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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, November 3, 2004

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 3, 2004

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[*English*]

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

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, supply management is the system of farming developed in Canada. We depend on it for dairy products, chickens, turkeys and eggs. The quality and cost of these is the best in the world.

Supply management is also a system of farming which produces farmers. Young people are attracted to supply management sectors. This brings in new farmers and helps maintain family farms between generations. In rural areas like Peterborough County, it is supply managed farms which underpin economic and social life. They are the underpinning of rural Canada.

I urge the Government of Canada to continue to support and enhance supply management at home and overseas. The time has come to promote it, rather than just defend it. Let us work to mitigate the particular problems that BSE brings for dairy farmers. Let us designate Canadian milk powder as a food aid for starving people around the world.

* * *

• (1405)

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next Thursday Canadians will take a moment to remember and thank veterans for the incredible service they have given our country.

In World War I, World War II and Korea our soldiers performed exceptionally well. They made Canada the country it is today. Our young soldiers left their homes from across Canada to go and fight in

these conflicts. Their sacrifices were gigantic and not all of them came home.

Recently, my constituency office staff had the honour of a visit from Rudy Deutsch who served in Italy during World War II. This gentleman recounted some of the experiences he faced during the war. The stories were amazing. It is because of people like Mr. Deutsch and many others that we live in freedom today.

I urge all members to attend Remembrance Day events in their communities. It is the perfect time and place to show their appreciation to our veterans.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MAISON DE LA CULTURE IN GATINEAU

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the salle Odyssée of Gatineau's Maison de la culture, whose board it has been my honour to chair was recognized as the performance venue of the year at the latest ADISQ gala.

The entire Outaouais region, and the riding of Gatineau in particular, is delighted with this honour, which is due in large part to the tireless efforts of the Maison staff, under the able direction of Julie Carrière.

My congratulations to the board and its present director, Maurice Groulx, and to the City of Gatineau for having recognized the importance of culture, along with our government and the Government of Quebec.

A tip of the hat to the Maison de la culture de Gatineau. And bravo to Julie Carrière, chosen personality of the week by *Le Droit* and Radio-Canada's 90.7, Radio One.

I encourage everyone to visit this jewel in my riding. It will then become obvious why the Odyssée theatre was awarded the Félix for performance venue of the year.

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HOUSING COOPERATIVES

Mr. Christian Simard (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a housing cooperative in the Limoilou sector of Quebec City is about to celebrate its 20th birthday. The Coopérative d'habitation À l'étage has buildings on 9th and 10th streets. My family and I once lived in one of them, so the co-op holds a special place in my heart. It is one of the 175 housing cooperatives in the Fédération des coopératives d'habitation de Québec-Chaudières-Appalaches, which provides 4,000 housing units in all.

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This cooperative is fortunate to be in good health to celebrate this 20-year milestone. Many others have felt the effects of the cuts imposed by the Prime Minister when he was Minister of Finance.

Negotiations are underway at this time between federal and Quebec government representatives to obtain the transfer of federal funds for social housing. Quebec must obtain its fair share if it is to properly support housing cooperatives.

I wish the Coopérative d'habitation À l'étage a happy 20th birthday on November 6. May it celebrate many more and continue to be a shining example of cooperative housing.

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[English]

MULTICULTURALISM

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour and privilege to rise today and recognize a group of Italian and South Asian seniors from my riding of Etobicoke North. I am fortunate to have a very diverse and multicultural riding where South Asian and Italian Canadians live side by side and form part of the great fabric of our society.

We owe a debt of gratitude to these great individuals, some of whom are here today. While I wish there was time to thank each and every one of them, there are several individuals that I would be remiss if I did not mention: Mr. Shangara Singh Chaudhary, president of the North Kipling South Asian Seniors; Mr. Bachittar Singh Rai, president of the Humberwood Seniors Club; and Mr. Carlo Barei, president of the St. Andrews Italian Seniors.

Through their support and leadership they have contributed to our community and have helped to enrich the lives of others around them. I am proud to welcome this group and call them my friends.

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GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect their government to offer policies that reflect and uphold traditional Canadian family values.

The Liberals do not have the political will to change the age of consent from 14 to at least 16. The child porn bill will not protect children from pornographers and pedophiles. The Liberals continue to deny Parliament the right to decide on the definition of marriage. Tax discrimination against single and stay at home parents continues and there are no meaningful tax reductions for families.

Education opportunities are restricted with skyrocketing costs. There is no effective sex offender registry. There is no national drug strategy. We see nothing on TV about drug prevention. Rather than deterring youth from smoking pot, the Liberals' marijuana bill gives kids a discount. With little money for law enforcement, crime and violence continues, and families fear for their safety. The family is the foundation of our society. The Liberals are failing our families and thereby weakening the nation.

● (1410)

[Translation]

PATRICE DUFORT

L'hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Ahuntsic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this House to recognize Patrice Dufort from École Christ-Roi in my riding of Ahuntsic for his involvement in the Teachers Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy.

He is one of 70 teachers chosen across the country for their commitment to teaching the concepts of Parliament, governance, democracy and citizenship.

[English]

The Teachers Institute is a unique and outstanding opportunity for teachers to witness first hand the processes and inner workings of Parliament. It allows them to analyze critical issues with political, procedural and pedagogical experts, and gives them a chance to live the Canadian parliamentary reality beyond books and documents.

[Translation]

I commend Mr. Dufort's initiative in encouraging his students to have a greater interest in current affairs, fostering their critical eye and inspiring them to get involved in order to become better citizens.

I thank him on behalf of all parliamentarians.

* * *

THEO VAN GOGH

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, controversial Dutch filmmaker, Theo Van Gogh, great-grand-nephew of the famous painter Vincent Van Gogh, was murdered in cold blood in the streets of Amsterdam yesterday morning.

He directed the film *Submission*, in which he criticized Islam's treatment of women. Theo Van Gogh's feature film *06-05*, which deals with the assassination of Dutch populist leader Pim Fortuyn on May 6, 2002, is scheduled for release in December.

Regardless of the fact that Theo Van Gogh's opinions were at times controversial, the Bloc Québécois is shocked at this attack on freedom of expression and at this gratuitous, brutal murder.

The right to be different and its corollary, the right to express that difference, are the cornerstone of our democracies and the centre of our civilizations.

The murder of Theo Van Gogh is an attack not only on basic rights, but on humanity in all its uniqueness. We strongly denounce this outrage.

* * *

[English]

TAKE OUR KIDS TO WORK

Hon. Judi Longfield (Whitby—Oshawa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize all young Canadians participating in the 10th anniversary of the Take Our Kids to Work program.

My great nephew, Keith Martin, has come to work here in Ottawa and is job shadowing his mother, Colleen, at the Canada Revenue Agency. Keith is just one of the hundreds of thousands of students in 75,000 Canadian workplaces experiencing the world of work and the variety of career opportunities that await them.

Take Our Kids to Work is an exciting and informative program initiated by the not for profit organization known as the Learning Partnership. The Learning Partnership is dedicated to bringing together business, labour, education, government and public policy makers to develop partnerships that strengthen public education in Canada.

The Take Our Kids to Work program serves to illustrate the importance of education, skills development and training, and plays an important role in developing the career opportunities of young Canadians.

I know that all members of the House will join me in congratulating the Learning Partnership for the outstanding success of, and growing support for, its many projects.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in recent years a new kind of violence against women has reared its ugly head at parties, on campuses and in nightclubs across Canada. Date rape drugs have become a violent weapon used to victimize women in cowardly assaults. Colourless, odourless and tasteless, date rape drugs are slipped into drinks to render women unconscious so they can be sexually assaulted and raped.

According to a study in the *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, date rape drugging rates more than doubled in Vancouver, Richmond and the North Shore of the lower mainland between 1999 and 2002.

According to Statistics Canada, fewer than 10% of women who have been sexually assaulted report to a hospital, let alone to the police to pursue prosecution. The cowards who use date rape drugs need to be told through the law, with stern punishments, that their behaviour will not be tolerated.

I call on the government to take the following steps: first, create a separate section in our laws for date rape drugs with tough new penalties; second, launch a national campaign to educate young women on the dangers of these drugs; and third, streamline the collection of evidence on sexual assaults and rapes to facilitate prosecutions.

It is time for the Liberal government to step up and fight the cowardly use of these drugs that victimize and assault women.

* * *

• (1415)

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian railway industry, comprising 60 railway companies and their supplier industry supporters, is on Parliament Hill today and tomorrow as part of its annual industry advocacy day, "On Track for the Future".

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Representatives will be meeting with MPs to discuss rail's contribution to our economic prosperity, environment and quality of life. Canada's railways do 64% of total surface freight activity measured in tonne-kilometres, yet produce only 4% of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector.

I am sure my colleagues in the House will agree that with the right public policies, freight and passenger railways can do more to de-stress our highways, unclog our borders and ports, and improve the air we breathe.

* * *

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, recently I heard the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador say "A deal is a deal and you can't renege on a deal. Fair is fair and all we want is what's fair".

He should have been speaking for women workers in his own province who have just been told that it is okay to make them wait for pay equity compensation. It was women who earned lower wages for years and had to carry the financial burden of the province's fiscal problems.

The Liberal government has also delayed or argued over paying compensation for pay equity claims but the government does not have a deficit. In fact, the women workers of Canada often hear the Liberals crow about eight straight surpluses in a row.

What are the Liberals waiting for, to cry poor and tell women, no, not now?

The government has to stop disputing how or when it will give out its share of pay equity and get on with it. Women workers in Canada are waiting.

* * *

FRASER INSTITUTE

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the fall of 1974 a public policy think tank set up shop in Vancouver. It advocated ideas such as free trade, more freedom through less government, balanced budgets and lower levels of taxation. Socialists and Liberals treated this organization with scorn and hostility.

How times have changed. Today, Liberals and even some NDP members admit that free trade is good for Canada. Even the creators of massive fiscal imbalances, the Trudeau Liberals, now embrace the concept of balanced budgets. Socialists and Liberals now agree that government must measure surgical wait lists and find ways to shorten those lists.

Yes, the Fraser Institute has contributed much to this country and in so doing it has improved the lives of Canadians.

S. O. 31

I know all members, including the NDP and the Liberals, will all want to congratulate the Fraser Institute for 30 years of excellence.

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[*Translation*]

MADELEINE DALPHOND-GUIRAL

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this evening, a former colleague of ours, Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral, will be made a member of the prestigious Order of the Legion of Honour. A medal will be presented to her by the ambassador of France on behalf of the president of the republic.

The Légion d'Honneur, one of France's most prestigious awards, was instituted in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte. The order is conferred in recognition of exemplary civilian and military contribution to the defence, prosperity and reputation of France. As the former French ambassador to Canada said, Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral is receiving this award, above all, for having proven herself unquestionably a special friend of France.

During her time in Parliament, Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral sat for several years on the executive committee of the Canada-France Inter-Parliamentary Association, which she also chaired.

My hon. colleagues will certainly want to join me in extending our warmest congratulations to Ms. Dalphond-Guiral on being given this great honour, one that is well deserved and reflects on the people of Laval Centre, whom she so proudly represented in this place.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party of Canada declined to take sides in the U.S. presidential election but we all watched with great interest last night as the American people rendered a decisive judgment and re-elected President George W. Bush.

While we are neutral on U.S. politics, we are not neutral in our affection for the American people.

Chesterton once said that the United States is the only country that was founded on a creed, a creed that recognizes the dignity of all people and their right to pursue their dreams.

We do not always agree with our American friends but they are our friends. They should open their border to us on beef cattle and softwood lumber, but we cannot let these disputes blind us to the fact that we share the greatest trade relationship in the history of the world.

On behalf of the Conservative Party of Canada, I offer my congratulations to President Bush, Vice-President Cheney and successful senators and congressmen. We send our special congratulations to senator elect—

● (1420)

The Speaker: The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

TERRORISM

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently a spokesperson for B'nai Brith, Adam Aptowitzer, publicly justified state terrorism by the government of Israel against Palestinian civilians. This incredibly inflammatory statement sought to justify the wanton destruction of Palestinian homes and the terrorizing and killing of Palestinian civilians because such actions might prevent Israeli deaths.

This twisted logic and valuing of Israeli lives ahead of Palestinian lives is totally unacceptable.

Also, the unfortunate recent remarks of Mohammed Elmasry indicating Israeli civilians were legitimate targets of terrorists were also very regrettable and he was correct to withdraw them as was Mr. Aptowitzer.

I believe that peace will only come to the Middle East when there is justice for Palestinians as well as Israelis.

To me, a Palestinian life is just as valuable as an Israeli life. The killing of any civilians by state terrorism or any other form of terrorism is illegal and immoral.

The path to peace in the Middle East lies not in terrorism but in the just treatment of all peoples—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

* * *

MEMBER FOR ELMWOOD—TRANSCONA

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of my colleagues in the NDP caucus to pay tribute to the member for Elmwood—Transcona, the dean of the House of Commons, and to acknowledge his 25 years of continuous service to the people of his Winnipeg constituency and the people of Canada as a member of Parliament.

When he first took his seat in October 1979, he brought a determination and passionate belief in social justice that have not wavered over the years. He also brought a faith in the institution of Parliament as an instrument for realizing our dreams for a more just and equitable society.

The strength of his convictions, delivered with humour and dignity, have increased Canadian's respect for this place and won him the personal respect and affection of colleagues in all political parties.

His contribution and presence in this place have far exceeded his physical stature. He is a giant in this place intellectually, spiritually, as well as physically.

On behalf of the NDP, on behalf of all colleagues in the chamber, on behalf of all the staff and people who support this institution, I offer heartfelt appreciation and good wishes in celebration of the hon. member's milestone 25th anniversary.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD***[English]***CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS**

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Prime Minister will join with us in offering congratulations to President Bush on his re-election, and to Senator Kerry on the strength of his campaign.

Unfortunately, the Liberal government has repeated the same mistake as the last time, not just allowing cabinet ministers to pick sides in the American election, but to pick the losing side.

Why did the Prime Minister permit his cabinet members to so recklessly jeopardize our relations?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I already have expressed my congratulations to President Bush on his re-election, as I have expressed to Senator Kerry my congratulations for his campaign. I also said that publicly after caucus this morning.

I also said that I look forward to sitting down with the President to deal with very important issues, from mad cow to softwood lumber to wheat, that we in this country have with the United States. I look forward to doing that forthwith.

• (1425)

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hope the Prime Minister will deal with those issues. There are some pretty serious trade issues that are jeopardizing thousands of jobs and the futures of families.

I hope the Prime Minister does not intend to turn a blind eye to the issue I just raised because these issues are constantly complicated by anti-American rhetoric coming from his government.

In recent days the member for Don Valley East blamed the United States for global terrorism. He said:

Who wrought this terrorism? Where did they come from? They are the result of the policies of the United States.

How does the Prime Minister explain why views so odious continue to have a place in his caucus?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at this very important juncture in history it would be far better for the Leader of the Opposition to join with the government that has been unequivocal in its fight against global terrorism.

We have made it very clear, whether it be on the strength of our borders or the ability of our borders, and at meetings that the Deputy Prime Minister has had with Secretary Ridge, that we will stand side by side with the Americans to make sure that those who would inflict terrorism upon the world will be found and punished.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only is this party unequivocal in its fight against global terrorism, we are unequivocal that that fight is with the United States and not against it.

I would like to turn to the bungling of the Atlantic offshore situation. The Prime Minister will now know that Nova Scotia has left the talks with his Minister of Finance and is demanding a three way meeting with Newfoundland and Labrador.

Is the Prime Minister prepared to agree to a three way meeting and to implement his election promise as soon as possible?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me deal with the preamble to the Leader of the Opposition's question. The fact is that we are not anti-American. Canadians are not anti-American. We are pro-Canadian.

I will tell the House what being pro-Canadian means. It means that we would not go down to the United States and use an American television network to slam Canada. It means that we would not write articles in the *Wall Street Journal* criticizing our country. We will have our debates within Canada.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should address that lecture to his own caucus, not to the official opposition.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister said that he was prepared to live up to his agreement, the undertaking that he gave to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, yet Nova Scotia officials tell us that the Prime Minister must give clear direction to his officials in order to get on with this deal, that is 100% of the royalties, 100% of the time.

