



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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VOLUME 140 • NUMBER 036 • 1st SESSION • 38th PARLIAMENT

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, December 1, 2004**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, December 1, 2004

The House met at 2 p.m.

[English]

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*Prayers*

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• (1355)

[English]

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

[Members sang the national anthem]

• (1400)

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

### AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES

**Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's agricultural cooperatives need government support. They are calling for measures to assist with their capitalization.

These cooperatives play an essential role in the development of the rural economy. At the present time, the constraints on their capitalization limits their strategic investments and makes them very vulnerable to the competition.

In a context of market globalization and emerging agri-food competition, the cooperatives need our support for their efforts.

The entire agricultural and agri-food sector supports the cooperatives. The Quebec Liberal caucus calls upon the Minister of Finance to include the measures requested by Canada's cooperatives in his next budget.

I believe that our government should take its cue from the measures that Quebec has adopted to help with the capitalization of the cooperatives.

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, December 2, Tibetan monk Tenzin Delek Rinpoche is scheduled to be executed by the Chinese government.

Rinpoche is an outspoken defender of the Tibetan culture and identity. He has worked to provide the people of his region with schools, medical clinics and homes for orphans and the elderly, yet he has been convicted without clear or convincing evidence of guilt.

Rinpoche was not accorded due process during his closed trial and, despite repeated assurances from Chinese officials, the case was never reviewed by the Supreme People's Court. This case is so serious that U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell has raised the issue with his Chinese counterparts. Amnesty International has looked into this case and has classified this peaceful Tibetan monk as a political prisoner and has called for his immediate release.

China's record of human rights in Tibet is atrocious and it annually executes more prisoners than all other countries in the world combined.

Canada needs to take a leading role and use its position in world affairs to help stop the execution of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche.

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• (1405)

### VOLUNTEERISM

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, December 5 is International Volunteer Day. It is officially recognized by the United Nations as a day on which volunteers around the world celebrate their contributions and their dedication.

One such dedicated Canadian volunteer is Jason Goveas. Jason is an Ottawa high tech worker and has been a volunteer for a very long time.

He works at a homeless shelter in the downtown core serving breakfast to over 200 homeless people every day. He has also spent a lot of time and a lot of energy doing good work in other capacities, including two separate Habitat for Humanity projects. He has just recently returned from a 15 month engagement in South Africa where he provided IT support to a child welfare agency.

*S. O. 31*

From coast to coast, volunteers like Jason strengthen our communities and make the world a better place. They serve on boards and committees, mentor peers, organize cultural and recreational activities, support the elderly, provide shelter, counsel youth, clean parks, coach teams and so much more. Volunteers do this work because they—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

#### CENTRE D'ACTION BÉNÉVOLE DE GRAND-MÈRE

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Centre d'action bénévole de Grand-Mère has been active in our community for 28 years. In December 2002, it learned that it had six months to leave the building it was in and relocate. Because of its particular needs and the difficulty of finding appropriate facilities, it began considering owning its own building.

A team of volunteers, backed by 10 community leaders, came up with \$180,000 with which to acquire two buildings and thus give the organization some stability. For 15 months, over 105 volunteers rolled up their sleeves in order to restore, renovate and adapt these buildings for its use.

Today, thanks to these efforts, the Centre d'action bénévole de Grand-Mère is able to continue its service to our local people. My thanks and congratulations to the funding committee, the board of directors, the many volunteers, and the centre's director, Sylvie Gervais.

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[*English*]

#### HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

**Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Monday, as parliamentary secretary, I joined the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development to announce over \$2.4 million in funding for two projects to allow foreign trained workers better access to Canada's labour market.

The first project, called Prior Learning and Foreign Credential Assessment, will improve the recognition of foreign credentials of aviation maintenance technicians.

The second project is a mentoring partnership that will improve access to jobs for immigrants in the GTA.

These two initiatives are in keeping with the Prime Minister's commitment in the Speech from the Throne to ensure speedier recognition of foreign credentials and prior work experience for the betterment of Canada.

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#### CHILD TAX BENEFIT

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to address an issue that has been brought to my attention by several of my constituents from Oshawa. The issue in question is child tax benefits, commonly known as the baby bonus.

Currently, it appears that non-custodial parents, neighbours, friends and non-relatives can simply call Revenue Canada and make application over the phone for this benefit. This can occur without providing any proof of custody and, more important, without any notice to the parent currently in care of the child. When Revenue Canada agents are questioned on this practice, the answer is that they assume people are telling the truth.

In theory, my next door neighbour could pick up the phone, call Revenue Canada and make application for my child's benefits without any notice to our family. Furthermore, it is of concern when parents who are rightfully entitled find out they have been disintitled. The rightful parent has to go through tons of red tape in order to get their entitlements back. This is simply wrong.

I encourage the Minister of National Revenue to look into this matter today.

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#### TEAM SAINT JOHN

**Mr. Paul Zed (Saint John, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday's arrival of President George Bush was not the only significant visit to Ottawa. There was also a large delegation from Saint John, New Brunswick.

His Worship, Mayor Norm McFarlane of Saint John, Deputy Mayor Michelle Hooton and eight members of the city's common council: Ivan Court, Bill Farren, Carl White, Jay-Young Chang, John Ferguson, Peter McGuire, Chris Titus and Glen Tait, all came here for meetings with a number of cabinet ministers and members of Parliament from all parties.

Known as Team Saint John, we are working together in the spirit of cooperation as a team to make our city and region a better place to live and grow.

Saint John, New Brunswick is a dynamic and vibrant place to live and to raise our children. Situated on the magnificent shores of the Bay of Fundy, Saint John serves as an economic and social gateway to the rest of Atlantic Canada.

I welcome the mayor and council, Team Saint John, to our capital.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

[*Translation*]

#### GALA DES LAURÉATS DU HAUT-SAINT-FRANÇOIS

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the dynamism of all the entrepreneurs attending the ninth annual Gala des Lauréats du Haut-Saint-François, which took place on November 20. This evening celebrated the vibrant entrepreneurial spirit in the Compton—Stanstead riding.

I want to congratulate all the big winners of that night. The Carrefour Jeunesse-emploi won an award for its human resources management, and Val-image was recognized as independent worker of the year.

Fleuriste Ducharme, Transport Y.B., Créations Jade and Entrepôt L.Y.B. were recognized as businesses of the year in their categories. Finally, Jaqueline Maher and Yves Bibeau, named personality of the year and entrepreneur of the year, respectively, distinguished themselves through the excellence of their work.

The determination of these entrepreneurs to make their dreams come true is helping the Haut-Saint-François RCM to succeed and enjoy economic prosperity.

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[English]

### HIV-AIDS

**Hon. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today marks World AIDS Day and the following are some statistics.

In 2004 the number of people living with HIV rose to its highest level ever: an estimated 39.4 million people. With steep increases of infection in east Asia, eastern Europe and central Asia, women and girls have become increasingly vulnerable. Gender inequality, disempowerment and lack of education continue to fuel the AIDS epidemic. In North America there are over one million people living with HIV-AIDS.

The epidemic is increasing rapidly among minorities, notably African Americans, aboriginal people and Latino women. We must all of us pay attention to the fact that intravenous and other drug use is important to stem the tide of that epidemic.

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### MÉTIS NATION OF SASKATCHEWAN

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government announced that it has frozen funds for the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan until the leadership deals with the corruption involved in this year's election.

Based on the revelations of the independent Lampard report, the only way to restore justice is to hold a new election.

After a troubling election process in 2001, the federal government and the province provided \$200,000 to ensure a fair and open MNS election. The federal government must follow through with the demand for new elections for the Métis people of Saskatchewan.

Last week the Deputy Prime Minister said, "Considering the allegations of serious and significant electoral fraud...Canada rejects the announced final results". She was talking about Ukraine. Is our federal government equally committed to free and fair elections for Saskatchewan's Métis people?

The Métis people need a free and fair election process. As in Ukraine, there needs to be a new election for the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan and the federal government must play its part to make it happen.

S. O. 31

### HIV-AIDS

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today is World AIDS Day. This year the focus is on the situation of women and girls and AIDS.

Stephen Lewis, the United Nations special envoy for AIDS in Africa, points out that according to the most recent UN data, 75% of the over six million people between the ages of 15 and 24 who are living with AIDS are women and girls. There is no doubt that this is related to gender inequality.

Women, and in particular young women, often are unable to say no to sex or to negotiate safe sex by, for instance, asking a man to wear a condom.

The UN and other organizations have many initiatives underway around the world to address this situation by improving and enforcing laws on sexual violence, by guaranteeing property and inheritance rights, and by providing equal access to treatment.

Ambassador Lewis points out that women show immense courage in the face of AIDS even while facing death. Women living with AIDS need our solidarity and support. That is what World AIDS Day is all about.

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●(1415)

### JACK SHIELDS

**Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to Jack Shields, a member of this House from 1980 to 1993, who died two days ago after battling with cancer.

Born in Alberta, Mr. Shields moved to Fort McMurray in 1963 after serving in the Korean war. He was the founding president of Keyano College, now an internationally recognized school. He was the president of the Chamber of Commerce, founding member and president of the Kinsmen Club, chairman of the Public School Board and owned many businesses employing hundreds of local persons throughout the years.

He was a very colourful character known for his humour, creativity and generosity. He was a man who year after year would fly his own private plane to the Indian hamlet of Janvier and, dressed up as jolly old Saint Nick, would distribute hundreds of toys to infant aboriginal children.

He was a man of the people for the people of Canada and was a true Albertan. He will be missed by his wife, Pat, and family members in Alberta.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### WORLD AIDS DAY

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, for World Aids Day, celebrated December 1, 2004, the Quebec health and social services department has chosen the theme, "Intolerance kills people with HIV".

### Oral Questions

Even today, people living with HIV face stigmatization and discrimination. Even if their lives are better, thanks the availability of improved treatments, they are subject to the looks of others, too often marked by prejudice born of ignorance. The rejection and isolation faced by those living with HIV can have serious psychological repercussions for them.

It is up to us to support and show compassion for those affected by HIV or at greatest risk of contracting it. First, our support enables these people to better accept the assistance they need. Second, it makes it easier for them to access various social and health services.

I invite everyone to come out in force to the various events that will be held throughout our communities to commemorate World Aids Day.

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[English]

### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday and today Canadians had the privilege of hosting the President of the United States. President Bush gave Canadians his time and attention for consultations and meetings and he had the Prime Minister's ear.

Personally, BSE and the border closure is the issue I have worked to solve for the Canadian cattle industry from the beginning of the crisis. Despite having President Bush as his personal guest, the Prime Minister still could not persuade the President to end the ban on live Canadian cattle or establish a firm date when the border will reopen.

Days before the President's arrival, the foreign affairs minister leaked to the media that there would be an announcement of a definitive timeline for a border opening. This was all a hoax. Instead of creating sound solutions to the BSE problem for Canadians, all the government does is create false hopes and shattered dreams.

President Bush has come and gone but due to the Liberal incompetence, the turmoil in the cattle industry, whether beef or dairy, remains.

\* \* \*

### PIERRE BERTON

**Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to reflect on the life of a truly great Canadian. Pierre Berton passed away yesterday at the age of 84. He left behind a legacy through his brilliant life, through his career as a journalist and as an award winning author and pundit, a giant of the writing scene.

Pierre Berton was a man who began recording Canada's past, but perhaps most memorable was how he proceeded to help define who we are. Indeed, it has been said that so much of nationhood and our collective identity as Canadians was created by him.

Pierre Berton is a true Canadian icon. He wrote more than 50 books, the final one this year. He won three Governor General's literary awards for non-fiction, two national newspaper awards and made the Companion of the Order of Canada in 1986.

At this time I would ask hon. members of the House to join me in expressing our deepest condolences to the family of Mr. Berton. He

was a man who gave us a greater sense of what it means to be Canadian. He will be greatly missed.

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### HARRISON MCCAIN

**Mr. Andy Savoy (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac, potatoes are king. Potato farming, processing and shipping are key to the upper Saint John River Valley economy.

To celebrate this vital industry and those who work in it, the New Brunswick Potato Museum held its first Potato World Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

One of the inductees was a giant in the potato industry and in Canadian business, the late Harrison McCain.

McCain and his brother Wallace launched their potato processing company, McCain Foods, in 1956, building it into the world's largest french fry manufacturer, selling one in three french fries around the globe and employing 20,000 people worldwide.

One of Canada's greatest philanthropists, Mr. McCain was a Companion of the Order of Canada. In 1993 he was inducted into the Canadian Business Hall of Fame and two weeks ago he was inducted into the Potato World Hall of Fame.

Mr. McCain passed on earlier this year, but through initiatives like the Potato World Hall of Fame his legacy lives on.

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## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

● (1420)

[English]

### SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today the chief counsel to the Gomery commission complained that the government was editing and deleting sections of documents required by the commission. The Minister of Public Works has repeatedly implied that documents were limited to the public accounts committee because it did not ask the right questions. It appears that documents are now being sanitized before being released to the commission.

Can the Deputy Prime Minister tell us what the government is trying to hide? What happened to the repeated promises of openness and transparency from the government?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Gomery commission is at work. The government has turned over tens of thousands of documents for the Gomery commission's consideration. The commission has been given a broad mandate, so that it can do its work and issue a complete and thorough report. I would recommend to the hon. member that we simply let the Gomery commission do its work.

*Oral Questions***AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, speaking of work, while Canadians welcomed the U.S. President to Canada, what Canadians do not appreciate is the failure of this government to get any substantive movement on the BSE or softwood files. The softwood lumber dispute is into its fourth year. It has been almost two years since the border was closed to Canadian livestock.

The President and the Prime Minister have met face to face on at least four occasions prior to yesterday. A mutually beneficial partnership should result in results for Canadians. Why do Canadian producers continue to suffer while the Prime Minister focuses more on photo ops than substantive results for producers?

**Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is simply wrong. In terms of progress, a time specific process in the OMB for the rule change has been put in place.

In addition to that, yesterday we saw access to the Hong Kong market being provided. We have seen access to beef products and embryonic products in China. We are hosting both Japanese and Taiwanese officials to make even further progress.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nothing has been accomplished.

While the Liberals have been wining and dining, they have been feeding the farmers with nothing but empty promises. The Prime Minister has come back from Halifax with an equally empty plate. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has no control whatsoever over how long the opening up process will take.

Can he tell us whether he has obtained any assurance on the specific date the ban will be lifted? We want a date, Mr. Minister.

**The Speaker:** No doubt the hon. member means to say “Mr. Speaker”, although the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food now has the floor.

[*English*]

**Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are very substantial differences between the members on this side and the members on that side. Because of the actions that we have taken, beef producers in this country have received over \$2 billion in assistance during this particular crisis. In terms of no progress in the border opening, yesterday we gained access to a market that we did not have the day before. There is also a time specific process in place with the United States.

**Ms. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Before the President's visit, the minister teased Canadian farmers and their families with the promise of a fixed date for the border to reopen. Two days ago I asked the minister in this House whether he would apologize to Canadians if there was no such surprise. It did not happen. This devastated industry remains locked in a bureaucratic process that could take longer than six months and cost this industry another \$2 billion.

In the face of this great failure, will the minister now apologize to Canadians for misleading them about what to expect?

**Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the only apology that should be taking place in the House is from hon. members opposite who want to take this situation and score cheap political points as opposed to trying to achieve real progress. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs said last week, there needs to be a timeframe put in place and that is exactly what has been put in place by referring this matter to the OMB.

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**CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS**

**Ms. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the self-congratulatory tone from the government is deafening, but hollow. There is nothing to show Canadians but promises to have bureaucrats look at issues and report. There is no movement on the issues that matter to Canadian business and workers. There is nothing on softwood and more easy words about looking at the Windsor-Detroit border crossing. That is because the government still puts no strategic political priority on the relationship with the United States. It failed to deliver the goods where it counts.

Why was the government so ill-prepared for this critical visit?

• (1425)

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, far from being ill-prepared for this critical visit, this was an enormously successful visit. It was rebuilding the most critical relationship we have with our key ally and trading partner, the United States.

Yesterday the President and the Prime Minister signed off on a joint communiqué which speaks to a series of actions around our security, our shared prosperity, and our shared quality of life. The Prime Minister has asked me and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to report on Canadian progress on this agenda.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, President Bush stated yesterday that his discussions with the Prime Minister of Canada concerning the future of NORAD also addressed the way that organization would be used in ballistic missile defence. Contrary to what the Prime Minister has always maintained, this declaration means that the missile defence shield is an integral part of the discussions on NORAD.

Will the Prime Minister admit that President Bush's remarks confirm that discussions on the future role of NORAD are indeed the beginning of the implementation of the missile defence shield?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, absolutely not. What we have done in the amendment to NORAD is to enable NORAD to receive certain information on which to base its actions. In any case, the decision to take part in the missile defence shield is one that will be made here, in Canada, with the contribution of Canada's Parliament, in the best interests of Canadians.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat astonishing that it was President Bush, who gave more information on the missile defence shield to this House, its members and all Canadians, rather than the government.

Can the minister tell us Canada's reaction and the extent of its commitment when the subject of the missile defence shield came up during the discussions on the future of NORAD last summer? We would like to know exactly how far the government has gone in making a commitment in our name, without our knowledge.

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the amendment to NORAD is something we decided in August last year. It was announced. The Prime Minister spoke with the opposition party leaders. It was completely transparent.

As for the missile defence shield, I repeat, the Government of Canada made no commitments at that time. We are having discussions with the Americans on a certain number of specific goals. There has been no pressure from the President of the United States as the hon. member implies. The decision will be made in Canada in the best interests of Canadians.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government is trying to hide its real intentions regarding the scope and nature of its participation in the missile defence shield. It is constantly making reassuring statements to the effect that it has yet to make a decision

Now that President Bush himself said that negotiations are already well underway, will the government stop pretending that it has not adopted a position and will it tell us once and for all that, despite its claims to the contrary, it has already gone some way to participating in the defence missile shield?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate the very clear position that I just stated. Our government has not made any decision on the missile defence shield as such. It goes without saying that we are deeply committed to NORAD. We supported the NORAD amendment, as we announced in August. NORAD must undergo some changes over the next two years. NORAD is at the core of Canada's defence and it will continue to be.

As regards the missile defence shield, this is another decision that we will make at the appropriate time. We are under no pressure from the United States on this issue.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, considering that this government claims to be transparent, we can only be surprised and disappointed by the turn of events.

Does the Prime Minister not find it strange that the first major decision that he makes on Canada's participation in a defence system is communicated to us by the President of the United States? What transparency.

• (1430)

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is a contradiction here. On the one hand, the Bloc Québécois is telling us that the government has not made a decision but should make one, while, on the other hand, it is claiming that the President of the United States announced a decision. I would love to know what that decision is, since we are told, on the one hand, that there is a decision and, on the other hand, that there is not. This is unusual, but, obviously, Bloc Québécois members are not very well prepared when it comes to discussing Canada's most important relationship, namely that with the United States.

The decision on our participation in the missile defence shield will be made in Canada, following a vote in the House of Commons, and in the best interests of Canadians.

[English]

**Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. Yesterday Colin Powell told me that the current version of star wars—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I sense a lot of anticipation on the part of hon. members. However, it is the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth who has the floor and we will want to hear his question.

**Mr. Jack Layton:** Mr. Speaker, Colin Powell told me that the weapons in space that he proposes—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth is entitled to put his question despite the excitement that it generates. I would hope that hon. members would show a little restraint until they have heard the whole question. Then perhaps there will be the necessary applause or cheering.

**Mr. Jack Layton:** Mr. Speaker, Colin Powell informed me that the weapons in space that are proposed, this time around, are different than the previous version of star wars because they are not aimed at earth. President Bush told me that the project was not being—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Perhaps the member for Toronto—Danforth could skip the quote and put the question because unfortunately we are running out of time even with all these interruptions. I am trying to be generous with the hon. member under the circumstances.

**Mr. Jack Layton:** With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, I hope you will take the time from those who are shouting out. They used to have a chairman of their caucus who would have never countenanced that kind of behaviour. I can tell the House that the former chairman of that caucus would never have gone along with it.

Will the Prime Minister say no to Canadian flags on—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I did try to get movement on this, but we are not getting far.



Perhaps the hon. member could treat his supplementary as his question and put the question to the House because I have been very generous. I have avoided counting time against him with all these interruptions, but in spite of that, it is taking forever. We need to have the question. Perhaps we can go to the supplementary and have it all in one.

**Mr. Jack Layton:** Mr. Speaker, will the Prime Minister say no to Canadian flags on George Bush's missiles?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we had a very successful visit yesterday by the President of the United States and Secretary of State Colin Powell. Indeed, we had exchanges of the utmost importance for the future of our continent that is really the envy of the world. We must continue to ensure that.

