Global positioning systems are now in operation by big trucking companies. Technology has permeated the industry. We invested a lot in high technology, in the innovation and technology agenda in the last number of years. There was always a view that if we did that it was enough. It is not enough.

We can invest in all the telecommunications, all the technological systems that we want, computerization, and we can be on-line nine ways to Sunday, but unless we can get goods from point to point and unless we can get people from place to place it does not matter what kind of technology there is in the planning of the transportation system.

We need roads, rail and the seaway. We need good ports, airports and rail yards. We need good crossings at the border with the United States. We need all of the physical attributes required to make a transportation system truly competitive.

The policy document I have brought forward enunciates the government's intention to continue to build on the many successes already evident in our transportation system. It embraces our objectives that show the true course for the future.

The amendments that we have today are the first part of the menu, the first course. The second course will be the airports bill and the third will be amendments to the Canada Transportation Act some months down the road.

Certainly, I would hope that members, although they may differ in some degree with the philosophical directions, would at least say that the government has come forward with a concerted, comprehensive transportation framework that addresses the transportation needs of Canadians in the years ahead.

I look forward to answering questions in committee. My officials look forward and I know stakeholders will come to the committee. I believe this is a major piece of legislation for the government. The policy document was a major policy document of the government that was outlined in the throne speech last fall. We are living up to the commitments of continuing to build the best, safest, most secure, and most efficient transportation system in the world.

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill C-26. I have been waiting for it for awhile. We knew it was coming. It is always hard when the government controls the exact timing and we do not know it until it occurs so we have to spend quite a bit of preparation time putting other things aside.

Bill C-26 is in essence two bills. One deals with a variety of amendments to the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act, and the other deals with the creation of a new act, the VIA Rail Canada act.

Government Orders

I will briefly touch on issues contained in the first section of the amendments. This area will be dealt with in more detail by my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, who is the Canadian Alliance chief opposition critic for transport. He graciously yielded the lead speaking position to me as the Alliance spokesman for VIA Rail, so that I might speak at length about the second part, the VIA Rail Canada act.

The portion of the bill that deals with amendments, and presumably improvements to the Canada Transportation Act, needs to look at many issues.

The minister said that this is part one, there will be a part two and a part three, and maybe some other parts thrown in there as well. I would suggest to him that there are things that must be looked at that this bill certainly does not address.

Today the federal government spends approximately \$300 million annually on the national highways system. It takes approximately \$5 billion from fuel taxes, \$1 billion from British Columbia alone.

There is the new airlines security tax. There are a lot of alternatives to it. There are alternatives that I have touched on with the minister in committee and I hope he will continue to look at them. Small airports in my immediate region of Cranbrook, Castlegar and Penticton, at this point in time, still do not have basic x-ray and yet the people who get on board the aircraft there fly around all the security the minister claims to be spending millions upon millions of dollars on at the major airports. This flies them around that.

The minister might wish to suggest to the contrary but never has he suggested, I would hope, that he would put in CAT scans and incredible lengths of security at tiny airports. A chain is only as good as its weakest link so the minister should consider some significant alternatives to the security system. If he does not recall what I suggested before, I would be more than happy to give him a new outline.

The government must take a lot of the responsibility for the problems in our airline industry now, particularly with the national carrier, Air Canada. Air Canada, as it sits now, is the result of Air Canada taking over Canadian Airlines. There was an alternative. The alternative was for an outside company, the Onex Corporation, to take over both and put them together. That would have been highly preferable.

Let me tell the minister why it would have been preferable and the fundamental difference between what happened and what would have happened. The Onex Corporation brought in new market capital. Air Canada financed out of its existing debt structure, one that it is now reeling under. What prevented the Onex deal? It was federal government legislation that prevented Onex from owning more than 10% of the shares, a thing that the government with a mere wave of a hand could have extinguished but chose not to do it.

There are major airport fees. Up until the time the government went through the creation of national airports and the authorities to look after them, it lost hundreds of millions of dollars a year running airports. Now it is charging so many fees that it is a profit making venture for it. That is another form of taxation. It is just another way for the Liberals to sneak money from the taxpayer. We can be

assured that if an airport operation has to pay excessive taxes to the government, so the government can reap a big profit, that cost has to be passed on to the public.

I have heard the minister mention that he is concerned about the financial viability of community airports. There are a couple of things he could do. He could increase the capital assistance allowance for those airports to ensure that they remain viable in terms of dealing with necessary capital projects, but there is another thing he could do.

• (1555)

At the time all the community airports were turned over to these communities, they were told that they have to provide a plan in terms of their fire response times. They were allowed, where the times were sufficient, to take the airport firefighting off the airport and handle it from their own firefighting resources. Then after that was all signed and turned over and the commitment was made by these communities, the government came up with CARS308, which now threatens to force these same municipalities to put dedicated firefighters on the airport itself, a cost that very few of these airports can sustain.

The minister can take care of that by simply saying one of two things: that he will do away with that, or; if he requires authorities to put in something that he told them they did not have to do at the time they took these airports over, that he will pay for it. If the minister is really worried about the financial viability for small airports, those are the two choices.

The minister mentioned the ports. Recently the minister announced how proud he was and what a great thing it was for the mighty Liberal government to put \$172 million into port security over five years. I always get a chuckle when the government does things like this because this is the government that took away the ports police in the first place. It has taken away the entire mechanism that created port security and then says "Please give us a big round applause for putting just a tiny bit of it back in".

Regarding freight rail, the government needs to do something to ensure that we have all aspects of good free movement of grain for prairie farmers so that we can ensure that grain does get moved to the ports, that farmers are not being penalized with the inability to sell their grain with back charges on demurrage and so on. Also we need to have a real plan to ensure that we move heavy freight onto rails and off of our highways.

These are but a few of the transportation concerns of the public and this bill does not meaningfully address these in any way.

What is the real reason for the VIA Rail Canada act? According to the Minister of Transport in his appearance before the Standing Committee on Transport on May 22, 2002, the minister said,

—I think that by establishing VIA under a statutory base, it will make it very much more difficult for governments in subsequent times to be somewhat arbitrary and capricious with the passenger rail system.

Government Orders

In essence what the minister is saying is that he is a rail buff and that he will not be around in this position forever. He wants to use his position as the minister to entrench VIA as a government operation to make it easier to shovel the taxpayer money to VIA and make it harder for any future minister or party to consider alternatives such as private sector operation of VIA Rail.

In truth Bill C-26 is really about taking steps to prevent VIA from ever being taken out of the minister's hands. Normally, when a government takes on a public operation, it starts out as a government department. The next step to make the operation more stand alone, is to make it a crown corporation. Then, if the government wants to make it truly independent of government, it sets it up under the Canada Business Corporations Act. This would make it virtually identical to any private sector corporation but with the government owning all the shares. That is the stage that VIA Rail is actually at now. What the minister wants to do is go to the trouble and expense of moving backwards. Is there a precedent for this? Not that I know of.

Also, one of the things the government is doing with this is under the concept of running rights and VIA Rail's access to go to the big freight companies and tell them when it wants to run, how often it wants to run and how much it wants to pay. If the big freight companies do not like that, what can they do? If the freight companies do not give VIA what it wants, as a government operation, it can go to the Canada Transportation Agency, another government operation, and tell it to decide what is fair. No conflict there at all.

What are the choices for VIA? One is the status quo but that is a poor alternative at best. It would mean the ongoing subsidy of half a million dollars a day to VIA Rail. It would mean that VIA continues to compete against the unsubsidized private sector transportation companies. Since the Liberal Party took office in 1993, it has given VIA \$2,966,905,000. Basically to round it off, and it does not take very much added to it to that, \$3 billion. We talk about the boondoggle of the firearms registry now approaching \$1 billion. This is \$3 billion of taxpayer money to help subsidize VIA Rail. I wonder how many of those taxpayers actually have ridden on VIA Rail.

• (1600)

Let me put that into perspective for individual ridings, the minister's riding, my riding and your riding, Mr. Speaker. In each riding in this country, on average, the taxpayers have sent to Ottawa \$10 million of their money to the minister to hand over to VIA Rail. It costs VIA Rail almost \$400 million to make a gross revenue of \$250 million. It is amazing. The ongoing subsidy is about a half a million dollars a day, and we should keep that figure in mind. Ten million dollars to each riding and \$3 billion nationally.

Canada's health care system is greatly underfunded and is in trouble. There is a lack of funding for post-secondary education. Our national highway system is deteriorating. Farmers are suffering and in need of a continuation of farm aid. There are many local funding problems in all our ridings. Just think what each riding could have done with that \$10 million dollars of taxpayer money which the minister has given to VIA Rail since his party took office and what

we could have done nationally with the \$3 billion VIA Rail has spent.

The alternative is to sell off all VIA Rail, in essence a continuation of what was so successfully done when VIA Rail sold off its western rail excursion business. It would mean then that rail travel would be given the opportunity to reach its full potential, the way the Rocky Mountaineer Railtours company has done. It would mean an end to the immense and ongoing subsidization of those who travel by rail. It would mean that the innovation of private enterprise could be brought into to play to find new ways to enhance the viability of rail travel.

One question that must be asked on the concept of selling off VIA Rail is: Is there anyone out there who would take it?

When the current Minister of Transport took over his portfolio, he publicly stated he was interested in either privatizing or commercializing VIA Rail. Frankly, given the minister's background, I was a little surprised to hear him take this enlightened attitude. Of course it was too good to be true. Not too long after, the minister stated that such options were off the table because VIA Rail could never make money and, therefore, the private sector had no interest in it.

This flies in the face of later testimony the minister gave before the Standing Committee on Transport. On May 22, 2002, the minister, in response to my questioning, stated:

—there's no question that the private sector had interest. We sent out solicitations of interest and 40 companies were interested...it would have been possible to do something.

As to why he changed his mind, he stated:

—when I became minister, it was in an environment after program review where I never thought in my wildest dreams that I could get \$400 million out of finance for VIA Rail.

Now we know what the latest plans of VIA Rail really are. They are the minister's wildest dreams.

Since that meeting, I have been trying to obtain a list of those 40 names so I could contact them and see what kind of ideas they had for operating VIA Rail.

First, I tried access to information. I was not hopeful because I had used this to try to obtain a variety of different information about VIA Rail and had always been refused by the government. Sure enough, this attempt proved futile as well.

Then, when I brought it up at a transport committee meeting, on November 7, 2002, asking that the clerk obtain a list from the minister's office and the committee contact these individuals and ask about their ideas for operating VIA Rail, the committee agreed. However over four months later, there was nothing from the minister's office.

In a past presentation to the Standing Committee on Transport, former VIA Rail CEO Terry Ivany also made clear VIA's intentions and new targets for competition. For western Canada, he stated:

In the west, we will continue to provide basic transportation service. But we will also establish new services. Western Canada represents the greatest tourism potential in Canada.

There is an enormous potential for passenger rail to take full advantage, and to contribute to the development of tourism. We will invest and expand services to focus on the fastest growing tourism market today.

Government Orders

In response to a letter from me, where I addressed a concern that VIA was trying to re-establish itself on the Calgary-Vancouver route, in competition with the very company they sold that route to, the minister implied that VIA was needed on the southern route. Specifically, his letter states:

As you may be aware, I asked VIA Rail to assess the feasibility of restoring certain discontinued passenger rail services in order to expand VIA's service across Canada. As part of its proposed initiatives for western Canada, VIA has submitted a proposal for the reinstatement of year-round service between Calgary and Vancouver.

● (1605)

What would be the purpose for VIA to expand its service in the west? There are only two possibilities: the minister's contention that it is necessary to provide passenger service to the travelling public or, the alternative, to go into competition with the existing tourism operator, Rocky Mountaineer Railtours.

The argument that VIA is needed to provide passenger service to the travelling public is absolutely absurd. Currently a round trip from Edmonton to Vancouver by aircraft costs \$287.22, which includes \$41.22 in federal government taxes and surcharges of \$55. It takes about an hour and a half each way. The minister is telling me that the airlines should be more visible in what they do. That is the full price. The VIA Rail fare is \$393.76, and these are the lowest fares, which is net after a subsidy of nearly half a million dollars a day that VIA receives, and it takes in a full day in each direction. The Canadian taxpayers shell out half a million dollars a day so that VIA can operate a service that takes 16 times as long and costs 37% more. Yet the minister would have us believe that we need more of this kind of service. We do not.

Also, the minister talked briefly at the end of his speech today about the environment. Unlike the environmental benefit of moving heavy freight by rail, passenger rail service is the least environmentally friendly form of transportation. It uses considerably more fuel per passenger on the Edmonton to Vancouver trip than an aircraft. What is the justification of expanding this slow, expensive and environmentally unfriendly operation as a passenger service? There is not one.

That leaves VIA looking at going into competition with the existing tourism operator, the Rocky Mountaineer Railtours. The Rocky Mountaineer was a rail excursion service initiated by VIA in the 1980s. Like most of what VIA does, it lost money. When the Conservative government ordered VIA to dispose of this service and concentrate on their core responsibility, it carried less than 5,000 passengers annually.

The private sector investors who purchased the business from VIA paid millions of dollars to buy the business rights and rolling stock from VIA, to buy new cars and refurbish them, to hire and train their staff to the high standard, which I think the public expects on that kind of service, and to develop an international advertising strategy that would bring large amounts of foreign tourism into Canada every year. Business has grown tremendously. This is a private sector success story.

In essence, the government went to the private sector and said, "We want you to take over this operation, invest large amounts of private capital, end the drain of taxpayer funding, create jobs, boost the economy and pay taxes".

The Rocky Mountaineer did all those things and now the minister, who as a self-confessed rail buff, should be heaping rewards on this company. Instead he is looking at letting the taxpayer funded government railway go back into competition with the business it could not run and sold. I guess he feels now that Peter Armstrong and the hard working people at the Rocky Mountaineer have built the industry up, his personal government rail line should be in a position to reap the benefits and the profits from all the work that those people have done. Anyone with a conscience or sense of what is right will see that this is a travesty, no matter what his or her political party.

We frequently talk about the need to involve the private sector in more investments in this country. We look to it to boost the economy and participate in public-private partnerships. Rocky Mountaineer Railtours has done what was asked of it in spades, and its reward is to have the government talk about going into competition with it using the taxpayer money to give the government the advantage. The whole private sector should watch this bill very closely. If VIA is allowed to further compete with the private sector, it is a warning to the private sector never to trust or co-operate with government again.

The minister says that there have been all kinds of consultations in the drafting of this bill. I would like to know who he talked to in western Canada on this issue. It certainly was not the chambers throughout the rail route in British Columbia, from Vancouver all the way to Calgary. It was not the boards of trade. It was not the councils along the route. It was not the provincial government in both B.C. and Alberta, all which oppose VIA Rail going back into competition with the Rocky Mountaineer.

● (1610)

Again referring to the testimony of former VIA CEO Terry Ivany, for eastern Canada, he stated:

In the (Quebec-Windsor) corridor, we will provide vastly expanded services—new express trains, more frequencies, shorter trip times, convenient schedules—all designed to fully capitalize on the business travel, cross border travel and tourism markets.

Given VIA's projected debt free startup status and its likely ongoing subsidization from the federal government, VIA would be able to further erode the customer base of the private transportation sector.