The premiers are in sync. When will the Prime Minister provide that clear direction to his officials to live up to and fulfill that promise he gave to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the work between the Government of Canada and the respective provinces continues to be ongoing.

I would like to point out to the gentleman that offshore resource revenues are today owned and received 100% by the relevant provincial governments. Equalization comes on top of that. On top of all that, the Government of Canada adds at least a further 30% bonus in offset reductions, and we are proposing to add a further 70% on top of that, for a total of not 100% but 200%.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly that is not the commitment the Prime Minister gave Premier Williams and Premier Hamm.

The Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador has said that he will take it on the road if the Prime Minister does not fulfill that commitment. The premier is prepared to tell ordinary Canadians first-hand what will happen to them if they take the Prime Minister at his word.

Could the Prime Minister explain why it would be necessary for a premier in this country to embark on a cross-country campaign just to get the Prime Minister to keep his word?

• (1430)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very confident that we will ultimately arrive at a satisfactory conclusion for the provinces of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

Oral Questions

I would point out to the hon. gentleman that what we are dealing with, at least in part, are the offshore accords that were signed by a previous Conservative government. Both of them were specifically limited in terms of time and in terms of dollar values. We are trying to improve on the previously flawed Conservative record.

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[*Translation*]

CHILD CARE

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, the Prime Minister promised to give Quebec its fair share of federal funding for child care, with no strings attached. Now the election is over, the ministers are having a meeting. Quebec simply wants the Prime Minister to keep his promise, but still there is no agreement. Why not? Because Ottawa wants to impose conditions on Quebec.

Because he made this promise during the recent election campaign, is the Prime Minister prepared to confirm that, in the matter of child care, Quebec will have the right to opt out with full compensation and no strings attached?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the minister and the provincial ministers who have been working for the past two days on this issue.

I must also say that Quebec's Minister Béchard said that this was a start. It is very important to truly understand the goals we want to reach.

I would also like to tell the leader of the Bloc Québécois that the model we will be using is the Quebec model.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, they say they will be using the Quebec model. They said that about the young offenders, too, and then, in the end, they did the opposite. The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said there would be a specific agreement with Quebec, but that there would be some conditions. Mr. Béchard was very clear; Quebec wants nothing to do with conditions. So, although he says it is a very good start, I think it is a poor one.

Does the asymmetrical model he is proposing mean an agreement for all the provinces and no agreement for Quebec? Is that what he calls asymmetry?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois need not worry. We are going to reach an agreement with the federalist government in Quebec City. It is very clear; we have said so. The minister, Mr. Béchard, said yesterday that the federal government has not said no and that is a start. It is very clear that we are going to respect Quebec's experience in this matter.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Social Development kept referring to a national agreement on child care, while his Quebec counterpart confirmed that he attended the ministers' meeting to reaffirm the position of Quebec, which does not want Ottawa to impose conditions on child care funding.

Considering that the minister claims to want to follow Quebec's example on the child care issue, how does he explain that he did not come to an agreement with Quebec's officials yesterday? It should be easy to come to an agreement with the government that paved the way and which is an inspiration to the minister. How does he explain his silence on Quebec's representations?

[*English*]

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said to the hon. member a short time ago, we did not come to an agreement. We agreed on some very important principles in terms of a national child care system. We agreed collectively to go ahead with a national child care system. We agreed on the principles of quality, universally inclusive, accessibility and development. We agreed to work together to develop a 10 year plan. We agreed on those things.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister announced that the January meeting would deal with the money that will be invested by Ottawa in the child care system. Yesterday, he talked about principles, but was unable to come to an agreement with Quebec.

How can the minister think that, in January, he will come to an agreement with Quebec on the monetary issue, when yesterday he did not even agree on the principles?

[*English*]

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said to the hon. member, we agreed on the principles of the program. In terms of the funding, that is something we did not discuss. That will be for a later discussion and the meeting is in January.

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• (1435)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians woke up this morning sharing a deep concern that many of us feel about the future. The American people have an absolute right to make their choices, but Canadians have a right to ensure that our values are protected.

The star wars missile defence program is the next initiative of George Bush's values, and is based upon them. Will the Prime Minister seek guidance from Canadian values or George Bush's values? Will he say no to missile defence right now today?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the American people have chosen their president. We on this side of the House, we as the government will work with the administration as we have worked with it in the past.

If I could just take this occasion, I would like to say to the member for Elmwood—Transcona that I congratulate him on his 25 years of parliamentary endeavour. He is known in this House as the member for Elmwood—Transcona. In my family he is known as the father of the very dynamic NDP candidate who ran in the riding of LaSalle—Émard.

Oral Questions

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the Prime Minister understands the fear that Canadians are feeling right now. Canadians want the face of Canadians to be their own face—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. We will have no booing in the House. I said this last week. I hope I do not have to say it again. Three times and you are out. The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth has the floor. We will hear his question.

Mr. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, Canadians want our face to the world to be based on our values. The question of star wars missile defence will be the test of whether this government presents the face of Canadians to the world.

Again, will the Prime Minister say today that he will respect the values of Canadians and say no to missile defence?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada will work with the U.S. administration on a vast multitude of files. We will certainly reflect our values; our values which are being reflected in Haiti at this very moment; our values which are being reflected in Afghanistan at this moment; our values which are being reflected in Africa; and our values on a multitude of files as we work to alleviate poverty.

Those are Canadian values and we will continue to push our value system wherever we are.

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SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before the Prime Minister was fired from Jean Chrétien's cabinet, he said that he would do government differently, that he would clean things up and he would act in a more responsible way. However the facts of how he acted when he was the finance minister show something a little different.

There is a comment here from public works documents. In February 1995 justice requested and received a proposal from Pierre Bélisle for a soul source contract. Finance requested that it use Earncliffe instead, and soul sourced a contract for over \$28,000 to the Prime Minister's friends in Earncliffe.

Why did the Prime Minister break the rules for his friends?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the opposition is wrong. The contracts were selected for the provision of information and polling information from a broad range of firms, consistent with government practice.

Again, I would urge the hon. member to allow Justice Gomery to do his work, not to prejudice that work by commenting on documents presented at Gomery or by commenting on day to day testimony. We are interested in getting to the full truth, not in dribs and drabs of documents that may or may not represent the ultimate truth that Canadians desire.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this has nothing whatever to do with Gomery. This has to do with the public works department being interfered

with by the finance minister to get money for his friends. He did it at a time when that public works minister was on this side of the House saying that Brian Mulroney was the best prime minister we had in the last 50 years. That minister has no grounds whatsoever to now be standing and taking bullets for the Liberals.

I want to know this from the Prime Minister himself. Why did the Prime Minister interfere to get \$28,000 for his friends at Earncliffe? Why did he break the rules?

● (1440)

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member said 1995. In 1995 I had a far less hectic life in the private sector.

The member for Battlefords—Lloydminster stated in July 2002 that we should have a fully independent public inquiry to get to the bottom of this. On September 8 the Leader of the Opposition said, "I think [Gomery] is the best chance of getting some answers". The Prime Minister appointed Justice Gomery to do exactly that, get some answers.

Why is the opposition attacking the independence of a judicial inquiry that it actually sought?

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CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's approach to dealing with strategic Canadian interests is to allow his MPs to continue this volley of toxic verbal missiles across the border to Americans.

Would he make a commitment today that in the future he will change his strategy and publicly discipline or reprimand his ministers or his MPs when they damage Canadian interests? Would he be willing to do that?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has been very responsible in dealing with the United States administration. We have been developing extremely strong links with the Bush administration, and we will be quite pleased to continue to work very closely with them. We would like the opposition members to contribute as well in their relationships with Congress and the senate and contribute to the interests and the values of Canadians.

Working with the United States is teamwork. All of us, the government and members of Parliament on all sides should be involved in promoting our interests on BSE, on softwood and on our values.

[Translation]

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as usual, the minister did not answer the question. Critical issues such as mad cow, softwood lumber and the missile defence shield are very important to Canada. Why did the Prime Minister allow his ministers and MPs to establish our position through their ill-advised indiscretions? Why?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to work in close cooperation with the administration that the Americans have chosen, the Bush administration. We will continue to work in close cooperation with that administration, and I urge all members of the House and of the Senate to do the same.

In Washington, it is common knowledge that the administration, along with Congress and the Senate, will discuss the missile defence shield issue. Earlier, the NDP leader referred to it and tried to turn it into a partisan issue. However, in the United States, both Senator Kerry and President Bush support the North American missile defence shield. This is not a partisan issue, but—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laval.

* * *

SOCIAL PROGRAMS

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last month's agreement on parental leave was described by federal and Quebec spokespersons alike as a historic agreement. All that was left to finalize was the financial aspect.

Could the minister tell the House what, all of a sudden, is stopping him from signing this historic agreement as soon as possible?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will answer as I did yesterday. Negotiations are continuing. The minister is pleased with the progress. My officials and those from Quebec are still there to deal with the obstacles. We are working on achieving a satisfactory solution.

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the eve of the last election, it was a done deal; the only thing missing was the figures.

How can the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development explain that, six months later, he is still negotiating the terms of this agreement?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can repeat what I said before. Obviously, the members of the Bloc are having difficulty hearing. I will add that, in negotiations, results are expected after everything has been discussed with all involved.

It should also be pointed out that Quebec's economy has progressed considerably. Perhaps my hon. colleagues do not want to hear this, but unemployment has dropped sharply. The unemployment rate currently stands at 8.3%.

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TAXATION

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec has received \$1.2 billion too much in equalization payments, and has to pay it back. Saskatchewan has received \$590 million too much. I have one very simple question for the Minister of Finance.

Since Quebec is being made to repay this overpayment over several years, is Saskatchewan going to do the same and how long will it take?

• (1445)

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. gentleman is referring to two different situations in two different fiscal years, I am happy to tell him that as we move into the new regime for equalization, there are two years of transition. Over those two years of transition, Quebec will receive approximately \$9 billion and Saskatchewan will receive some \$600 million.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will ask my question again. It is a very simple one. The answer ought to be simple as well. Quebec received \$1.2 billion too much in equalization payments and has to pay it back. Saskatchewan received \$590 million too much.

So this is my question to the minister: Is Saskatchewan going to be paying it back, like Quebec, and over what length of time? A simple question, requiring an equally simple answer.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I totally reject the politics of grievance and blame that are reflected on the floor of the House of Commons by the Bloc.

The fact of the matter is both Quebec and Saskatchewan benefit from the transitional arrangements. Quebec benefits under floor number one. Saskatchewan benefits under floor number two. Different provinces across the country benefit in different ways. The gross benefit to the province of Quebec is larger than the gross benefit to Saskatchewan.

* * *

TRADE

Ms. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of International Trade.

The importance of Congress to the resolution of the BSE crisis, softwood and other trade problems with the U.S. is evident to all of us. Americans have now chosen representatives in both the house and the senate. There are at least eight brand new senators and various new representatives from border states like New York, Washington, Michigan and Illinois.

When will the minister travel to their home states to meet with these new players to make Canada's case right from the start?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I totally accept the premise of the question from the hon. member.

It is absolutely critical that we as parliamentarians have close contact with our American counterparts, including the new members of Congress because these files are vital to our future. I welcome the efforts of the hon. member opposite and her colleagues working with us on this side of the House to establish those strong links with those new members of congress.

Ms. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. The Republican Party has secured the presidency, both houses of congress and a majority of the state governors.

The Minister of the Environment and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence proclaimed their support for the other party. That party did not win. Given this outcome, they have compromised their ability to manage key issues of national importance with the United States.

What is the Prime Minister going to do to fix this problem in the name of Canada's national interests?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has made it absolutely clear that the Prime Minister and all of us are absolutely pleased to work with the Bush administration. We have done so in the past. We have developed good, strong working relationships. Americans have been very divided themselves on the choice they have had to make. They themselves were quite split. They made a choice and we are absolutely going to work with them constructively. However, on our side of the House, we do it in the interests of Canada. That is the difference between us.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

Mrs. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, day after day, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food keeps trying to sell us on the merits of his meagre program announced on September 10. Yet it contains nothing to remedy the great harm done to dairy producers, nothing to reduce the huge surplus numbers of cull cattle, nothing concrete to open up the border.

How long will it take before we see any real slaughter facilities in the east and in the west?

[English]

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the announcement of September 10 does contain within it components to build new slaughter capacity that can deal with culled animals as well. There is a managing older animals program that is part of the announcement of September 10.

As I have said on several occasions, we feel it is absolutely essential to deal with the cull animals coming out of dairy operations. I have made a commitment to work with various political leaders on this with the industry and we are working toward a specific solution in that respect.

• (1450)

Mrs. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 532 days have passed and the border is still closed to Canadian livestock. All the while members of the Liberal government have given insult to our most important trading partner. Now they have alienated themselves from the new Bush administration by expressing their support for John Kerry.

How does the agriculture minister plan to get the border reopened to our livestock in light of the damaged relations that his government has created?

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite the contrary. Over the last while we

have had over 150 individual interventions with our American counterparts specifically designed to deal with the BSE issue.

I have met with the minister once personally. Twice we have had in-depth discussions about this. All members on this side of the aisle have been dealing with the Americans aggressively to get the border opened. That is what we have been doing and that is what we will continue to do.

[Translation]

Mr. David Smith (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the cattle farmers in the riding of Pontiac are experiencing serious problems in making their operations cost effective, as are their counterparts in the rest of Canada. One of their main problems is not being able to slaughter cattle locally.

My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. Would it be possible to have our own abattoirs and to sell our meat locally at a price that would allow the farmers of the Pontiac to make a living?

[English]

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes a very important point and that is the need to increase slaughter capacity. That is why we did two very important things on September 10. One was to create a pool of money, a loan loss reserve, to help in the financing of new slaughter capacity. The other was to provide additional resources to the CFIA so it could effectively provide the regulatory framework so that these new slaughter capacities could be brought on line.

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SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the former top bureaucrat in charge of the sponsorship scandal testified today about the extent of his political influence in the Liberal government. Chuck Guité said he had a direct relationship all the way to Gagliano's office and the PMO. He was able to order up a raise, a promotion, and when he wanted to leave, these same people convinced him to stay.

Does the minister concede that Mr. Guité should have been fired, not given a raise?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member is part of a party that actually does respect the independence of the judiciary. I would urge him to speak with his colleagues and his party's leadership about that because his question is actually inconsistent with the general theory of judicial independence. I know that when he really thinks about it, he will want to wait for Justice Gomery's report to have the whole truth so that all members of Parliament and all Canadians can benefit from that truth as we move forward.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are tired of hearing this broken mantra everyday, that they cannot answer. You have answers to give to the people of Canada. We are going to continue pursuing you until you give them.

Chuck Guité—

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member knows I do not answer questions in the House. He must address his remarks to the Chair, not to the minister. I am sure that in saying “you” he meant me, knowing that I do not answer questions. I invite him to please address his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, I apologize.

Chuck Guité was given a raise to facilitate the plundering of the public purse. He testified today that no contracts were tendered, there were no rules and no guidelines. Does this sound like a person who deserves a raise?

• (1455)

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that does not sound like a person who deserves a raise either.

We have an independent judicial inquiry. Justice Gomery is doing his work well. Canadians trust Justice Gomery to get to the truth. What Canadians do not want is a parallel Gomery inquiry here on the floor of the House, sullied by that kind of partisan rhetoric.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Trade insisted before the U. S. election that Canada had a window of opportunity to negotiate the softwood dispute after the U.S. election. In the meantime, the minister's Liberal cabinet colleagues completely marginalized Canadian influence with the Bush administration due to Kerry endorsements.

Will the minister get all of Canadian industry and the provinces together to fix the problem he and his colleagues have created?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange that the hon. member is suggesting we immediately get everybody together to negotiate a settlement because the official position of his party was, the last time I heard it, that we should not be negotiating a settlement for softwood lumber.

Having said that, I remain ready to follow our two-track approach. We will continue to negotiate and to litigate under NAFTA and under WTO. We also stand ready to negotiate in the interests of all Canadian stakeholders.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister's laissez-faire attitude is hardly appropriate given the great amount of money owed to our industry.