We will continue to be deeply interested in the defence and security of our continent. As to the participation in the ballistic missile defence system, this is a decision that will be made in due course in Canada after a vote in this House of Commons in the best interests of Canadians.

•(1435)

**The Speaker:** A very brief question from the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth. No preambles, just the question.

**Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we already know the Prime Minister's cavalier attitude toward the flag. With the evidence now absolutely clear that this is weapons in space, will the Prime Minister simply say no and say no now?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government has always been very clear and we say an absolute no to the militarization of space. Our government has been clear on that and I repeat it in this House of Commons today.

As to the respect for the Canadian flag, our Prime Minister does not need to take any lessons from the NDP leader. We will stand for the Canadian flag as we stand for our country. We will continue to make decisions in Canada in the best interests of Canadians, but with a wide perspective.

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#### JUSTICE

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister frantically pushes his project to liberalize marijuana, health experts tell us that it is four times more toxic than tobacco. Neurologists tell us that it leads to long term cognitive decline. Police experts say that it will lead to increased criminal activity and driver impairment problems. Now trade experts tell us that it will lead to congestion at the borders and a loss of Canadian export jobs.

Why does the Prime Minister continue to push his pot project in the face of all this expert advice?

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is not a pot project. It is a prevention of pot project. I would like the hon. member to appreciate the elements in this prevention of pot law enforcement project: first, an alternate penalties framework; second, new offences to combat the grow ops; third, a renewed education strategy regarding the health hazards of marijuana; fourth, cross-border cooperation; and

fifth, the whole approach with respect to both prevention and bringing to justice those who need to be brought to justice regarding marijuana.

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, more access and less sanction do not equal prevention.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister really wants his legislation on marijuana, despite the fact that neurologists maintain that marijuana is a scourge and that it creates problems, that the police say it is linked to crime and now economic experts say it is responsible for lost jobs.

Why is the Prime Minister hiding behind an exotic smoke screen?

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I met yesterday with representatives of the Association of Chiefs of Police and I must say that my answer in French is the same as in English.

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[English]

#### SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Bernard Roy, chief counsel for the Gomery inquiry, says that some of the paperwork handed over by the Privy Council Office has been edited to delete sections relevant to the inquiry. On February 11 the Prime Minister told Canadians about ad scam, "the government will ensure that every single piece of information and every fact on this matter are made public".

Given that the Liberals are hiding information, what happened to transparency and why is the Prime Minister hiding information from the Gomery inquiry?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no one is hiding information here. Tens of thousands of documents have been provided to the Gomery commission. There may very well be procedural issues and questions that come up during the course of the hearings. We have seen this. Mr. Justice Gomery, along with legal counsel for all involved, will discuss those issues, and rulings will be made. This simply speaks to the fact that we should not spend our time questioning and assessing the daily activities of Gomery, but let the commission do its work and issue its report.

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, either Bernard Roy is not telling the truth or the Liberals are not telling the truth. I think I know on whom I will put my money.

[Translation]

The Liberal government promised us that it would put everything before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and we believed it. The Liberals hid relevant information from the committee. Now, we are seeing that they are hiding information from the Gomery commission.

*Oral Questions*

Why should we believe that the Gomery commission will do better than the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, if relevant documents are also hidden from it? What is the government hiding?

• (1440)

[English]

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said, the Gomery commission has tens of thousands of documents before it, provided by the government in an unprecedented act of openness. If there are procedural questions that arise at the inquiry, those will be dealt with by Mr. Justice Gomery.

I reject entirely the assertion by the hon. member that somehow the government is hiding anything. We are not.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Mr. Roger Gaudet (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we know that it will be another five to six months before the U.S. embargo on Canadian beef is definitively lifted. The UPA, the Government of Quebec and the Colbex slaughterhouse have done their part to find a solution to the crisis. The Canadian government is the only one dragging its feet.

Does the government intend to get down to business and work with these three stakeholders?

[English]

**Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned on a number of occasions in the House, there are a number of solutions that are being suggested. There is the long term solution, which is to create increased slaughter capacity in the province of Quebec in a competitive environment. We have announced support for that programming. Also, solutions have been suggested in terms of what the price of milk will be set at in the next few weeks. There is the issue of what the rule change will be in the United States and how that will impact the process in Quebec. There have been suggestions both in terms of direct payments as well as in terms of a minimum price.

We are discussing all those, both with producers and all provinces. In the words of a motion that will be in front of the House tomorrow, we intend to do this as soon as possible.

[Translation]

**Mr. Roger Gaudet (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, how can the government continue to maintain that it invested \$366 million to deal with the cull cow crisis, when the UPA states, with figures to back it up, that only \$90 million was actually received by the producers? This \$90 million is a long way from \$366 million.

[English]

**Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in terms of all programs that have been provided nationally, when they are fully expensed, they will be in the neighbourhood of some \$2 billion; in Quebec, on business risk management, \$366 million.

As I said to the hon. member on a number of occasions, there are some specific issues in specific sectors. We are determined, in working with all provinces and producers, to deal with those issues and to find solutions.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM**

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, counsel at the Gomery commission complained this morning about the government's lack of transparency. One of them, Bernard Roy, was exasperated and denounced the government's censorship and the secrecy about the use of the national unity fund.

Will the government, whose leader promised to get to the bottom of things, finally agree to cooperate with the Gomery commission by making public all the documents required by Bernard Roy, lead commission counsel? That is what transparency is all about, is it not?

[English]

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this whole matter is before the Gomery commission. We have turned over hundreds of thousands of documents so the Gomery commission can do its work.

Let me assure the hon. member that what needs to happen is that Mr. Justice Gomery be allowed to do his work and issue his report. Then we will all know what happened.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister publicly said, and I quote, "Anyone who knows anything that could help shed light in this area... should come forward and not wait to be compelled to do so as they will."

How do we reconcile this statement with the fact that the government is purposely hiding information from the Gomery commission? The public wants the truth. Why is there such censorship?

[English]

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Gomery commission has been given a very broad mandate so it can get on with its work, determine what happened and issue a report. I would hope that the hon. member would stop haranguing everyone and simply accept the fact that the Gomery commission has the powers needed to do its work. Let us get on with it.

*Oral Questions*

•(1445)

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are troubling inconsistencies in the immigration minister's story. First she said that she did not want to separate her campaign worker from her Canadian husband. Now she is forced to admit that separating couples is precisely what Liberal government policy demands in such cases.

Why did she not change the rules to make them fair for everyone rather than give a special permit to this one campaign worker?

**Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear on these issues. We continually review our policies. We are looking at a variety of them, as we move forward in the 21st century, to bring in an immigration framework in cooperation with the provinces.

The issue to which the member refers I referred to the Ethics Commissioner. Let us let the commissioner do his job and we will respond then.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, here is another example of why the minister's excuses do not add up. She said that she decided to do her supporter a favour in order to rescue her from sexual exploitation. In the same breath, she argued that this woman was brought to Canada to fill a legitimate labour market need.

She certainly does not gain credibility by defending Liberal policies that bring young women in to work where they can be sexually exploited.

Is the minister's real problem that there is simply no way to justify the preferential treatment she gave to her campaign supporter?

**Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this issue is with the Ethics Commissioner, a very important person. People on the opposition benches also said that they wanted an Ethics Commissioner.

The Ethics Commissioner will respond, and I will answer at that time.

**Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration told us that the stripper program did not exist. The Prime Minister told us that it did exist but it was under review. The minister told us that it really was not about strippers after all.

The facts are this program does exist. It is degrading, insulting and it exploits women.

Why are women in such vulnerable positions being told that they should submit a nude photo of themselves in order to be accepted into the country?

**Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, over 110,000 people came in last year under the temporary foreign worker program. It is a program that is run out of HRSD. My department responds to the request from HRSD. A variety of analyses is done on various issues: agriculture workers, entertainers, and so on. As I said, 110,000 people came in through that program last year.

**Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that this program requires women to submit nude photos of themselves. Imagine how degrading this could be for them. Do they have to audition for the immigration officers as well? Maybe this is why the minister's staff regularly went to strip clubs.

Why does the minister continue to support and defend programs that clearly degrade and exploit women?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think I have been absolutely clear in relation to this matter. We have made it plain that the program is under review. It is a matter that human resources and immigration are in the process of reviewing. However, I can inform the House that HRSDC has decided that there will no longer be a national labour market opinion for this industry.

\* \* \*

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. As Somalia's new government and newly elected president, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, prepare to restore and return order after years of state collapse, according to a new report by the Norwegian Refugee Council, the country's 400,000 internally displaced people remain in a highly precarious situation.

Now that there is a democratic government in place, when will we recognize this government and what actions will our government take to help end the humanitarian crisis in Somalia?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we welcome the inauguration of Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed as transitional president of Somalia. Canada has never stopped recognizing the Somali state.

Canada is committed to addressing the serious humanitarian situation in Somalia. We recently provided a \$1 million contribution to the World Food Program. We have provided more than \$45 million in humanitarian aid to Somalia since 1991.

\* \* \*

•(1450)

**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, George Bush came and went, and the border is still closed to Canadian beef. Meanwhile Canadian farmers are having to feed their cattle for another long winter.

If cull cattle could talk, they would tell us that they were more concerned about dying of old age than ever getting mad cow. Even if the border does open some day, we know that cull cattle will not be crossing stateside.

*Oral Questions*

Why will the government not admit that it has no plan in place, practically, to deal with the immediate crisis in cull cows?

**Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for giving me the opportunity to point out to the House that since putting in our repositioning program on September 10, we have seen the price of fed cow go from 65¢ to 85¢ last week. That is \$1 billion from the marketplace to producers.

We have also provided assistance in building slaughter capacity to deal with older animals. We also have the feeder set aside program to assist producers in the cost of feeding their young animals over the next 14 to 16 months.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that is another supersized helping of a big whopper from the government.

The prices for cull cows are not going up, and the CAIS program designed to help this has been an absolute disaster. I have been phoning the minister's office, trying to get help for a number of farmers who are going under. Guess what? It does not even have staff in place to deal with them.

Given the absolute failure of this program, why will the government not put in immediate money for debt and tax relief for the farmers who are going under?

**Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned many times in the House, as part of the September 10 program there is a managing older animals component. That has been offered to the provinces. As I have mentioned to members opposite, we are dealing with the cull cow issue and we will continue to do that.

The reality is that on this side of the House we are looking for and providing to producers assistance to help them in this difficult time to the tune of \$2 billion.

We have seen with the rule change going over to the OMB a very specific timeframe put into place.

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**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is the job of the immigration minister to ensure fairness and maintain the integrity of the immigration system, but the fox is minding the chicken coop. Rather than preventing queue jumping, the minister is engaging in it. It is outrageous and insulting to the lawful applicants waiting in the backlog.

It is time to restore the integrity of the immigration system. When will the minister resign?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister and I have both made clear, the Ethics Commissioner is at work. The Ethics Commissioner has been asked to investigate this matter. The Ethics Commissioner is going to report. That report will be made public. There is no necessity for the minister to step aside.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is a bottleneck of 700,000 applicants waiting to enter the

country, among them many women with professional qualifications and experience. The immigration minister has insulted these women by dishing out special favours to strippers and campaign workers.

When will she stop hiding behind the Ethics Commissioner, face the music and resign?

**Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to repeat exactly what I said earlier. We have an independent Ethics Commissioner and I have asked him to review the file and to report back.

I would like to add in response to the hon. member's question that Canada brings in approximately 230,000 new immigrants a year. Canada's immigration system is very successful. In fact in many ways we are a victim of our success because so many people want to come to Canada because it is such a great country to live in.

\* \* \*

• (1455)

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this year the Minister of Justice plans to give judges pay increases greater than the annual salary of many Canadians. This 11% pay raise is almost four times the Canadian average, far above any cost of living increase.

Can the Minister of Justice explain to Canadians why he believes judges deserve pay raises so far beyond that of other hard-working Canadians?

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is not the Minister of Justice who is giving anybody any pay raises. It is an independent judicial commission established by the Supreme Court of Canada. That is number one.

Number two, the hon. member is not putting the facts squarely before the House. It is 10.8% over four years. That is 2.8% per year. Those are the facts.

**Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is that minister who is bringing in that outrageous legislation. He cannot pass the buck off to anybody else.

Despite the fact there are at least 10 qualified applicants for each position, the minister says he must boost the pay of judges to \$240,000 in order to attract qualified judges. Supreme Court of Canada judges would receive \$285,000. The chief justice would receive \$308,000.

This proposal is an outrageous abuse of the public trust. Why will the minister not do the right thing?

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's concern with the integrity of the administration of justice. I just wish his responses were more in accordance with the facts with respect to the integrity of the administration of justice.

If the hon. member has concerns about this, Parliament will have the matter referred to it, and that is a part of the law.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**MIRABEL AIRPORT**

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in his speech on returning land in Mirabel, the Minister of Transport said that it would be impossible to do so, since Bombardier was planning to build a new plant there and needed the land.

How could the Minister of Transport make such an erroneous statement when there is far more land available than what the farmers and those whose land was expropriated in Mirabel are asking for, much more than Bombardier needs, as confirmed by ADM?

**Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very glad the hon. member asked me that question and I am even more glad that he was in the House when I made my speech. He knows I never said that particular land would be needed for Bombardier's development.

What I did say was that we believe in the future of Mirabel, that the Bombardier proposal is one of the elements in the development of Mirabel and that we see many others. We believe in the future of Bombardier, the future of Mirabel, the future of Quebec and the future of Canada, despite what they think.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Roger Clavet (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs said he would look into my question concerning the case of Tibetan lama Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, whose only known crime is to have dared to differ.

Since the stay of his execution has ended, can the minister tell us whether he has lodged a protest with the Chinese authorities, or whether he plans to do so, in order to save this Tibetan lama's life?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Senior Canadian representatives have already interceded on several occasions with the Chinese authorities, in Beijing and in Ottawa, concerning Tenzin Delek Rinpoche.

Representatives of Canada have expressed our concerns about the impartiality of his trial, particularly at meetings held this year in Beijing. We have asked them to prevent this execution.

We have also recently joined with other foreign governments in making our concerns about this known to the Chinese authorities.

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**MIRABEL AIRPORT**

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. Yesterday, the House of Commons passed a Conservative motion to give the land in Mirabel back to its rightful owners. When will the minister dare to give back the confiscated land? When?

● (1500)

**Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate the hon. member on putting his question in French. That is remarkable, and his accent is very good.

As for the substance of the question, I will tell him that the reason we cannot give the land back to the farmers in Mirabel is that we want to abide by the agreement signed in 1992 by the Conservative government, whereby ADM was granted a 60-year lease. The Conservatives may not keep their word, but we do, and we respect the signature of a government on an agreement.

[English]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has been hiding behind a technical argument, that he cannot do anything about a corporation that he controls. He knows that is a bunch of nonsense. We have been telling the minister, and I think he knows this, that a terrible mistake has been made at Mirabel. It is a mistake that touches the lives of people, some of whom can trace their family history back 300 years on that place.

I think the minister knows in his heart that a terrible mistake has been made. I am asking him to do the right thing. Give those 11,000 acres back to the rightful owners. Do the right thing. It is not that bad.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot get over hearing such remarks from a member who served under the Mulroney government, which was in office for nine years, yet did nothing in this matter and signed the 60-year lease. Is the member telling me that the signature of the Mulroney government is worth nothing? Is that the reality? They signed for 60 years. Who are they to stand up now to oppose what they did in 1992?

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[English]

**HIV-AIDS**

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

Globally there are as many as 42 million people infected with HIV-AIDS. Here in Canada the number of new infections has not decreased since 1996.

Can the Minister of Health tell the House what his department is doing to respond to the HIV-AIDS epidemic?

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, over the next five years funding for HIV-AIDS in Canada will increase to \$84.4 million. It is being increased by \$5 million this year to get to that figure.

This is an issue that cuts across all sectors of Canadian life: gays and lesbians, women and children, the aboriginal people. We are seeing an increasing number of newly infected people among the aboriginal population, including in fact the prison population.

It is important that we recognize this as a serious issue globally. I want to make sure the Government of Canada as collectively as possible continues to work across departments to make sure—

*Privilege*

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

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**CANADA POST**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada Post wants to jack up stamp prices. The Liberals say it is okay with them. It is not okay with the Conservative Party.

Canada Post has been manipulated by the government to be patronage heaven. Over the last number of months we have become aware of Liberal-friendly firms being given untendered contracts and dozens of Liberal supporters and donors being given jobs.

After millions of dollars wasted at Canada Post by the government, what possible justification could there be for a \$55 million tax grab?

**Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what we have is a very clear, transparent and non-political system. The member wants to go back to the old days when politicians set stamp prices. We have a system by regulation. Each and every year the stamp price goes up by two-thirds of the rate of inflation. It is clear. It is transparent. It is non-political. It is a great deal for Canadians because we have one of the lowest prices of stamps in the western world.

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**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration promised to table information about distribution of ministerial permits across the country. She said she would do that within a few hours. It has been 24 hours and nothing has been tabled. Will she keep her promise?

**Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I said very clearly yesterday that I would table the report as soon as I put it together. I will be tabling that report following question period.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**CHRYSOTILE ASBESTOS**

**Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in response to pressure by the Bloc Québécois, Canada supported the decision in September to exclude chrysotile asbestos from the list of hazardous substances under the Rotterdam convention.

Now that the safe use of chrysotile is recognized internationally, does the government intend to begin the second phase of this initiative and promote the safe use of chrysotile right here in Canada?

• (1505)

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thanks to our esteemed former colleague, Gérard Binet, we have been able to protect public health and the economy. We will continue to pursue that goal as we again work with Mr. Binet.

[*English*]

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Dr. Sein Win, the elected Prime Minister of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, the exiled government formed in December 1990.

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

**The Speaker:** I would also like to draw to the attention of all hon. members the presence in the gallery of Mr. David Goatley. Born and trained in London, England, but now residing in British Columbia, Mr. Goatley is the artist who painted the portrait of the Right Honourable Kim Campbell, 19th Prime Minister of Canada, as well as the portrait of this House's former Speaker, the Honourable Gilbert Parent.

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

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

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

[*Translation*]

In light of the inadequacy of current federal assistance, that this House call upon the government to implement specific measures as soon as possible to help the cattle and cull cattle producers who are suffering the impact of the mad cow crisis.

This motion, standing in the name of the hon. member for Montcalm, is votable. Copies of the motion are available at the Table.

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**PRIVILEGE****MEMBERS' ACCESS TO PARLIAMENTARY PRECINCT**

**The Speaker:** The Chair has received notice of questions of privilege. First, the hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord.

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we had a visitor whose presence did not go unnoticed. The visit by George W. Bush was an out of the ordinary event, in the same way as was the visit by Vicente Fox, President of Mexico, a short while ago.

Nevertheless, this visit caused considerable inconvenience to the staff and members of this House. As you certainly noticed, the parliamentary precinct took on the look of a fortress under siege.

Obviously, we agree that some exceptional measures had to be taken to prevent any untoward incidents that might have endangered the health and safety of certain people during President Bush's visit.

However, notwithstanding the importance of a dignitary or head of state who honours us with his or her presence, Parliament is, first and foremost, the central point of democracy where the people express themselves through their elected representatives. Because of this, whatever the event may be, nothing justifies any breach of the privileges of members of Parliament.

*Privilege*

On this point, I would like to draw your attention to certain incidents that took place yesterday, which, in our opinion, constitute a breach of privilege. I have five examples for you.

I will begin by mentioning the hon. member for Hochelaga, who was not able to get onto Parliament Hill until 6 p.m., with the result that he was unable to exercise his right to take part in the vote held here in the House at 3 p.m. I will point out that the hon. member for Hochelaga had to negotiate or discuss with at least 50 security officers from all police forces, and that he tried to get to the Centre Block from at least 10 different points in order to exercise his right to vote. His privilege was denied.

I would also like to mention, in a non-partisan gesture, because this is a case where colleagues from all parties in this House saw their privilege abused, the case of five of our colleagues, the hon. member for Saint-Lambert, the hon. member for Durham, the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park, the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, and the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay, who were taking part in a round table discussion on the future of broadcasting in Canada at the Westin Hotel. At the end of that conference, at 10:15 a.m., they presented themselves properly, with their MP pins and identification cards, and no one recognized their privilege, so that they were allowed on the Hill only at 11:20 a.m. For an hour and a half, they were unable to enter the parliamentary precinct.

If my question of privilege is ruled in order, I will have an opportunity to elaborate. But for the time being, I will address the issue of respect for both official languages, particularly by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers who addressed our MPs in English only. I will come back to this, but this issue of RCMP officers being unilingual was literally disastrous, not only at the security perimeter, but also at various places on Parliament Hill.