In a recent *Maclean's* interview, the Minister of Transport stated:

...congestion on the roads and security delays at airports make train travel more attractive.

This is the minister who takes \$5 billion in fuel excise taxes and gives back only \$300 million. Congestion on the roads indeed. No wonder. He could probably congest them a little more if he only gave us \$200 million of that \$5 billion.

Government Orders

With regard to security delays at airports, who put those in place? Who is collecting the airport security fee with no accountability for it and creating chaos at the airports? He is the very person who put that into place. He could have done something much more streamlined than what we have. We do not see it happening. The minister then says that we have to turn to rail, which I happen to be a buff of, because there is congestion on the roads and delays at the airports. What an interesting statement to make when he is the very person responsible for that congestion and those delays.

As I said, Ottawa collects about \$5 billion a year in fuel taxes and spends only 6% on highway programs. At airports, the government has had over a year and a half to organize efficient security measures. All the flying public has received is yet another tax.

In 1995, VIA Rail employees went on strike. When the strike ended, VIA decided that it needed to take business away from the bus lines so it cut its already hugely subsidized fares by another 40%. VIA offered a round trip fare on VIA 1, its first class service, between Toronto and Kingston for under \$100. That fare included before dinner drinks, a deluxe menu to choose dinner from, wine with dinner and drinks after dinner in both directions. It is questionable if the fare even covered the cost of the food and drinks for many people. How is an unsubsidized, taxpaying company supposed to compete with that?

The Ontario Motor Coach Association points out that Toronto desperately needs a new \$20 million bus terminal but the industry cannot make that kind of investment if it thinks the government is about to expand a highly subsidized passenger rail system through that same market.

Many companies feeling the current financial squeeze have cut back on their discretionary spending but not VIA. Given that VIA is subsidized by almost \$500,000 a day, how can it justify funding a private film production in the amount of \$1 million? You remember that one, Mr. Speaker. It was the one where the government had to come up with an extra \$1 million for VIA Rail and paid Lafleur Communications Marketing a commission of \$120,000 to deliver the cheque to VIA. Of course Lafleur Communications Marketing also delivered a pretty hefty cheque back to the Liberal Party as a contribution.

The concept of privatizing VIA Rail does leave a question of service provision to communities where VIA Rail operations provide the only reasonable transportation service. Although these situations are limited, they are a concern that must be addressed. Continuation of service in these areas can be ensured through a variety of measures, and the Canadian Alliance is fully prepared to work to find the most viable solution to ensure continued service in the most cost effective manner. Continuing the government operation of VIA nationally is not the most cost effective manner. It is the least cost effective, along with all the other problems that I have already outlined.

As I mentioned earlier, I have been working through the Standing Committee on Transport to try and obtain a list of names the minister advised were interested in operating VIA. The committee had indicated a will to investigate the feasibility of having the private sector take over the operation of VIA. This was underway before the minister tabled Bill C-26 in the House. If the minister is really

interested in the financial and transportation interests of the Canadian taxpayer, he will agree to allow the transport committee to complete a feasibility study of having the private sector take over the operation of VIA. I believe that a good case has already been made for this.

At the beginning of the minister's earlier on he talked in glowing terms about what an incredible job his government had done on privatization. Airports, ports, CN Rail, the air navigation system, all of which he said were good moves, good for the country and good for the taxpayer, and that these things were thriving. Why then does he not take one more step and look at it with VIA Rail as well?

• (1615)

The minister is a self-professed rail buff. If this is his only reason for keeping VIA under his control and he will agree to relinquish that control, I will personally offer to purchase for him the best model rail set imaginable. I realize that it is not the same as playing with a full size train but the taxpayers of this country will be forever grateful to him.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Bill C-26. I have been listening to the Minister of Transport. I hope that we will all have sufficient intellectual honesty to acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of Bill C-26. It pleases me that the minister has spoken to us of his policy document "Straight Ahead", his national transportation policy. In my opinion, it represents a ministerial wish list. At his press conference on this policy, the reception he got from reporters was as someone with plenty of dreams but not much promise of delivering the goods.

In other words, "Straight Ahead" is a document that is a patchwork of Liberal Party ideologies on transportation, but has absolutely no connection to the announcements made by the Minister of Finance in the latest budget, on which we will vote in part this evening.

Once again, the contents of this document bear little resemblance to those of Bill C-26. It seems like a rather impressive bill, but when we go through it, I will point out the blank pages that pop up every two or three pages. There are 24 empty pages in all in the bill. That is the reality.

I would love to hear the minister deliver a learned discourse on the future of all kinds of transportation everywhere in Canada, but the problem is that today we are debating Bill C-26, and there is absolutely nothing in it to support the minister's words.

In this connection, I always am thunderstruck when spokespersons for the party in power, including the Minister of Transport, come and deliver some fine speech to us—and this minister is no newcomer, as he is third-ranking in this government. He has just given those listening to us in Quebec and in Canada a fine speech on the future of transportation in Canada.

The problem is that there is nothing in this bill. There was nothing about it in the budget brought down a few weeks ago, on which we will be voting in a few hours, either. The people of Quebec, the people of Canada, the members of this House, are not stupid.

Government Orders

I will provide some examples. It is all very well to describe the situation, but I will provide some examples.

The minister told us at the end of his speech that we need good ports, good airports, good highways and good border crossings. In the same vein, I would add a good railway system and a good public transportation system.

But once again, there is nothing in Bill C-26 to back what the minister is saying. And we will examine each of the categories. I am especially pleased as the transportation critic for the Bloc Québécois to be touring Quebec in order to identify Quebecers' transportation needs. This is quite unique. I have met with agencies involved in all categories of transportation throughout the regions of Quebec. The Bloc Québécois is the first party to conduct such a tour in Quebec. We will be the first to set out in a book—that I am calling “the transportation blue book”, which I will submit by the end of this session—the needs of Quebecers in this area.

I will try—because I visited six of the 16 or 17 regions in Quebec—to summarize both the minister's speech and the bill. We will see how people compare the needs of Quebecers—the needs in Quebec being substantially the same as the needs elsewhere in Canada—and how the minister responds today with Bill C-26 to the needs of Quebecers and Canadians.

• (1620)

I will begin with marine transportation, because it really takes the cake. First, as the minister candidly admitted, Bill C-26 is totally silent on marine transportation. However, the minister's red and white book called “Straight Ahead” does touch on it.

There is, among other things, a statement, a news release that followed the policy, and the text of the document, which indicates that a policy was put in place by the Liberal government in 1996. This policy is the Port Divestiture Program for regional, local and remote ports, and it affects over 530 ports and wharves that used to belong to the federal government. The policy was aimed at transferring ports and wharves to local authorities, with a budget of \$125 million.

I am just presenting and summarizing the policy. It is very well spelled out in the news release. As of February 2003, when the minister introduced his policy, the government had saved \$122 million annually because of this port divestiture policy. So, the government gave ports back to local authorities and has since made annual savings of \$122 million.

This is a harsh reality for those who took over the facilities. If the federal government is saving \$122 million, this means that somewhere there are communities across Canada who must face costs of \$122 million.

Moreover, when the policy came into effect, 13% of the 537 ports and wharves were located in Quebec. In his document entitled “Straight Ahead”, the minister announces that the divestiture policy will be completed by March 31, 2003. So, when the policy was first implemented, 13% of the wharves and ports in Quebec were to be divested. Now, as we are speaking, 32% of the 116 or 117 ports and wharves that have yet to be divested are located in Quebec.

This means that, as regards this port divestiture policy, the government acted more diligently in the rest of Canada than it did in Quebec.

Why I am mentioning this? Because in Quebec, the provincial government had decided, in the context of this policy, to see if it might be profitable to restore some facilities. Ten wharves and ports were selected for that purpose, including those of Gaspé, Matane, Rimouski-Est and Gros-Cacouna. I am pointing this out because these ports are located in the Gaspé and in the Lower St. Lawrence.

This is all the more important since Quebec decided as early as 1999-2000, following a policy review, to inform the federal government of its intention to buy 10 of the facilities that the federal government was supposed to transfer to the province. It did not wish to do this for the mere pleasure of regaining control over some of these facilities. It submitted a shipping policy to the people of Quebec, but especially the residents of the Gaspé area, Matane, Rimouski and Gros-Cacouna, for their consideration.

The policy was aimed at developing the ports. The Government of Quebec had realized that the St. Lawrence River had great potential for economic development and decided to invest \$20 million. Some would argue that this is not enough, that more money is needed, but it is still \$20 million more than what the federal government was offering, which was nothing.

Under its port divestiture policy, the government would transfer the facilities to the local population and provide financial assistance for their upgrade. Then, the communities would have to decide what to do with the facilities and how to develop them. Some were not as eager as others to get their hands on these facilities.

But still, Quebec was the only government to hand money to the communities and to tell them “Look, we will invest \$20 million to be able to incorporate these 10 seaports into an economic development project.”

Believe it or not, at this time, these 10 ports have yet to be transferred to Quebec.

• (1625)

Worse still, since 1996, the economic development of these regions has not been promoted. The federal government has simply decided to do nothing. Last year, the government even had the preposterous idea of extending by one year the program that should have ended March 31, 2002. There were zero consultations in the last year because the federal government figured that if the Government of Quebec took over control of these facilities, the Quebec flag would replace the Canadian flag.

It is unbelievable. That is the reality of the federal system. The government has taken hostage entire regions and facilities, which are the tools for economic development, because it realized, seven years later, that if it transfers them to Quebec, it will no longer be able to hoist its little flag.

Government Orders

For a year now, the federal government has not even had the nerve to write a letter to Quebec's transport minister to ask if there is some way the Canadian flag could still be flown if the ports are transferred. No, the government could not even bring itself to do that, for fear of being criticized, I suppose.

Meanwhile, economic development in the Gaspé, Matane, Rimouski, Cacouna and Rivière-du-Loup has been threatened. The federal government could not give two hoots about what is going on in the regions. All that counts is its visibility.

My second point: given that the program is coming to its end, it is running out of money. There is only \$17 million left in the program. For just the ten ports that the Government of Quebec had targeted, we are talking about \$60 million. That does not include the 26 others, because there are still 36 facilities that need to be transferred to Quebec.

As for the shortfall, local organizations estimate that approximately \$80 million is needed to be able to transfer these ports to the Government of Quebec or local entities and bring them up to standard and into line with the policy that is used across the rest of Canada.

Again, Quebec is being penalized. Even though the minister has told us that he was very concerned with marine transportation and that he wanted good ports across the country—that is what he said earlier—Bill C-26, which was tabled today, contains nothing to that end.

I am not trying to scare those who are listening to us. The minister admitted that there was nothing in Bill C-26. Policies with regard to shipping will probably be tabled at a later date.

Now let me turn to the second major part of the minister's speech. I always refer to the minister's speech because, I will say it again, the minister took the policy entitled "Straight Ahead" that he tabled some time ago and decided today to turn it into a speech.

Incidentally, when he gave his press conference, journalists did not pay much attention to it simply because there was no funding announced. Politicians can say all they want, but they cannot fool journalists, who hear speeches in this House and press conferences every day. They are not taken in by the rhetoric they get from MPs and other politicians.

Of course, this policy entitled "Straight Ahead: A Vision for Transportation in Canada" made absolutely no impact. It went practically unnoticed simply because journalists, like members of this House—at least members of the Bloc Québécois—saw it for what it was, that is a nice speech by the transport minister without any funding to back it up.

I will now deal with the issue of air transport. Yes, I must say that there are changes in this area, including increased competition. On that subject, the minister did not miss the opportunity to tell us that Air Canada's market share, which had gone up to 78% after the September 11 crisis, was now down to 60% or 65%, or at least that is what he says.

The bill before us today will enable national carriers such as Air Canada to grant other carriers access to their interline programs, their

incentive fares and their loyalty marketing programs, should they request such access.

● (1630)

This means that, theoretically, the smallest companies could benefit from the Air Canada point programs. This would all be governed by the Competition Act and made available to companies that did not engage in unfair competition.

This is good to the extent that there are small air carriers operating in the regions. I have travelled to Mont-Joli and Gaspé, where there is no plane service. I would very much like to hear the Minister of Transport tell us today that he wants to encourage freer competition and allow small companies to benefit from all the Air Canada customer loyalty programs, but there has to be service available in the regions.

The problem is that the regions are losing their service. How long has this been going on? It is simple. The bill passed in this House that merged Air Canada and Canadian required regional service to be maintained until September 30, 2002. It is not that the opposition did not try to get that date deferred and regional service maintained, given the very special circumstances facing the airline industry after September 11, 2001. We were met with a refusal.

Air Canada was allowed to pull out of the regions. Free enterprise was allowed to work. Today the minister is telling us that Air Canada will have to solve its own problems. It has only 60% to 65% of the market, but Bill C-26 is going to increase the competition it faces. Yet there is no assistance for Air Canada.

We are told Air Canada needs to solve its own problems. It has labour problems, problems which, believe it or not, were created by the legislation that merged the two carriers, Air Canada and Canadian. The problems were created by this government. Today he comes to tell us with great candour, once again, that Air Canada will have to solve its own problems by negotiating with its unions. Once again, it is Air Canada's employees who will have to pay for getting the company back on its feet, for making it profitable.

The federal government's solution is not to provide Air Canada with assistance. It is to encourage competition, which will be harmful to Air Canada, so that Air Canada employees will have to accept salary cuts in order to keep the company alive.

With the Liberal federal government, nothing ever makes sense. With regard to free competition, especially in the air transport industry, the government has no policy to support regional development. Let us take as an example the Quebec government, which decided to create a ticket bank and do business with Air Canada. With its purchasing power, it was able to ensure that service was maintained in certain regions, but not everywhere. Why? Because the purchasing power of the Quebec government is limited.

I wish the Liberal government had done the same thing and offered to help airlines by saying: "Look, you are in trouble. With all our public servants who have to travel across Canada, we certainly can have ticket banks to help airlines in the regions". The Government of Canada never thought of that, or at least there is nothing about it in Bill C-26.

Government Orders

Of course, on this subject, we have to put the question to the minister, whatever the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, who is a former Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, may think. He was pretty harsh in criticizing the Government of Quebec. Without that policy and the purchasing power of the Quebec government, many more regions would have lost air service.

That is the reality of this market. If we let the carriers do whatever they want, if we let Air Canada operate in isolation, the employees will surely pay the price. The president of Air Canada has only one responsibility: to provide his shareholders with a dividend at the end of each quarter. That is his responsibility. Otherwise, he would no longer be the president of Air Canada. This is where the problem lies. Private carriers cannot be left to their own devices. Otherwise, only the profitable routes will be serviced. Every region in Quebec and the rest of Canada will suffer the consequences.

That is the harsh reality. With Bill C-26, we are helping small carriers to remain in business and to be included in the customer loyalty programs of the big air carriers. There are not many big airlines. In Quebec, there is Air Canada. There is one airline. Of course, the smallest carriers could use their Air Canada points to their advantage and create more competition for Air Canada.

• (1635)

But is this a good time to give Air Canada even more competition and tell Air Canada employees, at the same time, that they must accept a pay cut to keep the company going? Once again, I think that this is a bad political decision.