[*Translation*]

It is not just the forest workers in Nanaimo—Alberni who are suffering from the iniquitous imposition of countervailing duties. In Abitibi, Mauricie, Beauce and Bois-Francs, too, people are waiting for a fair and equitable settlement. The Liberals have fostered the distrust and disdain of the Americans. Today, their partisan choice will cost exporters dearly.

When, in fact, is the government going to return the overpayment to softwood lumber producers?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree that there are problems with softwood lumber and

the American position. We have been fighting against it. We have also allocated over \$300 million to help workers in the softwood lumber industry, and we shall continue to work very closely with the industry and the provinces to resolve this issue.

* * *

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the American ambassador has stated that changes to Canada's drug laws are a border issue for the American government. It is clear that the Liberal government's position on marijuana will harm Canada's jobs that depend on our billion dollar a day trading relationship with the Americans.

Can the minister explain to Canadians why he thinks it is more important to decriminalize drugs than to protect Canadian jobs?

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, I discussed the matter with the attorney general of the United States who understood our position. With regard to the question of smuggling, we have a shared concern. We are cooperating on that and the Americans respect that.

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I take the word of the American ambassador that he stated in public. It is clear that the government is willing to jeopardize Canadian jobs. It also appears that Liberals are willing to sacrifice public safety on our highways since training police officers to detect drug impaired motorists will only be complete in four years.

In the interests of public safety, will the minister promise that the marijuana law will remain unchanged until all necessary officers have been trained and in place?

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the marijuana law is intended to protect public safety, particularly in combating cultivation and grow ops.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the Gomery commission we have learned that a contract awarded to a communications firm was split in two at the request of the finance department, and one part given to a firm with very close ties to the current Prime Minister.

When the Prime Minister confirmed, last winter, that there had been political direction behind the sponsorship scandal, was he thinking of his own interventions on behalf of his own friends?

Oral Questions

• (1500)

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Justice Gomery's mandate includes both sponsorship and communication strategy work. He has a strong mandate and sufficient resources to conduct his work. We have also provided cabinet documents back to 1994 and in fact over 10 million pages of documents for him to do that work.

I would urge the hon. member to have some patience and some courage because we are looking forward to receiving the truth. I would urge similar courage over there.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services can try to defend his boss by saying the commission's work is not done. But one fact remains; the evidence against the Prime Minister is growing more and more serious. In fact, no one believes the Prime Minister when he says he knew nothing about the sponsorship scandal.

Does he not now realize that serious suspicion has grown up around him and that it is his duty to explain himself to the public, right here in Parliament?

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has always been very clear on this, that he was aware of the sponsorship program. In fact, all members of Parliament were aware of the sponsorship program. It was a national program. In fact, the hon. member was aware of the sponsorship program because he was writing letters to the minister responsible, the Minister of Public Works, seeking support for projects in his riding from the sponsorship program.

Again, we are looking forward to getting to the truth and Justice Gomery is doing good work. We should be encouraging him, not sully his work with that kind of partisan rhetoric. Beyond that, we did ensure that competitive processes did occur.

* * *

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago a Liberal member made some outrageous remarks that blamed global terrorism on the United States. The member for Don Valley East said:

Who wrought this terrorism? Where did they come from? They are the result of the policies of the United States.

The opposition leader has given the Prime Minister an opportunity to completely disavow those odious remarks. I would like to give him the opportunity one more time to stand in his place on the day following the U.S. election and denounce the blatant and destructive anti-Americanism.

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the opposition's questions are very useful when they try to say that this government or Canadians are anti-American.

We, alongside the Americans, have built the best continent on the planet in terms of the levels of justice, in terms of prosperity and in terms of having the most secure continent on the planet. We will continue to work with the Americans to make sure North America is safe, secure, prosperous and free.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is not useful are Liberal ministers and Liberal members repeatedly undermining our most important foreign relationship by referring to Americans as bastards, morons, idiots, as a menace and as the cause of world terrorism. Those comments happen repeatedly. It is a deep-set pattern in the Liberal Party.

Why will the Prime Minister not stand up and denounce the remarks of his member which blamed global terrorism on the United States? Why will he not stand up and do that?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think all Canadians know that it is the official opposition members who are calling a lot more attention to a few remarks that may have been made. It is the opposition members who have brought the attention of the United States to it. They are the ones who go down to Washington knocking on the doors of senators and congressmen to tell them that some obscure member of Parliament might have said something about them. They are the ones who call the attention all the time to some remarks.

This government will continue to build a strong continental North America alongside the United States of America.

* * *

• (1505)

[*Translation*]

CHILD CARE

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Social Development. The early childhood and child care issue is of critical importance to francophone and Acadian communities.

Can the minister assure the House that, in the context of federal, provincial and territorial negotiations on child care, special consideration has been given, or will be given to services and programs for minority francophone and Acadian communities? Can the minister confirm that a fair share of the funds and services will be earmarked for these communities?

[*English*]

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to our official languages, I know how important it is for young children to have learning experiences in their first language when they live in linguistic minorities in this country.

I can assure the member that these communities will be an important part of a new national child care system.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health said that he would raise in cabinet the issue of compensation for all victims of hepatitis C from tainted blood, but I am skeptical.

It has only been a matter of weeks since the minister said that he would open the compensation fund, only to come out the next day and tell reporters that he had changed his mind and that he would have to look at it further.

The opposition parties have agreed unanimously to compensate hepatitis C victims. Now all of a sudden the government feels that opening the fund is the right thing to do.

Will the minister tell us exactly what issue he intends to raise at the cabinet table, and—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said repeatedly, both inside and outside the House, and the Prime Minister said during the election campaign that we were open to considering the idea of looking at the actuarial surplus.

I would just ask that the hon. member stop politicizing the issue because it is a very sensitive issue for people who have suffered a lot.

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is about the victims. If the government would compensate them it would be over.

I know the Prime Minister also has a vested interest in what happens on this file. He was on the board of directors of the Canadian Development Corporation, which was implicated in the tainted blood scandal, but conveniently he remembers nothing about importing blood from the United States prisons.

Since the Prime Minister was a decision maker at the CDC during that period, will he remove himself from the discussions relating to opening the compensation fund, because—

The Speaker: The hon. member is asking about events that happened before the Prime Minister became a member of the House. I am afraid that it is out of order. I do not know whether there is an attempt to tie it in with something that has happened now because I could not hear the question with all the noise. However, the minister may wish to reply.

I did not say where the noise came from. I just said that there was too much noise. I could not hear everything and therefore I will have to review the question and decide later if it is in order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, over the past few days, the Canadian Hemophilia Society and numerous other organizations representing the interests of the victims of the hep C virus have been asking the federal government to follow up on the Krever recommendation and to compensate all those who got hepatitis C from contaminated blood transfusions, or from the administration of blood products, regardless of the date of infection.

Can the minister confirm that close to \$1 billion remains unused in the compensation fund, and that it is outrageous that the government

would refuse to extend eligibility to people who contracted the virus before January 1, 1986, or after July 1, 1990?

[*English*]

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night during the take note debate the hon. member agreed that we were pursuing the right course of action to approach the objective that he and I share.

Last night we had a wonderful discussion. We will be taking these steps in the next few weeks. We want to deal with the issue that he raises, which is a very serious issue.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

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

● (1510)

[*English*]

That this House deplore the attitude of the Prime Minister of Canada at and following the first ministers conference of October 26, 2004, and that it call on the federal government to immediately implement its pledges of June 5 and 27, 2004 to allow the provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia to keep 100% of their provincial offshore oil and gas revenues.

This motion, standing in the name of the hon. member for Calgary Southwest, is votable.

[*Translation*]

Copies of the motion are available at the Table.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of former member of Parliament Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral, who will be awarded the Legion of Honour of the French Republic.

I should add that she is accompanied by former member of Parliament Suzanne Tremblay.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

The Speaker: On the occasion of Veterans Week, I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of three World War II veterans: Guy Robitaille, 22nd Royal Regiment, escorted by Air Force Captain Jean Taylor; Betty Brown, a nursing sister who served in the Italian campaign, escorted by Army Master Warrant Officer Timothy Power; and Robert Campbell, tank commander, escorted by Navy Leading Seaman Barbara Mackinnon.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[Translation]***VETERANS**

Hon. Albina Guarnieri (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, each year an entire week is set aside for paying tribute to our veterans. Veterans Week 2004 will be from November 5 to 11, and will include the 60th Remembrance Day since the end of the second world war.

This week is one way we can thank the veterans of the past century's wars, soldiers on peacekeeping missions and Canadian Forces veterans. They are national treasures and part of our tradition of peace.

[English]

This year and every year we wear poppies to honour those Canadians who lost their lives in defence of our country. Lieutenant Chris Saunders and Corporal Jamie Murphy were two of those Canadians. Their tragic loss this past year reminds us all that risk, noble purpose and sacrifice are enduring realities for Canadian Forces personnel and their families.

Veterans Week is part of our never-ending mission to thank the veterans who stepped out of ordinary times to do the extraordinary and left our nation with an endowment of peace.

[Translation]

For Canada's veterans, nothing is more important than the honour and recognition of those who have served Canada.

[English]

Recently, we followed the trail of one generation of veterans who surrendered the comfort and safety of home to become exporters of peace and freedom 60 years ago.

Across Italy, France, Belgium and Holland, we found witnesses to their courage, proof of their humanity and monuments to their sacrifice. Most of all, we found ourselves in the shadow that is forever cast by those who stood tall in the fight for freedom.

None stood taller than Smoky Smith. Smoky has always been one of a kind. Now he is also the last of his kind, the last living Canadian who earned the Victoria Cross. Smoky and every other Victoria Cross recipient put their stamp on our history, and this year we put their history on our stamp.

The Ministers of National Revenue and National Defence, together with Canada Post, released two special edition stamps in honour of the 94 Canadians who earned the highest award for valour. We point to their legendary courage as a portrait of thousands more Canadian veterans who are themselves symbols of national pride, survivors of a national struggle, and carriers of our national spirit. Every time one of these stamps is delivered, it will be a reminder of how our veterans delivered for Canada.

For this Veterans Week we have coined one more reminder of the price veterans paid for the freedom we enjoy. The universal symbol of remembrance, the red poppy, made famous by John McCrae, is now emblazoned on 30 million quarters, one for every Canadian who shares the duty to remember.

Every Veterans Week is a battle against the amnesia of time and a mission to remind all Canadians that we have reason to be proud of the achievements of our veterans and reason to be humbled by the scale of their sacrifice.

● (1515)

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to rise in this place to pay tribute to Canada's veterans. As we prepare for the launch of Veterans Week, it seems to me that a week is an insufficient amount of time to remember the many accomplishments of our veterans and the sacrifices made on Canada's behalf.

We in fact should never forget for a moment that without these gallant men and women we as a nation would not be where we are today. We enjoy a reputation throughout the world as a nation that will come to the aid of those in turmoil. This reputation has been achieved at a very high cost to those who built it.

This year the theme of Veterans Week is "Canada Remembers the Italian Campaign". I have just returned from Italy where I had the opportunity to accompany veterans of the Italian Campaign on a pilgrimage to the cemeteries that are the resting place for 5,900 of their comrades in arms. It is sobering to see row after row of headstones with the name and unit etched on them, but it is when one sees the age of these soldiers that it impacts a person the hardest. Many never reached their 20th birthday.

Veterans continue to give to this country by going to schools and reliving their experiences so that Canadian children have at least an idea of the pain of war. It is important that we know and remember what war is all about. It gives us the incentive to keep the peace.

As we don our poppies and take our places at cenotaphs across the country this November 11, I would like to share with my colleagues and Canada an inscription I read on a headstone in Italy. It was the headstone of one young Canadian soldier and it told the story of every Canadian family that lost a loved one. It read:

To the world he was only one, to us he was the only one.

● (1520)

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as veterans affairs critic for the Bloc Québécois, in this week that is dedicated to them, I am proud to pay tribute today to the women and men who have participated in war, whether in world conflicts or peacekeeping operations.

Our thoughts and respect go out to all those who fought on behalf of Quebec and Canada in World War I from 1914 to 1918, in World War II from 1939 to 1945, 175,000 Quebeckers among them, in the Korean war from 1950 to 1953, and more recently in the gulf war and the various UN and NATO peacekeeping missions.

Privilege

Remembering our veterans means also caring for them, including the younger ones who often have trouble fitting back into society here and whose problems are not always acknowledged as being related to their combat experiences, post-traumatic stress for instance.

As I have done since first elected in 1997, I will continue to defend these women and men whom the government forgets too quickly once they are back from war or a mission. We owe them this recognition and support.

Since its inception 10 years ago, Veterans Week has offered us an opportunity to perpetuate the memory of our veterans and their exceptional sacrifices.

Let us show our recognition and respect to the thousands of women and men from this country who have sacrificed themselves in the defence of freedom and democracy.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Veterans Affairs on its most interesting web site. I discovered, for instance, the virtual war memorial on which I was able to find 17 people with the same last name as myself, Perron, and I wish to pay particular tribute today to those soldiers and their families.

Peace must remain the primary objective of our government. We must preserve our reputation, built up since the early years of the last century, often at the price of our soldiers' lives. Their contribution must be remembered with gratitude.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on a recent trip to Italy with my colleagues from the Ministry of Veterans Affairs I came across a gravesite that said it very clearly. This gravesite spoke for the 117,000 men and women we have buried in over 72 countries around the world. It said, "They gave the greatest gift of all, the gift of an unfinished life". The Mayor of Casino said in a speech to the veterans that our sons have become their sons. That is a very poignant statement if I have ever heard one.

I was born in Holland. In 1956 my parents made the decision to come to this great country. As many immigrants to this country, the reason my father made that decision was because during the liberation of Holland he was a prisoner of war. He later said to my mother and to everyone who would listen, "If they have a military like that, can you imagine what kind of country they come from". So the decision to come to this great Canada I call home was an easy decision for my father to make.

The names of Caen, Ortona, Vimy, Passchendaele, Dieppe and Hong Kong will forever be etched in the memories of all Canadians.

It is the responsibility of all members of Parliament to ensure that their memory and their history is passed on to our children so that they in turn can pass it on to their children.

At this time I want to thank the members of the legions and the ANAF clubs throughout Canada that keep the memory of our veterans alive. I wish to thank the military family resource centres, the 34 we have in this country and around the world, that dedicate their time to support the families of our current members of the armed forces. Every day these brave men and women put their lives on the line so that we can live in peace, freedom and harmony.

I would like to say very clearly that at the going down of the sun, we will remember them. God bless our veterans. God bless our armed forces personnel. God bless them all.

● (1525)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: I would ask that all hon. members rise and observe a moment of silence for those veterans who gave their lives for our country.

[*The House stood in silence*]

[*English*]

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a point of order from the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

TAKE NOTE DEBATE ON HEPATITIS C

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last night in the debate on hepatitis C I unfortunately made a disparaging remark toward the legal profession of this country. I would like to withdraw that remark and apologize unequivocally, and with sincere regret to the people in the legal profession of this country.

An hon. member: We accept.

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for Don Valley East.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

MEMBERS' REMARKS

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the leader of Her Majesty's opposition and some members of his caucus have sullied my reputation by alluding that I am anti-American. On October 30 the *Ottawa Citizen* printed a clarification on an error it made. I would like to read that in the House for the record:

One hopes that in a democracy such as Canada, every individual, elected representative or not, has a right to a personal view on various issues. Surely, those viewpoints do not always have to mirror those held by other individuals—or foreign governments, for that matter. Being branded anti-American because one's beliefs and values are different from say, the foreign policy of the United States or that nation's current leadership is ludicrous. My views on the Iraq war itself would probably not differ from those of the almost three-quarters of Canadians who believe Canada made the right decision not to take part in the invasion of Iraq in the first place. Would it then be correct to say that, to some, every one of those Canadians is anti-American? I do not think so. As a Muslim woman, the first ever elected to the House of Commons, I do indeed adhere to basic beliefs found in the Koran—tolerance, peace, diversity, pluralism and respect for life. That is why I joined former party leaders Stockwell Day and Alexa McDonough this week in criticizing—

● (1530)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member is getting herself into difficulty reading a letter to the editor because it has names of members in it. She cannot use those names in the House. The hon. member is going to have to come to the point of her question of privilege, perhaps without all the reading

Routine Proceedings

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the point to my question of privilege is, as a Canadian citizen who espouses Canadian values, I have a right to an opinion, and I would demand an apology from the Leader of the Opposition and the caucus members.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to the member's question of privilege, insofar as I have twice quoted the remarks in question on the floor, I would submit that her submission does not constitute in any respect a question of privilege, prima facie or otherwise. I would be quite prepared to table the article in question from the *Ottawa Citizen* wherein she makes the remarks which we have cited.