Let me cite as well the example of the hon. member for Drummond, who, between 10 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., was in the ladies' room, when a male security officer came in without knocking and told her she was not permitted access to the hallways of Centre Block.

I would also cite the example of the hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord, who, between 10 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., had a security officer enter her office without knocking and order her not to use the hallways.

● (1510)

I could also cite the example that, at 1:50 p.m. yesterday, 10 minutes before oral question period, the green shuttle buses used by members on the Hill were literally prevented from servicing the Confederation Building, where there was an RCMP emergency response team, and I am told that it was the same at the Justice Building.

If my question of privilege is ruled in order, I will have the opportunity to elaborate further. I also intend to call on those members whose privileges were breached to present testimony.

Consequently, with permission, I would like to draw attention to an excerpt from page 230 of Maingot's second edition, which states:

Members of entitled to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed.

In *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, chapter 3, on privileges and immunities, at page 85, on the topic of obstruction, authors Marleau and Montpetit write the following:

In circumstances where Members claim to be directly obstructed, impeded, interfered with or intimidated in the performance of their parliamentary duties, the Speaker is apt to find that a prima facie breach of privilege has occurred. This may be physical obstruction, assault or molestation.

On October 30, 1989, in a case similar to this one, Speaker Fraser found that a prima facie breach of privilege had occurred following a question of privilege raised by Herb Gray, the then member for Windsor West, regarding a roadblock that had been set up by the RCMP on Parliament Hill to contain a group of protesters. Because access to the House of Commons was blocked, the Speaker felt that a breach of privilege had occurred in the case of some members.

Also, on February 17, 1999, several questions of privilege were raised regarding picket lines set up by members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada who were obstructing access to Parliament Hill and to entrances to the buildings where parliamentarians work.

At the time, Jim Pankiw, the former member for Saskatoon—Humboldt, argued that some strikers had resorted to violence and intimidation to prevent him from getting to his office. As in this case, Speaker Parent had immediately ruled that a prima facie breach of privilege had occurred. Mr. Pankiw then moved a motion asking that the issue be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, for review.

Three other members had also raised the same question of privilege and reminded Speaker Parent that his role made him the guardian of the rights of members. He then came to the conclusion that this interference was a case of contempt of the House.

Before concluding, I would like to quote a statement made by Speaker Fraser. It is taken from the May 5, 1987, *House of Commons Debates*, on page 5766, and it reads as follows:

The privileges of a Member are violated by any action which might impede him or her in the fulfillment of his or her duties and functions.

Therefore, if the Chair rules that my question is in order, I will table the appropriate motion.

● (1515)

**Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was not personally a victim yesterday of what has been described. I must say, however, that I was outraged when I read of it in this morning's paper. I read, for instance, of a Toronto police officer saying "I don't know where you can get through, but you can't get through here". I know that being a Toronto police officer is important, but more important than our rights and privileges as parliamentarians.

In support of what the hon. member has said, I cannot speak to the merit of the claim itself, having not been a victim, but I can speak to the merit as regards the principle behind it. I would therefore also like to quote Maingot, in chapter 9 of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, which addresses the privilege of freedom to attend Parliament without arrest or what was called molestation. It reads:

In connection with most early assemblies that were in any way identified with the King—

This refers to the assemblies of nobles of the day.

*Privilege*

—is to be found some idea of a royally sanctioned safe-conduct; the King's peace was to abide in his assembly and was to extend to the Members in coming to it and returning from it. Naturally these royal sanctions applied to Parliament.

Continuing:

As it is an essential part of the constitution of every court of judicature, and absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers, that persons resorting to such courts, whether as judges or as parties, should be entitled to certain privileges to secure them from molestation during their attendance; it is more peculiarly essential to the Court of Parliament, the just and highest court in this Kingdom—

● (1520)

[*English*]

If we then read the 22nd edition of Erskine May on page 121, it refers to obstructing members of either House in the discharge of their duty. It states:

Any attempt to infringe the privilege of freedom from arrest in civil causes by Members of both Houses is itself a contempt and has been punished.

That would be in the case of where someone tries to arrest someone. This is a threshold that is far lower than that, which is to actually stop someone. Therefore, *prima facie*, it seems that the offence is even greater because there was not even an alleged breach of anything by any hon. member.

Erskine May also states:

The House will proceed against those who obstruct Members in the discharge of their responsibilities to the House or in their participation in its proceedings.

It is pretty clear that to stop someone from coming to Parliament is a very serious offence.

Finally, this right is very ancient. Erskine May refers to the fact that in 1751, officials of what was known at the time as the liberty of Westminster, which I gather is the equivalent of the council of the city, were committed for having apprehended, insulted and abused a member and for refusing to discharge him. In other words, when they refused to allow a member to leave from their arrest to attend to the sitting of the House, as early as 1751 this was a punishable offence.

It does sound like a very serious charge. As I say, I was not one of the members who was stopped but that perhaps was because my office is in the West Block and the demonstration was largely to the east of that area. For those who are familiar with the perimeter of the Hill, as all hon. members are but for the benefit of anyone else who is trying to identify what we are talking about, it was evident that it was more difficult to circulate a little east of here.

Surely it would have been normal for whatever police officers working outside, the RCMP, the Toronto police as it is alleged, and others to have been acquainted with the fact that the right of members of Parliament to come to Parliament is sacred and that no one should ever attempt to stop an MP from attending to his or her duties in Parliament.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to support my colleague from the Bloc. I will start out by saying that my length of service in the House did not stand in the way of not being able to get on the Hill yesterday because I was indeed one of the people who was prevented from accessing the Hill for a short period of time.

I just want to register my own objection. I do not understand why these police, who were not the usual RCMP that we find on the Hill, could not have been instructed, or if they were instructed, why they did not absorb it, that there would be people coming up to the Hill who were members of Parliament and who had ID showing that they were members of Parliament, or a pin, or a pin and ID.

In my case I had my identification card with my picture showing that I was a member of Parliament but the policeman said that was not good enough and that I had to have a security pass. I told him that my staff were on the Hill and asked him why I could not get up. I was with Senator Grafstein from the other place, who incidentally is co-chair of the Canada-U.S. Parliamentary Association. He also had to prove that he was a senator. Neither one of us could get passed this particular policeman and we invited him to discuss the matter with his superior officer and he went to do that.

In the meantime, we carried on the discussion with the policeman who was left and finally persuaded him that these passes were legitimate and that we should be allowed to proceed up Wellington toward the East Block. We were somewhere between the Chateau Laurier and the East Block. We got past him but then the other policeman came back and asked what we were doing. We told him that we were on our way up the Hill. He told us that we could not because we needed security passes. I told him that no one told us we needed a security pass and no one ever did tell members of Parliament and security passes were not provided for members.

It was only when we managed to talk our way close enough to the gate at the East Block that the RCMP, who normally police the Hill, were able to see myself and the senator and tell the police officer that it was okay to let us on the Hill.

When I got through the gate and up onto the lawn, there were protesters there. Did they have security clearance? Did they have the card that I did not have? They had huge signs saying that George Bush was a terrorist and everything else. They were on the lawn by the eternal flame having a fine old time but I, as a member of Parliament with picture ID, could not get on the Hill. Something is wrong with this movie.

Mr. Speaker, you need to talk to the people who were in charge of security for yesterday's events and make sure that this kind of thing does not happen again.

● (1525)

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer a brief anecdote from my experience yesterday in support of this question of privilege.

When I tried to access the Centre Block yesterday, I had to go behind the West Block in order to join with the buses that were going to the state dinner and an RCMP constable stopped me. I explained that I was a member of Parliament. He said that he did not care and asked for my security pass. I showed him my parliamentary pin but he told me that was not good enough, that he needed my security pass.



I was in a rush to make it to the state dinner and he almost physically detained me from walking into the parliamentary precincts as a member of Parliament with my identification. It is a similar experience to that of the member. This is really outrageous. It is especially bizarre when one sees the kind of laxness in security around here from time to time. As he said, we had the bizarre anomaly of protesters on the Hill and a policeman saying that he did not care that I was a member and would not permit me to access the parliamentary precincts without some unspecified security pass.

This really is a serious matter, sir, and I hope you will take it under advisement.

**The Speaker:** The Chair does not need to hear any more on this point.

[*Translation*]

I am satisfied that the hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord has raised a very valid and distinct question of privilege. I know full well that other hon. members have had the same problem. I have heard the comments from all the hon. members who participated in this discussion, the hon. members for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Calgary Southeast, and Elmwood—Transcona.

[*English*]

I am satisfied that in my view this is a prima facie case and the matter ought to be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

I am quite prepared to allow the hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord to move his motion at this point.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord can move his motion. I will then hear the point of order of the hon. opposition House leader.

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the promptness with which you are addressing this issue you consider to be very serious.

Accordingly, I move:

That the question of privilege regarding the free movement of members of Parliament within the Parliamentary Precinct during the visit of George W. Bush be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

• (1530)

[*English*]

**Mr. John Reynolds:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There is one additional item I want to mention before we do this.

Yesterday the member for Wetaskiwin missed a vote in the House and stood and asked for unanimous consent to be included because he was delayed. I would like this to be one of the items looked at by the committee because I think the member should have the right to maybe have that vote reinstalled.

Mr. Speaker, I think there would be unanimous consent to do that if you were to ask.

**The Speaker:** Without going into that one at the moment, if this motion is adopted by the House, and I would not want to presume anything, I am sure the Standing Committee on Procedure and

### *Privilege*

House Affairs would certainly hear from the hon. member for Wetaskiwin and any other hon. member who wishes to make submissions on this point.

[*Translation*]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion without debate?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Speaker:** The hon. House leader for the New Democratic Party has the floor on another question of privilege.

[*English*]

### DECORUM DURING ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Ms. Libby Davies (House Leader of the New Democratic Party, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege as a result of what happened during question period today when the leader of the NDP asked a question of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and was effectively shouted down repeatedly.

I think it is obvious, but maybe it needs to be stated, that our leader, and indeed any member of the House, has the right to raise a question in the House. It is a fundamental privilege of who we are as members of Parliament in order to do our business in the House of Commons. We also have the right to give a preamble to our question.

I know this issue of decorum in the House has recently come to the attention of House leaders. We have had discussions about it. You yourself, Mr. Speaker, have made your point of view known. What happened today in the House was basically that the leader of the NDP could not get his question out, was not allowed to return to his preamble and could not even hear what was going on because of the noise and disturbance that took place.

We understand that the opposition has a right to have a different point of view but to deny another member and the leader of our party the opportunity and right to raise a question in the House, and to be effectively shouted down and then to be joined by the government members as well, we find that completely appalling and unconscionable.

Mr. Speaker, if members of the opposition choose to act in that manner, then we look to you as the Speaker to basically maintain the privilege that we have in this place, which includes the privilege of having a preamble to the question.

A disturbance like that should not then be used to take away time from the member who is raising the question. The violation took place on that side of the House. As you yourself have said in the past, Mr. Speaker, and the government side, it is up to the Speaker to make it clear that time will be taken away from the opposition, not from the member who is trying to raise the question and has done absolutely nothing wrong.

I would ask that you to look into this matter and find this to be a prima facie case of privilege for the member for Toronto—Danforth and that as a matter of general decorum and the fact that our leader was not able to deliver his question in the House today, this be considered as a matter for the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

*Privilege*

● (1535)

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to add my voice to that of our colleague, the House leader of the New Democratic Party. I do not want to get into a debate consisting of accusing any of our colleagues. I would not want members of certain parties to feel that a particular party is being targeted. My remarks pertain more to respect for decorum during oral question period.

At a meeting of the House leaders, you raised this matter already. I respectfully submit that sometimes there are excessive deviations at times; repeated applause is one such example. One Wednesday, the government members rose nine times to applaud a very pedestrian non-answer by a minister. Obviously, the government was resorting to such tactics deliberately, because time is unalterable. When we have 45 minutes for oral questions, which party ultimately loses the opportunity to ask a question? It is always the Bloc Québécois or the NDP.

I do not want to get into a debate with the Conservative Party. Each party in this House needs to examine its conscience. I call upon your judgment. Perhaps we should consider, ultimately, taking away the right to ask questions if a party deliberately attempts to impede the course of oral question period.

I would point out that the Liberals have—I cannot find a better expression—two “planted” questions. The minister already knows the answer to the two questions. So, if the government members stand nine times during oral questions to applaud insignificant pedestrian answers, perhaps we should consider eliminating one of the questions.

*[English]*

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to say just a few words on this. I think it is probably the first time in the history of the House that a member is up on a question of privilege about getting a standing ovation from both sides of the House, which happened today. Nevertheless, I have some sympathy for what happened to the leader of the NDP today.

But it happens on all sides of the House. The House leaders did meet a few weeks ago and talked about having no more standing ovations. My party did it for about three days, but it did not happen that way because other parties kept on doing it. I will not mention names. The hon. member mentioned the Conservative Party. Sure, we are as guilty as everybody else in the House.

I think what needs to happen is that the House leaders have to sit down and talk about the decorum, but certainly we also have to advise all members that if they are going to lead with statements that are inflammatory, they will create that type of thing happening in the chamber. That happens.

Both sides are guilty in this issue. If we are making statements that cause the standing ovations and the yelling and screaming, it is going to happen; it is not going to stop.

I think this is up to the House leaders together, because, Mr. Speaker, you have a tough enough job as it is. We have discussed

this with you and you have concerns about it in regard to the concerns of members and the timing of question period. Maybe it is time that we started penalizing those who cause the problem.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was not sure whether I wanted to rise in this debate, but having listened to the Conservative House leader, I feel I have to. With respect, if he checks the blues he will find that all the leader of the NDP was able to say before the noise that we are objecting to happened was “yesterday Colin Powell told me”. That was it.

Now, I ask if that is inflammatory; maybe if he had gotten as far as “yesterday Colin Powell told me that he favoured the NDP” or “yesterday Colin Powell told me that the moon is made of green cheese” or whatever, but all he got to say was “yesterday Colin Powell told me”. There is nothing inflammatory about that. The fact of the matter is that the House erupted, not just once but twice, after the leader of the NDP got those four or five words out.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that you have a problem here, and actually, we all have a problem. I know, Mr. Speaker, that you try to deal with things by being humorous, but this is getting to be unfunny.

It is getting to be unfunny, this systematic harassment in particular. A lot of stuff goes on here, but there is a systematic harassment and barracking and yelling at the leader of the NDP when he rises in the House to speak. I find it particularly objectionable.

It is funny, Mr. Speaker, in that we have spent two weeks with everyone walking on eggshells worrying about whether somebody would say something or say anything, or whisper, or even moan improperly, if the President of the United States was in the House of Commons here talking to us, but we can treat each other in the way that we treat each other. We are total hypocrites when it comes this, to the extent that we all so are worried about how polite we are going to be, but why can we not be polite with each other?

Why is it a problem if anybody were to express a disagreeable opinion with respect to someone else, but other members of the House feel that it is perfectly okay to shout down a person to the point where we cannot hear what is going on and the person cannot put his or her question? The duly elected member of Parliament who is the duly elected leader of a political party that over two million Canadians voted for and that person cannot ask a question in the House without being shouted down? That is not the Parliament I thought I was being elected to.

● (1540)

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to this matter as well. Unlike the House leader of the Conservative Party, I am not so much bothered and distressed by the fact that one of our colleagues is given an ovation, genuine or not, as by the fact that this colleague is deprived of the possibility of finishing the preamble to his question.

Mr. Speaker, if this is the practice you wish to implement and it means that a member who is heckled is prevented from proceeding with his preamble, this is extremely disconcerting. Some people here might develop the unhealthy habit of heckling every time someone's preamble was not to their liking. This would eventually lead to no one ever having a chance to say anything in a preamble that was the least bit controversial. In this case, everyone will agree that there was nothing the least controversial in the preamble of the leader of the NDP. He did not even have the chance to get to the end of his speech, which might have been where the controversy lay.

We must not let a trend develop here whereby colleagues would end up deprived of the opportunity of completing their argument simply because of a heckling or an ovation, whether well intentioned or otherwise. You would need to implement a kind of rule of reprisal, if I might term it that, for members who waste the time of the House.

In the case of interest here, it is my opinion that the leader of the New Democratic Party was not the one wasting the time of the House, yet he is the one who has had to bear the consequences.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, I am very supportive of your role in the capacity in which you serve this House.

I recognize that there is an overall blanket issue we are talking about, but I would like to refer specifically to what we are talking about here today and this particular event.

For good reason, there are words that are listed, and out of respect for the Chair I will not use any examples, and which we do not use in this House for the simple reason that they cause a furor and an uproar in the House. Although in many instances the words themselves may be true and a true characterization of something that someone has said or done, nonetheless we do not use them because they cause an uproar.

I am trying to be as respectful as I possibly can be here, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that the fact that the leader of the NDP took the massively hypocritical position of encouraging people to demonstrate, to demonstrate very actively, demonstrate to the point of illegality—

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

**Mr. Jim Abbott:** —with the visit of President Bush and then turned around and went to his dinner, I think that, if anything, was as much a basis for the kind of response that happened in this House.

• (1545)

**The Speaker:** I am sure the hon. member is trying to be helpful, but we are dealing with a question of privilege and I think I have heard enough on this point. Again, I will make a decision on this.

[*Translation*]

I appreciate the counsel of the hon. members who have spoken—the two members of the Bloc, the members of the official opposition, and the hon. House leader of the NDP who raised the question in the first place.

### *Privilege*

[*English*]

But having heard the arguments, I have to say this in defence of the Chair's position in respect of the question that was asked. I did stand up and interrupt the outcries that interrupted the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth's question and I was sympathetic to the fact that he was being interrupted in this way.

The first time, as I recall, he then repeated the beginning of the question again, which provoked exactly the same reaction it had the first time.

I then interrupted again to quell the disturbance. My recollection is that he got some other words in, but then referred to someone else he had spoken to, which provoked a third reaction, and I interrupted again.

At no time was the time of those interruptions counted against him on his 35 seconds. The clock was stopped by the officers at the table. I made sure that this was not counted against him. So the time he actually had on his feet came either close to or exceeded the 35 seconds. The time was taken up. The whole thing took much longer than that with the disturbances, but I believe he had significant time spent, before each interruption, on his feet; I did not then use the interrupted time against him.

I think he had a fair shake on the time. It is just that he kept repeating a lot of what he had said previously rather than getting on with the rest of the question. For that reason, it disorganized things. He did get a second question, despite my suggestion that perhaps he should only get one because of the time that had elapsed, but I made sure he got a second one. I have not timed the whole thing. I have not looked at it, but I think he got a fair break given what happened in the House.

In respect of what happened, I agree with the hon. member for Vancouver East and her suggestions that this matter should be reviewed, but I am not prepared to find a question of privilege in this case because in my view the hon. member's privileges were not breached. He did get to ask two questions in the House; that is my recollection.

Here is what I believe is appropriate, however.

[*Translation*]

The House leaders will continue their discussions on this subject. The hon. member for Vancouver East and the party whips are members of this group. I already encouraged such a discussion when I attended their meeting a few weeks ago.

I am certain that with more discussions on this topic and more ideas like the ones mentioned by the House leader of the official opposition and the other hon. members today, we may find another way to solve the problems of the House.

[*English*]

However, I agree the noise levels are excessive. I point out that in today's question period there was one question missed, and it was the third question on the government side, because time ran out. Everyone else on the official list, if I can call it an official list, got their question.

*Routine Proceedings*

We did reasonably well despite the loss of time and the noise in the early stage but it in fact was the last question on the list that was eliminated and it happened to be the government's question.

I think our list has been drawn up fairly. The parties all agreed on that list. It was negotiated. I think it is a reasonable one, in terms of who was placed where. If there is someone who misses, the first miss is a government question because they are at the bottom of the list and we go up from there.

I sympathize with the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth and the noise he had to endure today, but I think sometimes that happens to various members when they say things that provoke difficulty. The usual thing I can say is to switch topics, move on and say something different or say it another way and maybe the provocation will be a little less. I think in the House where we have 300 members all seeking to express their view sometimes at the same time, there is a problem with noise.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

Therefore, I encourage the House leaders to continue their discussions on this subject. I am open to suggestions from hon. members, as the hon. whip of the Bloc Québécois has suggested.

Nevertheless, I would like any decision on such a subject to be made with the consent of all parties in the House and not simply on my own. We have an agreement regarding oral question period covering the time allocated for each question and answer, the order to the questions and the number of questions for each party.

Since the Speaker is a servant of the House, I must do as I am told, if I can put it that way, by all parties in this House.