In terms of rail transport, Bill C-26 does contain some measures, but they are far from what the minister promised in his speech.

The minister finally wants a good rail system. In fact, everyone was expecting rapid rail service along the Quebec City-Montreal-Windsor corridor because the minister himself made the announcement. But, there is nothing on this in Bill C-26.

It is creating VIA Rail. This legislation is now creating VIA Rail. This is what is in the bill. The minister is telling us that he was going to develop rail transport, passenger services, because demand is high. But it is not true, none of this is in the bill.

Shortly before the Minister of Finance brought down his budget, the Minister of Transport said that there would be rapid rail service between Montreal and Toronto. There was an uproar in Quebec City. People there said, "Once again, you made us a promise and you forgot about us".

We know it takes substantial public investments, but there is nothing in Bill C-26 to give effect to the minister's promises. Since there is nothing in the finance minister's budget or in Bill C-26, we will have to forget about the rapid rail idea for another year.

The railway system will in fact be improved. The Canadian Transportation Agency has been granted more power, as requested, over noise pollution among other things. We must admit that the government has made a bit of progress. I give it that, since this allows the Transportation Agency to examine complaints about noise and require the railways to take measures to reduce the harmful effects of noise as much as possible.

Obviously this is not a legal requirement, but a policy. In the past, even if the Transportation Agency acted as a mediator, it had no authority to follow up and ensure that the company respected the policies that had been mutually agreed upon. At least now, when there is an agreement between the parties, the Canadian Transportation Agency will have the authority to ensure that commitments are met.

Deregulation of rail transportation has resulted in cut-throat competition and downsizing at the railroad yards. When railway cars are coupled together for repairs and so forth, they are unmanned. This means some major jolts. Everything is rushed and hurried and there is a lot of noise. It was no longer tolerable, and that is a fact. It is not because new people are involved. It was the same people who lived near the same railroad yards. This began in the early 1990s, in 1992 when the entire railway system was deregulated and turned upside down across Canada. Private industry came in and the companies were listed on the stock exchange.

The same problem still exists. Profitability comes at the expense of neighbours and noise pollution. There were so many complaints that the government was receptive to the problems faced by communities bordering on railroad yards.

But that does not solve the problem with the minister's promises. For months—and I could even say since the last election—the minister has been travelling across the country promising a rapid rail service in the Montreal-Toronto corridor. Because of pressure, he finally extended this service to Quebec City. Everyone who had hopes in this respect will have to be patient, however, because the whole plan has been put off for at least one year. That is clear, because the investments would have had to be announced in the budget and there was no such announcement in the finance minister's latest budget.

Let us turn to the issue of public transportation or transit. It is so wonderful to hear the minister boast about what the federal government will do in terms of mass transit, public transportation and the environment.

Public transportation needs are known. Transportation companies across the country have made very specific requests. They have outlined their needs. Believe it or not, excluding the minister's great speech, there is absolutely nothing in Bill C-26 to address these needs.

• (1640)

That is why I said at the very beginning of my remarks that intellectual honesty was required. The minister could have admitted that he missed the boat at the press conference on his "Straight Ahead" policy and was making up for it today with a speech on that policy. Instead, he prefaced his speech by saying it was a speech on Bill C-26. There is absolutely nothing in there.

While the minister just told us about his great concerns about public transportation and the need to invest, especially since the ratification of Kyoto, there is absolutely nothing to that effect in Bill C-26. There is nothing in there, less than nothing in fact.

Government Orders

Naturally, there were needs and requests were made. It is not that the needs were not identified. As I said, transportation companies all had sent requests to the federal government. It is likely that all members of this House, at least those representing ridings where these companies operate, were approached. The companies came to tell us, "Look, we know what our needs are and what we want. We want a long-term program. We want to be able to develop".

The Bloc Québécois knew where the money could come from. Since 1996, the federal government has been collecting 1.5 cents per litre for the elimination of the deficit. That goal was achieved in 1998 but, every time you fill up at the gas station, the government still collects 1.5 cents per litre.

The 1.5 cents were for the elimination of the deficit. What has the federal government been doing since 1998? It has taken that money, put it in the consolidated fund and invested it elsewhere. Some would say maliciously that the government has been very generous to its friends since 1998. Of course, this may have stopped because of some pretty serious investigations. In any case, in 2002, changes were made to the sponsorship program.

However, a lot of money has been collected since that time. The 1.5 cents per litre, which represent over \$700 million, could very well have been used for public transportation. For the government, it would have been a good opportunity to do such a thing. And we certainly made the suggestion. We had found a way, and the proposal had even been very well received by stakeholders. I remember that, in the Quebec City area, people had even made calculations. For the new city of Quebec, the 1.5 cents per litre would have gone a long way toward meeting that city's public transit needs.

However, even after the finance minister's last budget that will be voted on tonight, the 1.5 cents per litre still belong to the federal government. Each time you fill up, once a week or once every two weeks, the federal government still collects the 1.5 cents per litre.

The transport minister is always making fine speeches in the House to remind us that the focus will now be on public transportation and that the government will start investing in public transportation because of the Kyoto protocol. But there is no mention of that in here and the government keeps collecting 1.5 cents a litre to wipe out its deficit, a deficit it wiped out 1998. That is how public affairs are being managed by the Liberal Party.

Again, Bill C-26 makes no mention of road transportation. The minister told us he wanted top quality roads. And when I say there is nothing in this bill, it includes the 24 blank pages I showed the House earlier. Road transportation is not mentioned anywhere in the bill. The minister said that it is included in the major infrastructure programs brought forward since the 2001 budget.

Yes, there is \$6 billion out there, but it is not only for road transportation. The program is called the strategic infrastructure fund. That is how things stand. The minister can well talk about the \$6 billion. The first \$2 billion is for a 5 year period. The last \$2 billion is spread out over a 10 year period.

Again, we are talking about \$6 billion for the whole country. In Quebec, the money could be used for municipal infrastructure, for instance, like water systems and other such things. Projects have to cost over \$75 million to be eligible. If we can get our act together

and exert a lot of pressure, we estimate that about 50% of the strategic infrastructure fund could be spent on the Canadian road and highway system.

• (1645)

As for the \$6 billion the minister referred to just now, half of that has been taken away. There is \$3 billion left.

When we calculate that \$1 billion is spread over 5 years, and the last \$2 billion over 10, we are forced to conclude that there is not a single cent available before 2004-05, and only \$50 million for 2004-05. There is nothing in 2003-04 for the last \$2 billion. That does not make a lot of money, considering the \$3 billion promised by the Liberal government in the province of Quebec. These were promises made by the federal Liberal Party during the last election campaign: for Quebec alone, more than \$3 billion.

There will be some celebrating because the highway 30 project has been announced, and highway 175 also. Agreements have yet to be reached on highways 185, 35 and 50. I see the smile on the face of my colleague from Hull—Aylmer, who is very much aware that an agreement has yet to be reached on highway 50.

In some ways, there are still some very important projects left, and there are surely others in other parts of Canada. I have just mentioned the needs in the province of Quebec. We are well aware that the federal government is not going to give it all to Quebec.

I have just demonstrated this. In maritime transport and ports, we are behind the rest of Canada. This is the situation in a number of areas. However, in some ways, there is absolutely nothing for us in Bill C-26. As far as highways are concerned, there is nothing but the minister's speech, and that commits only him. The Minister of Transport is not the Minister of Finance. So when questions are asked of him—and I find this just lovely—he replies, "I will be pleased to come to the committee. You can ask us anything at all".

I have been on that committee for as long as I have been in this House. I can indeed ask the minister anything I want, but the problem is he is not the one with the money. The Minister of Finance is. And for the strategic infrastructure program, it is the Minister of Industry. Obviously, he can afford to make all sorts of announcements and promises, but the problem is that he is not the one who manages the money. That is the reality of the Liberal government.

It decided to create a lot of programs spread over several departments so that every time a minister speaks to the people, they always have the impression that they have to believe him. The Minister of Transport said that he was going to use money from the Canada strategic infrastructure fund for a certain project. The problem is that he is not the one who is managing that fund; that responsibility belongs to the Minister of Industry.

Government Orders

That is the way it is and this is why I am raising this issue today with regard to Bill C-26. It is just another example. The speech delivered by the minister on his "Straight Ahead" policy has nothing to do with Bill C-26 that is before the House, which does not deal at all with road transportation.

The minister even talked about municipal infrastructure. Indeed, problems and agreements concerning municipal infrastructure are mentioned in his press release and in "Straight Ahead".

What the Liberal government is offering in the budget that will be adopted tonight is \$1 billion over 10 years. This means \$100 million a year to help municipalities. The minister even suggested earlier that unions of municipalities did not have a good understanding of the budget. But they do have a very good understanding of the budget.

In Quebec, the Coalition sur les infrastructures municipales probably sent to every member from that province its document saying that the needs in terms of municipal infrastructure are \$1.185 billion a year over a period of 10 years. It was \$1 billion a year when it made its first submission to the federal government two years ago.

The amount has increased by \$185 million because there has been no investment in this strategic program to support municipal infrastructure.

The federal government has announced \$1 billion divided equally over a period of 10 years, that is \$100 million a year for the whole country, while Quebec alone needs \$1.185 billion a year.

On the issue of infrastructure, I want to point out to all my hon. colleagues in the House that the oldest cities in Canada are located in Quebec. Why? Because the development of Canada started in Quebec. It is only normal that the infrastructure in Quebec is older than anywhere else in Canada. It is normal that the needs are also greater in Quebec than elsewhere in Canada. This is something my colleagues in the House have to understand.

I am not ashamed to say so. I was president of the Union des municipalités du Québec for three years. It is a well known fact that part of the water system in some cities, like Quebec City and Montreal, are still made of wood.

• (1650)

Why? Because it is normal for the oldest cities in Canada. What is not normal is that 40% of the drinking water passing through these water systems is being lost. We need a major program to protect our drinking water, which contributes to our quality of life.

Of course, the money set out for this is still \$100 million more than what we had before, which was nothing. The problem is that it will only meet 10% of the needs of Quebec municipalities. Communities throughout the rest of Canada are faced with the same problem.

Some would argue that municipalities simply misunderstood, which is not true. They understand quite well. They understand that the federal government decided not to give more money. So, the government should have the intellectual honesty to tell the cities they it did everything it could by giving them \$100 million and it knows that it is not enough.

Some day, hopefully, the government will understand that the quality of life of its citizens is linked to the quality of the drinking water and it will invest the money needed to ensure that our municipal underground infrastructure is up to the international reputation Canada wants to be able to maintain.

Again, even though the minister referred to infrastructure in his speech earlier, Bill C-26 contains nothing. Even though the minister shared with us his thoughts, and fleshed them out a great deal, as far as I am concerned, the problem is that Bill C-26 does not solve anything because it contains absolutely nothing about infrastructure.

As for transparency and airport authorities, the minister said that he would be introducing a bill in the near future dealing with airports. He said at the beginning of his comments today that Bill C-26 does not cover airport authorities. These are supragovernmental administrations whose representatives are appointed and recommended by the federal government. We would have liked to have seen more democratically elected and appointed representatives for these airport authorities. Quebeckers who are listening will be familiar with the ADM or Aéroports de Montréal, one of these authorities in Quebec.

In committee, I even told the minister, who was singing the praises of the airport authorities, that I would have liked him to do a survey of what Quebeckers thought of ADM's performance. I already know what the results would be; I would not need to wait to see them. I know what Quebeckers think of ADM.

ADM completely dropped the ball on one of the finest airport facilities in Canada, and the largest federal property in Quebec, the Aéroport de Mirabel. They prefer doing business with the Toronto airport rather than Mirabel. That is the truth about ADM, which decided to develop Dorval at all costs, to the detriment of Montreal's north shore and Mirabel.

We are being promised new legislation that will bring more transparency to airport authorities. I look forward to it. Quebeckers are waiting for transparency legislation that will, I hope, force ADM to answer questions from reporters for a change.

Believe it or not, ADM manages money and property that belong to the federal government through a lease. These include a hotel at Mirabel, an airport and a terminal, and ADM does not answer questions from reporters. If they do not answer reporters, I do not think they will answer questions from a member of Parliament. I am not even sure they answer questions from the minister. That is the fact of the matter.

This is how things are being managed. This was a choice made by the Liberal government. It clearly said in the policy, in 1994, that management was being handed over to an independent organization. This suited the government's purposes because it did not need to take a political stand with regard, among other issues, to Dorval and Mirabel.

Government Orders

This allowed the government to reach its objective of closing Mirabel and transferring the flights. Now, that did not happen, although there are fewer flights. It says here that ADM had a \$27.2 million surplus. However, traffic decreased by 7.7%. That is the truth. Where did the traffic from Dorval go? Not to Mirabel, no, they closed Mirabel. It went to Toronto and Montreal. The government just invested \$300 million in Ottawa. Probably because it benefits Ontario.

This is how the federal government is letting its equipment and property be managed, by not getting politically involved, but still succeeding in taking from Quebec to give to Ontario.

• (1655)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Agriculture.

I will now hear the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I think you would find unanimous consent for the adoption of four motions. The first motion reads as follows:

I move:

That, in relation to its study on long-term care for veterans, the Subcommittee on Veteran Affairs of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veteran Affairs be authorized to travel to eastern Canada from March 31 to April 4, 2003, and that the necessary staff do accompany the committee.

• (1700)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

TRANSPORT

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That, in relation to its study of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway system, a group comprised of 5 government members and one member each of the opposition parties of the Subcommittee on Marine Transportation of the Standing Committee on Transport be authorized to travel to Samia, Ontario in April 2003, and that the necessary staff do accompany the subcommittee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

TRANSPORT

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the next motion is as follows. I move:

That, in relation to its study of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway system, a group comprised of five government members and one member of each of the opposition parties of the Subcommittee on Marine Transportation of the Standing Committee on Transport be authorized to travel to Chicago in the U.S. in April 2003, and that the necessary staff do accompany the subcommittee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, finally, I move:

That, in relation to its examination in view of strengthening economic relations between Canada and Asia-Pacific, a group comprised of nine members of the Subcommittee on International Trade, Trade Disputes and Investment of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade be authorized to travel to the Asia-Pacific region from May 2 to May 17, 2003, and that the necessary staff do accompany the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

TRANSPORTATION AMENDMENT ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-26, an act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act, to enact the VIA Rail Canada Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have just a few words on the bill before the House today, Bill C-26, an omnibus bill dealing with a whole series of transportation issues. I want to begin by saying that our critic, the member for Churchill, is not here today. She is travelling with the aboriginal affairs committee and would otherwise be here to make a well fleshed out presentation in terms of our position on the bill.

The bill before the House today is a bill that we call an omnibus bill. It covers a whole series of topics, from air transportation to rail transportation to transportation of naval vessels and the like. It covers deregulation and a whole series of issues in this country that are transportation oriented, so I just want to say a few words that hopefully the government will take to heart.

Government Orders

In terms of the last decade or so, my main concern about transportation has been the tremendous deregulation of transportation in our country. We have seen it that has not been helpful to the ordinary citizens, the ordinary consumers of transportation right across the country.