I would emphasize that no one in this chamber has denied or challenged her freedom of expression in this place. What we have challenged is the substance of her words, and we simply ask the government to disavow her suggestion that the United States is the principal cause of world terrorism. That is entirely within our rights as members of the opposition.

The Speaker: I will review the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Don Valley East, the response from the hon. member for Calgary Southeast and the transcript of today's question period. If I find there is a breach of privilege, I will come back to the House in due course with a ruling.

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in your deliberations and as you consider this matter, I just want to be perfectly clear that what the member was intending to do was point out very clearly that she is not anti-American and that—

Mr. Vic Toews: Yes she is.

Hon. Tony Valeri: There you hear it again, Mr. Speaker. The point the hon. member was making, for your consideration, was that she is not anti-American and she has been called anti-American, or to that effect, by the Leader of the Opposition. She would like you to consider that and consider whether it is a point that you would accept, and then therefore demand an apology from the Leader of the Opposition. I want to be perfectly clear that this is the request.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. government House leader for that clarification. I will bear his comments in mind as well in my deliberations on this matter.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two reports to table today. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, OSCE, respecting its participation to the expanded bureau meeting, held in Copenhagen, Denmark on April 23-24, 2004.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, OSCE, respecting its participation to the 13th annual session held in Edinburgh, from July 5-9, 2004.

I would also like to thank very much all the accompanying staff who were very helpful to all hon. members and senators who were in attendance and who participated very well on behalf of Canada.

* * *

• (1535)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration on the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005. The report is respectfully submitted.

TRANSPORT

Mr. Jim Gouk (British Columbia Southern Interior, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Transport.

Pursuant to an order of reference of the House of Tuesday, October 19 the committee considered Bill C-4, an act to implement the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment and the Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters Specific to Aircraft Equipment. The committee has decided to report the same back to the House without amendment.

I appreciate the cooperation of all members and staff of the committee for passing the bill quickly so we can focus on the more contentious issues of transport.

* * *

YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-258, an act to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act (breach of a condition of an order).

He said: Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce my private member's bill, a bill to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act. My bill recognizes that the vast majority of troubled youth leave crime behind them if they get the guidance they need at a very early intervention. To succeed, adequate supervision is absolutely critical.

If passed, the bill will lay charges against guardians who fail to report known breaches of probation upon discovering them. Penalties can range from a \$2,000 fine up to and including six months in prison or both.

Without enforcement mechanisms most probation breaches go unreported. Without reporting, youth do not get the guidance they need. My bill seeks a fair balance between punishment and rehabilitation.

I encourage all members to support this important bill so we can ensure that young people, who get started in an area of crime, can get the help and guidance they need to get them out of the revolving door of our youth courts.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

● (1540)

EXCISE TAX ACT

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-259, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act (elimination of excise tax on jewellery).

He said: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to introduce my private member's bill to amend the Excise Tax Act and its regulations to eliminate the excise tax on jewellery.

The excise tax is a luxury tax that unfairly discriminates against the jewellery industry. It is a 10% levy paid by manufacturers on the sale price of items manufactured in Canada and by importers on the duty paid value of imports. It was introduced in 1918, after World War I, as part of a package of excises on items considered to be luxury goods. Today, it is the only remaining luxury tax in Canada.

Canada is the only industrialized nation and the only diamond producing nation that has maintained such a tax. Due to this tax, Canadian mined diamonds cost more in Canada than anywhere else in the world. In addition, the House of Commons finance committee has concluded on more than one occasion that this tax should be abolished.

I encourage the support of all members for my bill.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

TREATIES ACT

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-260, an act respecting the negotiation, approval, tabling and publication of treaties.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present, seconded by the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île, the bill entitled An Act respecting the negotiation, approval, tabling and publication of treaties.

The purpose of this bill is to ensure that treaties are first submitted to the House of Commons. Of course, we are talking here about major treaties. Following that initial step, there would have to be a true consultation of civil society by a parliamentary committee, before Parliament would vote on these treaties.

The objective is to ensure real transparency. Treaties have a bearing on the daily lives of people and, increasingly, they impact on everyone's life. Just think about free trade or the trade treaty. From now on, such treaties would have to be submitted to the House of Commons, presented to civil society through a parliamentary committee, and published in the *Canada Gazette* and on the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs, so that people could find out about their content.

The bill also seeks to ensure mandatory consultation of the provinces before negotiating a treaty on an issue that comes under

their jurisdiction. We are asking that when a province is affected by a treaty, it be consulted before that treaty is signed and before the government makes a commitment on its behalf.

Of course, it is my hope that all members of the House will support and pass this bill.

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

* * *

● (1545)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**HEALTH**

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I move that the first report of the Standing Committee on Health presented to the House on Monday, November 1, 2004, be concurred in.

Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia.

This is a very important motion and I would like to explain exactly how it came to the House. This is a motion that was made in the health committee and it was a unanimous decision by the committee. Unanimous decisions are not all that striking in themselves but the House has to understand that this decision was made unanimously and it went against the direction in which the government has gone for the last two parliaments.

It becomes very significant when government members will sit in a committee room, discuss the issue and realize that they were in error for the direction in which the government had been going on the issue of compensation to hepatitis C victims outside the window for the last seven years, or even a decade. It becomes a very significant issue to understand how it came to the House.

We made the motion in committee. It was a unanimous decision to compensate all those victims outside the window. There was another motion made in committee which was to bring it to the House and have it reported here. It was reported on Monday so my notice of motion was for the concurrence of the House to recognize that the decision of the committee is the right direction in which to go. We are asking the House to concur with that motion. It is a very legitimate request and we believe that the House should concur.

There is \$1.1 billion left in a compensation fund that started at \$1.2 billion and all of those who are within the window have already been paid. We know the numbers outside the window are much reduced compared to the estimates that were made initially. There are about 5,000 left, maybe 6,000 at the very most. There is absolutely no rational reason why we would not compensate outside that window.

Routine Proceedings

We had a take note debate in the House last evening to discuss the issue. The minister said that he would like to pursue this and plans to take it to cabinet. When I looked at the cabinet ministers I realized that a number of cabinet ministers who were against this for the last decade are still sitting in cabinet. Therefore, I am a little nervous about the direction in which they will go when they are in the cabinet room. That is why it is very important for the House to send them a message urging them to do the right thing.

There is no reason that this should not happen. The funding is there, although the decision should never have been based on the funding. It should have been based on fairness.

We have to understand that all of those outside the window who were impacted by tainted blood who got HIV and which progressed to AIDS were compensated. It is only the hepatitis C victims. Not only was there discrimination of the individuals, it was also of the disease itself. Because of that, in the sense of fairness if for no other reason, all victims of tainted blood should be compensated.

It was a terrible time in the history of this country when the citizens felt that the blood system was safe and it was not. The government knew. It had been forewarned that it was not safe but it proceeded. We could go on and on with the rationale and the history of the situation. I do not know if it is important to do that at this time. What is important is that we make sure that the House has an opportunity to speak to the cabinet and to the government in power with regard to doing the right thing for all Canadians.

The decision in 1998 should have been to compensate all those outside the window, which coincides with the Krever inquiry. That was the right thing to do then. It is the right thing to do now. We still have time to do the right thing and I encourage Parliament to send that message.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): I want to correct the record and inform all hon. members that the motion is seconded by the hon. member for Winnipeg North rather than the hon. member for Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia.

Questions and comments.

• (1550)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the take note debate last evening was important because of the consensus among all hon. members who participated. There was the positive position taken by the minister with respect to the matter to the extent that commitments can be made.

I ask the member to elaborate on the condition of testing of blood in the period outside the window of eligibility. Some tests were proxy tests. They were not the right tests. I think they were being used in the U.S. We did not use them. It was not until after that period that a proper test came in.

I would like clarification. Would the member advise the House on when reliable testing became available with regard to hepatitis C?

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Madam Speaker, I would be pleased to answer that question.

We actually have documentation showing that the government was aware of the possibility of the problem with tainted blood in the blood supply in Canada as far back as 1981. That is no excuse. We

could go around and around on this one, but that is a terrible legacy. Outside the window we knew about the blood and we should have been liable as a country back that far and beyond.

We should compensate those who are victimized by tainted blood through no fault of their own. We should treat them fairly from one side to the other. We cannot just pick the window of 1986 to 1990 and think that we are doing the right thing. That is almost worse than not dealing with them at all, because we are treating one segment completely different from the rest for absolutely no reason. That is why it is very important.

That is why the health committee looked at this very seriously. We made a motion on it urging the government to move on this immediately. We need concurrence of the House to do that.

Hon. Robert Thibault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we had a very good discussion on this last night. Everybody participated until very late last night. The U.S. election was not over when we got home. We were not here that late, so we still got the tail end of those reports.

The minister was here yesterday and the member got a chance to question him and dialogue with him. He recognized an understanding, we hope, of what the fund is that existed. I do not remember the exact wording but the committee agreed in light of the surplus in the fund, because we all believe there is a surplus in the fund, but he will understand that fund does not belong to the government. It belongs to the recipients in the trust. It has to be managed through an organization with the consent of the court. The actuarial surplus would be ideal to be used to widen that, which is the step that we are taking now and which the minister is looking at now.

Would he not agree that is a reasonable approach, as everybody did yesterday evening?

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Madam Speaker, I would be pleased to answer that one.

We could have and probably should have debated this issue until 10 o'clock this morning if we were waiting for the outcome of the U.S. election. It would have been appropriate to do so because this important issue has been on the minds of Canadians for a long time. Whether a person is impacted or not, a sense of the fairness of this issue drives Canadians to understand that it was a dark day in Canadian history and needs to be corrected.

With regard to the comments of the minister last evening, it seemed to me that he was trying to say that he wanted to do the right thing, but he had not yet talked to cabinet. If he had talked to cabinet and said that he had been discussing it with his colleagues and there were some details they needed to work out before it was done, I would feel a little bit more comfortable, but that is not so. In fact, he has not even approached cabinet yet.

We have to understand who is in cabinet. The people in cabinet are the same ones who were there in the last Parliament. I very aggressively let them know how much money was in the fund in just the last few months, yet they were unwilling to consider it. There were all kinds of excuses why they could not pay and compensate appropriately.

Routine Proceedings

Forgive me if I am a little skeptical of, maybe not the intent of the minister, but perhaps the ability of the minister to do the right thing in this case. That is why the House has to encourage cabinet and the minister to do the right thing on this issue and it needs to be done now.

• (1555)

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Madam Speaker, the victims of hepatitis C suffer painful physical symptoms, fatigue, cirrhosis of the liver, nausea, and many other ailments. Their pain is increased particularly for those who are in the pre-1996, post-1990 window. These people were infected by tainted blood and their pain and suffering has not been recognized by the Government of Canada. They deserve compensation, yet the government refuses to broaden it. We know the money is available. A surplus exists, yet these people are being denied the adequate financial resources to mitigate their suffering.

Today in question period we had an accusation from the Minister of Health that somehow the opposition parties were politicizing this issue. I would like to remind the government side that in 1998 there was a motion brought forward by the opposition parties to compensate these victims of hepatitis C from tainted blood, but the prime minister of the day made it into a confidence motion on the government. The prime minister of the day politicized the motion that would have opened the door to compensate the victims of hepatitis C from tainted blood.

It is the Liberal government that has politicized this issue. It is the Liberal government that has refused to do the right thing. However at the health committee a few weeks ago, members from all parties, including the Liberal Party, agreed that compensating hepatitis C victims from tainted blood was the right thing to do. Hence we are discussing that motion today.

It is really interesting that four members of the Liberal government have decided to side with the opposition parties. They have done it because they are people of conscience and people who want to do the right thing and compensate the victims of hepatitis C.

We have an opportunity here. The money is there, but more important, the principle is that these people need to be dealt with fairly. Even if there was not a surplus we should compensate these people, but there is, so there is absolutely no excuse. I think, and I believe the opposition parties agree and at least four members of the Liberal Party agree, that compensation should be made.

I therefore move:

That this question be now put.

• (1600)

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Resuming debate.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to take part in this very important debate. I was listening to the hon. member who spoke a few minutes before me. He seemed to be saying that some MPs have more of a

conscience than others. I do not think we are here today to examine one another's conscience. I think that all hon. members want us to compensate all the victims. Past agreements have to be honoured. In that respect, I think the Minister of Health has shown a great deal of openness.

However, I would like to provide a little background on this issue. All the members in this House want to help the victims, but we must consider past decisions and live with some of the legal consequences that currently govern this program.

The Government of Canada paid \$1.4 billion at the time to compensate and help victims who contracted the hepatitis C virus from the Canadian blood supply system. Some \$875 million was allocated to compensate victims infected between January 1, 1986 and July 1, 1990. That was the settlement agreement.

There is also \$525 million for care and assistance for the victims. This money will provide care and better blood regulation and surveillance.

In 1998, the Government of Canada and its provincial and territorial partners announced definitive help for infected Canadians. At the time, the settlement was also meant for hemophiliacs and thalassemics infected with hepatitis C—these people had received blood products during that time—regardless of when they had been infected.

At the time, the total settlement was \$1.118 billion. The federal government's contribution was roughly \$875 million. The money was put in a trust fund for the claimants, pursuant to the settlement agreement for people who contracted hepatitis C.

I know we all want to do better, but we all have to realize that the settlement agreement is currently being administered at arm's length from governments. We cannot, today, decide to dip into the fund. We know it is managed by independent court-appointed administrators. The court ruled and appointed Crawford Expertises Canada Inc. and the Garden City group.

The trustees are ultimately responsible for the decisions regarding the claims and the compensation granted to the victims. All of us want to do more and to do better, but we have to abide by the court's decisions that were taken precisely to protect claimants and keep the government at arm's length.

Yes, there is some money left in the fund and I hope that we will be able to compensate more victims. As of March 31, 2004, the trust fund contained \$865 million. As of October 1, 2004, 9,424 claims had been approved and approximately \$387 million in benefits had been paid. The fund did benefit those who qualified for the reference period.

We are, of course, aware of all the difficulties faced by the others. However, the initial agreement was intended to compensate the 1986 to 1990 victims. The \$865 million still in the trust fund do not belong to the federal government. The House alone cannot make any decision regarding that fund.

Routine Proceedings

It is my understanding that a procedure is in place to allow the courts to review the fund and its actuarial surplus in June 2005.

• (1605)

At some point, the courts, under totally independent supervision, will review the real surplus and the future obligations under the trust fund. They will also be able to find out if there is really a surplus and if there are no longer any commitments to the victims who contracted the disease during the reference period. If not, then they will be able to tell us how to use the money. At that point, I guess a lot of people will want to make representations. Let us hope that, despite all the arrangements made by the court, the surplus will be big enough so that more victims can get more money.

I heard my hon. colleague say that some members have a conscience while others do not. We are all responsible for the management of the trust fund. We all have to respect the process that was set up at the time. We cannot unilaterally change the rules. It would not be acceptable to those who still believe today that they are entitled to some compensation.

I think the Minister of Health has been very clear on this: we want to look at all possible ways of making the compensation broader and fairer. No member in this House wants to see anyone suffer. No member in this House wants to deprive anyone of anything. But we must live with the consequences and the reality of the history of this issue. It is a question of responsibility. We must also recognize that this is an independent fund.

I know that all the members are full of good intentions and want to see this fund paid out. When we look at the figures and see \$865 million, we say we could be doing more. Perhaps, but it is not our place to decide. Members who were here at the time of the last agreement decided that it should be up to a court. I have complete confidence in the courts. In June 2005, we shall see if there is a way to be more generous.

In the meantime, I know that the Minister of Health, as he announced publicly, will be discussing this with his cabinet colleagues. Still, even the health minister cannot unilaterally change the terms of this decision.