[*English*]

I am keen to work cooperatively with the House leaders and whips on this subject. I can assure the hon. member for Vancouver East that if I can assist in those discussions, I will be more than happy to do so. However, I do not think, on the facts of today's question period, there was a breach of privilege as she alleges. I think the point she has raised is important and I am sure the discussion in the House today was of assistance to all parties.

\* \* \*

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## RAISING OF QUESTIONS OF PRIVILEGE

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

In light of the two questions of privilege that have been raised this afternoon, I just wonder if you could clarify for me and for the House as to the validity of people raising questions of privilege on behalf of other members who are not even in the chamber at the time.

It was my understanding according to the Standing Orders that if I felt my privileges as a member of Parliament had been usurped, I had to raise that question of privilege myself rather than have someone raise it on my behalf. If I am mistaken, I would like the Chair to clarify.

**The Speaker:** I can tell the member that I found one was not a question of privilege anyway.

The second one was raised by the whip of the Bloc Québécois on behalf of numerous members. I felt that in the circumstances, since it was raised on behalf of numerous members and since it received support from all sides, it was appropriate that the matter go to committee and be studied there. Frankly, I believe there were technical breaches of obstructing members from getting to the Hill and getting to the House for the purposes of carrying out their duties here. The fact that individual members who had it happen to them were not all here raising it, I felt in the circumstances, was not necessary.

I will look into the authorities and advise the hon. member. I have not allowed one raised by the member for Vancouver East, but it was not just because she raised it on behalf of the member for Toronto—Danforth. She did give me notice that she intended to raise it. I assume she is raising it as House leader for her party, saying that her party's privileges have been affected by the proceedings in the House and I accept it on that basis.

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**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[*English*]

**TABLING OF DOCUMENTS**

**Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to table, in both official languages, a response to a question from the member of Parliament for Mississauga—Erindale during question period in the House of Commons on November 29.

\* \* \*

**ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT**

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-304, An Act to change the name of the electoral district of Battle River.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill will correct an error that was made prior to the last election and will substitute the name Westlock—St. Paul for the name of Battle River which will more realistically represent the real name of that riding.

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

\* \* \*

● (1555)

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## FINANCE

**Hon. Raymond Simard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Minister responsible for Official Languages and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I think you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding Standing Order 83.1, the Standing Committee on Finance be authorized to present its Report on the Pre-Budget Consultations 2004 between December 3 and December 17, 2004; and

*Government Orders*

That, on any day that the House is not sitting in December 2004, the Standing Committee on Finance be authorized to deposit its report with the Clerk of the House, which shall thereupon be deemed to have been presented to the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member have the consent of the House to present the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS**

## CANADIAN FORCES HOUSING AGENCY

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to rise once more and present another petition on behalf of our military families who live on base.

This petition is signed by citizens from Coalhurst, Alberta. They wish to draw to the attention of the House of Commons that the Canadian Forces Housing Agency does provide on base housing. However some of that housing is below acceptable living conditions and our military families are subjected to annual rent increases well above what they should have to face in many instances.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to immediately suspend any future rent increases for accommodation provided by the Canadian Forces Housing Agency until such time as the Government of Canada makes substantive improvements to the living conditions of housing provided for our military families.

## AGE OF CONSENT

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of 3,250 islanders from right across P.E.I. from Souris, Fort Augustus, Charlottetown, Summerside, Stratford and many other areas.

The petitioners wish to draw to the attention of the House that our children need protection from sexual exploitation. Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to protect our children by taking the necessary steps to raise the age of consent from 14 years of age to 18 years of age.

[*Translation*]

## NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to submit a petition signed by some of my constituents who, for the most part, are residents of Côte-de-Beaupré and Île-d'Orléans.

The petitioners urge Parliament to take the necessary measures to oppose Canada's involvement in the U.S. missile defence shield project. They believe that Canada's participation in all or part of the U.S. missile defence program would be contrary to their interests and values. They ask that taxes be applied as a matter of priority to meeting urgent and important needs of the public, particularly in health.

**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

**Hon. Raymond Simard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Minister responsible for Official Languages and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

**MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**

**Hon. Raymond Simard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Minister responsible for Official Languages and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[*Translation*]

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ACT**

The House resumed from November 26, 2004, consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, an act to establish the Department of Social Development and to amend and repeal certain related Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Réal Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, how can the Bloc Québécois support the creation of a department whose mandate would mean interference in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces? Such an attitude certainly comes as no surprise, since the government has shown us once again what has now become its trademark.

There is consensus in Quebec that social development is part of Quebec's jurisdiction, just like health, education, municipal affairs and so forth. It would not make sense for the Bloc Québécois to support such an abuse of power, especially since this area affects the public so directly.

In any case, need I remind hon. members that Quebec never supported the 1999 framework agreement on social union? Despite the fact that 97% of the funds from this department will be allocated for seniors, the fact remains that this jurisdiction, which the federal government unfortunately appropriated, should never have been given up by the provinces. By doing so, they opened the door to federal intrusions in social development.

Besides the worthy goal of protecting and possibly improving Canada's social foundation, how can we be sure we are not witnessing another violation of our jurisdictions? Judging from past experience, it is not hard to predict what will happen.

*Government Orders*

As we all know by now, the Department of Social Development is the result of the split of the former Department of Human Resources. Its role will be to put in place a system that will ensure the elderly, handicapped, families and children have an adequate income.

The new department, through its 12,000 civil servants, will manage a budget on the order of \$53 billion to be injected into our social foundations, but only on the condition that it respects provincial and territorial jurisdictions, as the government promised in the throne speech.

The new Minister for Social Development will have to ensure the department operates within the parameters accorded the provinces. The mission of the Department of Social Development is to enhance the well-being of individuals, families and communities through a set of measures tailored to their needs.

As you know, Quebec has expertise in most of these areas. Once again, we will obviously see a duplication of costs. In view of the lack of will to consult, vital to success in the area and in the context, we can already assume that the results will be hit and miss and cobbled together.

In view of the money involved, \$53 billion, 97% of which will go to the Canada pension plan and old age security, duplication must be avoided at all cost.

For years the Auditor General of Canada has pointed at the fact that some expenses such as the Canada child tax benefit can be found under tax spending but not under the department's expenditures. There is an obvious lack of transparency. This then justifies the Bloc's concern.

Such a cavalier attitude sends a very negative message to Bloc members.

• (1600)

In order to create this new department, it is certain that some legislation will have to be amended or simply repealed so that there can be new rules, such as those addressing protection of and access to personal information other than what is governed by the Canada pension plan and the Old Age Security Act. There is therefore an additional problem with this new approach, one that is likely to complicate case assessment still further, and is therefore far from a simple problem.

The Bloc Québécois has had a position on reimbursement of the GIS for some years now. We have demanded considerable sums for a number of Quebecers and Canadians who were deprived of the GIS because they were not properly informed of the eligibility criteria.

In Quebec alone, the amount that did not go to eligible recipients since 1993 is in excess of \$800 million. Despite the fact that some \$100 million have been recovered since, the procedure still has to be considered pretty dubious, particularly since the government in power is still denying entitled recipients full repayment of all that is owed to them.

As far as inclusion, and the government's involvement in that inclusion, is concerned, it must be kept in mind that the Liberals announced numerous measures in the 2004 budget, including tax deductions for integration of the disabled. The Bloc Québécois

cannot do but rejoice at such initiatives, but we feel that no one is better placed than the Government of Quebec to do this properly.

As far as dynamic communities are concerned, a number of programs, such as the social development partnerships program, which is especially accessible to not-for-profit organizations, the voluntary and community sector initiative to improve relations with volunteers, and the new horizons for seniors program, will be helpful, there is no denying that.

However, since the relationship between all of Quebec's community organizations and our health and social services network is running smoothly, it is hard to admit that a more distant level of government could administer it better, or come up with a better adapted policy, given Quebec's familiarity with the approach already in use.

Looking at the new federal initiative aimed at a better understanding of young children, here is the best example of program duplication in the area of education. This is strictly a provincial program, all the more so because the Quebec professionals involved in it, in both the health and public education sectors, are at the leading edge of modern techniques in this area.

More interference is looming through the national child benefit. This is a program which guarantees financial support to low-income families with children by promoting a national threshold whereby payments would be calculated on the basis of income and expenses through the Canadian child benefit program. The government's avowed aim is clearly to raise its profile, an approach that suits the minister.

This federal intervention falls under the agreement on the social union. Well, so far as I know, this agreement has never been approved by Quebec. If the federal government wants to continue acting unilaterally, it should at least have the decency to compensate Quebec, which already has well-adapted, successful programs in that area, as is generally recognized.

Beyond problems of program harmonization in this area, another problem is arising in regard to the calculation of federal child benefits. The example of day care centres for \$5 a day is the most striking evidence of this.

• (1605)

Some families lose more federal deductions than what they gain from the establishment of child care services. Because the federal government refused to harmonize its criteria with those in Quebec, families in Quebec have been hit with a shortfall of about \$70 million.

In order to circumvent that kind of problem, the Bloc Québécois is advocating a refundable tax credit for all families with dependent children, regardless of the family's income. This approach would be much fairer and would be more in keeping with the circumstances of Quebec families. We have a similar situation with a program established in 2000 called early childhood development, under HRDC, to help young children.

*Government Orders*

Between 2000 and 2005, \$2.2 billion was supposed to be paid to the provinces and territories to help lessen human misery, especially in low income families. The Quebec government cannot condone such interference, since the federal approach runs against several provincial jurisdictions.

Another subject raises many questions. In the 2004 throne speech, the federal government told us that, true to its reputation for encroaching on privileges, it would keep playing its inquisitorial role by increasing the number of projects in the multilateral context of training and care for young children in a multilateral framework.

For the same reasons mentioned earlier about the penalty incurred by parents of Quebec children benefiting from the \$7 day care program, we cannot agree with such an initiative, since it punishes a number of families.

Finally, when we are talking about national day care services, which were already part of the election platform in 1993, Quebec's experience proves beyond all doubt we do not need any federal interference that might even be a nuisance given the level of performance of our own system.

The so-called agreement in principle of November 2, 2004 is still both ridiculous and unrealistic in the current context. No elected member from Quebec, particularly in this sector, can accept federal interference without any guarantee of the right to opt out with full compensation. We would remind the House that this is what the federal government had committed to in the 2004 Speech from the Throne, by agreeing to the amendment to the amendment by the Bloc Québécois providing that provincial jurisdictions would be entirely respected and that financial pressure called fiscal imbalance would be reduced. Thus, the federal government had committed to respect all Quebec's jurisdictions. Despite the fact that the Speech from the Throne contains numerous hidden possibilities of interference, we will not be fooled by such subterfuge.

It must be pointed out that, in the health sector, an exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec, the federal government must respect the agreement on asymmetry and stop calling for accountability.

In the environment sector, the BAPE has proven itself in Quebec. The efforts made by Quebec to implement the Kyoto protocol are obvious. The federal project on national equity might also lead to another asymmetrical agreement, since our homework is done.

In the project on cities, Quebec is the architect of municipal infrastructure. It is responsible for establishing priorities and distributing funds. Will the money coming from the gas tax be transferred without condition? We doubt it, although it would make sense.

• (1610)

Over the years, Quebec has successfully developed social policies that are highly regarded both at the national and the international levels. Quebec needs no lessons from anyone, and you know it since you have not been shy about copying Quebec's social development initiatives. Quebec's expertise is recognized and is something on which all of Quebec agrees.

The system is working well because the structure and the institutions that link the people, the organizations and the

government together help everyone understand the needs and take the appropriate measures, whether it is developing efficient tools, as we have proven, or providing the money needed to ensure stable long term funding.

As you know and as the government will hopefully acknowledge, the problem is that we do not have room to manoeuvre due to fiscal imbalance. You have the power to right that wrong. We demand that you act now.

The people of Quebec will no longer stand by while the federal government abuses its prerogatives in order to squeeze money out of them and keep what is rightly theirs. Only the right to opt out with full compensation can convince us of the federal government's goodwill and induce us to vote in favour of the department's restructuring.

Uphold the commitments you have made in the throne speech, which have allowed you to stay in office. It is a matter of respect and integrity. The health and safety of Quebecers are at stake.

• (1615)

**Hon. Claude Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Rural Communities), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat surprised by the comments of the Bloc Québécois member. There is a lot of talk about the Government of Canada's interference. However, the hon. member should at least have the courage to recognize that manpower training was transferred to Quebec, this at a time when the Parti Québécois was in office. This shows openness on the part of the federal government and a firm will to respect provincial jurisdictions.

Infrastructure programs are also an area where, again, the federal government respects provincial jurisdictions. These programs are implemented in cooperation with the governments in place. Then, there is the daycare program. We recognized that Quebec had good expertise and said that we want to cooperate with the province and let it provide the service. What I have a hard time understanding is that when we listen to the hon. member, it sounds like everything is perfect, everything is just fine.

Did the hon. member talk to people in his riding to learn that there are single parents who earn a little over \$7 per hour, who signed up for the \$7 per day child care program, but who are forced to pay the full amount, because there is a shortage of spaces available.

What the Government of Canada wants to do is to improve the situation to allow these single parents to have access to the \$7 per day child care program. The Bloc Québécois member should congratulate the Government of Canada on its initiative, because the money will go to Quebec to help it provide a better service. It seems to me that this is the obvious thing to do.

Health was mentioned as an exclusive provincial jurisdiction. Perhaps this is due to a lack of experience, but the Bloc Québécois member should know that health is a shared jurisdiction. However, the provinces must provide services to their population and that is their exclusive domain. We respect that. Asymmetry was a great initiative on the Government of Canada's part to show that we want to cooperate.

*Government Orders*

The Bloc Québécois member should recognize this and he should have the courage to say that, indeed, some measures are being taken. We are positive and we want to cooperate with the provinces to improve services to the public.

**Mr. Réal Lapierre:** Mr. Speaker, in response to my colleague, I was very careful to specify, in my remarks, that I was certainly not arguing that nothing good had been done or was being done. Quite the contrary, good things have been done, new ones are still being done, and I can imagine that in subsequent years, we will witness more improvement for low income families.

The only thing is that we always come back to the old saw that if you want something done well, then do it yourself.

Take regional development. There is no denying that a much more logical approach must be taken together with all the stakeholders in the regions. They are in the best position to identify the issues.

The same can be said for day care centres. That the federal government put in additional funds to make the program even better, I agree. However, what we would like is that, when the federal government enhances its programs as the result of agreements with provincial governments, it should leave the provinces the necessary leeway to bring to fruition the projects considered, which might possibly be resolved.

• (1620)

**Hon. Claude Drouin:** Mr. Speaker, a Bloc Québécois member raised an interesting point about regional development. Since I had the privilege of being the Secretary of State for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, I could see that regional offices throughout Quebec were aware of the regional development dynamics. They had teams of 15 to 17 people, which did a fantastic job.

I think they want to keep doing it, and they have the wherewithal to do it. The Liberals made a commitment to provide even more tools to them to do their job. If I understood the hon. member's allegation correctly, the Quebec government centralizes too much and is not present enough in the regions.

However, the hon. member should know that the Canadian government is working with the regions. A good example is the Centre des technologies de l'aluminium in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, where 80 researchers are working full time on the development of second and third stage processing of aluminum.

What are the actual results of this centre in which the Canadian government invested \$57 million? Alcan won a contract with GM to manufacture aluminum bumpers for Cadillacs. Two cities were in contention, Jonquière and Detroit, and Jonquière got it because the Canadian government had been visionary and made sure it set up this centre in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean area.

I could give similar examples in all Quebec regions. Another one is the Institut des matériaux industriels in Boucherville. The Canadian government is supporting development.

**Mr. Réal Lapierre:** Mr. Speaker, it is not because we are in politics and our ideology may differ that we cannot recognize initiatives were put in place and had positive effects. We recognize that.

You are telling us about a project in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. However, in our own communities, our own ridings, there have been disastrous situations, specifically, the closing of plants in the apparel and textile industry, asbestos and all sorts of other sectors.

I remind you of the mad cow crisis. Is it normal that a whole country has been penalized because of one single case?

We say that, as far as possible, where it is easier for provincial authorities to act, the ideal formula would be for the federal government to make improvements through these provincial jurisdictions, because it has the surpluses necessary to do so, but that afterwards, it would give leeway to provincial authorities so they can solve the issues that we know about.

• (1625)

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there was an intervention on the other side of the House, but the question is for my colleague.

The issue of regional development came up again. The Liberals dates from the time of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who said that Ontario was the automobile industry. The federal government then scrambled to prevent any automobile industry from going to Quebec.

Also, 50% of workers in aeronautics are now in Ontario. When aeronautics is good, 50% go to Ontario. This is the way to centralize toward Ontario.

I would like to ask my colleague how he sees the fair and just distribution of wealth among all the provinces.

**Mr. Réal Lapierre:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for having asked that question.

My view, as a former mayor, is quite simple, I can tell you that the people in the best position to fix the problems of the municipality were the municipal representatives. On that basis, if we extrapolate somewhat, we must again admit that the people who are in the best position to fix problems in the regions are those who are on the spot, in the regions, and used to working together.

I must admit, with my friend on the other side, whom, incidentally, I know quite well, that in our region, the people who used to work at the CDIC were local people, people born in the region, who really were familiar with its problems. I am glad to say, as I must, that this was a positive thing for the CIDC. Those people were already well versed in how things worked and all the problems. Coming from the area, they were people able to work...

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry to have to interrupt the hon. member, but it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Agriculture; the hon. member for Palliser, Agriculture; the hon. member for Windsor-West, Privacy.



*Government Orders*

[English]

**Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to rise and speak in favour of Bill C-22.

The basic purpose of the bill is to formally establish the new Social Development Department, the one that was created last December when the former Department of Human Resources Development was divided into two parts. This division was part of the government's move to strengthen Canada's social foundations.

Bill C-22 is more than a simple piece of housekeeping. By enabling the Social Development Department to obtain legal status, the bill complements the many other ways the government is moving to strengthen Canada's social foundations and to improve the way that government does business with Canadians.

In other words, supporting Bill C-22 means we would be doing more than just giving legal status to a government department. It means that we support the fact that the Government of Canada is committed to serving Canadians in a fair, inclusive and efficient way. It means that by giving this new department a mandate to focus on social development policies and programs, members of the House recognize the importance of social development as one of the key defining features of our country and of the government's concern for individual Canadians.

With this legislation, we are both providing Social Development Canada with an appropriate legal status and we are confirming that we are in accord with the department's mandate.

What is the mandate we are confirming for Social Development Canada? The mandate is straightforward. It is to strengthen Canada's social foundations by promoting social well-being and income security for all Canadians. While the mandate is straightforward, the department's activities in support of this mandate are both many and wide-ranging.

Social development has become the point of convergence for all social policies and programs for children, families and caregivers, persons with disabilities and seniors. The department is also responsible for the voluntary sector. In concrete terms, this new department represents \$53 billion at work for Canadians. Most of this money goes out as income support to Canadians themselves, such as seniors, people with disabilities and children.

The new department was also created to provide a centre of expertise on social policy and programs for the benefit of all Canadians. As such, it provides a focal point for social policy development within the Government of Canada.

The objective is to ensure a holistic approach to social policy through this department's relationship with other government departments and agencies, such as, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Health Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Finance Canada, Heritage Canada, Justice Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and the Canada Revenue Agency.

Many of the programs and policies of these other federal government departments can have an impact on the social policy interests of Canadians. The role of Social Development Canada is to work cooperatively with each of them to ensure that common objectives are identified and met.

This new department is also working in areas of shared responsibility with the provinces and territories. In a federal system like ours, where jurisdiction for social development is often shared with our colleagues in the provinces and territories, this particular federal-provincial-territorial liaison function is extremely important. For example, the department will be working with its provincial and territorial counterparts on a plan to establish a new national early learning and child care system. That is just one of the many areas of federal-provincial-territorial cooperation in which the Minister of Social Development and his department are engaged.

They are also working closely with representatives of stakeholder communities. These include child care experts, representatives of persons with disabilities, representatives of seniors and seniors organizations, and many other groups who from time to time need our attention and support.

All this activity can be rolled up into one statement which defines the goal of Social Development Canada. That goal is to ensure the social expectations of Canadians are understood and can be translated into policies, programs, and agreements that meet individual needs while respecting national objectives.

• (1630)

To put it in concrete terms, the new department is working in a number of ways to ensure key social objectives are met. Among these objectives are: continuing income security for seniors; helping people with disabilities to participate fully in Canadian society; re-enforcing the need for children to have the best possible start in life; and supporting the roles and activities of the voluntary and not for profit sectors in our society.

The bill would ensure that we could accomplish these objectives under an organizational structure that would provide integrated policy development and program delivery in a cost effective way. Indeed the two departments, that is Social Development Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, have been designed in a way that minimize disruption and ensures that Canadians continue to receive a seamless, single window service.