We have also seen the privatization of some of our transportation industries. Air Canada is a prime example of that. Despite privatization and deregulation, Air Canada is in serious financial trouble today. It has also stopped serving some of the smaller markets that it used to serve in different parts of Canada.

I think these are things that should be looked at in terms of the future. We should be looking at re-regulation in some areas of the transportation industry in Canada.

We support the bill before the House. We think it is a positive step. We are not greatly enthusiastic about a lot of it, but it is a positive step in the right direction. When our critic gets back, she will have a chance to speak on the bill and to look at it in the transport committee as well.

The other issue that concerns me about transportation is that in the recent federal budget there was very little in terms of investment in transportation in Canada and very little in terms of investment in infrastructure in the country. I know my friend in the Liberal Party across the way is interested in urban infrastructure and urban issues. This is something the government has fallen down on in the last decade. With a huge surplus, the last budget in particular was an opportunity to put more money into transportation and infrastructure. That is needed for all kinds of reasons. We have environmental problems, traffic congestion problems and problems of frequent travel from point A to point B right across the country.

About a year or so ago I was supposed to speak in Peterborough. I flew to Pearson airport in Toronto. It is about 150 kilometres between Pearson and Peterborough. I thought that would take about an hour and a half on a huge freeway. I got to the meeting an hour and a half late. It took three hours between Pearson and Peterborough because of all the traffic congestion and big trucks on the road. All the pollution being emitted by those trucks and vehicles really shows us in Technicolor the need for increased investment in transportation to get some of the trucks off the road in the country, to have a better rail system in Canada so that there is more transport of cargo by rail as well as transportation of people by rail. These are things that have to happen. Again, the federal government missed the boat in the last budget by not putting in very much at all in terms of investment in transportation and urban infrastructure in Canada.

When I look at my own part of the world, rural Saskatchewan, I can see what has happened there over the last 20 years as well through greater deregulation of transportation. In particular, I see what has happened to the whole rural elevator system and the rural rail lines and branch lines across the Prairies.

In town after town, elevators are now abandoned because the rail lines have been pulled up. With the rail lines gone, trucking is now a common thing for transportation of grain from the farm to an inland terminal. Many of the prairie roads were built with thin membrane concrete and when the big trucks are put on the road they damage

and destroy the roads. There are all kinds of potholes on them. It has been very costly for provincial governments to rebuild the roads with a thicker membrane that can withstand the trucks hauling the grain to market.

● (1705)

That is one of the consequences of Liberal Party and Conservative Party policy over the years in terms of abandoning rail lines. When rail lines across the Prairies are abandoned, there is more trucking. When there is more trucking, there is damage to the roads. When there is more trucking it is harmful to the environment. It is more costly for the farmer. As well, when the farmers truck their grain to a market that is further away, they tend to shop in the bigger centres and then the small towns disappear, as they are disappearing right across rural Canada.

These are some of the issues that are extremely important. We have to put a lot more money into investing in urban and rural transportation infrastructure so that we can get more of the trucks off the roads and get more transportation and people onto the rails.

We could look to Europe or of course Japan, but let us look at Europe. We see a lot more rail transportation there than we have in this country, in both people and goods. That is the kind of direction we should be moving in, particularly when it comes to VIA Rail in the high density corridor between Windsor and Quebec City. Again, these are issues that are extremely important.

I mentioned Air Canada and the airlines. We saw the privatization of Air Canada. We see the problems that Air Canada now has. We have seen the lack of proper servicing to smaller communities. I believe that once again there should be a government equity investment in Air Canada on behalf of the taxpayers of the country.

The other thing I wanted to mention is that the government very recently brought in the airport security tax. That was a \$24 tax. The government reduced that tax in the budget of a few weeks ago, but again, that tax was put in to provide more security for airports. That did not occur. For example, a few times in the last year I was at a small airport in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. They had one person with just a wand who was trying to provide security at the airport in Prince Albert. They collect the \$24 fee and people fly in and out of the airport, and they still only have one person with a wand. With all the money they have collected, they could have a better security system.

These are the kinds of things that I believe are important and should be addressed in the bill that is before the House today. We are a large country. We are geographically the second largest country in the world, surpassed only by the Russian federation in geography and pure mileage. It should be our country that leads the world in terms of transportation technology. It should be our country that leads the world in terms of a national transportation policy.

Government Orders

In our country we do not even have a national highways policy. Most countries do have a national highways policy. In Canada, most of the money for building highways comes from the provinces, from provincial revenues. For a small province like Saskatchewan that becomes very expensive. With just one million people, Saskatchewan has more highways on a per capita basis than any other jurisdiction in North America. Without a national highways policy in Canada, it becomes very expensive for a small province with a small budget to maintain a very thorough highway system.

These are the issues that are extremely important. We need a national highways policy. We need a national rail policy. We need a national airline policy. They would help bind this country together.

Grain movement and grain handling issues are also very important. I know we have gone a long way down the road and it is very difficult, most times impossible, to turn back the clock, but there are some things that can be done. There is a group on the Prairies now that is interested in buying some of the short line rail lines. That is dominated by farm groups and supported by provincial governments.

There is another group that is interested in purchasing hopper cars. The federal government purchased 12,000 or 13,000 hopper cars, I believe, primarily in the 1970s, to transport grain in Canada. It did this in order to make sure we met our export commitments to our customers and to make sure that farmers had a way to transport their grain. The federal government now wants out of the hopper car business. There is a group called the Farmer Rail Car Coalition, supported by the provincial governments of the Prairies, which is interested in purchasing those hopper cars on behalf of the farmers to move grain across the country. That should be looked at as well.

These are some of the issues. As I said before, our member for Churchill will be back in the House shortly and will shepherd this bill for our party through the House of Commons and through the committee.

• (1710)

Mr. Rex Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls, PC): Madam Speaker, a couple of weeks ago the hon. minister released his transportation plan called "Straight Ahead". There is nothing straight ahead with this document. It has more curves and bumps than the Trans-Canada Highway, although there are positives. I am suggesting that we look at some areas that need to be addressed.

In 2002 national airports paid \$240 million in rent to the Government of Canada. In 2003 this rent is expected to rise by \$20 million. If this continues, rent demands will grow to \$500 million by 2010.

About four weeks ago the Atlantic caucus of Liberal members presented a plan developed by the people who understood the local issues affecting their towns. I ask, why did the minister choose to ignore it? Why did he not include this in his "Straight Ahead" vision for Canada? Why would he ignore the necessity and the importance these small airports contribute, both socially and economically, to Atlantic Canada? They are crucial to the long term economic future of the communities they serve. Air Canada officials have criticized this document for its lack of an action plan.

How will the recommendations be enacted? What will the price tag be?

We all know that the consumers will pay for the minister's misguided approach to the transportation issues facing Canada today.

Is this the minister's personal agenda? Surely he is not listening to what his caucus members and the transportation officials are saying?

Both air transit officials and Canadian National Railway officials state that there is no practical need for this. Let me repeat again that there is no practical need for this. We should be moving forward, not backward.

Most times we learn from our mistakes. However the minister should have reviewed the consequences of toll roads and the negative impact upon the downtown district, in which the government has invested so heavily to rejuvenate in the past decade.

The minister's predecessors recognized the economic impact and the heritage that these areas contribute to the Canadian way of life. The City of Montreal tried toll roads and, guess what? They failed. The province of New Brunswick experimented with toll roads and they too learned that toll roads were unacceptable to Canadians.

We are all trying to work within the Kyoto protocol. However the long lines of traffic and idling vehicles will contribute heavily and put additional stress on our already fragile environment.

The cost of tolls will be robbing dollars from the Canadian motorist who already pay provincial tax, income tax, municipal tax, water tax, fuel and excise taxes, which are supposed to be directed into our transportation infrastructure programs.

Premier Eves is proposing that 2% of revenue generated by the fuel excise tax be given back to municipalities which are charged with the responsibility of building and maintaining our roads. They know best what the local issues are.

Why could the minister not be more creative? The mayor of the City of Toronto was quoted in the *Toronto Star* as saying "This is the dumbest idea I have ever heard". The Minister of Transport should take heed.

In this plan it is apparent that he never considered the cost associated with implementing such a cumbersome piece of legislation. How can we standardize policies when all provinces have their own issues?

Safety regulations are a priority, which we all agree with. However this plan does not deal with compliance or the additional workload already placed upon our highway safety inspectors. Will the minister allocate the necessary funds and is he cognizant of the impact upon Canadian consumers?

A couple of weeks ago shipping officials had their meetings here in Ottawa. I had the pleasure of meeting with a delegation of them who were quick to point out that there was not one issue addressed in this plan, which basically has left them shaking their heads.

If we are going to expect buy-in and contributions from the shipping sector, then we will have to pay more than lip service. They were concerned about the new security policies and how they will affect how they do their business.

Government Orders

•(1715)

Databases are maintained, ship manifests provided and unnecessarily delays are a way of life, which is both costly and a hindrance in doing business in the shipping industry in Canada.

Submissions were made that would enable the shipping companies to remain competitive in the international markets. I have to ask why this plan excludes insight and expertise in the developing of this plan?

The hon. minister believes that after consulting with the transportation sector for the past couple of years that all that is required is a little tweaking. This is clearly a government without a vision for Canada's transportation network.

I have to say that the hon. minister has missed the boat. He is including \$40 million for showcasing the transportation network in Canada. This we feel is better left to the transportation industry. When did government get into the marketing and advertising of private industries?

We need a mass transportation system and a national highway development plan. It is time for this country to have transit roads for the trucking industry, thus making our highways safer for the general public.

I ask the hon. minister to go back to the drawing board and once again ask for input from a cross section of the transportation industry and implement those recommendations.

Will the minister assure Canadians that the government will not miss the boat again?

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member's party is probably in favour of the continuation of VIA Rail as a highly subsidized government operation.

I spoke at length today about how VIA Rail was subsidized half a million dollars a day, which is pretty phenomenal. Not only that, but it has been given a lot of other money as well. It has been given a total of \$3 billion since the Liberals took power. That is \$10 million from each and every riding on average in this country. I think we have to address that.

This railroad, VIA Rail, competes directly against the private sector. Nowhere does it do that more than right here in Ontario. The Quebec-Windsor corridor is a highly viable operation for the private sector. The problem with the federal government, and the minister raised the point today, is that it is talking about putting \$3 billion into, not the Quebec-Windsor corridor but just Montreal-Toronto alone.

Air Canada is in serious trouble. Those of us who have to fly to the opposite ends of this country, which is what the hon. member has to do, know the importance of having reliable air transportation. The minister said, wrongly, that one of the most viable links for Air Canada was Calgary, Vancouver and he mentioned a couple of other spots. In reality, the most expensive ones are its international flights. Its second biggest revenue producer is the Toronto-Montreal-Ottawa triangle. If the government highly subsidizes a high speed rail system

to go into operation, funded by the taxpayers, from one end of the country to the other, Air Canada will be in serious trouble.

Does the member feel that this could be a problem, not just because of the Air Canada situation, but because of the minister's own comment about the air security tax? With regard to the air security tax, the minister said that the reason he was charging that tax was that those who travel through airports and incur this problem have to be the ones who pay it. Yet we let rail travellers travel across the country and they are not the ones who are paying it.

I would ask for the hon. member's comments in terms of whether he believes that this one transportation system should be subsidized while all others are not, and if he recognizes the problems it creates, not only for the taxpayers' purse but for the private sector transportation system within this country.

•(1720)

Mr. Rex Barnes: Madam Speaker, with the whole picture of transportation it is important that we look for a balance. There is no doubt that what the hon. member has said is true. One of the biggest things is that sometimes government interferes too much in the private sector. As a result of that we try to do too much for the private sector.

This special quota needs to be done, but should it be done with the public purse and should it be heavily subsidized? While I think that we as a government should be in the business of lending a helping hand, to what extent do we do that? I think that if we do it for one we will have to do it for all.

It is important to remember that consumers will pay for whatever happens in the transportation industry. If we are going to ask taxpayers to pay on one side, why should we as a government bail the industry out on another side? We need to find a balance. It is important that we talk to all stakeholders and find out what the best route is to take.

The minister seems to be putting a huge chunk of the transportation money into central Canada and forgetting about the other areas. The problem is that he has not listened to what people have been saying. If he had listened, he probably would have found a better way to come up with this plan.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague carefully and I am fully aware of some of the concerns he raised. I would like him to comment on transportation as it affects our own province in particular. I will mention two examples.

The first example has to do with the complete lack of infrastructure funding. The government, in its recent budget, talked about \$3 billion in infrastructure funding, and everybody said that was a lot of money. One billion dollars of that will go into special projects, which will take it away from regular road work, et cetera. The other \$2 billion will be spread over 10 years. In a country like Canada, \$2 billion spread over 10 years will not be enough to keep the potholes filled up. I would like him to comment on that.

Government Orders

My second example has to do with air transportation and the cutbacks that have negatively affected eastern Canada in particular, but more particularly the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and, even more particularly, the area of Gander. I would like him to comment on those cutbacks.

Mr. Rex Barnes: Madam Speaker, this year I think the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador may only receive approximately \$3 million to \$5 million for highway development. It has already been stated in the province that it will be short approximately \$50 million to keep up with the basic needs of the province. The province is spending about \$50 million right now and it will be short approximately \$50 million. When we talk about \$3 million for the whole national scheme, it seems like a lot of money but it is not a lot.

As a result, only a small amount of dollars will be spent in Newfoundland and Labrador and Atlantic Canada. I do not think there is any doubt that the provinces will have to come back to the federal government for more money.

In Newfoundland and Labrador right now the cost to fly out of the province is tremendous. People are being taxed to death. Airport authorities have been asking the government to get rid of the passenger tax because it has been a major hindrance. Airport authorities are being burdened to death with the excise tax with regard to fuel. If some of this money were rebated to the airports then a lot of the airports could stay more competitive than what they are today.

I think the government has missed the boat in that area. It has to start rebating some of the money it is taking from airports throughout Atlantic Canada. If it does not eliminate the tax totally, some of the airports in Atlantic Canada will not survive. If the government does not totally eliminate the tax, there will be a very negative impact on the whole of Atlantic Canada. Atlantic Canada cannot afford that because it will be the one hardest hit throughout the country. The government needs to start listening to airport authorities and the people who use the system.

● (1725)

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, my question for the member for Gander—Grand Falls is very simple. How would the member see being able to achieve the goal of eliminating the bias against rural Canada that currently exists as a consequence of the way our taxation regime and infrastructure support work in the current framework? They discriminate against rural Canada in a way that I know the member for Gander—Grand Falls would understand as well as I, being from northern Vancouver Island, do.

Mr. Rex Barnes: Madam Speaker, some days there is never an easy question.

The important thing is to look at the rural areas and population decline, but individuals still need air transportation and a transportation service. There is a cost sometimes to help out the people most in need. The urban centres are getting all the big breaks with regard to the transportation sector.

I firmly believe that we have to sit down and talk to the stakeholders, talk to people from the areas that are affected and come up with a Canadian plan for Canadian taxpayers that will have little impact on the taxpayers themselves but more of an impact on the fact

that Air Canada and other carriers provide an equal level of service for all of Canada.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I have a tendency to speak very quickly and to mumble, but inside of one minute I suppose I can level what may be the thesis of a greater talk that I will have the opportunity to do in the future.