We know that the settlement agreement created a compensation schedule for claimants eligible for fixed compensation payments, compensation for loss of income or cost of treatment, and other expenses. There are six levels of fixed payments as compensation for damages, from \$10,000 at level 1 to \$100,000 at level 6. An individual's total compensation can be \$225,000 depending on the seriousness of the claimant's illness.

As the illness progresses, eligible claimants already included in the program between 1986 and 1990 can ask for more compensation. It would not be responsible to tell these people who are already eligible for the program that we are going to empty the trust fund. I think we must absolutely ensure that everything is done according to the rules. We have a moral and legal commitment to the people who are already included in the program.

We cannot unilaterally make decisions for them, without the precise studies that are called for in the agreement. We know that payments from the fund may continue as long as 70 years. We must take the long-term view of this. We cannot make a decision today

that will affect the lives of all these people. I was saying that at present there are several thousand, in fact there are 9,424 claims already in the system, but there will be others in the long term. All of this must be considered.

I know that if he could, the minister would rather write each victim a cheque right away. But that is not the way the agreement was designed initially. It would not be responsible on his part to do that right away, through an initiative that could affect the rights of those already in the program.

• (1610)

New claimants and those already eligible, who get continuous benefits, have until 2010 to make a claim.

Of course, all members in the House want to do more and wish we could do more. But we are bound by an agreement. There is no way around it. An agreement was made with those infected between January 1986 and July 1990, and we cannot extend the program at their expense without examining the facts and getting proper authorization.

I heard partisan remarks earlier in this regard, and that is unfortunate.

An hon. member: On which side?

Hon. Jean Lapierre: They came from the Conservatives mostly. This is unfortunate, because this issue is too difficult for anybody to try to score political points. Nobody wants to earn votes today on the basis of human suffering and illnesses. I cannot believe any member in the House would wish to score political points by taking advantage of a victim's misery. It would be utterly irresponsible.

That is why when I hear these members now wanting to change the rules that were agreed on, I think that we have to live with them. It does not prevent us from seeking possible formulas to extend the scope of the program. However, this will be in June 2005. It is not very far from now. I am sure that, if there is a way to find other measures, the Minister of Health will do so, because his heart is as big as anyone's here. However, we cannot do so to the detriment of an agreement governed by the court.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Some people are getting excited. The reality is such that we must have a calm debate on this subject, and I am sure that victims demand more.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Indeed, they demand more than the yelling from members. Victims who are watching us today know that a process was validated by the court, that there is a process. Moreover, we are talking about June 2005. I know that no one acted in bad faith on this file.

Today, it is good to have this debate, it is good to reflect on the lot of those who are not included in the program. However, we must not do so to the detriment of those who are included. In this sense, the Minister of Health is acting responsibly. Of course, we will be able as early as June 2005—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, there are people here who are excited. This is incredible. I do not know what kind of caucus meeting they had in the Conservative Party today. I do not know if they are quarrelling, but they are all wired. We are here to have a candid debate, a serious debate, with a real concern for victims of this terrible disease.

We want to have this debate, and we are pleased that some members, like the member for Hochelaga and others, want to make the government and the public aware of the lot of those who were not included in the program.

I am happy to take part into this debate, and I am convinced that other members will have a lot to add to it. Once the Minister of Health has ascertained what the actual surpluses are, so as not to penalize anybody, I hope we will be able to put forward a more generous and broader program. This is my hope. In an ideal world, that is what everybody is hoping for.

Today's debate is an opportunity for us to do just that. I know the minister has already made a few comments on the matter, and other colleagues will want to take part in the debate too.

•(1615)

However, I did not like the attitude of the member who spoke before me claiming that some in the House have more moral fibre than others. I believe everyone wants to do their best in this debate. We will participate in a constructive way, keeping in mind all those who are affected. The debate might help raise awareness and remind us that we have a deadline, June 2005. It is fast approaching. The fund administrator will report to us at that time.

We cannot just raid the fund. It would be totally irresponsible. I am quite sure that no member would want us to do that either. The fund is no longer in the government's hands; it is in the hands of independent trustees appointed by the court. I know that many members across the way do not hold the legal process in high esteem. We see it every day during question period from the way they refuse to accept justice Gomery's independence. But that is another debate, and we should not hold it at the victims' expense. It is not part of their tradition. Let us go back to the heart of the debate, which is not at all partisan.

I know that hundreds of victims are following today's debate and are wondering what the government intends to do. Our duty is to tell the truth, to explain the situation as it is and to go over the substance of the agreements. Based on all of that, the health minister will do everything he can to offer more. We will find out what the surplus is and how much money is available. We will surely wait for direction on how to reallocate the surplus.

Just like my hon. colleagues, I am pleased not only to reflect on that program, but also to listen to the non-partisan comments made by all the members. It shows that we are concerned about those who are not covered under the program, while acting responsibly toward those who were unfortunately eligible, since no one would wish to have to make a claim under such a program. We would not wish that on anyone. We have to face the facts and live with the commitments we made to the victims.

It is a responsible approach that will hopefully allow us to grow. In this regard, I rely on the magnanimity of both the health minister

and the finance minister so we may continue this discussion and provide assistance to those who deserve it.

•(1620)

[*English*]

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is very clever in his use of words. I guess that is the basis of my argument.

Only Liberals could applaud a statement like that. I said he was clever in his use of words and his use of language. The truth of the matter is the file has always been in the hands of the government. The government is the one that set the parameters of the program when it set up an artificial date to compensate victims from 1986-1990. That was deliberate on the part of the government.

The government chose to pick those dates and when it did that, it flew in the face of Justice Krever who said that all victims, regardless of when they contracted hepatitis C, should be compensated. The government knew that the \$1.2 billion it set aside would never be used. In fact the legal, actuarial and administration fees have outstripped payment to the victims. Only a Liberal could agree to a program like that.

We are talking about fairness to all victims. For the minister to stand in his place and say that it is no longer in the hands of the government, it never left the hands of the government. It is in the driver's seat. That is why it was elected to form the government. Canadians had some level of confidence that it would do the right thing, but it has failed on this test time and again.

The minister was not in the House. He preceded you and I, Mr. Speaker. He took a little vacation and came back. He missed the intensity of the debate in the House in 1998, when the government had a chance to do the right thing. We brought in a motion to do exactly that, to compensate all victims. Guess what happened? The Liberal government, of which he is now a part, voted down compensation for all victims.

You will remember, Mr. Speaker, because you have a great memory for this place and I give you full credit. I always enjoy it when you are in the chair because you take such an interest in debates like this. The history of this place will show that Liberal members stood in their places and voted against that compensation package with tears in their eyes. That is correct. In fact the Minister of Public Safety today is one of those members who stood in her place and was forced by the Prime Minister of Canada to vote down a compensation package for all victims. What does that tell us about the sincerity of the government to do the right thing?

Routine Proceedings

Why does it not put its good will to the test. Why does it not come back to the House and have that same vote. Last night we had a take note debate. Where else in Canada would one have a take note debate? We come in and politely discussed something. However, all Liberal members should get up and be forced to vote on this issue, whether they agree to compensate all the victims or continue to carry on the way they have.

To add insult to injury there is almost as much money in the fund today as there was the day that the funding was announced. There is a reason for that. I remember Allan Rock at the time stood in his place and said that the government could not compensate them all simply because there were too many and that the government did not have the money to do it. That was his argument.

There are fewer victims than the government imagined there were at the time. On this side of the House, we were telling the government there were way fewer victims and that the money it had put aside would compensate all the victims. It chose not to compensate all victims.

• (1625)

I guess the question is why did the government do it, knowing full well there was more money in the fund to do it then? There is still the same amount of money in the fund. Why not compensate all the victims? This issue is still in the hands of the government. Why does the government not bring this to a vote in the House of Commons and have members stand in their place and make a decision, yes or no, to compensate all victims?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member has raised a good point about everyone wanting to compensate as many victims as possible, and the necessity to look at the amount available in the fund. As at March 31, 2004, there was in fact \$865 million. In June the courts will be able to determine the amount of surplus, as is set out in the documents at this time.

When considering that \$865 million that remains, the obligations relating to the 9,424 claims have to be kept in mind. This process is evolving. So we could not, responsibly, go into that \$865 million, because there are commitments to victims for the period from January 1, 1986 to September 1, 1990.

In June 2005, the court, with the assistance of specialists in the field, can determine the real amount of the surplus and the way it can be allocated. That is the time a decision could be reached.

But to assume today that there is \$865 million in the fund that can be used in its entirety for other victims is to neglect the moral and legal obligation to those already included. What will be needed is outside expertise.

I understand the hon. member's wanting to be generous. We all would like to be. A procedure was adopted at the time, however, and was recognized by the court. Consequently we will be in a position in June 2005 to know the real amount of the surplus and what is to be done with it. At that time I think there may be a way to expand the scope of the settlement.

We shall see if this is a genuine surplus, taking into account the commitments to the 9,424 claimants to date. Will there be others

between now and June 2005? We are told they have until 2010 to make a claim, and after that we shall see.

To conclude that the government can unilaterally move in on this fund at this time and turn its back on the commitments made to the others would be irresponsible and a breach of contractual obligations and of what the court has determined. I am sure that hon. members are not asking us today to go back on our word to the victims that are covered under the program.

We cannot do this to the detriment of those victims. I know everyone has good intentions and we all want to help. Seeing this \$865 million surplus in the account is heartbreaking, especially when we know that people suffering from hepatitis C could use it. We agree. That is why the Minister of Health has promised to do everything he can, while keeping our word and our obligations.

I trust the court and the administrator. I think these funds were spent prudently and have met the needs of those who have already filed their claims.

I am glad there were not more victims during that period. At the time, the Minister of Health thought there were many more. That is why such a big fund was set up. His advisors told him that the potential number of victims was much higher. We should be glad today that there were far fewer than predicted. That is good news.

At the time, scientific knowledge was not as great. It was thought there would be many more victims and therefore a significant amount of money was allocated. The cut-off date is June 2005; we can decide then what to do with the surplus.

All the hon. members in this House would like this money to be used by the victims. If the numbers are lower than predicted, we should be happy. If there is a way to do better and use these funds for the victims infected outside the recognized dates, let us hope the surplus will help. We all want that.

• (1630)

The Speaker: 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 Trois-Rivières, Violence Against Women; the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, Softwood Lumber; the hon. member for St. John's-South—Mount Pearl, Natural Resources.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on the intervention of the member for Outremont, who seemed to think he was in front of a television camera. I must say that he was eloquent. This is obviously because of his past.

First, I would like to remind the House of a number of facts. In the 1980s, two viruses contaminated blood supplies: the HIV virus and the hepatitis C virus. It is important to remember that, as a result, 10,000 people in Canada contracted hepatitis C, some 1,000 contracted the HIV virus, and half of these people died.

Routine Proceedings

Our colleague and health critic for the Conservative Party of Canada was quite right to remind the House that parliamentarians sitting on the Standing Committee on Health were very well advised to ask for a review of this file.

This is the thrust of the motion today. We are asking that the unanimous report of all parliamentarians who sit on the Standing Committee on Health be adopted and not only that this report be adopted unanimously, but that it be votable.

I must say, however, that I do not agree with the hon. member for Outremont when he suggests that we can completely disregard history. I am sure that the hon. members who were in this House in 1998 will remember John Nunziata, an active member of the so-called rat pack, and he was not alone. There was the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, who went overboard at that time. It was not easy to deal with the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. We even recall rat pack t-shirts up for sale.

That having been said, we understand that this is a non-partisan issue. There is no doubt about that. But the Liberals cannot be changed. It is just not possible that this government decided to turn its back on one of the most humanitarian things that could have been done under the circumstances, that is, not to discriminate on the basis of chronology.

The Canadian Hemophilia Society told the government that 20,000 people was way too much in terms of traceback. We know that, as far as the traceback efforts to identify those who received blood transfusions was concerned, the figures were inflated. Minister Allan Rock even commented at the time that expanding the compensation program would bankrupt the health system.

Sadly, we must remember that the Liberals lacked compassion during the period in question. We are seeking today historic reparation, and this is an opportunity for all parliamentarians in this House. The issue may not be a partisan one, but do not expect us to act as if those infected before 1986 and after 1990 had already been included in the deal back in 1998, because that it not true.

I would like the hon. member for Outremont not to forget that, among the determinants of health, there is the noise caused by railroads. I hope that, as parliamentarians, we will be able to pass legislation before Christmas to give the Transportation Agency more power to ensure that hepatitis C victims can enjoy some peace and quiet, because right now there is also an issue of quality of life, and noise plays a role in that.

Now, with respect to the trust fund of \$1.1 billion—that is a considerable sum of money—it is true there is an element of visibility in here for the government. Yet, of this \$1.1 billion, \$800 million has still not been used.

I really hope that the government will act very quickly, and this is the thrust of the report that was unanimously adopted by the Standing Committee on Health. We are asking for a two step commitment. We want the Minister of Health to consult with the cabinet before Christmas and to say publicly, because he will have consulted with cabinet and Treasury Board before Christmas, “Yes, in principle, at the cabinet table, we have voted for the extension of the compensation program”.

●(1635)

Then we will come to terms with the various imperatives. If the court does not allow us to act before June of 2005, we will understand that. Members will recall that these questions were decided by the courts at the request of Justice Horace Krever, from the Ontario Court of Appeal.

What we would like to see now is a clear commitment from the executive, from cabinet. This is what our very reasonable report is all about.

Second, we have to think of this. Why did the tainted blood scandal happened in the 1980s and 1990s? It happened because there was no control over the blood supply system. The situation was the following. The government relied on the Red Cross and its reputation. The idea was that the Red Cross having such a good reputation worldwide, it was not necessary to have a regulatory control. This should get us thinking about what happens when the public authorities are not taking their responsibilities properly.

It was only in 1989 that the House of Commons amended the schedule to the Food and Drugs Act, giving us a minimum of control over blood products. Before 1989, there was no control whatsoever by any public authority.

Of course, we cannot rewrite history. We understand that the Red Cross had a great reputation and credibility at that time. However, this should get us thinking about what it means to abdicate one's responsibilities.

I have no doubt that all members in this House want to extend compensation. I have no doubt about that. We cannot ignore the fact that, historically, the government has not been as sensitive toward the people who were infected. That being said, it has the opportunity to correct a wrong. It is true that, yesterday, I commended the health minister for his speech. During question period, in response to a question that I asked him, the minister said that the member for Hochelaga had recognized that the government was prepared to take the right action. I am willing to say that, if the government recognizes that compensation must be expanded, all Bloc Québécois members will certainly be very pleased with this decision. That is not a problem. However, we will congratulate it in the name of this transcendence, this broad thinking and this generosity of soul, since this is the attitude that must be taken in a file such as this.

However, it would have been advisable for the cabinet to address the issue much more quickly. How is it that we are not seeing a much clearer commitment from the Minister of Health?

That being said, let us work for the future and hope that, before the adjournment in December, such a commitment can be made. I know that all parliamentarians will work on this.

When we held this historic vote in 1998, the compensation plan was comprised of six categories. In the first one, as soon as antibodies were detected in the blood, one would receive \$10,000. Depending on the seriousness of the case, one could receive cumulative compensation of up to \$250,000. We will also recall that the government added, in conjunction with the provinces, an amount of \$300 million to provide care for people who were infected during the period between 1986 and 1990.

Routine Proceedings

Consequently, this is an issue of public health, compassion and responsibilities.

● (1640)

As parliamentarians we have simply delayed too long in putting this matter behind us.

The impatience comes, we must admit, from the fact that everything was documented. Justice Horace Krever was a judge of the Ontario Court of Appeal, the highest court in Ontario. He had chaired a commission of inquiry into access to confidential medical documents in Ontario. He documented the abuses and prejudices that victims had suffered and what a responsible compensation scheme should look like.

Justice Krever chaired a royal commission whose terms were discussed in cabinet. We know that a royal commission must be authorized by the Privy Council. We cannot say that it was not serious or not binding. In 1995 the commission tabled its report.

We will remember that Justice Krever earned his reputation. In fact, some intervenors, among them the former minister Pierre-Marc Johnson, the Red Cross and Thérèse Lavoie-Roux went to the Federal Court seeking to mark out the powers of the inquiry.