There are some specific ways the new Department of Social Development is already hard at work to meet its mandate. By bringing together income security and other social programs for seniors, families and children and persons with disabilities under one roof, the department is providing a focal point for social policy at the federal level. By supporting the work of the Minister of Social Development and the Minister of State for Families and Caregivers and their work with stakeholders, the department is addressing major social issues affecting Canadians, including child care, early childhood development and approaches to ensure the active participation and dignity of seniors and Canadians with disabilities.

Social Development Canada is working to deliver the programs and services that Canadians have come to expect from their federal government. The bill would ensure that the department and its 12,000 employees across the country could continue to deliver all these needed programs and services.

I am proud to stand here in support of the bill, and I encourage all members of the House to join me in supporting it.

*Government Orders*

•(1635)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to part of my hon. colleague's speech and found one thing she said, among others, particularly interesting. She mentioned single window service. I am not clear on the definition of single window. They are talking about forming two departments out of one, that is to say, splitting one department in two. There is also talk about encroaching on areas of provincial jurisdiction. This will make it necessary to multiply or double the number of civil servants. She mentioned 12,000, whereas closer to 14,000 civil servants will work for the new department.

Where is the single window in that? I would like her to give me her definition of single window and tell me how it has anything to do with increasing the number of people involved and interventions in areas of no concern to the federal government.

[*English*]

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite will be familiar with the local offices of the former Department of Human Resources Development. In most communities there is such an office. As that department has been divided in two, those same offices will serve both of the new departments. The two departments will share the existing programs service delivery network.

Social Development Canada is responsible for the network of call centres by telephone and the online web services. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada is responsible for the national in person service delivery network. That would be those offices to which I was referring, the human resource client centres. Additionally, Social Development Canada will provide corporate services to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. Those corporate services include human resources systems and financial and administrative services.

From the perspective of the member opposite, his constituents will continue to use the telephone lines, or the Internet or the local office that they have always used. There still will be three ways of contacting Social Development Canada and HRSDC, the same communication abilities for an average constituent as they had when this was one department.

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate. As previous government speakers have mentioned, Bill C-22 is pretty much housekeeping. We do not claim to try to characterize it as anything less than that, but it is certainly nothing more.

I spend time on the reality of the work that should be done at the national level to ensure we do not have the kinds of poverty we see in Canada. The bill is about the government's suggestion for a structure to deal with this issue.

I would be far more interested in having the House review the comments of my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie, our social services critic. He gave an outstanding speech, from his heart and from his own experience with his riding. He talked about his experience with food banks. He talked about what he did in the Ontario legislature, when he and I were there together. He fought to ensure that the issue of poverty was on the agenda. He relentlessly made sure no one

would forget that children were going hungry. He has carried that passion and commitment over to this place. I am not the least bit surprised that his first formal maiden speech was on that very issue. I urge members to take a moment to review his speech. Then I think members will understand why I make these comments.

I will begin my remarks by acknowledging that in the NDP, and in our predecessor, the CCF, we like to believe our *raison d'être* is to deal with the issue of inequalities in society. While I will say some things that are similar to colleagues in the Bloc, there may be some parts with which they may have some difficulty. We will have questions and answers at which time we can deal with those.

I want to talk about the fact that Tommy Douglas was recently chosen as the *Greatest Canadian*. He was known as one of the leading voices beyond his lifetime. He spoke up for the average citizen. Unfortunately, for far too many average Canadians, barely existing is far too often the reality for them, particularly children.

I know some people like to stereotype folks who are on social assistance, and we can play all the games we want. They are games and they are untrue. However, we cannot begin to put any kind of an acceptable face on child poverty.

Before I became a member and after, I watched the passions that were aroused around the issue of child pornography, and rightly so. What I and the rest of us in the NDP would like to see is that same kind of passion aroused over the issue of child poverty. Make no mistake, they are both violence against children.

Our country is one of the richest in the world. Parliament has failed in the commitment it made to its own people 15 years ago, almost to the month. The current member for Ottawa Centre, then the member for Oshawa, introduced a motion, which was passed unanimously by the House, to set a national goal of eliminating child poverty. Where are we today? A report by the National Council of Welfare states that the poverty rates among children are going up.

The House, and any member who was there at the time that motion was passed, has a responsibility to eliminate child poverty. This has not happened. Who is accountable? Who is responsible? Who cares?

I hear the Prime Minister of the day talk about his big commitment to goals around the Holy Grail, debt reduction. Fair enough, debt reduction is important. Would someone tell me why debt reduction is a bigger priority than child poverty. The House spoke unanimously to this 15 years ago. It was not just one party or the governing party, the entire House unanimously said that child poverty was a priority. It seems that right after the motion was passed it was filed away.

•(1640)

It seems that right after the motion was passed it was filed away. Members forget about it. They did their nice little motherhood stuff for the day. They all said wonderful things about children. However, the children have been forgotten. What really matters is business. Do not get me wrong. Business is important. Business is the generator of wealth, obviously critical to the future of the country, but it is not the only thing that matters.

*Government Orders*

I am not proud to raise this, but child poverty is increasing in Hamilton, my home town. Again, in the context of the world, Hamilton is one of the wealthiest entities. Other countries would love to have the economic dynamics of Hamilton. As an example, in Ontario lone female parents between the age of 25 and 49, with young sons age 10 to 12, receive \$1,106. The monthly cost of a food basket is \$212. I cannot imagine a mother and a son surviving on \$212. The average rent is \$737. They are left with \$157 after they pay for food, assuming that covers food and rent. We wonder why food banks are on the increase and why we have more and more people living on the streets.

How does that fit the national scene? This is where I may get into some problems with my Bloc colleagues. I accept that and I am prepared to deal with it. I have a real problem with the fact that the government provides money to provincial governments for a child benefit and then allows provinces like Ontario, although I do not know about others, to claw it back. That is disgraceful. It was Harris at the time. I do not care whether it is the Tories, Liberals or NDP. The national government has identified the need to support children in poverty through this benefit. It funnels it through the provincial government which has the ability to claw that money back, rendering the positive impact on that family moot.

That is not good enough. The House is the national voice of the country. When something as important as eradicating child poverty over 15 years is unanimously adopted by the House and the government of the day, regardless of political stripe, ponies up some money that is meant to go to those children, no provincial government should have the ability to negate that in any way, shape or form. That is an obligation of the House and of the national government. I am ashamed of the fact that I live in one of the provinces where the government—

**An hon. member:** Louder.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** I will make it louder for the member because when it comes to child poverty, I will be heard. Every New Democrat will be as loud as they can everywhere they can. The fact of the matter is—

• (1645)

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I, like most members of this place, am very interested in the subject matter of child poverty and some of other things about which the member talks. However, the member has not addressed the bill before the House right now. We have to be relevant in our debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Mississauga South is correct. I am sure the member for Hamilton Centre is working his speech and his remarks around to the content of the bill, and shortly we will find out how it all ties together.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, and I very much appreciate your say in it, because as I said from the beginning and all the way through, it is directed to Bill C-22, very much so.

The speeches from the government side of the House have talked about what a wonderful benefit this is going to be to Canadians. I am making the argument that one can restructure departments all one wants, but if programs and money are not actually being put in place that are going to help people on the ground, in their homes and

communities where it matters, then Bill C-22 is not worth the paper it is printed on.

That is my point and that is why I make the point that it is germane to this argument, very germane. It is not surprising that it is a government member who wants to stop me, because the government is trying to make out that this is a big deal. It is not a big deal. Children going to sleep hungry in Canada, that is a big deal. That is a huge deal.

We will probably hear somebody from the government talk about the national child care program. That is wonderful. I am glad it is happening. The government promised it often enough. It looks like it is actually going to happen. I would make the submission that it is only happening because we are in a minority government situation. That is the only reason this is on the agenda in the way that it is.

This minority House can work for Canadians. This is just another example. I believe that if we had a majority government Bill C-22 would be framed as the be-all and end-all of what this government is going to do to deal with social service issues, which means dealing with people in Canada who live in poverty and need help. But because it is a minority government, that is not going to be good enough.

It is just like bringing in the pension plan was, which by the way happened because the CCF, the predecessor to the NDP, held a minority Liberal government to account. That is how we got the Canada pension plan. That is how we got universal health care. Tommy Douglas started in Saskatchewan. It was a minority government situation where the Liberals were forced to introduce it. If we look at the history, we can see that historically the Liberals for decades have made wondrous promises many times over. This is another one.

I do not remember the Prime Minister talking about creating a new Department of Social Development as the be-all and end-all, and it is not. In fact, I am not sure it is going to make much difference at all. We are going to support it. I will be clear about that. We are not against it. There is not a lot to be for or against. It is a restructuring of a department. I would be much happier if I did not have to use parliamentary gymnastics to tie in arguments about child poverty in the bill that is in front of us. I wish we were dealing strictly and substantively with the issue of child poverty rather than clouding it with this, but this is the only opportunity we have and we are going to grab every one we can.

I am hoping that somebody from the government will help me understand during the 10 minutes of questions and comments where exactly the government thinks it is in terms of honouring the pledge of eradicating child poverty when the current national statistics are showing us going in the opposite direction. For those colleagues on the government benches who are going to speak after me and no doubt praise Bill C-22 to high heaven, I hope they will move from their prepared texts and explain to Canadians why their government failed them.

*Government Orders*

It is not just the Liberals; they have to take the primary responsibility as they are the government, but they are not the only ones who have an obligation in this. It is all of us. That was a unanimous decision of the House. That should mean something. So when the government members stand and brag about Bill C-22, I want to hear them tell us where they think we are in terms of dealing with child poverty, because I do not see it.

I do not see it. I do not see a lot of real passion on this issue. I am not here every minute of every day. I have not heard it a lot. I can name a couple of colleagues who have addressed it, but not nearly as many as I have heard talk about debt reduction or interest rates or free trade. Those are all very important, but I would like to think that in the Canadian House of Commons we at least equate with that the eradication of child poverty, if not make it a higher priority.

That is not the only area where we have serious problems as a society. It all fits together, because Bill C-22 talks about the structure of one particular department. That structure of that department within the overall context of the obligations of this government, the national Parliament, to all Canadians extends beyond just the niceties of how the department is structured.

• (1650)

The cutbacks to provinces by the current Prime Minister when he was the finance minister have a lot to do with this. That even has a lot to do with the statistics I read out about what is going on in Hamilton and the challenges we face, because someone like former Premier Mike Harris used the cuts of the federal government as an excuse to cut transfer payments to municipalities, to cut money for programs to support the very people this department is supposed to help.

Does the House remember that in 1995, upon receiving a majority government, the then newly elected premier, Mike Harris, cut the income of the poorest of the poor by 21.6%? They were people who were already in poverty, the majority of whom were children. They were already in poverty, the poorest of the poor. He cut their incomes by 21.6%.

Can we imagine what would happen in the House if the government House leader stood up and said that government would introduce a bill that would roll back MPs' wages by 21.6%? It would take weeks to peel the members of Parliament off the ceiling, yet I do not recall the national government or the House having too much to say at all when that was going on in the most populous province of this country.

I understand the constitutional responsibilities here, but my point is that this national House has an obligation. Where were the voices? Where were the new departments? I see my Liberal friend getting a little edgy over there. Where were the Bill C-22s of the day to stop that sort of thing? Where were they?

For that matter, I have to say that a whole lot of people have to take responsibility, because the reality is that due to the dynamics at that time there was hardly any outcry at all. There was hardly a peep because the politics of the day and the dynamics were such that the poor were to blame for their own circumstances. It was their fault. Since it was their fault, it was perfectly okay for the government to

cut back their income; that will teach them. That was the feeling at the time.

I point it out not just as a historical civics lesson, but to show the climate in this nation, this very wealthy nation of such privilege, to show that something like that could happen in the most populous province with hardly a peep from anyone. Where were the grandiose speeches then, the speeches condemning a government that would do that? Where were new laws, the Bill C-22s of the day, to step in and ensure that a government could not do that or it would offset it in some way but it would for goodness' sake do something? To just stand back and let the poorest of the poor have their incomes cut by 21.6% is unfathomable but true. It happened.

That is what I thought the resolution of the House 15 years ago was about, about making sure that did not happen and that where we discovered challenges we would do something about them.

I would be a lot happier if we had a bill in front of us that would actually do something concrete for individuals and children who are in poverty. We have not even begun to talk about those who have physical disabilities, psychiatric disabilities and all kinds of other problems where programs and supports that once existed are now gone due to cuts. Boy, that is a whole debate for the House too.

I apologize to members for being as loud as I am, but it is just so frustrating when we know that we can do better. I believe that every member here cares; I really do. It is just a matter of taking that caring and making sure that it translates at least as strongly as some people feel about debt reduction and free trade into thoughts about children in poverty and families in poverty, especially as we are heading into the Christmas season.

We should think about that and recognize that we have an obligation. We have not collectively met that obligation. We have a chance now in a minority government for all of us to pull together. A little bit more than Bill C-22 is what will be needed.

• (1655)

• (1700)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that the member tried to talk about the bill, he did spend an awful lot of time explaining how if the bill were a really good bill we would be able to deal with issues like child poverty. I would refer him to a book called *The Child Poverty Solution*, written by someone I know very well. Me, actually.

It tells the story about what happened in 1989. The member should know the facts. In 1989, the member for Ottawa Centre was retiring. It was a Friday. On the Thursday night there was a negotiation with Brian Mulroney and Jean Charest, in his office, about "how can we leave this guy some sort of a legacy without committing Parliament?" They came up with this wording change, "to seek to achieve the elimination"; that is, "to seek to achieve", not "to eliminate". The member should get the facts straight.

*Government Orders*

What I really want to do is let the member know that if he were to look at the statistics with regard to child poverty, he would find out that lone parent families, which account for 15% of all families in Canada, generate 54% of all children living in poverty.

So if we were ever to pass a motion in any Parliament to eliminate child poverty, we would actually have to deal with the issue of the breakdown of the Canadian family. That is something that we cannot legislate. We cannot legislate behaviour. It is a fact.

Child poverty is a LICO measure. The member must know something about LICO. It is a relative measure. If we were to give everybody in Canada \$10,000 a year in their pockets today, we would still have the same number of poor because it is measured basically as who is at the bottom of the totem pole. We need an absolute measure.

I would ask the member if he is familiar with LICO versus a market basket measure. I would ask him whether he thinks that in terms of measuring poverty in Canada what we really have to do is establish a true poverty line so that we can measure it and respond to it, rather than having a relative measure like LICO, for which no matter what we do we will always have people at the bottom of the list.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do know what LICO is. It is "low income cut-off". I understand how all of that works.

But before I go there, I want to talk about the member's preamble. It is worse than I thought.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, I do accept the member correcting me. If the member says that is the wording, I accept that and I stand corrected.

But it is worse than I thought; do not tell me that. I was concerned that this House really cared and there was a whole lot of passion for the issue and then they just dropped the ball or went on to other things. Now the member tells me it really did not matter, that the prime minister of the day did it as a nicety to the member for Ottawa Centre who was leaving. Come along. That cannot be. That cannot be the case.

If it is, then I would say shame on those members who pretended it was something else. They should have made sure that there was something else that was meaningful. It is too bad I cannot ask a question, because I would have asked the member in return whether or not he thinks that 15 years of doing not enough, which is leading to increased poverty, is the answer.

I realize the member is having great fun with this and laughing and joking. I am glad the member finds it all so humorous and amusing. I accept the fact that he must be a world-renowned expert; he wrote a book. That is great. What I would like to see is the member standing in this place and introducing a bill, given that he is in the governing party, that really does put some substantive meat around the issue of child poverty, rather than standing up and showing off by telling us what a great academic he is.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate the hon. member on his remarks,

but I am not about to congratulate the government member who said that talking about poverty was not relevant.

Poverty, both child and family poverty, is at the heart of any of the bills being introduced now, be it the creation of the economic agency or the social development bill. Poverty will always remain at the heart of our bills. It is embarrassing to hear a government member interrupt another member who is speaking to the debate.

Before asking my question, I have here some statistics. Canada's growth rate has been 3.1% since 1999. It is the best in the G-7. There have also been seven consecutive balanced budgets. Credit rating agencies have increased the government's rating. That is the spectacular side now. On the other side, we have Campaign 2000 and its report on poverty. How can we be as rich as that when the report shows that the child poverty rate is on the rise again in Canada? Even in the middle of an economic boom, it increased to 15.6%, which means nearly one poor child in six in Canada.

What can we say? The solutions are well known, but the political will of the government is lacking. Reference was made to several measures.

I am asking my colleague and he is right on that. How is it that, despite all the economic growth and a positive trade balance, poverty is increasing in Canada? Who is benefiting from the economic poverty? What is happening to wealth redistribution and businesses in all this? There is no commitment whatsoever from the government. They should certainly not be bragging about a bill that does not say anything about poverty.

• (1705)

[*English*]

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know that I have the answer to the question from the Bloc member. However, it certainly is the central question that needs to be asked when we are dealing with child poverty.

It is an area that I did not have time to get into, but our arguments are similar in that we are making the point that we are a rich nation. We have the dollars with the surpluses to prove it, but we chose other priorities. I cannot speak for the member opposite but speaking for myself, I would not expect that every dime and penny would go into any one particular area of government regardless of the need. We would not be able to function.

However, to merely let it go by, and now to hear that it was not even meant, that really blows me away. I hope there is some follow up by somebody somewhere who cares about this. That is what this was all about. He made the point that there were billions of dollars available through surpluses that went to debt reduction.

The point that I am making, and that I think my colleague from the Bloc is sharing, is that some of that money should have gone to another national priority goal and objective, and that was to deal with the issue of child poverty.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the national child care benefit clawback that happened in Ontario was an atrocious, egregious attack on working people, and also children when child poverty was rising at the time.

*Government Orders*

I would ask him to give his perspective as to why the federal government did nothing and is still not doing anything to stop the clawbacks from happening? The government could have put political pressure on the Harris government to ensure that it would have benefited many people, but instead it went to political goals and some waste. I would like to have the member's comments about that situation.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Mr. Speaker, to the best of my knowledge, and again I stand to be corrected, it is still happening. We have had a shift in government, but it is still happening.

What perplexed us, and at that time we were the third party in the House, was the deafening silence that came from this place. No one felt any obligation at all, at the national level in government, to speak to an action that hurt kids severely. I think the government had an obligation to speak and it still does.

To answer the question from my colleague from Windsor West, I think the obligation goes beyond just verbal reaction. When something like that happens, the national government has to do something. We cannot standby and let any government turn around and attack the poor in its own jurisdiction. I do not know how we would call anything like a 21.6% cut in income as anything other than an attack. These are the people in poverty.

I remember saying at the time that the history books will show that it was one of the darkest times in our province. What made it extra dark was the acceptance by the public that this was okay and by all of us as politicians who did not do enough in our communities to ensure that one could not get elected on that kind of an agenda. It should never have happened.

The point is that it did. In this federation, there has to be room somewhere for the federal government to do something, other than stand back and wring its hands and say "We're sorry, it is not good". It did not even say that. I hope that at least it wrung its hands.

• (1710)

**Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our children are Canada's greatest resource. That is why, even as it fought the deficit, the Government of Canada continued to meet the needs of children a priority. In this fiscal year, for example, the Government of Canada will invest more than \$13 billion in programs that support children and their families, but I agree that we must do more.

I would like to reflect on the government's commitment to our children, our achievements to date, what remains to be done, and how, with the passage of Bill C-22, the new Department of Social Development will become the catalyst for even greater action on behalf of our children.

No single government or jurisdiction can meet the needs of children on its own. We know that. That is why it is so important for the Government of Canada to collaborate effectively with provincial and territorial governments. I deplore these clawbacks. We have worked hard at this partnership and results are starting to bear fruit.

In 1998 federal, provincial and territorial governments reached a historic agreement to establish a national child benefit that has been called the most important social program introduced in this country since medicare.

Through this program, we work together to prevent and reduce child poverty, to ensure that it always makes economic sense for a parent to work rather than to receive social assistance where possible, and finally, to reduce overlap and duplication, and streamline all of our efforts collectively.

While the provinces, territories and first nations provide the services and the programs, the Government of Canada provides income support through monthly wages to families with children. In 2002-03, for example, the Canada child tax benefit provided \$5.3 billion in benefits to more than 80% of Canadian families with children. An additional supplement for low income families added another \$2.4 billion to this total and reached 40% of Canadian families with children.

Our most recent progress report showed that the program is working. In 2000 the national child benefit reduced the number of low income families by about 5%. In other words, 55,000 children living in about 23,000 families were no longer living in low income families. It is beginning to work.

To put this into even more practical terms, the national child benefit put, on average, approximately \$1,800 worth of disposable income into the pockets of these low income families. This is a significant step to reduce the depth of child poverty in this country, but we must do more, and we will do more.