The greatest criticism of this bill is, frankly, the way in which it was brought in by the Minister of Transport. I am pleased that the Minister of Transport is sitting on our side of the House at the moment so this criticism will be crystal clear. I know he heard it at committee and he will hear it again in the future. The way in which this bill was brought in was really unfortunate.

The bill was brought in a week after the federal budget. Therefore, any of the promises or anything else brought forward in the bill will be of utterly no use because the transport minister failed to stand up to his cabinet colleagues, who for a decade have been shutting out the transportation sector. He brought it in a week after the budget, therefore rendering the bill and all of its contents completely meaningless.

* * *

● (1730)

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

The House resumed from February 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act (political financing), be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): It being 5:30 p.m., pursuant to order made on Monday, March 17, it is my duty to put forthwith all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of Bill C-24.

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

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

Pursuant to order made earlier today, the length of bells will be 15 minutes.

● (1800)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 54)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Benoit
Burton
Chatters
Duncan
Fitzpatrick
Gallant
Gouk
Grey
Harris
Hilstrom
Jaffer
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Merrifield
Moore
Rajotte
Reynolds
Skelton
Sorenson
Stinson
Thompson (Wild Rose)
White (North Vancouver)

Anders
Bailey
Breitkreuz
Cadman
Day
Epp
Forseth
Goldring
Grewal
Harper
Hill (Macleod)
Hinton
Johnston
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Penson
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Schmidt
Solberg
Spencer
Strahl
Vellacott
Williams— 48

NAYS

Members

Adams
Anderson (Victoria)
Assadourian
Augustine
Bagnell
Barnes (London West)
Beaumier
Bélangier
Bennett
Bigras
Blaikie
Bonwick
Boudria
Bradshaw
Bryden
Byrne
Calder
Cardin
Carroll
Catterall
Chamberlain
Chrétien
Coderre
Comartin
Cotler
Cullen
Dalphond-Guiral
Desrochers
Dion
Doyle
Duceppe
Easter
Eggleton
Farrar
Folco
Fournier
Fry
Gagnon (Champlain)
Gaudet
Girard-Bujold
Goodale
Grose

Allard
Assad
Asselin
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bakopanos
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Bélair
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Binet
Blondin-Andrew
Borotsik
Bourgeois
Brisson
Bulte
Caccia
Caplan
Carignan
Castonguay
Cauchon
Charbonneau
Clark
Collenette
Copps
Crête
Cuzner
Davies
DeVillers
Discepola
Drouin
Duplain
Efford
Eyking
Finlay
Fontana
Frulla
Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gauthier
Godin
Graham
Guarnieri

Government Orders

Guay
Harb
Harvey
Herron
Jackson
Jordan
Karygiannis
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Laliberte
Lanctôt
LeBlanc
Leung
Lincoln
Macklin
Malhi
Manley
Marleau
Masse
McCallum
McLellan
Ménard
Minna
Myers
Normand
O'Brien (Labrador)
O'Reilly
Pacetti
Paquette
Parrish
Peric
Peterson
Phinney
Pillitteri
Pratt
Proctor
Provenzano
Reed (Halton)
Robillard
Rocheleau
Roy
Savoy
Scott
Sgro
Simard
St-Hilaire
St-Julien
Steckle
Stoffer
Telegdi
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tonks
Ur
Vanclief
Wasylycia-Leis
Whelan
Wood— 197

Guimond
Harvard
Heam
Ianno
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Keyes
Knutson
Laframboise
Lalonde
Lastewka
Lee
Lill
MacAulay
Mahoney
Maloney
Marcil
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Mathews
McGuire
McTeague
Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
Murphy
Nault
Nystrom
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Owen
Pagtakhan
Paradis
Patry
Peschisolido
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Plamondon
Price
Proulx
Redman
Regan
Robinson
Rock
Sauvageau
Scherrer
Serré
Shepherd
Speller
St-Jacques
St. Denis
Stewart
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi
Torsney
Valeri
Wappel
Wayne
Wilfert

PAIRED

Members

Alcock
Bonin
Godfrey
Loubier
McCormick
Picard (Drummond)
Tremblay
Bergeron
Dromisky
Hubbard
Marceau
Perron
Saada
Venne— 14

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

The next question is on the main motion for second reading of Bill C-24.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I think you would find consent in the House that the vote on the previous motion be applied in reverse to the vote on the main motion on Bill C-24 and to the vote on the motion on Bill C-2, with the addition to the Liberals voting of the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, the member for Scarborough East, the member for Oakville and the member for Scarborough Centre.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, I would like to add the member for Cumberland—Colchester to the Progressive Conservative members voting.

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

(Division No. 55)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Allard
Anderson (Victoria)	Assad
Assadourian	Asselin
Augustine	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bagnell	Bakopanos
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)	Barnes (London West)
Beaumier	Bélair
Bélanger	Bellemare
Bennett	Bevilacqua
Bigras	Binet
Blaikie	Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick	Borotsik
Boudria	Bourgeois
Bradshaw	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Byrne	Caccia
Calder	Cannis
Caplan	Cardin
Carignan	Carroll
Casey	Castonguay
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Charbonneau
Chrétien	Clark
Coderre	Collenette
Comartin	Copps
Cotler	Crête
Cullen	Cuzner
Dalphond-Guiral	Davies
Desrochers	DeVillers
Dion	Discepola
Doyle	Drouin
Duceppe	Duplain
East	Efford
Eggleton	Eyking
Farrar	Finlay
Folco	Fontana
Fournier	Frulla
Fry	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Champlain)	Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gaudet	Gauthier
Girard-Bujold	Godin
Goodale	Graham
Grose	Guarnieri
Guay	Guimond
Harb	Harvard
Harvey	Hearn
Ianno	Jackson
Jennings	Jordan
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Keyes	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan

Laframboise	Liberte
Lalonde	Lancôt
Lastewka	LeBlanc
Lee	Leung
Lill	Lincoln
MacAulay	Macklin
Mahoney	Malhi
Maloney	Manley
Marcil	Marleau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Masse
Matthews	McCallum
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan	McTeague
Ménard	Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
Minna	Murphy
Myers	Nault
Normand	Nystrom
O'Brien (Labrador)	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly	Owen
Pacetti	Pagtakhan
Paquette	Paradis
Parrish	Patry
Peric	Peschisolido
Peterson	Pettigrew
Phinney	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pillitteri	Plamondon
Pratt	Price
Proctor	Proulx
Provenzano	Redman
Reed (Halton)	Regan
Robillard	Robinson
Rocheleau	Rock
Roy	Sauvageau
Savoy	Scherrer
Scott	Serré
Sgro	Shepherd
Simard	Speller
St-Hilaire	St-Jacques
St-Julien	St. Denis
Steckle	Stewart
Stoffer	Szabo
Telegdi	Thibault (West Nova)
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)	Tirabassi
Tonks	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Volpe
Wappel	Wasylycia-Leis
Wayne	Whelan
Wilfert	Wood — 200

NAYS

Members

Anders
Bailey
Breitkreuz
Burton
Chatters
Duncan
Fitzpatrick
Gallant
Gouk
Grey
Harris
Hill (Macleod)
Hinton
Johnston
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Penson
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Schmidt
Solberg
Spencer
Strahl
Vellacott
Williams — 50

Government Orders

PAIRED

Members

Alcock	Bergeron
Bonin	Dromisky
Godfrey	Hubbard
Loubier	Marceau
McCormick	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Saada
Tremblay	Venne— 14

The Speaker: Since the vote has been applied in reverse, I declare the motion for second reading of Bill C-24 carried. Accordingly, the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

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

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, on Bill C-24, the main motion, the member for Fundy—Royal and the member for Kings—Hants will be voting in opposition to the motion.

The Speaker: Clearly this will not affect the results, but we will make the necessary adjustments on the list of the vote.

* * *

YUKON ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT ACT

The House resumed from February 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, an act to establish a process for assessing the environmental and socio-economic effects of certain activities in Yukon, be read the third time and passed.

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

(Division No. 57)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Allard
Anderson (Victoria)	Assad
Assadourian	Asselin
Augustine	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bagnell	Bakopanos
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)	Barnes (London West)
Beaumier	Bélair
Bélangier	Bellemare
Bennett	Bevilacqua
Bigras	Binet
Blaikie	Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick	Borotsik
Boudria	Bourgeois
Bradshaw	Brisson
Brown	Bryden
Bulte	Byrne
Caccia	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Cardin	Carignan
Carroll	Casey
Castonguay	Catterall
Cauchon	Chamberlain
Charbonneau	Chrétien
Clark	Coderre
Collenette	Comartin
Copps	Cotler
Crête	Cullen
Cuzner	Dalphond-Guiral
Davies	Desrochers
DeVillers	Dion
Discepola	Doyle
Drouin	Duceppe
Duplain	Easter

Efford
 Eyking
 Finlay
 Fontana
 Frulla
 Gagnon (Québec)
 Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
 Gauthier
 Godin
 Graham
 Guarnieri
 Guimond
 Harvard
 Hearn
 Ianno
 Jennings
 Karetak-Lindell
 Keyes
 Knutson
 Laframboise
 Lalonde
 Lastewka
 Lee
 Lill
 MacAulay
 Mahoney
 Maloney
 Marcil
 Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
 Matthews
 McGuire
 McLellan
 Ménard
 Minna
 Myers
 Normand
 O'Brien (Labrador)
 O'Reilly
 Pacetti
 Paquette
 Parrish
 Peric
 Peterson
 Phinney
 Pillitteri
 Pratt
 Proctor
 Provenzano
 Reed (Halton)
 Robillard
 Rocheleau
 Roy
 Savoy
 Scott
 Sgro
 Simard
 St-Hilaire
 St-Julien
 Steckle
 Stoffler
 Telegdi
 Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
 Tonks
 Ur
 Vanclief
 Wappel
 Wayne
 Wilfert

Eggleton
 Farrah
 Folco
 Fournier
 Fry
 Gagnon (Champlain)
 Gaudet
 Girard-Bujold
 Goodale
 Grose
 Guay
 Harb
 Harvey
 Herron
 Jackson
 Jordan
 Karygiannis
 Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
 Kraft Sloan
 Laliberte
 Lanctôt
 LeBlanc
 Leung
 Lincoln
 Macklin
 Malhi
 Manley
 Marleau
 Masse
 McCallum
 McKay (Scarborough East)
 McTeague
 Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
 Murphy
 Nault
 Nystrom
 O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
 Owen
 Pagtakhan
 Paradis
 Patry
 Peschisolido
 Pettigrew
 Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
 Plamondon
 Price
 Proulx
 Redman
 Regan
 Robinson
 Rock
 Sauvageau
 Scherrer
 Serré
 Shepherd
 Speller
 St-Jacques
 St. Denis
 Stewart
 Szabo
 Thibault (West Nova)
 Tirabassi
 Torsney
 Valeri
 Volpe
 Wasylcia-Leis
 Whelan
 Wood— 202

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Anders
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Bailey
Benoit	Breitkreuz
Burton	Cadman
Chatters	Day
Duncan	Epp
Fitzpatrick	Forseth
Gallant	Golding
Gouk	Grewal
Grey	Harper
Harris	Hill (Macleod)

Government Orders

Hilstrom	Hinton
Jaffer	Johnston
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Meredith
Merrifield	Mills (Red Deer)
Moore	Penson
Rajotte	Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Reynolds	Schmidt
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	Spencer
Stinson	Strahl
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Vellacott
White (North Vancouver)	Williams— 48

PAIRED

Members

Alcock	Bergeron
Bonin	Dromisky
Godfrey	Hubbard
Loubier	Marceau
McCormick	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Saada
Tremblay	Venne— 14

The Speaker: With respect to Bill C-2, third reading, in light of the agreement of the House, I now declare the motion for third reading carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

LOBBYISTS REGISTRATION ACT

The House resumed from February 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-15, an act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-15.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find consent that those who voted on the previous motion be recorded as voting on this motion, with Liberal members voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Dale Johnston: Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members will oppose the motion. I would like to add the member for Calgary—Nose Hill to our ranks.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois will vote against this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the members of the NDP vote against this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Party will vote yes to the motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Carignan: Mr. Speaker, I vote yes to the motion.

[*English*]

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I would like to remove the name of the member for Saint-Maurice from this and subsequent votes.

● (1805)

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

(*Division No. 56*)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Allard
Anderson (Victoria)	Assad
Assadourian	Augustine
Bagnell	Bakopanos
Barnes (London West)	Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Beaumier	Bélair
Bélanger	Bellemare
Bennett	Bevilacqua
Binet	Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick	Borotsik
Boudria	Bradshaw
Brisson	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Byrne	Caccia
Calder	Cannis
Caplan	Carignan
Carroll	Casey
Castonguay	Catterall
Cauchon	Chamberlain
Charbonneau	Clark
Coderre	Collenette
Copps	Cotler
Cullen	Cuzner
DeVillers	Dion
Discepola	Doyle
Drouin	Duplain
Easter	Efford
Eggleton	Eyking
Farrah	Finlay
Folco	Fontana
Frulla	Fry
Goodale	Graham
Grose	Guarnieri
Harb	Harvard
Harvey	Hearn
Herron	Ianno
Jackson	Jennings
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson
Kraft Sloan	Laliberte
Lastewka	LeBlanc
Lee	Leung
Lincoln	MacAulay
Macklin	Mahoney
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marcil
Marleau	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Matthews	McCallum
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan	McTeague
Mills (Toronto—Danforth)	Minna
Murphy	Myers
Nault	Normand
O'Brien (Labrador)	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly	Owen
Pacetti	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Peric
Peschisolido	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Pillitteri
Pratt	Price
Proulx	Provenzano
Redman	Reed (Halton)
Regan	Robillard
Rock	Savoy
Scherrer	Scott
Serré	Sgro
Shepherd	Simard
Speller	St-Jacques
St-Julien	St. Denis

Government Orders

Steckle
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi
Torsney
Valeri
Volpe
Wayne
Wilfert

Stewart
Telegdi
Thibault (Saint-Lambert)
Tonks
Ur
Vanclief
Wappel
Whelan
Wood— 162

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Anders
Asselin
Bailey
Bigras
Bourgeois
Burton
Cardin
Comartin
Dalphond-Guiral
Day
Duceppe
Epp
Forsyth
Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gaudet
Girard-Bujold
Goldring
Grewal
Guay
Harper
Hill (MacLeod)
Hinton
Johnston
Laframboise
Lancôt
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Masse
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Nystrom
Penson
Proctor
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Robinson
Roy
Schmidt
Solberg
Spencer
Stinson
Strahl
Vellacott
White (North Vancouver)

Ablonczy
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Benoit
Blaikie
Breitkreuz
Cadman
Chatters
Crête
Davies
Desrochers
Duncan
Fitzpatrick
Fournier
Gagnon (Champlain)
Gallant
Gauthier
Godin
Gouk
Grey
Guimond
Harris
Hilstrom
Jaffer
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lalonde
Lill
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Ménard
Merrifield
Moore
Paquette
Plamondon
Rajotte
Reynolds
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
Skelton
Sorenson
St-Hilaire
Stoffer
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Wasylycia-Leis
Williams— 88

PAIRED

Members

Alcock
Bonin
Godfrey
Loubier
McCormick
Picard (Drummond)
Tremblay

Bergeron
Dromisky
Hubbard
Marceau
Perron
Saada
Venne— 14

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

[*Translation*]

SPECIFIC CLAIMS RESOLUTION ACT

The House resumed from February 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-6, an act to establish the Canadian Centre for the

Independent Resolution of First Nations Specific Claims to provide for the filing, negotiation and resolution of specific claims and to make related amendments to other acts, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion for third reading of Bill C-6.