As we remember, the Federal Court decision was that the Krever Commission could not find people criminally guilty for their actions, but that it could make recommendations. This Federal Court jurisprudence means that, today, the powers of royal commissions are limited in this area and it has left vestiges in the arguments surrounding the Gomery commission at present.

I repeat, it is a question of compassion, humanitarianism and responsibility.

Last Friday, I spent the morning in Montreal, on the avenue du Président-Kennedy, named for the Democratic president assassinated so unfortunately in Dallas, in November 1963. I had the pleasure of meeting with representatives of the Canadian Hemophilia Society and spent the morning with them. They are volunteers. The Canadian Hemophilia Society was founded in 1953 and devotes a research budget of half a million dollars to finding out a way to get answers, through R&D, to all the illness involving the blood coagulation factor.

In the early 1990s, the Canadian Hemophilia Society was visionary because it told the government that its predictions were exaggerated and that there was no logic in making two classes of citizens. All of these victims were affected equally by their unfortunate circumstances.

A person who goes to the hospital emergency department and ends up being given blood products is not being treated carelessly or cavalierly. One expects public health authorities to control the supply, circulation and distribution of blood and blood products.

It will be 10 years ago next week that the Krever Commission started up, under Justice Horace Krever. Hon. members need to realize what it means to live with Hepatitis C. There are varying degrees, of course; not everyone is affected in the same way. But we need to keep in mind what it means in terms of resistance, fragility and worries surrounding the most ordinary of daily acts.

The volunteers of the Canadian Hemophilia Society are very courageous to get involved as they have. I have had a chance to talk about this with François Laroche, who comes like me from the Quebec City area, from Beauport.

● (1645)

They have always remained hopeful that the government might eventually review its decision. I hope that this will come to pass. I am confident that the Minister of Health, a former NDPer from British Columbia, will waste no time getting a brief to cabinet so that we may have something solid to go on.

I was happy yesterday to hear the Minister of Health refer to his determination. Since the Krever Commission, there have been five different health ministers. They could have settled this, and it would all be behind us. I know we can be assured that, by Christmas, cabinet will have been informed and the Minister of Health, with the support of everyone in this House, will be rising from his place to commit the entire government to this undertaking. When the Minister of Health rises from his seat to announce that the cabinet has adopted a resolution to allow compensation to be expanded to include victims from before January 1986 and after June 1990, I know that all hon. members will feel that our actions over the years have had results.

I can assure you that all Bloc Québécois members want to act in a non-partisan way on this issue. However, our desire to act in a non-partisan way will not make us forget history. We will not revive actions and policies that should not be revived. We would now like to remind the House again that this is a matter that warrants the full attention of all parliamentarians.

I will conclude by talking for a few minutes about the compensation of the HIV victims. You will recall that a federal-provincial-territorial agreement had been reached. They were talking about 300 people, which was not a lot. These people were given \$30,000 lump sum, providing they agreed not to sue the government. It is still rather sad to see that these people are getting benefits, which to this day have not indexed. They have been getting the same benefits for close to ten years now. We all understand the effect of inflation and can appreciate that these people's purchasing power has shrunk significantly.

This is less widely known than the tainted blood and compensation issues. However, it requires our attention as well. When I met with Mr. Laroche, Mr. John Plater and Mrs. Ostrowski last Friday, I was told that there was some catching up to do in this area.

In short, we hope that the government will roll up its sleeves and announce a public commitment by Christmas. We will of course respect the prerogatives of the court. If the deadline of June 2005 is the one to be respected, so be it. However, we would feel much more comfortable if the executive were to make a much stronger commitment than what is being made now.

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•(1650)

Hon. Robert Thibault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a few comments and then I will have a question for the hon. member.

He has been talking about a non partisan approach. I am in total agreement with him, but we should pick our words carefully for fear of going a bit astray and becoming partisan.

For example, we could consider setting up a trust, and we could have a unanimous motion in committee, with the support of the Liberals, the socialists, the separatists, and the opportunists. This motion would be to the effect that, with an eventual surplus in the fund, we could compensate more people and get into the question of who can receive compensation. We all agree on this. We want people infected before 1986 and after 1990 to receive compensation. That is what we all want.

But we cannot do as we wish, and the hands of the Minister of Health are tied. He explained that to the House last night. The transport minister gave the same explanation today. Funds in the trust do not belong to the Government of Canada or to Canadian citizens.

The minister or the Privy Council cannot access these funds on their own. They must follow the rules of the trust, as established by three courts of law, namely the Court of Quebec, the Court of British Columbia and the Court of Ontario.

There is a trustee, people who act on behalf of those who are receiving this compensation. So, we set up a trust, which acts on their behalf and which makes the investments that generate the funds. Consultants will tell us in June—it will come sooner than we think—what the surplus is. We believe there is a surplus, we all agree on that. But what is the real actuarial surplus? We must take into consideration people who may still be eligible for these funds, people whose needs will increase in the future, people who may collect compensation for another 70 years. So, what is the surplus after all these things have been taken into consideration?

It could be \$400 million or \$500 million. I do not know and we are waiting for the answer. Then, we will have to work with the claimants, the trustees, the courts and the provincial governments to make recommendations on how to use that surplus.

I think the minister's wish has been clearly understood. We definitely know what he wants from all the members of the Standing Committee on Health, in a non-partisan context. But I do not think we really want to use expressions such as “before Christmas”, “earlier” or “immediately”, in reference to the implementation of the changes. We want to do it at the earliest opportunity. If that means we have to follow the procedures and if that takes us to the month of June, so be it.

I am asking the hon. member what he thinks of the other assistance and compensation that were provided. Because let us not forget that assistance was provided to victims. Work was done with the provinces, in research and development, and also with the Canadian Hemophilia Society. The trust is working with them, since they are receiving funds from these \$525 million, funds that are used to help these victims.

Mr. Réal Ménard: Madam Speaker, I invite the parliamentary secretary to be very careful, because I cannot detect any hint of partisanship in my remarks. Moreover, I am afraid the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health has a vivid imagination. I invite him to recognize the value of what I am saying. I believe all the members of the Bloc Québécois in this House work in a non-partisan way.

Like the parliamentary secretary, I recognize that when courts hand down their decisions, there is something restrictive about them. I understand the meaning of the word “trust” very well. However, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health must agree with me that when the review of the actuarial surplus is complete, arguments can be made to enlarge it. That is what we are talking about.

In any case, before going to court, the cabinet must make itself clear on this issue. I am simply asking that a commitment be made to do this before Christmas.

June as a deadline is feasible, but for the victims, every day and every week count. For them, June is the middle term, not the short term.

I agree with the secretary that the health minister is acting in good faith, is eager to solve the problem and wants to be known as the minister who extended the compensation. I trust him.

Nevertheless, the health minister needs to understand that our quest for justice has made us very cautious, since the government has never acted before. Everything is in place for the government to act. I trust the minister, but do not ask me, as a Bloc member, to abdicate my responsibility. We will put pressure on the government. We will act intelligently, courteously and according to parliamentary rules. Yes, we will exert pressure, because we know that, in politics, you have to see it to believe it, and so far we have not seen anything.

Now, good faith is presumed, and bad faith should be proven. Yesterday, the health minister said “Trust me”. That is what we are going to do, but we hope that there will be a clear commitment, not that we want to push him. I am very much aware that the minister is to be “handled with care”. However, we will exert whatever pressure is needed to get results.

•(1655)

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first I would make a comment and then I would like to ask a question of my colleague. I would like to congratulate the member for Hochelaga for his humanist, humanitarian and humane position and for his compassion toward the victims.

This is how he always speaks, whether in meetings, in caucus or elsewhere. Indeed, it is always the same discourse, unlike that of the member for Outremont, who thought that he was in front of a camera. His was a legalistic discourse, short on humanity.

It is important to recall the position of the member for Hochelaga, who has always maintained that the federal government had responsibilities, could pay and still had control over the file.

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My question for him is this: is the stubborn and legalistic position of the minister that there is an agreement, that we cannot move before 2005 and that we cannot do anything, not an obstacle to solving this issue?

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his kind words. He has caught me a bit off guard. I was not expecting such praise. I sometimes think it should come from both sides of the House but public life being what it is, my expectations are not too high.

That said, more seriously, I think that the Bloc members understand that we are seeing a minister who wants to take some action. We are hopeful that he will act. Not only do we wish him good luck, but we are ready to recognize that the minister is new to this House and that he is entitled to a honeymoon period when he needs our trust in him, and he has that.

It is true that when funds are in a trust, there are a certain number of legal constraints. Obviously, we want the government to press its case once the actuarial review provided for in the agreement between the trustees and Crawford Adjusters is complete. Moreover, I am convinced that all members of this House will do the right thing and that this minister wants to go down in history as the person who found a solution to all this.

• (1700)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quite right. The minister has received a lot of compliments from colleagues on all sides of the House on his open-mindedness to this very important question that the health committee has brought before us.

The report from the committee urges the government to extend the compensation outside of the window. Under the agreement, which the member talked about and which I know he is familiar with, my understanding is that with regard to the disposition of any surplus the agreement presently provides for four potential uses: reinvesting the money; returning it to contributors, including the Government of Canada; increasing payments to existing beneficiaries; or spending the money on activities that would benefit the beneficiaries, for example, research.

The agreement in fact is not silent on the disposition of surplus, but extending the window does not seem to be one of these items, although I think through the utilization of one of the other ones we may be able to still do that. I know the minister will have to consider that.

Does the hon. member know whether the health committee considered the current provisions of the hep C agreement, whether it had any position or concern about the fact that the determination of surplus was not scheduled until 2005 and whether there was any mechanism by which a determination of surplus could be accelerated?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, first, the members did examine the agreement, of course, because they are professionals. Second, I understand that, in court, prosecutors will be able to make arguments like the ones we have been discussing for the past two hours.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 28 the Standing Committee on Health submitted a report to the House, which reads as follows:

That this Committee...urge the government to extend compensation to all those who contracted Hepatitis C from tainted blood; further that the managers of the fund, the Hemophilia Society and other relevant witnesses be invited to meet with the Committee on this subject;—

Today there is a motion to concur in this report. It is very timely in view of the fact that last evening there was a take note debate on this important matter.

I had an opportunity to follow the debate and I reviewed some of the debates of the members. I was quite taken by the extent of the support for the statements by the hon. Minister of Health on this matter. I want to put on the record what the minister said because I think it is important that members be reminded of the attitude and the position that he has taken. On Tuesday, November 2 in the take note debate he said:

For as long as I have been in public life it has been my view that we the elected legislators do our job best and Canadians are best served when we reason together constructively and respectfully. This is even more so when an issue is tough, when it evokes strong passions and when, as in the case of the suffering of victims who have been infected with hepatitis C through the blood system, it appeals on so many levels to that basic human compassion and decency which I know motivates all members in the House.

That is a very important characterization of the position that the minister has taken, not only in that debate, but in the work he has done since taking on his responsibilities.

I was here during this period in which we dealt with the hep C issue. I remember the emotion. Quite frankly, we have seen it today. Members, and even new members, have been moved to plead for some compassion, to have a conscience, to deal with the health and well-being of Canadians. That is our job.

I understand the passion, and it is important to recognize that members feel very strongly that this may be the right thing to do, but the important thing is that we take all appropriate steps to examine the options and to do whatever can be done.

One of the members in the debate, and even again today, made the allegation that the Government of Canada knew the blood was tainted and yet took no steps whatsoever and that the government apparently knew about the surplus and did nothing over all these years.

That is really not the case. The members will know that as a consequence of the consideration of the House of Commons at that time, a settlement agreement was agreed upon. It laid out some fairly explicit terms and conditions under which the fund would be operated.

With regard to the operation of the fund, the minister laid it out quite nicely last night when he said that the government was not in control of the funds. The government is in an arm's length relationship under a trustee and the fund is operating in accordance with the agreement.

Routine Proceedings

It does mean though, and as I indicated in the question to the previous speaker, that the agreement has some provisions in it which address the possibility of the existence of a surplus and the possible disposition of any surplus.

Members know that potential claimants under the prescribed window can make claims against this fund for another seven decades. The amount of the benefit that might be payable depends upon the nature and condition of their particular consequences as a result of hep C.

• (1705)

Given those facts, it is very difficult to estimate what might be the claims over the next 70 years. It might be a little difficult to determine what other things might happen. In terms of the \$1.118 billion available in the fund, members know that not all of that has been used. However it is clear that any determination of a surplus has to anticipate claims over the next 70 years.

The beneficiaries prescribed and defined under this agreement are clear. It is a window. That was a very difficult decision to make. Members can refer back to the emotional debates in the House and to the questions in question period as the members considered this. Points were made with regard to what the starting point had to be with regard to the window.

Is there a surplus? Well, the trustee of the fund will at least be making an attempt to determine whether an actuarial surplus is projected by June 2005. That may then bring into play the discussion about whether there is any opportunity to do something else.

As I have indicated in my previous question, the original agreement contemplates four potential uses of the surplus: reinvesting the money in the fund; returning it to the contributors, including the Government of Canada; increasing payments to the existing beneficiaries; or spending the money on activities that would benefit the beneficiaries as defined, for example, on research.

To the extent that the agreement currently would permit any surplus money, under certain circumstances, if it were actuarially determined, then the moneys could theoretically go back to the Government of Canada. Then, of course, the agreement would not cover those funds any longer and the government may very well be in a position to make a further initiative with regard to hep C victims outside the window. That is something that would have to follow a process.

I asked the member for Hochelaga, since he is on the health committee, whether he was aware of any provision under the agreement where the date the actuarial determination of a surplus at June 2005 might be accelerated. I think that is a very good question. I do not know. I am sure that people are looking at that now.

I suspect, having read the debates and followed and watched some of the debates last evening, it would be the consensus of this place that we take every reasonable opportunity to assess the options and do whatever we can. I think that is reflective of the hon. minister's statements to the House. He came here in good faith. He listened to the debate. Members were very generous in their praise for the minister in that he was so open-minded on this. The minister, in this regard, has been very clear. All members should be very pleased that we are able to deal in that environment.

This is not a matter of who has more conscience, nor is it a matter of who wanted to do something and who did not want to do something.

As members can see, there is not only the settlement agreement, there is also a pre-1986 and post-1990 care package, an undertaking initiative and the hep C prevention, support and research program, all of which came out of the work that members did back at that time.

The members who raised this in the health committee, which represents members from all parties, have taken the opportunity to bring this matter to the House with their unanimous recommendation that we look at this. For that reason, it is important that we carry on this debate. The fact that we are having this debate again today after a full take note debate yesterday is reflective of the care and concern that all hon. members share in this regard.

There is some question as to why some people were left out. I guess the question would be: What was the thinking behind that decision not to extend compensation outside the 1986 to 1990 period?

• (1710)

Having looked at some of the details and the data, I have learned that in 1986 most blood banks in the United States implemented surrogate testing to screen blood for non-A and non-B hepatitis. Canada did not implement surrogate tests. Canada implemented direct tests when they became available in 1990.

The federal government, the provinces and territories took the position not to compensate persons infected with hepatitis C through the blood system before 1986 or after July 1, 1990 because the Canadian blood system was deemed to be technically as safe as possible. Instead, the federal government agreed to transfer \$300 million over 20 years to assist the provinces and territories with hepatitis C health care services. That is concisely the underlying thinking about why people in Canada who contracted hep C and HIV through our blood system during the period outside of 1986-1990 were not included in this package.

I am not sure whether or not it is useful for us to debate some of the logic about what happened back then knowing that since then the Red Cross has had a role change. We now have Canadian Blood Services. I am not sure whether or not it is going to help us to debate whether or not surrogate tests, had they been adopted in Canada, would have been a reliable way to determine whether or not there were problems with the blood products that were available.

I am not sure if there are legal questions here about whether or not any cases are pending or someone is suing the government because during the period outside of the window where compensation or benefits were available there was a basis for a legal proceeding. I am not aware of any. Legal advice has said that under the circumstances, because there were no tools to definitely determine what the problems were at the time, there was no basis for doing more than we had done notwithstanding the fact that the United States had been looking at surrogate testing.