That is why the Government of Canada announced last year that it would increase the national child benefit supplement by \$965 million per year by 2007-08. One child in poverty is one child too many.

The spirit of partnership that underlined the creation of the national child benefit was based on a collaborative approach in this country to meet the needs of children and their families. A year after the national child benefit was established, the Government of Canada and its provincial and territorial counterparts launched the national children's agenda. This agenda sets out a shared vision for children through four broad goals: health, safety and security, success at learning, and social engagement and responsibility. We know that if we do not help our children at the early stage, we often lose them and we lose the tremendous potential they have to offer. This is a great disservice to our children and to our country.

Let me touch on three separate initiatives that demonstrate how this partnership is allowing us to focus on our children. In 2000 the federal, provincial and territorial governments launched the early childhood development agreement to help children reach their full potential. Each year the Government of Canada transfers \$500 million to support four key areas ranging from prenatal programs and family resource centres to child care and community based services.

This agreement has already brought positive results. In Manitoba, for example, 6,000 vulnerable women have received support to help them have healthy pregnancies. This is very important.

All these efforts are not enough to support the critical need for early childhood development supports and services. That is why last year the federal, provincial and territorial governments scaled up their commitment through a new multilateral agreement for early learning and child care. To that end, the Government of Canada committed to transfer more than \$1 billion over five years to provincial and territorial governments to support new investment in early learning and child care programs and services across Canada.

Everyone, children, adults and communities, need to continue learning to make the most of their opportunities. That is why the Government of Canada established a pilot project known as the understanding the early years initiative. It is allowing 12 communities to understand the multitude of factors that influence a child's development. Armed with this information, they can make sound decisions about the right policies and investments that will work for them. Building on the early successes of this initiative, budget 2004 provided funds to expand the program to up to 100 communities across Canada over the next seven years.

All of these programs are laying a strong and needed foundation for our children's future, but there is still one gap. I am speaking of course about early learning and child care.

Canadians told us that child care needs to be a priority, and we agree. They told us that child care should foster children's emotional, intellectual, social and physical development. They told us that child care must be affordable and available to all families who want their children to participate. The time has come for a truly national system of early learning and child care. The Speech from the Throne committed the Government of Canada to move forward on this agenda and to do so expeditiously, which it has.

In November federal, provincial and territorial governments agreed on the shared principles that would guide this new national system of early learning and child care. These four principles of quality, universally inclusive, accessibility and development are the same ones that were recommended unilaterally by both parents and experts.

• (1715)

Much more work needs to be done and we are determined to lay the foundations for the system as quickly as possible. Ministers agreed to meet early in 2005 to finalize an agreement, and this is very hopeful and exciting for our whole country and for our children.

For its part, the Government of Canada will commit an additional \$5 billion over five years to make this new national system a reality soon. This rapidly expanding agenda for children demands special attention from the Government of Canada. It demands a department devoted to the social well-being of children, their families and all Canadians. It demands a department with the expertise and experience to understand that early childhood education, quality early learning and child care go hand in hand with economic performance, health, social spending, urban planning and social equity. That is why it is so important to enshrine in law, which we

### *Government Orders*

will do, hopefully, from this day forward, the departmental structure for Social Development Canada announced last December.

By splitting Social Development and Human Resources Development into two separate portfolios, the government is giving more weight, legitimacy and value to each one. That means that the government will be better able to give the children's agenda all the attention it so richly deserves.

The Government of Canada has worked effectively with its provincial and territorial counterparts to address the needs of our children. It is time now to take the next step in this ongoing process by creating Social Development Canada.

I urge all members of the House to support the proposed legislation. Our children deserve no less than all the attention that we can afford to give them. I can tell members that as a new MP I will make it a high priority for myself, as well as our government, to put the needs of children first, and this is a first step.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ):** Madam Speaker, first I would like to thank and congratulate my colleague. I think that she also gets to the heart of the matter when she says "One child in poverty is one child too many". Unlike her fellow MP and minister, I think that she is really getting into the debate.

I would like to ask her a question though. How can we believe her when she says that child poverty is now a priority for the government? We all know that for many years, in a period of economic prosperity, nothing has been done about it. As I said earlier, the child poverty rate was close to 16%, or one child on six. What changes can we expect then?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Susan Kadis:** Madam Speaker, our government has put huge investments into the area of helping our children but we do have to do more. Our national child benefit does benefit children across the country and it will be increased each year. This is something that is historical and shows what our government thinks. It shows that it is a priority.

• (1720)

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I have a concern that I would like to express and one on which I would like the hon. member's comments.

We know that child poverty and the poverty of women is tied to our employment insurance system. Right now approximately 35% of women will never be able to collect from premiums that they have to put into the system. It has been a deplorable state. It has been a cash cow for the government and it has been off the backs of workers, predominantly women and children who do not get the supports necessary in times of need.

*Government Orders*

I would like to ask for the member's opinion, in terms of our current employment insurance system, on whether or not it needs to be fixed. What in particular would she agree to do to fix that system?

**Mrs. Susan Kadis:** Madam Speaker, we do have the Prime Minister's task force which will be bringing down recommendations on this issue. We also have the subcommittee of human resources. This matter has been taken very seriously.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I like the speech on poverty that I have just heard. However, the time comes when we must get to the real numbers.

They think they can reduce poverty by increasing the structures, but I do not understand. Entering into areas of provincial jurisdiction is not the way to reduce poverty, at least as I understand it.

I would like to ask the hon. member this question. In five years the federal government has increased the numbers of its public servants by 46,000, or 21%. Does this help to reduce poverty, or would it not be better simply to provide services? The number of structures are increased, but the government just gets fatter and poverty is not reduced.

To follow up on the question that was just asked, at present 39% of workers who have paid employment insurance premiums can hope, if they should lose their jobs, to receive employment insurance benefits. Thus, 61% of the workers who have contributed will not get benefits. Does my hon. colleague not think that among these workers, fathers supporting their families, there might be pockets of child poverty?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Susan Kadis:** Madam Speaker, as a government I think we have shown initiative by striking the task force and bringing down recommendations. We understand and acknowledge that there are issues. I believe we will be anticipating some improvements and changes.

In terms of jurisdiction, I know I have heard the hon. Minister of Social Development say on many occasions that there will be respect for the jurisdictions.

I want to commend the hon. member on the model in Quebec which it is renowned. I am confident that the member would want our government to extend this positive benefit to all Canadian children.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Madam Speaker, I do not understand. I will just take the example of seniors. I will use the word "steal" because no other word fits what is being done to our seniors. From the poorest of our seniors, those entitled to the guaranteed income supplement, \$3.2 billion has been taken over the last 10 years. Now, with this legislation and this new department, are they preparing to repay to these seniors the money that was stolen from them, through no fault of their own? Is that not a source of poverty?

I know people who have had to provide their aged parents with the necessities of life, but realized, when their mother died at the age of 88, that she had been deprived of \$90,000 by this government. Children having to support their parents who were deprived of the

money owed to them. Is that not a way of impoverishing the children?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Susan Kadis:** Madam Speaker, we have this in the GIS and we are proposing increasing that. It was part of our platform and we intend to follow through on that.

As well, I understand that those people who were not getting the money that they were supposed to get were given, I believe, up to 11 months back.

The splitting of this department will be helpful to everyone, to seniors, to caregivers and to our children. It will give emphasis to every area in a way that has never happened before.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Madam Speaker, what I cannot understand is that since the beginning of this session, we are speaking out against the increasing number of departments and the duplicating of jurisdictions. For example, another department will now be created and the number of public servants will be increased again in this area.

The provinces, Quebec as well as Ontario I am sure, have departments that could very well manage these programs. Why do we not release funds for these departments in these provinces? This would help save a lot of money that could be used directly to reduce poverty. What we are doing now is only making the rich richer.

How does the member plan to ensure justice is done for the poor people?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Susan Kadis:** Madam Speaker, we are not infringing. In fact, we are doing the opposite, we are collaborating. This will allow us to give the adequate resources so we can follow through in a more effective way. It is a one-stop shop. It is not a duplication. It is a shared service model and one that will be beneficial and will enhance our capacity again to distribute the services in a way that affects people's lives and quality of life.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Mr. Speaker, I still do not understand. What we are hearing is unacceptable. How dividing a department in two has increased the number of public servants by 14,000? This will increase spending by some \$700 million a year. How does this create a single window?

Do you not know that if these \$700 million a year went into administration in the jurisdictions belonging to Quebec and the other provinces, that would help to alleviate poverty? Is the member serious when she thinks that a bill such as this would help reduce poverty? I cannot believe it.

When the government increases the number of public servants by 46,000 and its administrative cost by \$7 billion a year over the last five years, do you think that this money does not create poverty?



We say that this money must go to the provinces. To those who are responsible for social assistance, health and education, I say stop encroaching. Perhaps they will then be able to think about reducing child poverty.

I would like to have a reaction on this. There are perhaps two minutes left.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Susan Kadis:** Madam Speaker, I am not sure where the hon. member is getting his information but this entity has pre-existed. The member must be aware that the bill would only legalize it. This concept was under another umbrella and what we are simply doing is making it a legal entity. It is not a duplication.

In terms of extra costs, the fact is that there are virtually no extra costs. The same services will be distributed from the offices that currently exist. I believe there are 300 regional offices across the country.

\* \* \*

### CANADA EDUCATION SAVINGS ACT

The House resumed from November 30 consideration of Bill C-5, an act to provide financial assistance for post-secondary education savings, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of Motions Nos. 1 and 2.

**The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine):** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions on the motions at the report stage of Bill C-5.

Call in the members.

● (1805)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 18*)

#### YEAS

##### Members

Angus	Blaikie
Broadbent	Christopherson
Comartin	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Davies
Desjarlais	Godin
Julian	Layton
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
McDonough	Siksay
Stoffer — 17	

#### NAYS

##### Members

Abbott	Adams
Alcock	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson (Victoria)	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
André	Asselin
Augustine	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Bakopanos	Barnes
Batters	Bélangier
Bell	Bellavance
Bennett	Benoit
Bergeron	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blondin-Andrew

#### Government Orders

Boivin	Bonin
Boshcoff	Bouchard
Boudria	Boulianne
Brison	Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brunelle
Bulte	Cannis
Carr	Carrier
Carroll	Casey
Casson	Catterall
Chamberlain	Chan
Chatters	Cleary
Coderre	Comuzzi
Cotler	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cuzner	D'Amours
Day	Demers
Deschamps	Desrochers
DeVillers	Devolin
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Doyle
Drouin	Dryden
Duncan	Easter
Efford	Emerson
Fitzpatrick	Fletcher
Fontana	Forseth
Frulla	Fry
Gagnon (Québec)	Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gallant	Galloway
Gauthier	Godbout
Godfrey	Goodale
Goodyear	Gouk
Graham	Grewal (Newton—North Delta)
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)	Guarnieri
Guay	Guergis
Guimond	Hanger
Harris	Harrison
Hiebert	Hill
Holland	Hubbard
Ianno	Jaffer
Jean	Jennings
Johnston	Kadis
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan
Komarnicki	Kotto
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lapierre (Outremont)
Lastewka	Lauzon
Lavallée	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Longfield	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Macklin
Malhi	Maloney
Marceau	Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Matthews
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLellan
McTeague	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Minna
Mitchell	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Myers
Neville	Nicholson
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Owen	Pacetti
Pallister	Paquette
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Penson
Perron	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)	Plamondon
Poilievre	Powers
Prentice	Preston
Proulx	Rajotte
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Reid
Reynolds	Richardson
Ritz	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rota
Saada	Savage
Savoy	Scarpaleggia

*Government Orders*

Scheer	Schellenberger
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Scott
Sgro	Silva
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)	Simard (Saint Boniface)
Simms	Skelton
Smith (Pontiac)	Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Solberg	Sorenson
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Steckle
Stronach	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Tilson	
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Tweed
Ur	Valeri
Valley	Van Loan
Vellacott	Volpe
Warawa	Wilfert
Williams	Yelich
Zed — 233	

**PAIRED**

## Members

Bigras	Blais
Bourgeois	Bradshaw
Duceppe	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Murphy	O'Brien (Labrador)
Picard (Drummond)	Poirier-Rivard
Roy	Torsney
Wappel	Wrzesnewskyj- — 14

**The Speaker:** I declare Motion No. 1 defeated.

[English]

The question is on Motion No. 2.

**Hon. Karen Redman:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that you would find consent to apply the results of the vote just taken to the question now before the House.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(The House divided on Motion No. 2, which was negatived on the following division:)

*(Division No. 19)***YEAS**

## Members

Angus	Blaikie
Broadbent	Christopherson
Comartin	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Davies
Desjarlais	Godin
Julian	Layton
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
McDonough	Siksaly
Stoffer- — 17	

**NAYS**

## Members

Abbott	Adams
Alcock	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson (Victoria)	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Graslands)
André	Asselin
Augustine	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Bakopanos	Barnes
Batters	Bélanger
Bell	Bellavance
Bennett	Benoit
Bergeron	Bevilacqua

Bezan	Blondin-Andrew
Boivin	Bonin
Boshcoff	Bouchard
Boudria	Boulianne
Brisson	Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brunelle
Bulte	Cannis
Carr	Carrier
Carroll	Casey
Casson	Catterall
Chamberlain	Chan
Chatters	Cleary
Coderre	Comuzzi
Cotler	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cuzner	D'Amours
Day	Demers
Deschamps	Desrochers
DeVillers	Devolin
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Doyle
Drouin	Dryden
Duncan	Easter
Efford	Emerson
Fitzpatrick	Fletcher
Fontana	Forseth
Frulla	Fry
Gagnon (Québec)	Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gallant	Galloway
Gauthier	Godbout
Godfrey	Goodale
Goodyear	Gouk
Graham	Grewal (Newton—North Delta)
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)	Guarnieri
Guay	Guergis
Guimond	Hanger
Harris	Harrison
Hiebert	Hill
Holland	Hubbard
Ianno	Jaffer
Jean	Jennings
Johnston	Kadis
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan
Komarnicki	Kotto
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lapierre (Outremont)
Lastewka	Lauzon
Lavallée	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Longfield	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Macklin
Malhi	Maloney
Marceau	Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Mathews
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLellan
McTeague	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Minna
Mitchell	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Myers
Neville	Nicholson
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Owen	Pacetti
Pallister	Paquette
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Penson
Perron	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)	Plamondon
Poillievre	Powers
Prentice	Preston
Proulx	Rajotte
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Reid
Reynolds	Richardson
Ritz	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rota
Saada	Savage

Savoy	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Scott
Sgro	Silva
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)	Simard (Saint Boniface)
Simms	Skelton
Smith (Pontiac)	Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Solberg	Sorenson
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Steckle
Stronach	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Tilson	
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Tweed
Ur	Valeri
Valley	Van Loan
Vellacott	Volpe
Warawa	Wilfert
Williams	Yelich
Zed — 233	

### PAIRED

#### Members

Bigras	Blais
Bourgeois	Bradshaw
Duceppe	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Murphy	O'Brien (Labrador)
Picard (Drummond)	Poirier-Rivard
Roy	Torsney
Wappel	Wrzesniewski — 14

**The Speaker:** I declare Motion No. 2 lost.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-5, as amended, be concurred in.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Speaker:** It being 6:07 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1810)

[English]

### FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

**Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-282, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (export permits), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to acquaint my hon. colleagues further on Bill C-282, a bill designed to safeguard Canadians and their prescription drug supplies by extending the export permit requirement in place in the Food and Drugs Act.

Let me set the stage. In 2003 the sales of prescription medicines to U.S. residents, through the medium of Canadian Internet pharmacies, reached a figure of \$566 million to \$605 million, more than doubling the 2002 estimates of \$251 million. Early indicators for 2004 are

### Private Members' Business

predicting further growth and volume sales, some estimates putting the figure up to a billion dollars.

Some Canadian pharmacies have been quick to exploit this market. We have seen a growth from only four Canadian pharmacies with an active Internet export business in 1999 to 120 in 2003.

There are two essential reasons for this exponential growth in the cross-border Internet pharmacy trade. First, prices for some drugs in Canada are lower than those paid by consumers in the U.S., on average 36% below U.S. prices. Second, the Internet has made it cheaper to find low priced drugs in Canada and ship them to the U.S.

What troubles me, and many Canadians, is that continued untrammelled growth in this industry will have negative, long term repercussions for all Canadians, while a few profit from the trade. It is Canadian consumers who will be the losers in the long run. Prescription drugs in Canada are priced for the Canadian market and reflect the regime of the Patent Medicine Prices Review Board, PMPRB, and the lower purchasing power of the Canadian dollar in relative terms.

The supply system is geared toward a system of health insurance that is looking for value for money and a smaller and less well off population base. The prescription drugs sold by Internet pharmacies to U.S. consumers are purchased from the Canadian drug supply and then sold on at a profit. If the growth in this business is allowed to continue unchecked, I and others fear that the Canadian drug supply system will be at risk and Canadian consumers will end up paying more. An increase in volume of prescription drug exports and caps being placed on the quantity of drugs shipped to Canada by the pharmaceutical companies will equal drug shortages and price hikes.

There are growing calls emanating from U.S. legislators and drug manufacturers for prices to increase in Canada. Prescription drugs already account for one of the highest health care costs for provinces. We could expect that even modest price increases would strain resources of governments, health plans and individuals. For the chronically ill and seniors, among others, this would mean more than a mere irritant. Any price increases in drugs would mean that ordinary Canadians would suffer.

Our system of prescription drug supply is designed to meet the needs of Canadian consumers, not U.S. consumers. The U.S. pharmaceutical market size is approximately 13 times larger than that of Canada. In 2002 prescriptions dispensed per day in the United States amounted to 8,590,260 compared with 326,219,000 per year in Canada. If we divide the total number of prescriptions dispensed per year in Canada by the U.S. daily figures, we see that if U.S. residents were to purchase all their prescription drugs in Canada, the annual supply of Canadian drugs would be exhausted in 38 days.

*Private Members' Business*

I am not suggesting that it would be the likelihood, but as U.S. demand grows, there is an obvious potential that the Canadian drug supply system would be unable to supply both the domestic and the American markets.

There is already a voracious demand from U.S. seniors 65 or older who number over 30 million. That demand and that from other sources has every potential to grow. Numerous states, including Wisconsin and Illinois, and counties and cities in the U.S., are already actively encouraging their citizens to purchase their prescription drugs online from Canada.

● (1815)

Two bills are before the senate in the United States designed to facilitate the import of drugs. It is very probable that U.S. federal laws could be changed to allow retail drug imports from Canada. There are existing problems associated with the Internet pharmacy business as it stands now. Retail drug imports into the United States are not technically permitted by the Food and Drug Administration. In essence, Canadian Internet drug companies are flouting U.S. law.

A commonly used device for Internet pharmacies is to hire a Canadian physician to countersign or fully prescribe a prescription with a U.S. physician in order for the Internet pharmacist to fill the prescription. Not only is the Canadian doctor in this case often breaching the professional obligations set down by provincial Colleges of Physicians by not personally examining the patient, but the Internet pharmacist is breaching a responsibility in standards of practice for patient care and dispensing.

Finally, the results of the Canadian Pharmacists Association, which was released in the past few weeks, suggest that Canadian pharmacists are already experiencing shortages when filling patient prescriptions. Most felt that these shortages had become more evident over the past year. Although the pharmacists are at the moment finding alternative sources to ensure that patients do not go away empty-handed, there is a limit to how long this can go on before patients cannot have their prescriptions filled. Internet pharmacies are already facing increased challenges in obtaining enough stock to meet the demand of their customers, and are actively lobbying other pharmacies to over order and ship the excess to them.

The bill aims at going some way to addressing some of these problems, both potential and already apparent. I am concerned that we as parliamentarians need to be pre-emptive in this matter and not merely reactive to whatever legislation may come from the U.S. What is at stake is the well-being of our country's most important resource, our citizens.

The bill is designed to develop a Canada-first policy and is based on three principles: first, ensuring that medicines are available to Canadians when they need them; second, protecting the ethics of our health care system; and third, ensuring that we are not infringing laws in another country.

The proposed bill will extend the existing export certificate requirements under section 37 of the Food and Drugs Act to require those wanting to export drugs, as set out as schedule F to those regulations, to obtain an export permit, unless specifically exempted. Those wishing to export prescription drugs will need to justify certain criteria. The export of drugs cannot endanger the supply in

Canada. The prescription to be filled and exported must be signed by a Canadian physician and pharmacist in accordance with the rules set down by the appropriate regulatory body in the province in which the prescription is filled. Export of drugs cannot contravene laws of the country to which it is being exported. There will be exemptions, most notably for Canadians temporarily residing abroad, such as snowbirds, and any export made with respect to the Jean Chrétien pledge to Africa.