[*English*]

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find consent in the House that those who voted on the previous motion be recorded as voting on the main motion for third reading on Bill C-6 and on the ways and means Motion No. 2, with Liberal members voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Dale Johnston: Mr. Speaker, on the two motions now before the House, Canadian Alliance members will vote nay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, on the two motions before the House, members of the Bloc Québécois will vote nay.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, on the two motions before the House, members of the NDP vote nay.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Party will vote no to both these motions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Carignan: Mr. Speaker, I vote in favour of both these motions.

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 58*)

YEAS

Members

Adams
Anderson (Victoria)
Assadourian
Bagnell
Barnes (London West)
Bélair
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Boudria
Brown
Bulte
Caccia
Cannis
Carignan
Castonguay
Cauchon
Charbonneau
Collenette
Cotler
Cuzner
Dion
Drouin
Easter

Allard
Assad
Augustine
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bélangier
Bennett
Binet
Bonwick
Bradshaw
Bryden
Byrne
Calder
Caplan
Carroll
Catterall
Chamberlain
Coderre
Copps
Cullen
DeVillers
Discepola
Duplain
Efford

Government Orders

Eggleton
 Farrah
 Folco
 Frulla
 Goodale
 Grose
 Harb
 Harvey
 Jackson
 Jordan
 Karygiannis
 Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
 Kraft Sloan
 Lastewka
 Lee
 Lincoln
 Macklin
 Malhi
 Manley
 Marleau
 Matthews
 McGuire
 McLellan
 Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
 Murphy
 Nault
 O'Brien (Labrador)
 O'Reilly
 Pacetti
 Paradis
 Patry
 Peschisolido
 Pettigrew
 Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
 Pratt
 Proulx
 Redman
 Regan
 Rock
 Scherrer
 Serré
 Shepherd
 Speller
 St-Julien
 Steckle
 Szabo
 Thibault (West Nova)
 Tirabassi
 Torsney
 Valeri
 Volpe
 Whelan
 Wood— 153

Eyking
 Finlay
 Fontana
 Fry
 Graham
 Guarnieri
 Harvard
 Ianno
 Jennings
 Karetak-Lindell
 Keyes
 Knutson
 Laliberte
 LeBlanc
 Leung
 MacAulay
 Mahoney
 Maloney
 Marcil
 Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
 McCallum
 McKay (Scarborough East)
 McTeague
 Minna
 Myers
 Normand
 O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
 Owen
 Pagtakhan
 Parrish
 Peric
 Peterson
 Phinney
 Pillitteri
 Price
 Provenzano
 Reed (Halton)
 Robillard
 Savoy
 Scott
 Sgro
 Simard
 St-Jacques
 St. Denis
 Stewart
 Telegdi
 Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
 Tonks
 Ur
 Vanclief
 Wappel
 Wilfert

Hill (Macleod)
 Hinton
 Johnston
 Laframboise
 Lanctôt
 Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
 Masse
 Meredith
 Mills (Red Deer)
 Nystrom
 Penson
 Proctor
 Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
 Robinson
 Roy
 Schmidt
 Solberg
 Spencer
 Stinson
 Strahl
 Vellacott
 Wayne
 Williams— 97

Hilstrom
 Jaffier
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Lalonde
 Lill
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 Ménard
 Merrifield
 Moore
 Paquette
 Plamondon
 Rajotte
 Reynolds
 Rocheleau
 Sauvageau
 Skelton
 Sorenson
 St-Hilaire
 Stoffer
 Thompson (Wild Rose)
 Wasylycia-Leis
 White (North Vancouver)

PAIRED

Members

Alcock
 Bonin
 Godfrey
 Loubier
 McCormick
 Picard (Drummond)
 Tremblay

Bergeron
 Dromisky
 Hubbard
 Marceau
 Perron
 Saada
 Venne— 14

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from March 17 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

(Division No. 59)

NAYS

Members

Abbott
 Anders
 Asselin
 Bailey
 Benoit
 Blaikie
 Bourgeois
 Brison
 Cadman
 Casey
 Clark
 Crête
 Davies
 Desrochers
 Duceppe
 Epp
 Forseth
 Gagnon (Québec)
 Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
 Gaudet
 Girard-Bujold
 Goldring
 Grewal
 Guay
 Harper
 Hearn

Ablonczy
 Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
 Bachand (Saint-Jean)
 Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
 Bigras
 Borotsik
 Breitzkreuz
 Burton
 Cardin
 Chatters
 Comartin
 Dalphond-Guiral
 Day
 Doyle
 Duncan
 Fitzpatrick
 Fournier
 Gagnon (Champlain)
 Gallant
 Gauthier
 Godin
 Gouk
 Grey
 Guimond
 Harris
 Herron

YEAS

Members

Adams
 Anderson (Victoria)
 Assadourian
 Bagnell
 Barnes (London West)
 Bélair
 Bellemare
 Bevilacqua
 Blondin-Andrew
 Boudria
 Brown
 Bulte
 Caccia
 Cannis
 Carignan
 Castonguay
 Cauchon
 Charbonneau
 Collette
 Cotler
 Cuzner
 Dion
 Drouin
 Easter

Allard
 Assad
 Augustine
 Bakopanos
 Beaumier
 Bélanger
 Bennett
 Binet
 Bonwick
 Bradshaw
 Bryden
 Byrne
 Calder
 Caplan
 Carroll
 Catterall
 Chamberlain
 Coderre
 Copps
 Cullen
 DeVillers
 Discepola
 Duplain
 Efford

Private Members' Business

Eggleton
 Farrah
 Folco
 Frulla
 Goodale
 Grose
 Harb
 Harvey
 Jackson
 Jordan
 Karygiannis
 Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
 Kraft Sloan
 Lastewka
 Lee
 Lincoln
 Macklin
 Malhi
 Manley
 Marleau
 Matthews
 McGuire
 McLellan
 Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
 Murphy
 Nault
 O'Brien (Labrador)
 O'Reilly
 Pacetti
 Paradis
 Patry
 Peschisolido
 Pettigrew
 Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
 Pratt
 Proulx
 Redman
 Regan
 Rock
 Scherrer
 Serré
 Shepherd
 Speller
 St-Julien
 Steckle
 Szabo
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The Speaker: I declare ways and means Motion No. 2 carried.

● (1810)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): It being 6:10 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CANADA STUDENT LOANS PROGRAM

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC) moved:

Motion No. 205

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider eliminating the parental contribution standard from the Canada Student Loan program.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to rise in the House today and speak to a private member's motion that I tabled on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party. It calls upon the government to take a leadership role in dealing with a national crisis in Canada, that of the accessibility of post-secondary education.

The motion reads, "That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider", consider being the operative word, "eliminating the parental contribution standard from the Canada Student Loan program".

NAYS

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Abbott
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 Asselin
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 Blaikie
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 Cadman
 Casey
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 Crête
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 Girard-Bujold
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 Grewal
 Guay
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 Hearn

Ablonczy
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 Bachand (Saint-Jean)
 Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
 Bigras
 Borotsik
 Breitzkreuz
 Burton
 Cardin
 Chatters
 Comartin
 Dalphond-Guiral
 Day
 Doyle
 Duncan
 Fitzpatrick
 Fournier
 Gagnon (Champlain)
 Gallant
 Gauthier
 Godin
 Gouk
 Grey
 Guimond
 Harris
 Herron

Private Members' Business

The Canada student loan program is flawed and is in desperate need for renewal. In fact, the program has not been updated or adjusted in the last eight years. Its design flaws are numerous. Its need for renewal is clear. Its inadequacies are affecting students, when this program is supposed to be the pillar of student aid. It is a tragedy. Unfortunately it is more like a black comedy. I believe the inadequacy of this program illustrates the lack of vision for post-secondary education within the Liberal government.

Tuition rates have increased 130% over the last decade. Debt loads have quadrupled. The average debt load, after a four year undergraduate degree, is about \$25,000. We essentially have indentured an entire generation of young people, our best and brightest. All these factors lead to difficulties in the accessibility of post-secondary education.

I was very careful with the wording of this motion. I am asking the government to consider the elimination of the parental contribution standard. Of course we are looking for improvements. Clearly I am amenable to adjusting, renewing or reviewing the standard in the first place.

Here is the problem with the parental contribution standard in the Canada student loan program. According to Statistics Canada, 50% of parents expect that their children will require additional financial resources, such as loans, to pay for post-secondary education, regardless of whether they have education savings set aside. For 94% of those children, these loans were, and were is the operative word, expected to take the form of government student loans, not bank loans or loans from family members.

Currently the Canada student loan program demands that parents provide financial support to students for their first four years after school. The amount of support expected is based upon what is deemed a moderate standard of living. The money parents are expected to contribute is then deducted from the student's assessed need.

Just to illustrate how out of touch this expectation is that we have today, a family of four in Ontario, with a gross annual income of \$55,000, is expected to contribute up to \$9,000 toward their children's studies. This leaves in the end many students short on the funds they need to go to school, to finish the year and to fulfill their studies.

A recent study by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation released last week entitled, "Making Ends Meet", found that 60% of parental contributions to students under the age of 22 was less than \$2,000. In other words, if the student's parents cannot or will not contribute the money the government expects, there is no recourse for that student. If students are lucky, maybe one recourse might be that they spread out their undergraduate degree from a four year process to a five year process. However the result of that is actually more punitive because more often than not students incur more overall debt. Another recourse is that many students do not finish their year and do not finish their degrees.

The expected amount of parental contribution is based upon a government standard of a moderate standard of living. The standard examines only two factors: family size and the province of residence. The Canada student loan program does not recognize that parents

have other obligations in addition to contributing to their children's education. In a study by Ekos, commissioned by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, the results showed that one-third to half of all students under the age of 22 received no financial support from their parents.

● (1815)

We need to address this clear and unmet need with respect to the Canada student loan program itself. Addressing the unmet need is critical. Recent research by the millennium scholarship foundation has found that an inability to access necessary funds may in fact be a bigger barrier to accessing post-secondary education than student debt itself. Clearly the government's assumption that parents can or will contribute to the degree that the Canada student loan program expects does not ring true for many students. Economic realities that are not part of the eligibility formula are ultimately denying funding to many students in need.

It is clear, and in fact well known by a myriad of bureaucrats within the government machinery, that the Canada student loan program is not filling the objectives that we and, in particular, the students, those who are our best and brightest, are seeking. This program's inadequacy is a glaring illustration that there is no political accountability for post-secondary education from the current government.

That is why earlier today, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, I called on the government to establish a minister of state responsible for post-secondary education to coordinate all programs on post-secondary education.

I know that the member for Peterborough is an advocate for that particular issue. It is advocated by the Graduate Students' Association of Canada, and I have reason to believe that the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations is amenable to the concept. I do hope that we hear comments from the alliance in the coming days and weeks as well.

A common vision and clearing house is required to maintain and coordinate the existing framework. With the creation of a ministerial position, post-secondary education in Canada would be better supported, funded and managed. The minister of post-secondary education would be responsible for the coordination of post-secondary education initiatives and innovation agendas as well as communicating those goals with our provincial partners.

The Canada student loan program is virtually broken. Tuition rates, as I said earlier, have sky-rocketed by 130%. Debt levels have quadrupled. There is no mechanism to assist students who are paying back their student loans. The Canada student loan program has not been reviewed since 1995. That would be the minister's responsibility. Clearly we would not have these runaway problems if we had a minister responsible for post-secondary education initiatives.

Given the fact that the Prime Minister, human resources, industry and science, research and development, finance, the Department of Foreign Affairs, CIDA, citizenship and immigration, and inter-governmental affairs all play a role in post-secondary education, that is why we are calling on a coordinator to develop a vision and manage these already existing issues that we have.

Private Members' Business

As Progressive Conservatives, we are very respectful of provincial jurisdiction. Our approach is to coordinate the existing programs to have a common vision and be a facilitator to our provincial partners.

Intellectual capital is the basis of today's knowledge economy. In fact, Human Resources Development estimates that 73% of all new jobs in a knowledge based economy will require some form of post-secondary education. An educated and innovative society is today's instrument of growth. Federal leadership is desperately required for post-secondary education that is visionary and activist.

According to polling done prior to the last federal election by Earncliffe for the former minister of finance, 85% of respondents placed making education more affordable as either a high priority or a priority, and 77% of respondents believed that funding access to education would help stimulate the economy. This was the most popular response and was scored above a balanced budget, lower taxes or even infrastructure spending.

Intellectual capital is the driving force in a knowledge based economy. I believe as the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations believes: that education can in fact build a nation. Current government policies across the board, I believe, are out of touch with Canadian realities. Government policies on post-secondary education need to be modernized in order to coincide with government expectations of the Canadian public. I believe that above all we need to have accessibility to post-secondary education and a visionary approach to publicly funded research, which has to be a national project and a pan-Canadian agenda.

● (1820)

There are some other problems within the Canada student loan program itself. There is the fact that the loan limits have not been adjusted since 1995 and 42% of students are now already at their loan limit maximum. That is a point of fact. The loan limits have not been addressed since 1995, but over the same period tuition rates have gone up 100%. That does not reflect the reality that students are facing right now. We also need to ensure that the factor in place to increase these loan limits is actually benchmarked against a student price index, to factor in the cost to students and to ensure that the loan limits are increased based on the student cost of living. I think those are approaches that we need to take.

I would like to highlight a very stark fact. In the next 10 years, there will be a 30% increase in demand for post-secondary education. Hon. members should think about that number: a 30% increase. That equals one new major university in every province of Canada: a new University of British Columbia, a new University of Alberta, a new University of Saskatchewan, a new University of Manitoba, a new University of Toronto, a new McGill, a new UPEI, a new UNB, a new Memorial and a new Dalhousie. A 30% increase in demand will take place over the next 10 years and the government we have in place right now is not making those investments that we will categorically need to have.

There are solutions that will come into play, such as a more integrated approach with respect to the very progressive college program that we have right now so that students can actually do their first year or perhaps two years at a community college. Those college credits could be transferred to university. The colleges could actually play a role in fulfilling some of these infrastructure needs.

If I may, at this time I would like to highlight a couple of other issues pertaining to post-secondary education. Principally, core funding that is long term, stable and predictable has to be put in place so that our provincial partners can do their jobs and our universities can make the investments where needed in the first place. Student aid has to take place in terms of having a modern Canadian student loan program. We believe that the third pillar of the equation is the fact that we need to have a debt repayment program that actually rewards students for taking on these risks and these debts.

Just over a calendar year ago, the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada proposed an amendment that was six votes short of actually passing in the Chamber. It would have empowered students to deduct up to 10% of the value of their student debt and interest off their income tax each year for a period of 10 years after graduation. What would that have done? First, it would have helped to mitigate the impact of student debt incurred through the years at university. Moreover, those students would have been able to take advantage of that program only if they were paying taxes in Canada. It would have had an immense benefit in terms of reversing the problem of brain drain as well.