Routine Proceedings

People have been talking about a surplus and I can only suggest they are speculating at what might be available. Of the \$875 million deposited by the Government of Canada, payments of approximately \$387 million have been made to about 9,500 approved claims. The fund still contained \$865 million as of March 31, 2004. The 9,424 claims breaks down to 4,452 approved claims for people infected through the blood system, 46 claims by persons secondarily affected by a spouse or prenatal exposure, and 4,926 claims by family members for loss of support.

It must be recognized that payments out of the fund may continue, as I indicated, as much as 70 years either to new claimants who have until 2010 to apply or for continuing payments to those who have already qualified. Claimants could be making claims for additional compensation as their disease progresses because there are different levels of benefits available.

Hon. members would agree that there is some question about what the extent of the surplus will be, if any, after an actuarial determination. These things take time. It is not within the hands of the government at this time but within the hands of a third party pursuant to an agreement to which the federal and provincial governments are party. Work will be done to determine what options may be available.

To the extent that any benefits would be extended for any other purpose and outside of the window, how do we determine the benefits that might be payable or the aggregate value of the claims? This has to be determined. How does the aggregate value of those claims relate to whatever the surplus might or might not be?

• (1715)

In that case, it is probably an important question for the health committee to consider. The health committee had passed a motion that the managers of the fund, the Canadian Hemophilia Society, and other relevant witnesses be invited to meet with the committee on the subject and that a report be tabled in the House, if necessary. I think it is going to be necessary.

It is extremely important that the health committee continue its work on this important question, that it does apprise itself of all the relevant details pursuant to the settlement agreement, that it deal with the facts to the extent that they are known with regard to those outside the window, and that it talk to the other stakeholders, whether it be the Canadian Hemophilia Society, Canadian Blood Services and any other relevant witnesses so that parliamentarians are fully aware. I know that members will look forward to receiving such a report from the Standing Committee on Health.

I want to close my comments by thanking all hon. members for their thoughtful input into this process. This is one of those subjects which I believe transcends partisanship. I think that there is a strong consensus in the House to seek whatever options may be available and to deal with them. I am hopeful that with the continued work of the Standing Committee on Health, with the work that the minister will be doing and has already started to do, that this question will not be moot in this place, but indeed parliamentarians will be able to work toward the right solution for an important issue.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to say to my friend on the other side of the House that the difficulty with everything he has spoken about is the

timeframe. I have people in my constituency who have contacted me over a period not of days, weeks or months, but years. It has been years that I have had the privilege of representing them in this Chamber. People have been living in pain and discomfort, and many of them have been in virtual agony for years. It is not only them but their families too. What they hear from the member is more talk and more study.

I understand the concept of this government or any government having a responsibility to the taxpayers of Canada to ensure that the funds are properly disbursed, to ensure that they are responsible with the funds entrusted to them by the taxpayers of Canada. I have no difficulty with that as a concept. I would expect that of a government.

However, as I hear him talk and talk, and I see the continued inaction on the part of the Liberals, I say shame on them. This is not a partisan issue. To that extent I agree with it. However, it is the Liberal government that made this decision in past Parliaments. It is the Liberal government that has made the decision to continue to drag this out. Surely, if we have had this period of time, there is enough information for it to have an idea of what is going on.

There is an additional problem. Even when the funds do get into the system, the distribution is also completely gummed up. We are talking about the lives of Canadians that must be enriched and enhanced. I do not understand how the government can continue to talk and talk.

I do not know what answer this member can give me, but I would like to know, is there some kind of a deadline to this talk? Is there some point at which the people who have been suffering and who have been inflicted by hepatitis C are finally going to be able to purchase the resources they require? Are the funds ever going to get to them, or God forbid, are they going to be dead before the funds get to them?

• (1720)

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, I understand where the member is coming from. I believe he is referring to hep C victims who are within the window that is covered and outside the window. There is no question about it. I think the minister made it very clear. His attitude toward this is concerned with the health and well-being of all Canadians regardless of any dates. He has made that commitment.

It is not a matter of somehow flipping a switch and making something happen. We have an agreement. We have an administrator who is the one who receives applications for benefits and in fact has sent letters of rejection to some people. It is in the hands of a third party.

To the extent possible, we have to find out what are the provisions of the agreement that perhaps can be reopened and how can that be done in a way which does not jeopardize the benefits to settle the claims with regard to the beneficiaries as defined, and to determine what surplus there might be and the extent to which any benefits might be extended to others.

It takes some time to do that. It is not just simply, let us do it. We have to do it properly to ensure that we do it right and that it gets to the hands of all Canadians who need it.

Routine Proceedings

I think that is the will of the minister. I think that is the will of all hon. members of the House. I understand the member's concern. I am not going to debate with him whether or not there are people who need the help. That is a given. We accept that. This is not a matter of sensitivity or conscience. It is a matter of parliamentarians doing the right thing.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to the report of Standing Committee on Health just tabled. I want to start by reading the precursor to report because it is important:

That this Committee, in recognition of the recommendation of the Krever Inquiry and the large surplus in the federal Hepatitis C compensation fund, urge the government to extend compensation to all those who contracted Hepatitis C from tainted blood.

It goes on to recommend that further witnesses be called.

We have to look at the facts. The system that has been set up has not worked for the victims, and that is the reality. It is now 2004. If someone were a victim of what happened in 1986, that person may not have had justice. The problem the opposition has right now is the way in which the government has handled the legislation, the process and where we are at right now. We sense urgency required for the victims.

It is important to quote from the Krever report, which states, "The compassion of a society can be judged by the measures it takes to reduce the impact of tragedy on its members". It does not matter what party members were in at the time of the debate or what party they are with now. Can we as elected officials say that we have met that standard? I think all of us have failed. We have to push forward fair compensation and ensure that those victims get justice.

A previous cabinet minister, who spoke earlier today, said that we would all like to be generous. It is not about that. This is about justice. There is a difference in those two things. That is what gives the discomfort about this file.

The government is still on the issue of generosity. People have been victimized because the process of which we have custody over has not protected them. And it is not about blame. It is about correcting an error. It is not generosity will help those individuals. I guess I have some difficulty with the current file and the way it is done.

I forgot to mention, Madam Speaker, that my colleague from Winnipeg North. I am splitting my time with her.

I spent about five years of my life working on the AIDS committee of Windsor and Essex County. I worked for individuals who had contracted AIDS, or HIV or hepatitis C. There was a difference in the quality of life of those individuals who had family supports and those that had none. Some had economic support and some had nothing at all. It was not just about the individual and how they would deal with situations, whether it be at work, or in society, or in their social life or as the conditions affected them. It also related to their communities.

I would like to start with that by mentioning an individual who was mentioned in previous discussions of the House of Commons. Her name is Susan. We need to talk about the people who are affected by this. Once again, it is about justice, not generosity.

Susan's husband suffered a heart attack and a stroke. He had a blood transfusion. He recovered completely from the stroke, but contracted hepatitis C from the blood. He was a sports coach for children, a strong athletic man, but now he is constantly ill. He is pacing himself to work to support his family as long as he can despite being seriously ill, as he has no other financial option. That affected everybody. It affected him as an individual, as a father and as a sports coach in the community. It is not about generosity to restore and try to provide some assistance; it is about justice.

We need to look at some of the issues of why we need to advance assisting the victims. There are lots of good reasons. The first reason would be medically sound. It is obvious that people can care for themselves if they have some compensation that will provide them the medicines as well as the treatment necessary to deal with their condition. That is a big benefit for those individuals and the people around them. It is legally compelling. At a certain point in time, as Justice Krever mentioned, "The compassion of a society can be judged by the measure it takes to reduce the impact of tragedy that is on its members".

We went through a process where the victims had to sue for compensation. They had to go through an arduous process to ensure that they would receive the support. At the same time, we went through a process, and we had recommendations that were ignored. Coming out of that, we have some of the things about which the government was warned. We have legislation that puts us where we are today nearly 20 years after some people were affected, necessitated largely by federal regulatory failure.

● (1725)

We knew our blood was vulnerable after we did the investigations and after we learned of incidents such as using blood from U.S. prisoners to treat patients in our system. We know we did not have the proper things in place. We then set out measures since then to correct that. That has literally brought down institutions, like the Red Cross. These are strong institutions that had good historical pasts. They had model boards of directors and were involved in the community. They were very much affected by this, and we still did not have the proper processing for this.

Sound finances is another reason we should do this. We know approximately \$80 million is available. We know we still need to compensate the people properly. At the same time, we have heard time and again from the government since 1995 that it does not have the money to do a number of things, However, year after year it comes in with surpluses.

Often we talk about compensation measures that go directly back to communities and to individuals. There is a direct benefit there. The government has pleaded poverty on a number of different occasions and because of that it has been unable to afford to do the right thing. It would like to but it cannot because the cupboards are bare. We know that is not true. We know we will have greater funds again.

It was also brought up at one point that this would be a threat to our medicare funding and that it would set a precedent. I argue this is a very unique situation that does not create a threat to our medical system. Canadians want us to do the right thing. They do not want us to delay any further.

Routine Proceedings

It is very generous in terms of the comments the Minister of Health has received and as well in some of his statements. What Canadians are really concerned about is whether this will be another smokescreen for delay. We would all like to trust the process and the system, hear the witnesses and have the delegations come forward. However, how long will it take and at the end of the day will it get the net objective. The net objective should be justice for the people who were affected. That should be the primary concern, not generosity.

The other thing is we should have a system that is politically transparent. It was uncovered that people were not getting the benefits they were intended to get, as had been laid out in the process. We need a system that is more transparent. That is very important.

There is social justice. The country has been built on a foundation that when people are victimized, we find restitution. We ensure that they will have a better future. The Canadian government and the people stand behind them. Have we stood behind these individuals? We have not. Although Joey Haché did receive compensation, he resorted to crossing Canada on his bicycle to draw attention to those suffering from hepatitis C. This is a 15-year-old boy who gets transfusions all the time. We have not handled it well. That is why we need due diligence at this point.

Justice Krever supported this. He said:

I therefore recommend that, without delay, the provinces and territories devise statutory no-fault schemes for compensating persons who suffer serious adverse consequences as a result of the administration of blood components or blood products.

We should have done this before. It is about time we do it today. It is no longer about generosity. I think that is where the discomfort affects opposition members. This file should be about justice. It obviously has not worked very well. There have been many problems. Let us fix it. Let us get it right and have a sense of urgency.

We all know the sensitivity in the House. Every day there are questions about whether the government will stand or fall. People will continue to be victimized if we do not advance this at the fastest pace possible. That takes trust, and the government has not earned that.

• (1730)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to participate in the discussion on the matter of hepatitis C compensation.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the present Standing Committee on Health. The member for Yellowhead has taken a position today in the House, reflecting the work of that health committee. The member from St. James has also participated based on the camaraderie and cooperation that has been enjoyed by members at that committee. That committee has chosen to take on a very important issue, following remarks made by the present Minister of Health to look seriously at the question of compensation for hepatitis C victims who fall outside the period of 1986 to 1990.

The Minister of Health has said publicly that he is prepared to look at it. He said so again last night in the House. However, he has not put any kind of time limit on that commitment. Nor has he

indicated that he is prepared to move forward on that issue, regardless of the amount of money that is left after victims in the period between 1986 and 1990 have been compensated.

We still have a very important issue to deal with in this place. We still have an outstanding matter that must be addressed so Canadians can feel confident that we have not missed this opportunity or been negligent in our responsibilities as members of Parliament.

Let us look very carefully at what the report of the Standing Committee on Health report says. It calls upon the House to look at the fact that:

...in recognition of the recommendation of the Krever Inquiry and the large surplus in the federal Hepatitis C compensation fund, urge the government to extend compensation to all those who contracted Hepatitis C from tainted blood; further that the managers of the fund, the Hemophilia Society and other relevant witnesses be invited to meet with the Committee....

These witnesses would be invited to further give explanation and enlightenment on this matter.

The committee has looked at this issue. It is recommending that compensation be extended now to all victims of the hepatitis C tainted blood scandal, prior to 1986 and post-1990. These people were infected through no fault of their own because our health care system failed them. Our government of the day did not take seriously the tests and advice that were available. It did not take seriously the mandate to show compassion for anyone who had been failed by our health system.

Today we got some indication that the government is looking at it. After six or seven years, we finally have enough interest on the benches of the Liberal government. We may be able, collectively and cooperatively, to deal with this unresolved and sad chapter in our history. We do not want to lose that moment. We do not want to let the good work of the present health committee disappear. We do not want to see the Minister of Health proceed without the full benefit of this chamber and the feelings of all members of Parliament.

It is critical that we deal with the report of the health committee today so we can give good advice and clear direction to the Minister of Health and to the government of the day. We cannot afford to let the minister yet again give rhetoric and platitudes and provide no follow-up action.

We are not questioning the compassion of members on the Liberal benches. We are not questioning the commitment by the Minister of Health. We are saying, based on the track record of this issue and based on seven or eight years of neglect and lack of compassion for those who have suffered all this time, that we are not going to let anybody off the hook. We are going to ensure that there is follow-up to this action.

• (1735)

We must remember 1998, when the Liberal government of the day under the direction of the minister of health at the time, Allan Rock, decided not to compensate all victims but to follow some abstract notion of when a certain test was available and therefore to compensate victims only in a certain period of time. It did so against the advice of Justice Krever, against the advice of learned professionals like Dr. Michèle Brill-Edwards and against the emotional pleas of the victims of this tragedy.

Routine Proceedings

Today we want to see that corrected once and for all. It is important to recognize that during that period of time the government chose a regrettable path that left at least 400 victims of the tainted blood tragedy, who have now died, with no compensation and no compassionate care or assistance through a most difficult time. Thousands of others have seen their quality of life deteriorate without any kind of recognition of the incredible tragedy and travesty in their lives.

I urge the government to support the work of the committee. I would move, seconded by the member for Cambridge:

That the House continue to sit beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment for the purpose of considering the motion to concur in the first report of the Standing Committee on Health.

● (1740)

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The House has heard the terms of the motion moved by the hon. member for Winnipeg North. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Will those members who object to the motion please rise in their place?

And more than 15 members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Pursuant to Standing Order 26(2) the motion is deemed to have been withdrawn. (Motion withdrawn)

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I find it absolutely alarming, when we want to do what is right by the victims who contracted hepatitis C through tainted blood, that the minister, who sat in his seat last night and suggested in a take note debate that he wanted that too, would sit in the same seat today and vote against a motion in the House that would urge him to do exactly what he said he wanted to do. I find that amazing.

From my hon. colleague's perspective, what does she think the minister's motive was in doing what he did just a few seconds ago in the House? I would like to ask for her perspective on exactly what happened and why the motion she put forward to extend hours to limit debate on this actually happened.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Madam Speaker, like the member for Yellowhead, I am shocked at the response by Liberal members to our constructive suggestion to continue sitting until this matter is resolved, a matter that has been outstanding for seven years, during which period of time at least 400 victims of hepatitis C have died without any kind of compensation from the government.

I say shame on the Liberals for not allowing further debate on this constructive report by the Standing Committee on Health, which was adopted by all members of the committee, including the Liberal members. Now, suddenly, they find they cannot live up to their commitment yet again. They have once more told the victims of hepatitis C, "Sorry, no can do".

I want to remind all members of the House that the same reasons for wanting to see compensation back in 1998 hold true today. They are summarized, as said so well by Dr. Michèle Brill-Edwards at the

time, "Compensation for all hepatitis C blood injured Canadians is medically sound, legally compelling, necessitated largely by federal regulatory failure, financially sound, not a threat to medicare funding, not a precedent, politically transparent, socially just and endorsed by Justice Krever".

We are simply asking the government, the health minister and all members of the Liberal Party in the chamber today, who stood in the House last night and said over and over again how compassionate they were and made a commitment to follow through on this issue, to finally follow through on their words, to show real compassion and do exactly what Justice Krever has asked us all to do, which is to show that the compassion of a society is judged by the measures it takes to reduce the impact of tragedy on its members.

We ask the government to show that compassion by ensuring that we do everything we can to reduce the negative impact of a decision taken by those who were negligent in their duty many years ago and to show that we are making a just response to a tragic period in our Canadian history.

● (1745)

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, what a bunch of hypocrites to pretend that they want to deal with the hepatitis C issue. The minister stood in this place last night and said that he wanted some closure to this issue by doing the right thing.