● (1820)

We have to look at harsh realities and do what is best for Canadians. If the U.S. market becomes open to parallel imports from Canada, or if the Internet pharmacy trade is not curtailed, there is a very real probability that our citizens will be the ones who suffer.

The provinces and this government have committed themselves to the preservation of the health care system that ensures a fair, affordable and accessible service where and when Canadians need it. We cannot put profit or the welfare of another country's citizens ahead of the necessity to protect and care for Canadians.

I hope that among other initiatives this bill will serve as a stimulus to find a solution to a problem that threatens all Canadians.

I would hope that every member of this House would recognize our collective responsibility to protect all Canadians. More particularly, we have a responsibility to those that are most vulnerable: the seniors, the chronically ill, low income families and single parent families, who would be adversely affected if this issue is not resolved.

If we cannot find a solution, we will have failed in our responsibility. To that end, I would welcome any other suggestions or solutions proposed by any member of this House.

We need to ensure that our supplies of prescription drugs are always there when we need them, that a few are not endangering the supply of the many. We need to ensure that we are not a convenience for a country whose health care system is a product of neglect and exclusiveness, that our prescription drug system is for all Canadians.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I was happy to hear the member for Mississauga—Streetsville mention that he would welcome any suggestions and comments of how to resolve the situation of escalating drug costs in Canada.

I would refer the member to Bill C-91 which was adopted, as the member knows, by the Mulroney Conservatives and which has led to a catastrophic rise in drug prices in Canada. Some drug prices have gone up over 100%.

What Bill C-91 did is it allowed pharmaceutical companies, and as we know pharmaceutical companies are the most profitable in North America, to extend their patent protection. As a result, Canadian taxpayers and Canadians in general have picked up the tab for Bill C-91.

The Liberals, when they were in opposition, opposed Bill C-91. Since they have come into power, the Liberal government has supported Bill C-91 and the extended patent protection. As a result, Canadians are paying much more than they should be paying.

Number one, does the member not feel that the escalating drug costs should be tackled by looking at perhaps balancing the interests of the huge profits the pharmaceutical companies are making with the interests of Canadians and bringing drug prices into control subsequently?

Number two, why did the member not use the issue of Bill C-91 as the major issue when he raised the issue of drug prices and the drug supply in Canada?

• (1825)

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** Madam Speaker, the issue at hand is today. Instead of looking back, we must look forward. The problem is now and it is increasing.

I came to this country over 30 years ago. I chose Canada because this was a country which had the social program that was the envy of the world. That is why I came here. I have benefited from the economic opportunity and the social programs as well.

I feel it is my responsibility. I am involved in many areas with low income families and seniors and I sense their fear and their possible future pain.

I cannot go back to 1990 or 1993, whatever the case may be with Bill C-91, but I am prepared to work with the member and any other member in this House to ensure that going forward we do the right thing.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the member for Mississauga—Streetsville with regard to his bill. I will give it due consideration.

The hon. member talked about looking forward. I tabled my own private member's bill which deals with a particular issue in Canada which is unique in the world. That is the automatic stay of injunction that a pharmaceutical or patent holder gets from actual legislation. They automatically get 24 months without having to demonstrate any type of patent infringement. I believe that is one of the reasons we have had some problems in our industry on the pharmaceutical side and the generic side.

How does the hon. member feel about the automatic 24 months and the fact that Canada is the only country in the world that has this current legislation?

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member has asked a very good question.

Pharmaceutical companies invest a lot of time and money in developing a drug to bring to market. The beginning of patent protection starts from the day the molecule is discovered. It could be done in eight years or it could take 12 years.

I am not saying the member's question is not valid because it is. A change needs to be brought about. I would support a change as long as it was sensible and equitable as far as the industry was concerned.

My bill is one to protect Canadians. If members have any suggestions, I would be prepared to work with them. I feel the 24 month automatic extension should be revisited. There is a need to revisit that and come up with an equitable solution.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Canada—U.S.), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to

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ask the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, given the question that he was just asked about the extension of the patents, is the issue of Internet pharmacies equally important for generic drugs?

It is my understanding that one needs a prescription for patent medicines and also for generic drugs that are legally on the market. The issue of the extension of a patent does not have anything to do with the bill, if I am correct.

I would like to hear from the member on this.

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** Madam Speaker, the question is excellent and I am glad my friend asked it.

Right now we are talking about Internet pharmacies and the export of drugs. The other issues brought up by my colleagues here are not pertinent today. However when the time comes we could debate them. When that time comes we will have to look at how a resolution can be brought about, take out the automatic extension, the linkages, et cetera. That is a whole different chapter. I would be prepared to answer those questions at that time.

• (1830)

**Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC):** Madam Speaker, much attention has been paid to Internet pharmacies recently, yet Canadians are unclear as to where their federal government stands on this issue. The Prime Minister and the health minister seem to contradict each other. They flip-flop. They send mixed signals. I find it interesting that a Liberal member is bringing this bill to the floor, which at least contradicts a few of the flip-flops the government has made.

Let us take a step back. This is a complex issue. On one side there is the need to protect the supply of pharmaceuticals and the cost of these pharmaceuticals to Canadians. On the other side, we must heed the economic benefit of a new industry and the more than 4,000 jobs it carries with it. As the member stated, it is worth hundreds of millions of dollars, \$500 million at least.

We must be unequivocal. The priority of the Conservative Party of Canada is to ensure that Canadians have a safe and secure supply of pharmaceuticals, and most important, access to prescription drugs which we use on a daily basis so that we all can lead active and productive lives.

We cannot discount the effect Internet pharmacies have had on the lives of thousands of other Canadians. For an Internet pharmacy employee in Manitoba, it means a steady income to provide a home, groceries and the necessities of life for his or her family. I come from Manitoba where a lot of these Internet pharmacies are found. I have seen the growth and development these pharmacies have allowed in towns like Minnedosa and Niverville.

Having said that, it is also important to note that Internet pharmacies are breaking no Canadian laws. There is no legislation currently in place in Canada to stop cross-border prescription drug trade.

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Bill C-282 is an attempt to regulate the Internet pharmacy industry. In fact it could be argued it is an attempt to shut down the Internet pharmacy industry. While we recognize that there is a place for industry regulations no matter what the industry is, the bill falls far short of fair and ethical standards for Internet pharmacies. Let me give the House a few examples.

The bill presents the idea of export permits on pharmaceuticals. Export permits would be a good start in laying the groundwork for cross-border pharmaceutical trade but it also contains a provision that trade can only take place if there is no threat to the Canadian supply. Again, it is a good measure to ensure Canadians are protected from drug shortages and ensure the industry is operating in an ethical manner.

There are measures proposed in the bill that are of great issue to Canadians and the industry alike.

One concern is the power that is granted to the minister in approving export permits for cross-border pharmaceutical trade. Under this legislation, the minister would have the power to approve or reject each application for the export permit. What that essentially means is if the minister wanted the industry to shut down, he or she could unilaterally take that step. This is unfair for the business owners and the employees of the Internet pharmacies.

Another concern is the application of the laws from another country. The bill states that it would be illegal to export pharmaceuticals to countries where it is against the law for that country, yet there is no schedule of countries where this practice is illegal. In fact we are all aware of the controversies that are happening in countries like the United States, where this is generally focused, where the country itself cannot decide if they are legal or illegal. How are we as Canadians supposed to make that interpretation?

I recognize that there must be some regulatory regime in place for this new industry, considering the product it deals with and the importance the products have in the lives of Canadians. However, there is much room for improvement in this legislation. There are immediate and practical concerns that all parties should have with the bill.

There is some fear that this legislation could precipitate the United States and other countries to fully permit the importation of pharmaceuticals. That could lead to bulk importation which could truly threaten the Canadian supply. That would be very serious.

● (1835)

Other concerns should be noted, such as the infringement on provincial jurisdiction, as provinces have the regulatory guidelines for medical doctors and prescription drugs and this bill may cross that line, especially when dealing with punitive measures against physicians, pharmacists and the industry. I would like to remind the member that these professions are self-regulating and within the jurisdiction of each province. It would be unfortunate to interfere in that boundary.

Let us put the bill aside for a minute. I want to talk a little about where the government has been on this. There has been a lot of talk, as I said previously, on Internet pharmacies, which I would like to reiterate for the record.

On October 31, the Minister of Health told CBC Television, "I see no evidence of shortages across the country; at least no evidence has been produced to me". A few days later, the Prime Minister said that his government would not be taking any action to shut down the Internet pharmacy industry. If that is the case and the health minister has seen no evidence of shortages, this bill is contrary to what the government has said publicly.

I would ask the member if he has empirical evidence that Internet pharmacies are affecting supply. I would be very interested in that evidence, evidence that can be supported. Anecdotal evidence does not do the trick. If he can provide that evidence, I would be very interested in it.

This bill has the potential, as I mentioned earlier, to shut down Internet pharmacies without exploring options with the stakeholders and industry representatives on all sides. While I agree that this industry does need some form of regulation, the bill has some room for improvement, to be fair and equitable for all players in the pharmaceutical game.

I note that the health committee will be looking at this issue. I would also note that the U.S. needs to get its act together on this issue. On the one hand, the U.S. says that Canada is the cause of the problem, but on the other hand, that it is the solution to the problem. With the new term of the current president, I would hope that he, along with his colleagues in Congress, will look at this issue for the sake of Americans and allow Canadians to focus on Canadians.

Having said that, let me note that the member who brought forward this bill has said he is open to discussions about it. I will reciprocate and say that I am open to entering into discussions.

With that, I will conclude my comments. This is a very important issue and we have to bring all the stakeholders together to ensure that Canadians come first.

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Madam Speaker, first I want to congratulate the hon. member for the bill he has tabled. It is an important bill. There are at least a dozen or so of us members who are interested in the cost of drugs. Next week, I too hope to present a private member's business initiative on this important issue.

I believe that there is nothing more important in the health care issue than the cost of drugs. The hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville is tackling one aspect of this issue by addressing the matter of online pharmacies.

Tomorrow, in the Standing Committee on Health, I will have an opportunity to move a motion so the parliamentary committee can take a broader look at this issue. I believe the proposal by the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville certainly merits consideration.

To understand the emergence of on-line pharmacies—pharmacies on the Internet—a person has to know that there are 150 of them across Canada. There are 59 in Manitoba alone. It is a billion dollar industry. Thus, this is an extremely important issue.

The Conservative health critic was wondering whether there was any evidence that the emergence of on-line pharmacies was threatening the Canadian supply. I think I would have to say yes. In October last year, at least one U.S. multinational announced that it would reduce its exports or slow down the supply of drugs to Canada.

To understand this issue, one thing must be remembered. The big difference between the United States and Canada, in terms of drug supply, is that Canada has an independent control system. It is not a perfect system: it is the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board, chaired by Mr. Elgie.

It is a quasi-judicial tribunal that has the same authority as a superior court. Its mandate is to check the prices charged by manufacturers for medicines for which they should have first obtained a notice of compliance. As for the control we are talking about, as the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine knows, often a notice of compliance comes with the application for patent protection. That is why this issue is important.

I will digress for a moment to say that, even though I am a Montrealer, I believe there has been some abuse on the part of this innovative industry. I think that all parliamentarians in this House, regardless of their political stripe, will agree with me. The bill that I will present in a week or two will propose four solutions, and I believe it is a balanced piece of legislation.

Internet pharmacies are a threat to the supply of medication, since some pharmaceutical companies have already announced that they intend to reduce their shipments to Canada. Of course, some form of dumping is feared. It is felt that, if drugs that are supposed to be shipped to Canada are rerouted to the United States, a downward pressure will be exerted on the price of these drugs. It is important to remember that while Canada controls the costs of pharmaceuticals, the United States does not.

Of course, it is disappointing, and I am sure that my NDP friends are disappointed, to see that generic companies are not regulated by the patented medicine prices review board. This creates a very serious inequity in the system.

The hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville is proposing a solution that should be considered, namely to decide whether an export permit should be required.

•(1845)

We will recall that, under the law, it is currently illegal for an American to buy drugs in Canada. From an American perspective, nobody is supposed to import drugs, without permission from the US health secretary.

Under the second set of laws—not under a federal statute, but under various provincial laws—it is illegal in Canada for a health care professional to sign a prescription, be it a generic or a new drug. If the drug has been prescribed, no health professional can validate it if he has not personally examined the patient in his own office.

### *Private Members' Business*

There lies the rub for the Canadian government. Of course, it has no jurisdiction over the regulation of health care professionals, but does over drug exports and interprovincial trade.

So, how can we ensure that health care professionals, who often are physicians, abide by the rules set by their professional association and how can we make sure we are not at risk of doing too much drug business with the United States?

We all recall the statements made by people in a position of authority in New York. I think that it was the governor of New York or Vermont who organized chartered buses, which came to the Canadian border to purchase prescription drugs. We are told that people in Minnesota and Illinois want to do likewise. So yes, it is important for parliamentarians to look closely into this issue.

The new health minister, who embodies the left wing of the Liberal Party, is to the government of the current Prime Minister what Sheila Copps was to the Chrétien government. He is the incarnation of the activist, humanistic left, eager to bring about social justice. The health minister is considering amending the regulations of the Food and Drugs Act to change the definition of practitioner. What is a professional? What is a practitioner? He would like to establish a new offence system.

I do not know whether this is the right solution. It has to be examined. One thing is clear, I have figures that will really convince us that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville was well advised to present a bill.

Of the 70 million Americans who have no insurance whatsoever, and who pay more for prescription drugs, two million already buy their drugs from Canada through the Internet. This is a fact. It not theoretical.

There used to be only 70 drugstores on the Internet a few years back; now there are 150 of them. What is even more crucial is that 20% of Manitoba's pharmacists have now branched out into the United States in order to continue filling prescriptions written in the United States using Canadian drugs.

As you can see, this issue raises a number of concerns. Let us talk about drug costs. I know that the hon. member for Windsor West also has a bill. I for one think that we need to reconsider the whole issue of the link regulations. I am not sure we need to eliminate them. That would seem a bit radical and, as the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine knows, I am not one to go for extreme measures. However, I also believe that we can no longer maintain the status quo.

I will therefore conclude by saying that the fact the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville has brought forward a bill is indeed a good thing. I hope that the Standing Committee on Health will pass a motion tomorrow to ensure that we have the opportunity, in February, to examine all the various ways to resolve this issue. I think the committee will have to consider the member's proposal. I would be more than glad to discuss this with him in committee.

*Private Members' Business*

• (1850)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to comment on Bill C-282.

As I mentioned earlier in the House, I congratulate the hon. member for having raised the question of drug prices, even though I believe the bill he proposes does not address the real problems.

As I said, the real issue is Bill C-91, which was adopted by the Mulroney government some time ago, and which extended drug patent protection. This extension, unfortunately, has added immeasurably to the drug prices paid by ordinary Canadians and our governments.

It is unfortunate because we must now act to control this increase in prices. In fact, the most significant aspect of the health care system at present is the increase in the cost of drugs, which puts even more pressure on our health care system.

[*English*]

Companies do need to make profits, as was mentioned earlier. When we talk about Bill C-91 and attacking the real causes of why our pharmaceutical products cost Canadians more and more, it has to do with reasonable profit making.

We know that pharmaceutical companies regularly rank number one in Canada in profits as a percentage of the revenues, as a percentage of their assets and as a percentage of their equity. As they are ranked number one in the country, the profits made in the pharmaceutical industry are actually higher than in any other industry in the country.

There have been claims that the cost of research and development are enormous. In fact, according to one American industry study, it costs up to \$1.3 billion to develop an average new medicine.

A 2001 study by the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board states that of the 82 new patented drugs for human use developed at that time, total expenditures for all those 82 products were \$1.06 billion. That averages out to about \$13 million per new drug. We are talking about a factor of 1% compared to what is normally trotted out as a figure for actual research and development costs.

The question of drug prices is an important one. When we are talking about Canadians having to pay more for pharmaceutical products than they should, while at the same time we hear about record profits for the pharmaceutical industry, there obviously is a problem.

My colleague from Windsor West has actually proposed with his bill, Bill C-274, a way of resolving some of these problems. I will quote briefly a release put out by the member for Windsor West concerning Bill C-274. He mentions that brand name drug companies now list several patents on the same drug so that they can start the automatic injunction against competition again and again. This is ever greening. This keeps lower cost generic drugs that are not infringing patents off the market and forces Canadians to pay monopoly prices for their medicines longer than they should.

Canada's prescription drug costs are increasing by 15% each year, which is faster than any part of our health care system. Bill C-274

would help control prescription drug costs by making lower cost generic drugs available more quickly.

It is important to mention that from 1993 to 2003 the price of brand name drugs increased by 75% while generic drugs increased by 42% over that same period.

The Romanow commission and the Competition Bureau have called for a review of the drug patent legislation. The Supreme Court has described the regulations as a draconian regime. Obviously it is time to provide Canadians with clear rules to ensure access to prescription medicines is fair for everyone.

This brings me back to the issue of Bill C-282. Very clearly we have a problem. Canadians are paying far too much for pharmaceutical products, which is as a result of Conservative policies that were first opposed and then continued by the Liberal government.

Does Bill C-282 in any way address those serious problems? I believe that it does not. In a sense it would allow multinational drug companies, which are mostly American based, to then dictate, in a way, what conditions should be attached to our drug exports to the U.S. retail market.

It is clear that pharmaceutical companies would love to level the price playing field between Canada and the U.S., not by lowering prices to the Canadian level but by jacking them up to the U.S. level. I think this would be a mistake.

• (1855)

The American drug insurance system does not cover 60 million American citizens. If we look at the course of any one year, 40 million Americans at any particular point in the year are uninsured. As the hon. member for Hochelaga mentioned earlier, 2 million of those 40 million to 60 million Americans in any one year are trying to escape the fact that they do not have access to medical insurance by purchasing through Canada.

When we talk about health care costs, 14% or more of GDP in the United States is devoted to health care, even though those 40 million to 60 million Americans are not covered by medical insurance.

The United States has outrageously high drug prices because its drug pharmaceutical companies resort to massive and very costly advertising for their products and the cost of advertising is built into the price of their products. This, as we know, is banned in Canada.

We now have a situation where American pharmaceutical companies would like us to cut off access to Americans who are uninsured and Americans who are paying too much for their pharmaceutical products.

I believe we should be seeking some sort of legislation that would provide relief and would address the issue of an importing country, such as the United States, using its laws to evoke either public policy safety or health safety technical standards with the primary goal of frustrating or eliminating Canadian exports. We certainly have seen that with softwood lumber and with BSE where laws were put into place as basically fences for Canadian exports.



We need to ensure that our exports from legitimate industries in Canada are protected but at the same time we need to ensure that Americans, who are desperate because of the lack of full medical coverage, have access to our medical products when it does not affect the Canadian national interest.

We know that a number of speakers in the United States have cast doubt on our pharmaceutical products by questioning our safety standards, but we all know that is ridiculous. Canadian safety standards are some of the strongest in the world.

We do need to deal with this issue but we need to deal with it in the Canadian context. I will come back to my initial comments that the real issue is the question of pharmaceutical costs and how much Canadians are paying now because of extended patent protection. We should be looking at a regime that provides for recouping research and development costs but which does not cost an arm and a leg for the Canadian taxpayer just to fuel industry profits in the pharmaceutical sector that are without parallel elsewhere in the country.

• (1900)

**Hon. Robert Thibault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the issue of cross-border sales of Canadian drugs to American consumers is complex. Canada cannot be the drugstore of the United States. Neither American consumers nor Canadian suppliers should have any illusions otherwise.

I would like to thank the member for Mississauga—Streetsville for bringing this subject to the fore. It is a very important question. We can look at many ways to regulate it and at many ways to solve it. He is suggesting one which we discussed today. The important thing is that we understand the nature of the problem, the nature of the risk and that we deal with it effectively.

From the perspective of the Government of Canada, there are two key priorities in this matter: ensuring that drugs sold in Canada are safe and affordable; and, ensuring that we have a sufficient supply of prescription drugs to meet the needs of Canadians. The government is committed to working with its partners, including provincial and territorial health departments and regulatory authorities, health care professionals, industry and other stakeholders, to ensure this outcome for Canadians.

Before outlining some of my concerns with the bill, I will outline some principles that should frame our consideration of the bill.

First, it must address our fundamental priorities of safety and security of supply for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Second, in this respect, the bill respects the roles and responsibilities of the provincial and territorial governments, which license and regulate doctors and pharmacists practising medicine and pharmacy through provincial colleges or registrars of physicians and pharmacists.

Third, it has to be implementable and enforceable. It also has to be consistent with Canada's trade obligations and be able to withstand any court challenge.