Another issue the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada would like to bring forth at this time is in regard the need to invest in the indirect cost of research. We are one of the few countries that did not even have a program in this regard, until last year, and we still only fund 20% of the indirect costs of research when the western norm is 40%.

The motion calls for the elimination of the parental contribution component under the Canada student loan program. We need to ensure that students have access to capital so that if they want to seek higher learning they can access those funds for school. We have to recognize the fact that certain families cannot or will not contribute. There has to be an appeal mechanism in place to address that particular issue. We need to eliminate the parental contribution component or at least adjust it and have an appeals mechanism.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, I want to congratulate the hon. member for Fundy—Royal for bringing forward this motion that gives us the opportunity to review the operations of the Canada student loan program and look at whether it still meets the very purpose for which it was created.

With his motion, the hon. member wants to eliminate the need for parents to contribute toward their children's studies, more specifically to eliminate the needs assessment process used to determine if a student is eligible for a Canada student loan.

The fact is I know that the Department of Human Resources Development is also considering the parental contribution, mainly its use in the needs assessment process. This process, based on a moderate standard of living, is used to assess the ability of a family to cover part of the cost of their child's postsecondary education. It also takes into consideration the cost of living in the various regions of our country and the size of the family.

Private Members' Business

We want to ensure that the Canada student loan program meets its primary goal, which is to give low income students access to postsecondary education.

We all know that in this knowledge-based economy, we must help all Canadians acquire the skills and knowledge to reach their full potential.

As elected representatives, we must determine how best to achieve that goal and, if choices must be made, we must ask ourselves if we are helping students by making it easier for them to get loans and thereby increase their debt load at such a crucial time in their lives?

As a society, we are responsible for encouraging families to contribute, particularly during this important part of their education.

As a government, we must work with our partners, the provinces, to ensure the viability, flexibility and accountability of this important social program.

These are important factors that the motion does not take into consideration.

First, we must not blow things out of proportion. Eliminating parental contributions from the needs assessment process, as this motion proposes, will not have a discernible effect on most students and families already entitled to assistance.

In Canada, the majority of students who receive student loans—roughly 54%—are not considered dependents of their parents. They are eligible for student loans based on their own financial resources and not on their parents'.

It is estimated that for roughly 70% of students who apply for student loans and who are considered dependents of their parents, the parents do not have to contribute any money. In other words, this motion is proposing a measure that is already being applied to most post-secondary students who receive loans under the Canada student loans program.

It is estimated that for 18% of students who apply for loans and are considered dependents of their parents, a parental contribution can be as high as \$2,999. A contribution greater than \$3,000 was reported for only 12% of students who are dependents of their parents.

The member for Fundy—Royal admits this contribution is calculated based on the parents' income, the number of dependent children, the cost of living and whether the family has any added financial barriers. Corrections are made to the amount of the parents' contribution when they have an unforeseen decrease in income or have any added expenses.

One basic component of the Canada student loan program that must not be forgotten is that parents who can afford it are expected to help pay for their children's postsecondary studies. This program was never intended to replace family assistance, but to complement it as required.

At the present time, the Canada student loan program provides \$1.6 billion in loans to some 350,000 students.

If we implemented what the motion proposes and eliminated the parental contribution, this would mean that the parental contribution

would be converted into part of the loan the student would have to take out.

The program at present is based on need and was created some 35 years ago to help low income families have greater access to postsecondary education, hitherto limited almost exclusively to the children of better-off families.

• (1830)

I therefore believe that we can certainly discuss the amount of the parental contribution and the pros and cons of various methods of calculation. If, however, the government were to eliminate the parental contribution standard, how could it assess each student's needs fairly? On what would it base that assessment? What would be the limits imposed on the program and the cost to be met by the taxpayers if each and every student could apply for assistance and receive the maximum amount regardless of parental income?

Finally, what would be the repercussions of this measure on student debt load later on? These questions need to be looked at very carefully before calling upon the government to examine elimination of this provision, because the Canada student loan program is one of the most productive programs we have implemented in this country.

Since its creation, it has served to support the educational objectives of millions of students. I am sure that a goodly number of the members of this House are among them. It is in part thanks to this program that Canadians are now considered among the best educated and most skilled people in the world. This is why we as a society need to guarantee access to postsecondary education to all Canadians, so that they may adapt to the new knowledge-based economy.

However, this does not mean that we cannot do better. Every year, the government implements a number of initiatives aimed at improving access to postsecondary education, while ensuring that the Canada student loan program continues to meet the needs of students.

The 2003 budget carries on in that direction and the government will invest an additional \$60 million, over a two-year period, to strengthen and improve the program. This budget initiative will address the main concerns of stakeholders and of provincial and territorial governments.

Thanks to these measures, students will have more money available, since they will be able to keep a larger part of their income while they are getting an education. Moreover, the first \$1,800 in scholarships that are awarded based on merit will be exempted.

The budget also improves access to interest relief measures and to the debt reduction repayment program, so as to help students who have borrowed money and who are experiencing financial difficulties. These measures include interest relief to help students manage their debts and debt reduction to help borrowers who are experiencing financial difficulties.

An extended repayment period is also provided for those who need it, and there is tax relief for interest on loans.

Private Members' Business

Finally, we will improve access to financial assistance, by making protected persons, including convention refugees, eligible for the Canada student loan program.

These improvements seek to ensure that the Canada student loan program continues to meet the needs of students. Together, these measures will open the door and increase accessibility to education, improve debt management and significantly strengthen the support provided to part-time students. They will definitely promote continuous learning.

Many of these initiatives are the outcome of the regular consultations that have been taking place between the Government of Canada, student representatives, the provinces and advisory groups.

The Government of Canada is constantly looking for solutions that will help the largest number of people. This is why we do not hesitate to discuss issues and options.

But, as I said, I do not think that rejecting one of the basic principles of the Canada student loan program is a good solution.

I will conclude by congratulating the hon. member once again for introducing this motion.

● (1835)

[English]

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and address this issue today, an issue that is very important. It is the whole issue of how to make it easier for students to attend university. I want to thank the member for Fundy—Royal for bringing this forward, but I have to say that he has brought it forward nine years after my party proposed it.

In 1994 our former leader, Preston Manning, stood in here and gave a great speech on a private member's bill where he talked about the need to, in effect, treat students as independents when it comes to making them eligible for student loans.

Nevertheless, I congratulate my friend for bringing this forward again. It is time to have this whole debate one more time.

Just so people are clear, the motion would effectively make all university students independent in the eyes of the government when it comes to getting student loans. As it stands today, if a student is from a middle income family or better it is basically impossible for the student to get a student loan, which poses some very real problems for some people.

Just by way of example, when my friend from Fundy—Royal was proposing this, a news story appeared in a local paper out his way about a young woman who came from a middle class family but, for whatever reason, could not get funding from her own parents. There are many good and legitimate reasons for that. She had to go to the bank to get a line of credit for \$6,000 to help her with her studies. In some cases it is not possible for people to do that. Banks will not give them the money. Therefore, this sort of idea addresses a real problem that many students have.

I want to talk about some of the various reasons that students may be in this position. This may strike members as odd, but there are

some cases where students will go to university when they are not ready and they will blow off a year. They will party and have a great time but they will not accomplish anything.

An hon. member: You're not talking about Rahim are you?

Mr. Monte Solberg: Well, I am not talking about anybody who is sitting right beside me, certainly.

However I do want to say that it has been known to happen. Very often parents quite wisely tell their children "We paid for one year and you blew it. Now it is up to you". Unfortunately though, because that student has parents who have middle class incomes or better, it is not possible for that student to get a student loan as it stands today.

This type of proposal would really help those sorts of people, but it is not just those people. Many parents today say, on principle, that they will not pay for their children's education when they turn 18 or 19 because they feel it is time they fended for themselves.

There are many examples of people who fall between the cracks. I know someone who happens to be in a situation where the family has enough assets but not necessarily a large income, and because of that the person is not eligible for student loans. In order to get student loans, the family would have had to sell off property.

I think to a lot of people that would seem unreasonable. It makes some sense to treat these young people as adults. We are asking them to embark on an adult course, make mature decisions and now, by treating them as independents in the eyes of the government when it comes to getting student loans, we would be giving them the chance to prove that they are capable of taking that money and spending it wisely. Ultimately, of course, they do have to pay it back.

I know many people are concerned that this will increase government liability. There is no question that it would increase government liability but, on the other hand, now that the rules have been toughened so much with respect to making it very difficult for students to declare bankruptcy in order to escape their student loans, this is virtually something that is difficult to get out of. When a student enters into a contract with the government for a student loan, it is difficult to escape that today and leave taxpayers on the hook. Besides, the great majority of students do pay back their loans. They are very responsible and it is really not an issue.

● (1840)

It is very important that we find some way to accommodate all the young people today who, for whatever reason, are having trouble obtaining funding to finance their education.

As the member for Fundy—Royal pointed out, the criteria is actually quite low as it stands. He pointed out that a family of four earning \$55,000 in Ontario would be expected to fund about \$9,000, in after tax dollars, of their child's education. That is a tremendous amount of money for a family of four making \$55,000. It seems to me that it is quite reasonable to come up with a way to free students so they can obtain loans and not be, in effect, trapped by the fact that their family earns a middle class income or better.

Private Members' Business

We must do much better than that. It is not enough just to give people student loans. We can do many other things. One thing we should be doing, which my friend and others did not talk about, is offer families ways to save more money to fund their children's education.

I want to point out, by the way, that if this motion were to come into effect I believe the great majority of parents, who are currently funding or planning to fund their children's education, would continue to do that because they do not want to see their children burdened with debt. As they have done their entire lives, they would find ways to sacrifice in order to fund their children's educations. It would be nice if we could make that more affordable.

In the 2000 election my party ran on a platform that included a universal child deduction of \$3,000. For families with children up to the age of 16 and people earning middle class incomes in Ontario, for instance, it would be a saving of about \$1,000 a year. If people were to put that into an RESP, or even if they were to set it aside over the course of the 16 years that child is eligible to receive it, it would be \$16,000 uncompounded. Therefore, for the average family with two children, \$32,000 could be set aside to go toward a university education.

If it went into an RESP, with the extra money that comes from the government, it would add up to a substantial amount of money that could be set aside. That is the other side of it that we have to start talking about, which is providing tax relief for families so they can afford things that are priorities to them. Clearly the education of their children is a priority. It is time the government started to wake up to some of the problems facing families in Canada today.

There are many other proposals, and we have talked about many of them in this place, with respect to ensuring that families have adequate means to sustain a university education for their children.

However, there is the other side of it. I have talked about young people coming out of a post-secondary institution of some kind. It is not just a university, by the way. We should not limit it to that. It is also technical and other private sector schools that provide specialized training. However, it is important that when students graduate they are able to find good jobs that pay great wages so they can pay back their loans more quickly than they can today.

During the recent boom in the United States we saw examples of how young people, both in the United States and Canada, were getting paid big signing bonuses to go to work for companies in the U.S. as a result of the hot economy in the United States in particular.

What we need to do as a country is have a vision for creating that kind of wealth, those high paying jobs that will ensure that young people will have the capacity to pay off these loans much more quickly than they currently are today. We have to start putting our minds to having that kind of economy again.

I would love to speak to this a lot longer but I see my time is up. I will wrap up by saying that we support the motion. I also want to point out that it is something we have been advocating for many years.

• (1845)

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Motion M-205 brought forward by the member for Fundy—Royal. I believe that this is a very legitimate motion and I want to congratulate the member for his initiative.

The motion calls on the federal government to eliminate the parental contribution standard from the Canada student loan program.

Right now, a family must allocate part of its annual income to a child's postsecondary education. Ironically, just before coming here today, I was reading an article that appeared in a New Brunswick French-language daily that talked about the widening gap between the rich and the poor in Canada. The data was collected by Statistics Canada. Is that not a contradiction? The federal government is asking parents to finance part of their children's postsecondary education at a time when Canadian families are becoming poorer and poorer.

The member for Shefford said that the Liberal government was doing this so that children would not get further into debt. However, she forgot to mention that the government accepts the fact that the whole family is getting into debt. She forgot to mention what happens to a family where three children in a row go to university for four years. These people cannot pay to send their children to school. Instead, children should be able to apply for a student loan so they can pursue their studies. It makes no sense at all.

In the late 1990s, several student associations and other organizations spoke out against the critical state of funding for postsecondary education. Who do the Liberals think they are? They think they are everybody's saviours. Why do they not listen to what students and associations have to say?

The New Democratic Party participated in various campaigns directed at Canadians and the federal government to raise awareness about the urgency of the situation, but these efforts were not very successful.

In the past ten years alone, tuition fees in Canada have risen by 126%, while Canadian salaries have not seen a similar increase. Tuition is approximately \$3,000 per year. There is no balance.

This figure of \$3,000 does not apply to young people attending university outside their region. Their studies cost them up to \$10,000 per year. By the time these kids graduate, they or their parents owe \$40,000. Imagine parents with two children at university; their debt is approximately \$80,000.

University graduates will owe \$40,000, unless they attend university in the city in which their parents live. For example, kids in the Acadian Peninsula must go to Moncton to attend university. This costs money. It is an expensive degree, especially since now, student debt is no longer included in a personal bankruptcy.

Collection agencies have never been as busy as in the past ten years. Our children cannot keep up; they are struggling. Their debt is killing them. What a wonderful legacy to leave our children.

I would like to give one quick example. A young woman from my region was telling me that because she was unable to repay her debts and because her parents were unable to help her, she had to turn to a credit office. Now she cannot get any more loans. This is someone who is employed.

The Liberals say that they hope to prevent young people from going into debt, but it is all right for the poor. The rich have no problem, but what about the middle classes? They can no longer even send their kids to university. They are the ones being excluded.

People increasingly realize that having a postsecondary education is essential to getting a good job. In the new millennium, HRDC had reported that 45% of new jobs required 16 years of education. That is reality.

• (1850)

Applying for a job today and getting it, when one has only Grade 9 or 10 is a rarity today. That is why young people are obliged to go to university. It was not necessary 10, 15 or 25 years ago.

In 1993, 9.57% of universities' revenues came from government. In 1999, that figure had dropped to 8.31%. Students and universities are constantly asking for more money to guarantee the availability of quality postsecondary education to all at an affordable cost. In comparison, between 1994 and 2001 the federal government reduced transfer payments to the provinces for education by \$5.2 billion, a huge amount.

Many students drop out before graduation. They quit because they are short of money.

In my riding, I have a number of files on young people who have had to drop out for financial reasons and now are having to pay back all their loans, yet they have not been able to find work.

One young person attempted suicide out of despair because he could not get a job and was being strangled by his heavy student debt load. Imagine the state of a family seeing their son lose any hope in life. In the space of a few months, he lost all interest in looking for a job, finding solutions. The family also had neither means nor solutions.

Is that what we want for our children? One can easily imagine the despair of parents who see their children getting deeper and deeper into debt without being able to assist them financially because they are themselves strapped with huge personal debts.