*Private Members' Business*

[*English*]

Fourth, it must respect the fundamental basis of the Food and Drugs Act and equivalent statutes in the United States and other countries, and that each country is responsible for the safety of prescription drugs and other therapeutic products made available to its citizens.

The Food and Drugs Act and its regulations ensure that drugs and other therapeutic products sold to Canadians are supported by sufficient evidence demonstrating their safety, efficacy and quality. For prescription drugs, the food and drug regulations require that they only be sold to a patient pursuant to a prescription that has been issued by a practitioner licensed to practise in a province or territory of Canada.

Fifth, existing tools at federal, provincial and territorial levels of government should be fully used before considering legislative options. In this regard, the Minister of Health wrote his provincial and territorial colleagues to reiterate the need for regulatory authorities for the practice of pharmacy and medicine and to remain vigilant in enforcing their standards of professional conduct.

[*Translation*]

Earlier this year, Health Canada inspected 11 Canadian pharmacies involved in Internet pharmacy operations, distance dispensing and cross-border drug trade, to ensure compliance with the Food and Drugs Act and related regulations, and it will conduct more compliance inspections early in 2005.

Finally, all the steps taken by the Government of Canada in the current assessment of the situation have to be taken into account.

So far, where supply is concerned, there does not appear to be any shortage on the Canadian side. Health Canada, in cooperation with other federal departments and the provincial and territorial governments, is looking at all the various options for addressing the issue, should the situation change.

[*English*]

I would like to speak to some of my concerns regarding Bill C-282 relative to these principles. Before I begin, however, it is important to highlight that the bill does not have the support of the Minister of Health, the Minister of State for Public Health nor the Minister of International Trade.

I should also point out that the Minister of Health is on record with respect to assessing options regarding how best to address concerns relating to the activities of Internet pharmacies. In this context I wish to point out that the Government of Canada is in the process of developing a list of potential regulatory options. This process will be completed in the very near future.

*Adjournment Debate*

My specific concerns with the bill are the following. It proposes to enact an export permit scheme for prescription drugs to ensure the security of Canadian supplies, with which we agree. Under the proposed clause 38 of the Food and Drugs Act, the minister would be authorized to issue an export permit if: first, the drug meets the laws of the country of import; second, the export would not adversely affect drug supply in Canada; third, the export would not contravene the act or regulations; and fourth, the sale of export meets all provincial requirements for the practise of pharmacy and medicine.

• (1905)

[*Translation*]

The bill puts on Canada the burden of enforcing the laws of the U.S. and other countries respecting the importation of prescription drugs.

Implementing the export permit scheme outlined in the bill will be a major challenge. It would be both very expensive and difficult to administer and to use, and would require substantial human and financial resources.

This bill also has an impact on provincial and territorial jurisdictions by ensuring that export sales meet all provincial requirements regarding the practices of pharmacists and physicians.

[*English*]

Finally, it could be subjected to legal challenges and raise concerns pertaining to our trade obligations. The bill, as tabled, does not meet the outlined principles and therefore, the government cannot support the bill.

I want to reiterate that I think we all agree with the principles put forward and the importance of the questions discussed by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. Regardless how the House decides on this legislation, we must never forget the importance of the matter. We must look at any solutions to any potential problems that might arise in this respect.

**The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine):** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to question further the government's position on CAIS program and the BSE crisis that confronts farmers across Canada. I would like to make three points.

First, it is indisputable that there are some very serious problems with regard to the CAIS program. The Canadian agricultural income

stabilization program is not working as intended. Many farmers in Canada are not signed up for the program. In my own riding in the city of Kawartha Lakes it has been reported that fewer than 50 farmers are actually signed up for CAIS program when there are several hundred farmers in that area. How can we help farmers if the mechanism is CAIS program and they are not signed up for CAIS program in the first place?

The CAIS program is a relatively new program. It has been in effect for less than three years. I am not sure it is doing the job it was intended to do. I would suggest that it was never intended to deal with a national disaster such as BSE.

Second, the CAIS program does nothing to address the serious loss of equity that many small producers have faced. I have many small cow-calf operations in my riding and to many of those operators, their livestock was their retirement fund. It was a place where they were accruing equity. Over the past year and a half since BSE broke out, those operators have seen their equity wiped out. The CAIS program is unable to deal with the equity issue.

My third point is that BSE is not an every day issue that the government needs to manage. In my opinion, the government has so far dealt with this as an every day issue that is on the minister's desk. In my opinion, BSE is a national disaster and it needs to be treated that way by the government.

Government has a standard procedure for dealing with things, but it also has the ability to kick things into a higher gear. When we were faced with SARS, when we were faced with the ice storm in eastern Ontario, and when we were faced with other natural disasters, the government can take that issue and put it on the cabinet table. The Prime Minister takes the lead responsibility for the issue, usually in cooperation with the minister responsible, and things happen quickly.

With regard to BSE, producers across Canada feel that what goes on in this place is a technical ping-pong match between the government and the opposition in terms of the CAIS program. Members ask themselves if this part works or if that part works.

However, farmers are facing a disaster. There are multigenerational farms in my riding in central Ontario and farmers are afraid they are going to go under this winter and not make it until spring. Those farmers are looking to the government, and the minister and his parliamentary secretary.

What is the government going to do, beyond the CAIS program and its shortcomings, over the next few weeks and months to ensure that farmers in my riding and across Canada are still in business next spring?

• (1910)

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food (Rural Development), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to respond to the basic question that the member raised on November 5. However, I will attempt to deal with the three points he raised tonight as well.

With respect to farmers who have not signed up in his area, as the member probably knows, we have extended the deadline a couple of times, actually, which gives farmers the opportunities to sign up for the program as the information rolls out. We certainly encourage them to do that.

There is no question that the equity, especially for people in the livestock industry, has declined drastically as a result of the BSE crisis and the border remaining closed. The value of the assets, especially in terms of total value, has in fact gone down. We recognize that. We are trying to deal with that. In fact, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food stated in the House earlier today that because of some of the programming we have done as a government, the price has actually now increased and farmers' equity, in terms of those cattle, should be starting to increase again.

The member said that BSE is a national disaster. That is absolutely true; there is no question about that. However, the government has been there for producers beyond the CAIS program itself. We have been there. The September 10 announcement by the minister changed our focus considerably. The minister clearly stated that we will continue to work on opening the border with the United States. We have heard what President Bush has had to say. We are making progress on that issue.

However, beyond opening the border, we are working in other ways. We have introduced the set aside program for feeder cattle and fed cattle. That is having an impact on the market. We are looking at repositioning the Canadian industry by increasing our own slaughter capacity in this country. We have set up the programs in order to do that. We are making good progress. We must have the slaughter capacity in this country.

I want to make a couple of remarks about the CAIS program. The CAIS program represents a long term commitment by governments, both provincial and federal, that tries to respond to producers' needs for a comprehensive program that protects farmers against drops in farm income. It replaces NISA, under which it took years for producers to rebuild their accounts after a downturn, and goes some distance to eliminating the uncertainty producers faced in the past because of government's continuing reliance on ad hoc programs and ad hoc responses to low income situations.

Having said that, as members can clearly see from my remarks, the government has been there. We added to the CAIS program. We added to the safety net by bringing in these other measures to specifically assist the livestock industry in its time of need. The government is doing its best to be there for Canadian farmers.

● (1915)

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** Madam Speaker, in my opinion, the bottom line on the CAIS program in my riding is that the government has put forward a program for which the majority of farmers have not signed up yet. So there obviously is a problem. Either they do not understand it or they do not feel it is worthwhile, or they do not think that it is actually going to help them solve the problem. The bottom line is that most of the farmers have not signed up for it.

I think everyone recognizes that, as a result of the border closure in the last year and a half or two years, we have an increased population in the number of cattle in Canada. Even if the border was to open, a month from now or six months from now, we have an

oversupply of cattle, particularly older cattle. When President Bush made reference yesterday to opening the border, he specifically talked about younger cows.

Has the government considered a major cull program in Canada that would bring the total population back to where it needs to be?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Madam Speaker, I think if the member would look at *Hansard* he would see that the minister responded to that particular question today.

We are in fact working with industry to try to deal with the number of cull cattle. The minister is specifically trying to address the slaughter capacity so that within as short a time as possible we have the slaughter capacity to kill the animals in Canada.

I should point out that we have been working closely with industry throughout the CAIS development process. We had consultations across the country from August 25 to September 7 to hear the industry's concerns and examine new options. As a result, industry tabled a recommendation to the federal and provincial ministers to eliminate the producer deposit.

After reviewing that recommendation, the provincial and federal ministers together concluded there were some gaps in the current model, but that any major changes to the program should take place within the annual review process along with industry. In the meantime, ministers extended the third deposit and deposit deadline to March 31, 2005. That is to benefit producers.

#### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC):** Madam Speaker, in early November I had the pleasure of rising in the House to speak on behalf of the people of Palliser, particularly the many agricultural and beef producers who make a substantial contribution to the economy of my constituency. At that time I asked the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food what he was doing to help farmers who could not afford to enroll in the CAIS program and whether he would commit to getting rid of the cash deposit.

When I asked that question, the minister still had time to do the right thing for producers. He could have looked at the situation in my riding, for example, and made the decision to waive the deposit so producers would have full access to disaster relief without having to spend their own cash or go into debt.

Today is December 1. The deadline for registering in CAIS has passed and the government has failed to act. I understand from the parliamentary secretary there is an extension on paying for CAIS, but the deadline to register has passed.

*Adjournment Debate*

The Liberal government clearly does not understand the impact that BSE and a poor crop have had upon Saskatchewan, particularly my riding of Palliser. First, excessive rainfall delayed seeding. Then in late August a devastating frost wiped out what looked to be a promising crop. All the while beef producers were being hammered by the BSE crisis. Unfortunately, these families were forced to rely upon the CAIS program for relief, a program which is cumbersome, complicated and not fully funded by the province's NDP government. It is a program that adds insult to injury by demanding that families pay a deposit as a condition of assistance.

The Conservative Party was not alone in demanding that the government address this issue. Individuals, families, farm organizations and the official opposition Saskatchewan Party joined us in calling on the federal government to eliminate the deposit. In fact, hundreds of people in my constituency signed a petition calling for its elimination. It would seem the only ones who failed to support producers on this issue were the Liberals and the NDP, which demonstrates just how out of touch they are with the issues that matter to Saskatchewan people.

A full six months after we in the Conservative Party announced our plan to assist beef producers, the Liberal government finally decided it too had to do something. Therefore this past September the Liberal government announced a plan to help Canada's livestock industry. While the announcement of aid was welcomed by cash strapped producers, the package was flawed because BSE assistance was made dependent upon registration in CAIS. This was clearly absurd. The government would not demand that flood victims pay out of their own pockets to access flood relief and yet that is exactly what it is requiring beef producers to do.

When my colleagues and I in the Conservative Party rose in the House in early November to challenge the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food on this absurdity, we received empty rhetoric from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food who answered in his place. That is somewhat surprising given that the same member opposite acknowledged a short time later that using CAIS to deliver BSE aid was flawed.

According to my colleague from Selkirk—Interlake, the Liberals' Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture and Agri-Food had this to say about the problems of delivering BSE aid through CAIS, "Part of the problem with CAIS is it really was not designed to deal with a disaster and we are trying to have it cover a disaster at the moment". In other words, the government acknowledged the flaws of the BSE relief program, but failed to take steps to address them.

We have now passed the November 30 registration deadline for CAIS. Let the record show that the government has failed to respond to the needs of Palliser producers.

My question for the member opposite is, will the government do the right thing now and waive the CAIS deposit for all our producers?

• (1920)

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food (Rural Development), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his concern. The same concern exists on this side of the House. We certainly have

been moving forward beyond the CAIS program with other measures to try, as I said a moment ago, to assist the livestock industry in its time of need. But on this kind of programming, the federal government just cannot act on its own either.

We have discussed the issue at the federal and provincial ministers of agriculture meeting. I would point out that at that meeting of the federal and provincial ministers of agriculture in September, we did agree, as I said a moment ago, to extend the simplified one-third deposit to the 2004 CAIS program year and to extend the deadline by which deposits must be made for 2003 and 2004 program years to March 31, 2005. I want to spell that out clearly for the record.

This means that producers in all provinces, except Prince Edward Island and Ontario, do not have to make their deposit until next year.

As members may already know, industry has recommended the elimination of the deposit requirement under CAIS and ministers have agreed to look at alternative program mechanisms that better support active risk management by producers. Officials have certainly started that work.

I should point out that, contrary to what the member opposite says, CAIS and the federal investment of \$488 million announced in September to assist Canada's livestock industry in repositioning itself are not the only government initiatives to help the industry manage through this difficult time.

In June 2003 governments announced \$520 million for the BSE recovery program. In November 2003 the Government of Canada provided \$120 million for the cull animal program. It did not stop there. In March of this year, there was an additional \$930 million for the transitional industry support program.

I think it is safe to say that this government has not only been helping industry through this difficult time, we have been there every step of the way, and we will continue to be. That shows through the minister's answers in the House today. We are there looking at other programming and we will stand and continue to stand by producers in their time of need.

• (1925)

**Mr. Dave Batters:** Madam Speaker, the question remains. What is being done for producers that have not registered for CAIS?

Let the record show that we in the Conservative Party have stood by our producers while the Liberals and the NDP have sat on their hands. It is disappointing to me and to my constituents that this government failed to take the one step that could have made a real difference for thousands of families across the country.

*Adjournment Debate*

It should be noted for the record that this Liberal government failed these families at a time when it had racked up yet another massive budgetary surplus. Surely this government cannot plead poverty given its \$9 billion surplus; at least we would not think so.

If it is not a matter of money, then it must be a matter of priorities or, in the case of this government, misplaced priorities. This government has demonstrated that it has no problem going to bat for friends of the Liberal Party like Serge Savard or dumping a billion dollars into a failed gun registry.

However, farm families seem to fall a lot further down the list for the Liberals.

Again, will this government admit once and for all that the CAIS program is flawed and deliver disaster relief and—

**The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine):** The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Madam Speaker, we have heard a lot of rhetoric from that side, but not a whole lot in substance, if I do say so myself.

The fact of the matter is that in 2003 we saw the biggest payouts in history from the Government of Canada to the farm community: \$4.87 billion. That is a lot of money. We know full well that there is a lot of suffering at the farm level, but we have been there for the farm community. Let us add on top of that the money that is coming from the provincial governments.

We are continuing to look at CAIS programming and how it can be improved; it has not even been operating a couple of years yet. We are looking at that program. We are analyzing it. We will continue to improve it as time goes along. We remain there for farmers and we will continue to do so.

PRIVACY

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to continue to press the government on an issue that I believe is very important to all Canadians, their personal privacy, which is at risk because of the U.S. patriot act. It was introduced by the Bush administration a number of years ago and now threatens Canadian privacy. It is doing so today in a context that I think it is very important for our government to move on to protect Canadians.

Specifically, section 215 of the patriot act provides for the FBI to go to any U.S. company or subsidiary and request personal information about people. Let us say, for example, that the CIBC contracts out its information and data gathering and storage management to an American subsidiary, which makes Canadians vulnerable to the records taken from them. The CIBC does not know about this. It is not allowed information on when the data is being accessed from that company. Second, the customer does not allow access to that.

This has been challenged in the United States by the American Civil Liberties Union. It won a case on section 505 of the patriot act and now it is actually pushing on section 215. We are waiting for decisions on that.

In the interim, the real issue here is why we are letting a foreign government have access to Canadians' personal and private

information. We literally do not have to leave this country to have our information accessed by the FBI. We can be sitting here right now watching TV, never leaving Canada, and our information can be accessed by the FBI. We do not even know how many people are actually being investigated.

It is an issue of privacy that speaks to the heart of democracy. If we do not have the ability to have our information protected, it threatens our privacy, our freedom of movement and also our rights as individuals, because we have seen what governments do with information.

There is no due process. That is the problem. This is all done in secrecy. When the information on Canadians is collected and taken, we do not even know where it goes. We do not know what other agencies it is shared with. We do not know how it is stored. We do not know what they do with it at all. That is a problem.

In the United States, we have seen some high profile cases involving Senator Edward Kennedy and another congressman who were put on a no-fly list through mistaken information related to the patriot act.

We also do not know whether the United States has had an influence on other significant cases here in Canada, cases that have led to some Canadians having trouble abroad, because we do not know about that situation.

This brings me to the questions that we have been pursuing. The government has a duty to act on this. Other provincial governments have done so because they know what has happened. They know it is a threat that affects their citizens. We have witnessed this federal government doing a lot of outsourcing to American companies. That provides the opportunity for all that information to be lost in terms of control and security and the government has to act on this.

The Privacy Commissioner has asked the government to do so. We have not seen that yet and that is a real problem. There have been rumblings about a potential summit with the provinces on this, or on having an international treaty, as the American Civil Liberties Union has testified about in British Columbia.

This government needs to act to protect Canadian privacy. I would hope that with the recent visit by the president and the delegations that there would have been some correspondence, some objections and also an inquiry as to how many Canadians are being affected by the patriot act and what the government is going to do to stand up for our information to be protected.

I live in a border community. I know right now that some of my citizens are being fingerprinted up to 2,000 times when entering the United States. They are Canadian citizens and this happens over and over. They do not even show their ID sometimes anymore. They are known by name. They are just fingerprinted and sent right through. We want to know what happens to that information. And the patriot act is even more obtrusive, because we do not know what is being accessed and when.

*Adjournment Debate*

•(1930)

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, let me begin by saying that this government takes the privacy of Canadians very seriously. To this end, we are committed to doing everything we can to protect the privacy of Canadians with respect to key federal personal, security and defence related information holdings.

The actions taken by the government in response to potential privacy and contracting risks posed by the U.S.A patriot act include, among others: a review by government departments of their outsourcing arrangements to determine if action is needed; continuing the review of federal privacy laws and policies; and cooperating with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner on the planned audit in this fiscal year of the transfer of personal information between Canada and the United States.

[*Translation*]

Many safeguards are already in place to protect the privacy rights of Canadians. The government ensures the protection of personal information about Canadians and other key sensitive information holdings through the Privacy Act and the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act.

[*English*]

Agreements exist between Canadian and U.S. authorities that stipulate conditions under which information is shared between our respective governments.

Recently, the President of the Treasury Board met with the Privacy Commissioner, Ms. Jennifer Stoddart, to discuss this issue. It was agreed that the government would continue to work closely with the office of the Privacy Commissioner to ensure that the privacy of Canadians would be respected and that personal information would be protected from inappropriate disclosure.

We will also continue to work closely with provincial governments and the private sector to protect the security and privacy of Canadians and the interests of Canadian businesses.

On Friday, October 29 the President of the Treasury Board issued a statement in response to the report prepared by the information and privacy commissioner for British Columbia on privacy and the U.S. A. patriot act, noting that the Government of Canada was currently reviewing the report.

Also on that day, Paul Cellucci, the U.S. Ambassador to Canada said that the United States would be willing to review the British Columbia report. He added that the U.S. would work with the

province and Canada on privacy and protection concerns. We welcome these comments by the U.S. Ambassador to have more dialogue on achieving the right balance between privacy rights and effective law enforcement.

Canadian and U.S. officials do discuss issues relating to cross border information sharing. The government is confident that it has the tools it needs to meet this crucial objective.

•(1935)

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Madam Speaker, I am sure Canadians really will be impressed that the government has a commitment from the American ambassador who is stepping down. That is again another problem with this file. The Liberals are never up to speed on it.

I will quote specifically from the testimony of the Privacy Commissioner at the ethics committee. She said:

—that the Privacy Act is not up to the task of protecting Canadians' information, of setting an adequate standard in the face of this new phenomenon of the international circulation of information.

She said that we were not up to the standards and that we had a problem. The government needs to act. If it is interested in working with the Privacy Commissioner, why did it not act sooner, as this was called for years ago? We should have had better action. In my opinion, the government still is not taking a responsible stance because it is not coming forward with any correspondence.

Is there specific correspondence that the Liberals can table today which requests the U.S. government to fix the patriot act to ensure that Americans keep their hands off Canadians. Who are the Canadian citizens who they are holding information on right now?

**Hon. Diane Marleau:** Madam Speaker, let us begin by addressing the issue of the U.S. ambassador, Mr. Paul Cellucci. He agreed to work us. He speaks for his office, and we will work with the Americans to ensure the proper balance.

We commit today to ensure that we protect the privacy of information for our citizens. We are doing a total review of outsourcing within our departments to ensure that we act appropriately to protect that information.

It is easy to criticize, but it is much better to be in a position to take action, and that is what we are doing.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jean Augustine):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:37 p.m.)







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