I am rising in this House today to point out that those bearing the brunt of these cuts are students and their families.

Since the beginning of this year, in my riding office alone, half of all calls received are from students and parents asking for assistance so that these young people can pursue postsecondary education.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development said that the federal government has a good program. I must say that this is not true; it does not have a good program. There are countries where university education is subsidized so that students and their families do not have to get into debt, by contrast with the way the federal government is currently handling our students.

Private Members' Business

Last fall, I even had a visit from a young woman who had qualified for a student grant from the government. However, her application was reviewed by the HRDC office without her consent, and as a result, this young woman received \$2,400 less than the amount originally approved.

What was the reason for this decrease? Her brother died in August. Human Resources Development Canada said that with one less child the parents could afford to contribute more money to their daughter's education. It is truly unbelievable. When the parents were going through a painful grieving process and had to cover the costs related to the funeral, Human Resources Development Canada delivered them another blow.

Most cases that I process are students who receive small loans of \$2,000 while the total cost is generally assessed at \$9,000. Where can these young people go to get the rest of the money they need to pursue their dreams?

I know parents in the Bathurst area who learned that the mine they work at will close its doors sometime in the next five years. How do you expect a family to contribute to their child's education knowing that in four or five years, the 50-year-old father will be unemployed and will have difficulty finding another job because he is uneducated and has no other experience?

It seems that the federal government is seriously lacking common sense here. That is why I think that for students in Canada, when the federal government says that it is paying down the debt or balancing the budget, it should admit that it is doing so on the backs of the poor and students. The government claims it does not want to leave Canada's young people with a legacy of debt. Yet our young people leave school with \$40,000 in debt. It is a disgrace.

That is why I would like to congratulate the member for Fundy—Royal for his motion. I think that what he is presenting is important. We want the government to review the financial situation of students. The government should look at the student loan situation and family situations. This is not a lot to ask. This proposal should at least be presented to the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development so that we can make recommendations to the minister. I think this is important.

• (1855)

[English]

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak to this important motion put forward by the member for Fundy—Royal. I wish to commend the member for his persistent efforts in this regard and at the very least for shining a light on the question of access to post-secondary education because this is critically important.

I cannot say that I would support the entire elimination of parental contribution and I have had this conversation before with my colleague indicating this. There is probably a place for that, but it certainly is not the way it works now. The reality is that expectations are far too high, loan limits are far too low, and there must be a process available to appeal decisions. There is probably not a member of Parliament in this place who could not cite 10 examples of where this does not bear up to close scrutiny.

Private Members' Business

I find myself somewhat surprised that I am speaking in favour of more loans because I never would have imagined that this would be the way to fix this problem. I have had this conversation with student constituents who also find it difficult to accept this themselves.

A recent survey was done which included UNB and Fredericton. It showed that a significant majority of students who had to leave school for financial reasons did not leave because of the fear of having a debt, but rather because they could not afford to live within the system that could not support them to that level. That is critically important.

The argument that we do not want to enrich the loan program to deal with this problem is slapped in the face by the reality that people who are not getting access to student loans are getting access to commercial loans. It is not as if not making loans available does not put students further in debt. That is the painful truth.

I agree with the two speakers that I heard tonight that ultimately the fundamental challenge to the national government is for it to restore significant core funding to universities. Now that we have divided on the health accord, the CHST, we have a more precise way to make that money available and to hold the provinces accountable. We really must explore the possibilities of doing that.

I must recognize the reference made by the member for Fundy—Royal to the secretary of state for post-secondary education as an important champion of this cause. I do not know how much harder the member for Peterborough could work on this.

The government has taken action and should be recognized as having taken action on R and D in terms of the granting agencies. I will put on the table that much of it was reduced and has been restored, and I accept that. I will say it before the member for Acadie—Bathurst tells me that. The reality is that investments have been made with the CFI, the chairs program, and the indirect cost program, but I am not suggesting it is enough. I pursue R and D investments all the time.

We have not kept up on the other side of the equation in terms of access. In a mature, civilized country like Canada individuals who are able to attend post-secondary education regardless of the type should be able to attend but they cannot right now. It is just not the case. It was the case when I went to college. I do not know of anybody that I knew who wanted to go but could not go. A rebate program was available as well as a bursary program. At that time, we were perhaps paying less than 20% of the cost of our education. Now, in some universities in Canada, it is upwards of 40%.

We have a challenge to put to the government. I once again wish to commend the member for Fundy—Royal for taking this approach. It is not exactly the approach that I would take, but it certainly highlights the need. We need to return the Canada student loan program to its roots which was a combination of a significant contribution to the cost of education for two reasons.

● (1900)

One reason is it is the right thing to do and it is fair for all young Canadians. Also, it will give the Canada the kind of critical mass of educated people that we need for a prosperous country. That is the responsibility of the national government for the future.

I want to make the point that it is both fairness and economics. For those for whom it is entirely economics, if we do not do this quickly, if we are not fair, the future will pass us by before we know what hit us.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I support the measure taken in this private member's motion. It has been a theme of mine for a long time.

One of the greatest errors we make is that everyone in our country, all of our young people, our best and our brightest, regardless of their financial situation or the situation of their families, are not being provided with access to education. This has been a theme of mine.

I remember when I was teaching at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology that too often there were students who had to stop their education for the reason that they could not afford to pay their bills. They could not pay for their tuition and their books and the usual costs of living which every person has. Especially with the increased costs of fuel, heating, electricity and all of that, students are being driven out of the education system and we suffer as a country.

I would even go so far as to say it is a great investment. It is a tremendously good investment when we educate our young people. I did a quick calculation. Let us assume that after graduating from a post-secondary institution, a university or whatever, a student earns \$200 more a month over his or her earning lifetime. I think that is a very modest estimate. In most instances the salary would be much greater than that compared to the salary of someone who went into the workforce right out of high school.

That \$200 more a month over a lifetime of earnings could easily provide that young person with an additional income of about \$108,000 accumulated without any consideration of interest at all. If half of that was paid in provincial and federal taxes, which I guess is probably just a little over what it is now, but just using half as the number, it means that in educating one person, we would get back directly in tax dollars collected from that person, \$54,000. That is not a bad investment at all.

Of course that totally ignores the fact that it is because of our educated young people that we enjoy the quality of life and the high standard of living that we have in this country.

I would like to see measures taken by the government that would enable students to get an education irrespective of their financial situation. We ought to do that. Of course, this is one possibility.

I have other proposals. I would like to see students earn their tuition and their books in the following year, strictly as a function of how good their marks are. If they worked hard and got good marks, they would be paid per mark, applied to their tuition and books for the next year. That would be a tremendous assistance to students. It is something we should vigorously pursue.

Of course this also is a measure which would reduce the debt load. How terrible of us to allow our young people to graduate from university or college and have a such a high debt load that they cannot put a down payment on a house. They cannot start their own little small business or enterprise because they have such a huge debt load just to pay for their education. That is atrocious and needs to be fixed.

I commend the member for this initiative.

● (1905)

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Madam Speaker, I would like to focus on the motion itself and say why we are going down this particular track. The motion calls on the government to consider eliminating the provincial contribution component under the Canada student loans program. The operative word is “consider”, not “must” or “immediately”. This issue requires debate. If this motion passed, it would be incumbent on the Minister of Human Resources Development to suggest to the committee that it review the issue.

Currently the program demands that parents provide financial support to students for the first four years after high school. The amount of support expected is based on what is deemed, as I said, to be a moderate standard of living. Many families find the current amount to be too high. In my remarks I used as an illustration a family in Ontario that has an annual gross income of just \$55,000 and which is expected to contribute nearly \$8,700 toward their children's studies.

I recommend that the level of expected contribution be reconsidered, or moreover, eliminated, and that an appeal mechanism be implemented for students with non-supportive parents.

I thank the member for Peterborough, the Liberal chair of the post-secondary education caucus who listened to my remarks. I was heartened by his visual support of the motion itself. I want to congratulate the member for Fredericton who has been a strong advocate on accessibility of post-secondary education issues. I thank my colleague from the province of New Brunswick, the member for Acadie—Bathurst for his remarks, and as well, the support that I received from the Canadian Alliance by the member for Medicine Hat.

Clearly there is a consensus. Every member of Parliament knows that the Canada student loans program expectations and the parental contribution component does not work. This is a core pillar of any kind of program with respect to accessibility to post-secondary education.

First, we need to make sure that the core funding is in place. Second, there has to be a student aimed program to have those students pay their fair share through the student loans program. That component is actually broken. The third pillar is to have a debt repayment program.

We know the system is broken. It has been clear from the get go that the Canada student loans program is virtually broken. Tuition fees have skyrocketed 130% over the last decade. Debt levels have essentially quadrupled over the same time period. This litany of issues, as I said before, to students is a tragedy and it is taking away

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their capacity to seek higher learning. Some have described it as a black comedy in that regard.

A cornerstone element for us to develop a common vision and clearing house so that we can maintain and coordinate the existing framework that we have in post-secondary education would come through creating a ministerial position. We need to ensure that we manage all the initiatives on post-secondary education that we have under the federal government with respect to research and core funding for PSE itself.

There is a newspaper article on the issue which appeared on March 17. The member for Medicine Hat spoke about it. In the article, Angela Sherman, who attends the University of New Brunswick at Saint John, is hoping that the Government of Canada is listening.

I am heartened that the member for Fredericton is listening. I was less heartened by the comments of the parliamentary secretary. This motion was deemed to be non-votable. There is clearly a split on that issue among the Liberals. I would request unanimous consent at this time that this motion be made votable so that all members of Parliament can make that consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

● (1910)

[*Translation*]

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 a votable item, the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I rise today to add to an issue I originally raised during question period regarding chronic wasting disease, or CWD, in cervids.

CWD has devastated the cervid industry in Canada and our cervid farmers are not getting answers to their questions from the government.

Unfortunately, most of the public concern is not based on fact, but is based on hysteria that misinformation and a lack of information breeds.

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At no time has CWD threatened the human population and cervids remain safe to eat. Nonetheless the government has quarantined four farms and they are still under quarantine. It needs to answer some fundamental questions in order to put the uncertainty of farmers and consumers at rest. These questions are best summarized as:

One, how is it possible that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency can keep these farms in quarantine indefinitely when there is no way to scientifically prove there is any disease on these farms?

Two, these farms have been in quarantine for over two years. Does the department have any plans to get these farms out of quarantine?

Three, can a sentinel program be funded to learn about CWD in an effort to put these farms back in business?

Four, two of the quarantined farms, on the directions of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, spent large amounts of money to clean up their farms and then were told that although they had met the required specifications, they still could not use their land. Can these farms be compensated for their fruitless efforts considering the fact that the CFIA representative stated they could restock their land with bison or cattle immediately after doing the cleanup?

CWD does not represent the first time that an animal disease has threatened one of Canada's agricultural industries. In 1998 in Quebec, sheep were infected or threatened with scrapies disease. Like CWD, this does not pose a threat to human consumption. The federal government was quick to come to the aid of the Quebec farmers in this instance. Quebec sheep farmers were offered compensation that allowed farmers to minimize their losses at a respectable level.

Cervid farmers are not being offered the same deal. They are being cruelly offered the market cost of their animals. This market cost represents a mere fraction of the investment that was made and in turn represents a fraction of the loss that is being incurred.

Cervid farmers deserve to receive compensation at the same level as were Quebec's sheep farmers. Any less than that would be discrimination. It would signal that farmers are not treated equally across Canada by the federal government.

I hope the minister will rise today and tell cervid farmers that compensation will be on par with that of Quebec's sheep farmers. I hope he can tell quarantined cervid farmers when they will be able to freely use their land to generate the income they need to feed their families.

I hope he will tell Canadians that cervid meat is safe for human consumption. I hope the minister will right this wrong before he destroys an entire industry.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Duplain (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would be happy to answer the question from the member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar regarding the use of lands likely to spread chronic wasting disease. This is a disease that attacks deer and elk. It is important to examine what measures are needed to eradicate this disease.

The member referred to the need for farmers to generate income from their land. However, I am sure that both she and her constituents are as resolute as we are to eradicate this dangerous disease.

First, it is important to know that farmers have been advised that they may, for instance, raise hogs or chickens destined for human consumption, provided that they remain inside to avoid exposure to soil contaminated by CWD. Farmers may also cultivate feed, such as hay or alfalfa, as long as they prevent it from being exposed to deer or elk that roam or are held in captivity.

The member asks if the government can scientifically prove that there is any disease on these farms and that it is contagious in that form.

Members will remember that the minister, in answering a question earlier this month from the member, indicated that the government was working with the industry to eradicate CWD from deer and elk herds in Canada. Part of this work involves doing scientific research to discover what happens to soil once it has been contaminated with CWD. How long does the soil remain infectious? When can livestock be reintroduced on the land without fear of reinfection?

Research to answer these questions is inconclusive at this stage. However, I will be letting members know of any results that will affect our decisions to determine if lands are deemed risk-free again.

A study published in 1995 revealed that 17% of animals that had been introduced to land that was previously contaminated, but that had undergone a lengthy decontamination process and had been in fallow for more than twelve months, died of CWD anywhere from three to eight years following their introduction. Soil decontamination was done by spraying calcium hypochlorite, then tilling the land and spraying it again. Feeders and fencing was also replaced. The fact that 17% of the herd was lost after having taken such careful precautions indicates that the risks were not managed carefully enough. Researchers later carried out a trial. This time, after having slaughtered all of the deer and elk living on the contaminated land, they sprayed the structures and fields with calcium hypochlorite. No elk or deer had contact with the land for one year. Subsequently, 12 young elk were introduced into the zone. However, after a few years, two of them died from CWD.

Another study was carried out on an establishment in Wyoming where all of the deer and elk had been slaughtered. The new animals that were introduced had no contact with the infected animals. However, after a few years, some of the new herd had contracted the disease.

A study published in 1998 did a review of the literature on the subject. It concluded:

Contaminated pastures appear to have served as sources in some CWD epidemics although these observations are anecdotal and not yet corroborated by controlled studies.

That is the bad news for farmers and ranchers with animals with CWD in one of the four highly infected farms among the 42 with an infestation. Empirical data seems to indicate that the disease can remain in the soil. The first two studies I described demonstrate that, even after one year, even if the soil, feeders and fences are carefully sprayed, the disease can survive.

● (1915)

[*English*]

Mrs. Carol Skelton: Madam Speaker, I take with great interest what my colleague has just said to me and I am quite sure that we will hear more from the breeders involved in this whole situation.

I would like to ask him then, if he has this great concern about our cervids, why will Health Canada give a food certification health certificate to elk velvet that is being used for export to Asian countries? If Health Canada is giving a clear health status for the velvet, why is the federal government placing restrictions and allowing the Korean borders to be closed to Canadian breeders? If Health Canada is positive that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Duplain: Madam Speaker, one could talk for along time about this situation, which is of great concern to Canada. The hon. member was at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food when we met with the various stakeholders about this disease. I believe that the government is taking into consideration everything it can possibly do to eradicate it.

Studies and tests are being carried out, and surely with time the various data gathered will produce results. It is certain that the government is going to try to do everything it can to solve this problem.

● (1920)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:20 p.m.)

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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