I want the member for Winnipeg North to comment on how hypocritical the government and Liberals members are to pretend they want to do something and then at the end of the day do absolutely nothing.

Some hon. members: Shame, shame!

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The member is an experienced member and knows the rules.

The member for Winnipeg North has eight seconds.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Madam Speaker, as we said back in the debate in 1998, sympathy does not pay for interferon. Sympathy does not make up for people losing their jobs or livelihoods. Sympathy does not add up to much unless it is accompanied by compensation—

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Resuming debate, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to participate in the debate.

We were, until a few moments ago, operating generally in a way which was somewhat non-partisan. Yes, there were a few partisan remarks made across the House and that is fine, we are the House of Commons, but the charade we saw a minute ago by the New Democrats should not be mistaken for compassion. That is an absolute abuse of the House of Commons. I think I know a little of how they work.

It is disgusting at its best and probably even worse than that to use the victims of hepatitis C in the way in which they just did. Let us get back to trying to help the victims of hepatitis C—

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Greg Thompson: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is not very often that I come to the defence of the NDP, but that was absolutely unparliamentary coming from that member, the biggest hypocrite of all on the Liberal side of the House on this issue. He should sit down in his place and behave himself.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1750)

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Order, please. May I ask the member to withdraw the word that he just used to describe the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell?

Mr. Greg Thompson: Madam Speaker, please remind me what word I used that was unparliamentary. I do not recall using any language that was unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): There was a descriptor in there, an adjective that is unparliamentary.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Madam Speaker, the member is being hypocritical, which is so typical of that member, and that word is not unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): I know it is late in the day but we have an opportunity here to be respectful to each other and to observe the rules of the House. I am asking if you would, at this point in time, having used language and repeated that language, to just take it back so we can continue with the discussion?

Mr. Greg Thompson: Madam Speaker, I will ask for a ruling from the Chair on the word hypocritical because it is my belief that the word is not unparliamentary. However, if it is, I will certainly withdraw it.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): As per Beauchesne's, citation 489, that word is unparliamentary. There is also another citation where again that word is unparliamentary.

We are dealing with an experienced member. I know he is respectful of the House and that he will do the right thing.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Madam Speaker, I respect what your research has told you. I will withdraw the word "hypocritical".

I will simply say that the member has gone back on his word in terms of the treatment of the hepatitis C victims. I will withdraw the word "hypocritical" but he basically has deceived the people in terms of—

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have no intention of calling anyone any names but I do want to call to your attention that the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell has used some very unfortunate words with regard to my performance in the House.

He has suggested that by simply calling for a vote in this chamber that I have shown a disgusting charade and suggested that I was playing a game. I am personally offended by those words. In fact, I believe he has prevented me by those words from doing my job in this House to the best of my ability.

Does the member think it a disgusting charade or a game to want to see this sorry chapter in our Canadian history closed once and for all?

● (1755)

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Order, please. I call on the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Hon. Don Boudria: Madam Speaker, I am glad to resume debate. I say to the hon. member that if she found some of my language offensive, then I do apologize. I want to continue with my remarks and hopefully the time taken by—

Mr. Charlie Penson: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It seemed to me that you were rising in your place to ask the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell to withdraw those words in connection with the member from Winnipeg because he was the one who started this whole problem with his unfortunate choice of words.

I think that you, Madam Speaker, to get control here, should ask the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell to withdraw the reference he made to the member from Winnipeg.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): I understood the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell had already dealt with the issue and so I was resuming debate. The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Hon. Don Boudria: Madam Speaker, this has taken almost as much time as a normal speech. I hope that somehow this is recognized in the time allotted to me to make my remarks.

We are dealing with an issue that has gone on here for quite some time. I want to salute in particular our new Minister of Health for the indication that he has given, to Canadians generally and to all of us, that he is willing to have a fresh look at this issue.

How did this start? We remember the agreement that was made. I will not use documentation generally prepared by the department. I will just look at a chronology of some of the things from a newspaper article. It talks about how on March 27, 1998 the federal and provincial health ministers, all of them, arrived at an agreement of \$1.2 billion limited to the people infected between 1986 and 1990.

Mr. Brian Masse: It doesn't cover everybody.

Hon. Don Boudria: The hon. member says it does not cover everybody. I know. That is why I am speaking about it. This may come as a shock to him.

Mr. Brian Masse: It's a bad agreement.

Hon. Don Boudria: Yes. The Liberals, Conservatives, New Democrats, and everybody that made the agreement did not cover everybody. That is quite true. We have dealt with that. That is not why we are here.

Then Premier Mike Harris of Ontario, after he signed the agreement, decided afterwards to modify his component of the agreement.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Don Boudria: Madam Speaker, perhaps you would want to keep some order. Even though I disagreed with just about everything that was said by NDP members earlier, I let them speak.

Routine Proceedings

I want to bring to the attention of the House the case of a constituent. Perhaps if the NDP members do not respect anything else, they could at least listen to the sad case of a constituent of mine. She is probably watching and listening.

[*Translation*]

When I was younger, I was elected to the municipal council where I lived. There was another young councillor in the neighbouring municipality, a young man full of ambition. He still is, though not so young, and in very poor health. His name is Jules Lavictoire. As a municipal councillor in Rockland, he was involved in just about everything that was going on there. I know what that is like, as I have done the same for ages myself. Unfortunately for Jules Lavictoire, his health suddenly deteriorated and leukemia was diagnosed in 1980. After undergoing chemotherapy, he required several transfusions. He was given tainted blood. There was not even any system in place in 1980 to detect it, or at least not one known here.

So that was how it began for him. He had a serious relapse in 1984, and for a while we thought we would lose him. But he pulled through, and almost miraculously, despite all that he has gone through, the leukemia and the tainted blood transfusions in 1980, he is still with us 24 years later. Still with us in the year 2004. He is of course all that much older, as am I, and his health has deteriorated. He still has hepatitis C. When I talked to him on the phone earlier this afternoon, he told me that he will likely be needing a liver transplant within days. That is the state his health is in.

It is never much fun to be ill, but to be ill under circumstances that were out of one's control to change is perhaps even harder to accept. At that time, there was not even any way a further check on the blood could have been done, because no such procedure was known at the time here, according to what he told me today.

Everyone agreed on the agreement that was reached. Yes, as was pointed out, the agreement was too restrictive. We know that. It could have been more comprehensive and included more people. At the time, it was signed by all stakeholders at the federal, provincial, territorial and even other levels. Everyone agreed. When things started heating up, some, like the Government of Ontario, I think, pulled back. It acted as if it did not agree, even if it was a signatory of the agreement. That is all well and fine, but that is not the reality.

Had it not been for the hon. Allan Rock, who was minister at the time and who was criticized later, there probably would not have been any agreement to help anybody. That is not recognized right now. It is only years later that recognition comes. He has made a huge contribution in this regard, and I am the first to recognize it. Today, we realize that all the funds will probably not be used. It is out of the question to pass a motion today to have a cheque issued to someone tomorrow. That is nonsense. That is not how things work.

In fact, the Bloc Québécois member who spoke earlier, the hon. member for Hochelaga, indicated to us that what was involved was an actuarial review. That is what is appropriate, as this fund is not administered by the Government of Canada, by the federal government and the provinces or by the provinces on their own. It is not administered by any of them. We know by whom it is administered. The administrator is a group called Crawford

Expertises Canada Inc. Everyone agreed on this. That is who is administering the fund.

Our job today is to encourage the minister and cabinet to send a clear message that we want any excess funds to be used for the other victims. That is the message.

● (1800)

That is the message that I want to convey to my colleague as I congratulate him on having the courage to reopen this file. It would probably have been a lot easier for the new Minister of Health to let it go for a while. However, he jumped at it at the first opportunity. He said "I am prepared to hear representations about this".

At least, in this regard, all the members who took the floor today agreed that it is possible to reopen this file and to send a message to the minister and the government, urging them to work together with other stakeholders to make sure that they can properly compensate people like my friend Jules Lavictoire and all the others.

I mentioned the name of Jules Lavictoire because he gave me permission to do so today. This is not something abstract. It never is. When you are talking about a friend or a former co-worker, it becomes very real. I am sure that all parliamentarians and all Canadians listening to this debate can think of one person close to them who is in the situation that I just described. They only have to change a name to describe a neighbour, a friend, a former colleague, etc.

This is the person I just described. In a letter dated March 9, Mr. Lavictoire wrote "Dear Sir". This is not the way he addresses me in person because he is a personal friend of mine. I will read his letter:

Dear Member,

I am writing to follow up on our telephone conversation of March 4 to draw your attention, and that of your government, to the victims of hepatitis C prior to 1986.

For a long time now, your government has recognized that hepatitis C can have a devastating affect on its victims, their families and their loved ones.

You have also recognized the monetary impact of this terrible disease, for which there is still no cure.

The Government of Canada has agreed to provide financial assistance to those infected between 1986 and 1990, but no compensation has been given to people who were infected between 1980 and 1985.

Funds were invested, but certainly not in the compensation fund for people infected between 1986 and 1990. My friend continues saying:

That is why I am turning to you today. I recently read in the newspaper that only some of the people infected between 1986 and 1990 have filed a claim for compensation and that a lot of money is still available in the hepatitis C victim reserve fund.

He said it himself, "the reserve fund." There is no use in claiming or telling Canadians that the Government of Canada can start issuing cheques and handing them out tomorrow morning. We know it does not work that way. Some hon. members were objective enough to say so in this House.

That is not the issue before us. The issue before us is to indicate our position. What position would we like the government to take with its other partners regarding the surplus fund, which will be calculated a little later for actuarial and objective reasons?

Routine Proceedings

If someone dipped into the fund and unilaterally handed out money without leaving any for those who might file a claim, then the Auditor General would step in, and we know what would happen. Those complaining today would be the first to say we did not use objective criteria.

That is not what we should do. Anyway, it is not something we can do. That is not the action for the government to take in this matter.

• (1805)

[*English*]

What we need to do then is to send that message to the government. I believe that the speeches today on the part of members, generally speaking, have been made in such a way that the minister has to be encouraged that members of Parliament, on all sides of the House I think, want this fund to be reopened pursuant to the actuarial criteria. The qualification must also be broadened to cover those people who were living these exact conditions prior to 1986, and taking note that in the beginning, there may not have been a detection system.

Then we have people like the constituent I described earlier who has lived 24 years with both leukemia and tainted blood which occurred almost immediately as a result of the first condition. He has lived with leukemia, which is already a very challenging medical condition, and then contracted that second condition within months. He has remained like that for 24 years and is now facing the potential of having a liver transplant, possibly within the next few months, if that is determined necessary.

Our role today is to give that kind of encouragement. I would like to see the government make an announcement in short order, preferably right here on the floor of the House, telling us that it will be taking that position with the other partners to broaden that scope so that more people can qualify for the funds. The funds have not all been expended. I think we will be able to prove shortly, with objective actuarial criteria, that not all the funds that are there will be required. Therefore, we do have the funds in order to be able to do that.

I see there are other members in the House. Probably some of them would like to comment before this time ends today. I do hope that we all continue to make that message clear.

I want to conclude by saying that this minister has demonstrated outstanding courage by tackling something which is no doubt very challenging for him but obviously something that he wanted to do. He deserves our praise. I wish him well, and that he be able at the cabinet table, together with his colleagues, to take a position which he will be able to enunciate here on the floor of the House of Commons very shortly.

• (1810)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech made by the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and his review of the situation.

It is important to distinguish a certain thing first, and that is, outstanding courage. Outstanding courage are not words that we should address to any member in this situation 20 years after the victimization of individuals because we have failed them. Whether it

be a provincial or federal government, the system has failed individuals who have been victimized and have watched their lives come apart, and we have not been able to compensate them adequately.

We decide to review it now because we are in a minority government status. We in the NDP brought this up in the 37th Parliament just last year, the same issue. It is not about courage, it is about justice.

I think it is important that a clear message be sent to the minister and cabinet that they must deal with this issue right now. The clear message should be that when members supported a process that has led to this situation, they were wrong. They need to stand and say that they were wrong. It has not worked. They need to say that they will fix this right now and that they want to be part of it. That is part of the trust that has to be regained.

I would ask the member, would he stand right now and say that they were wrong at that time, that it needs to be fixed, and that they should be part of that together?

Hon. Don Boudria: Madam Speaker, obviously the numbers were incorrect in terms of those who would draw on the fund, otherwise we would not be having this debate today.

It is quite obvious that if the people had not come to us in the large numbers that they did and saying that in all reasonable likelihood the fund was totally under-subscribed, and it looks like it was, we would not even be talking about this right now or the chances that we would be talking about it would be immensely less.

It looks like there are excess funds and they are available. The tone of the letter that I read from my constituent was in reference to the fact that these funds were there and likely would not be required. Obviously, the calculation was inaccurate otherwise we would not be discussing it at the present time.

An hon. member: Who did the calculation?

Hon. Don Boudria: Madam Speaker, somebody over there asked who did the calculation? The federal government and 13 other partners arrived at the calculations. We could blame every single government in Canada, federal, provincial and territorial and whoever they hired to do these calculations. We could tell them that it was erroneous in terms of the number of people who would likely apply. I do not know.

An hon. member: I would have calculated it better.

Hon. Don Boudria: The hon. member says he would have calculated it better. That is not the point. The point is we will probably have funds available that we could use to help people like Jules Lavictoire and others once the actuarial exercise is completed. That should be the focus of our exercise, nothing else.

• (1815)

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Madam Speaker, what we have heard tonight from the government side has been profoundly disappointing. There was an opportunity earlier tonight to support the health committee's unanimous recommendation to compensate hepatitis C victims. Yet, when the opportunity came up, members of the government denied that motion.

Routine Proceedings

The health minister, the chair of the health committee, and other health committee members prevented an extension of this very important debate. That is another example of the two-faced nature of the way this government has approached this issue.

The reason why this issue is on the table is because opposition parties have not allowed it to die. We have kept moving it forward. We have kept it on the radar screen. If it were not for the minority government situation, I doubt the Liberal government would even be considering opening up the compensation window.

The fact is that the Liberal government is on the wrong side of the issue. Those members are on the wrong side of public opinion. They are denying mitigation to those people that blood services harmed. The government needs to take responsibility for that.

My question for the member is: Why not do the right thing? If moneys are due to these people, they should receive it, surplus or no surplus. Why not do the right thing and compensate them regardless of the fund involved? The government could create a new fund if necessary.

Hon. Don Boudria: Madam Speaker, this is wrong in terms of the historical perspective. At the time, the Government of Canada, under the leadership of then health minister Allan Rock, agreed to join the provincial partners. These agencies were under the jurisdiction of the provinces. We agreed to join with the provinces and territories, and we provided the vast majority of the funds in order to provide this package. That is the history behind it, not the other way around.

That is how this process started. The discussion today, I remind the member, and even the committee report in question is about the funds that will likely not be required after the actuarial exercise has occurred. It is not about something else. I do not know whether the member had the opportunity to listen to that part of the debate earlier, or has had the opportunity to view the documentation. That is, in fact, what this is about.

In terms of him saying that this is before us today only because we have an opposition that—

An hon. member: A minority government.

Hon. Don Boudria: No, that is equally inaccurate.

The reason I am participating today has nothing to do with members on one side of the House or another. I have raised this with the minister privately three or four times since he let it be known a few weeks ago that he was willing to start the process of reopening this. My message for him has been to encourage him and to wish him well in that regard.

My quest is also to support my constituents in the way that I have raised this earlier today. I welcome the opportunity to have this debate this afternoon. I was not available to participate in the debate last night so this gave me the opportunity to say what I wanted to say on behalf of my constituents.

Finally, the hon. member talked about the extension of hours, or as he put it, the motion earlier today. That is not we had before us. What we had before us was a motion to extend the hours. The motion to extend the hours is deemed to be withdrawn if more than 15 members rise and then of course the motion is deemed to be

withdrawn. There was no motion to accept a report that was put at that time earlier today by the hon. member in question. That is a different topic.

• (1820)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jean Augustine): Questions and comments. There is only one minute left. The hon. member for Cambridge.

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, let us be very clear on something that I have been hearing in this debate, last night and again today. I do not think there is any doubt that every member in the House is gravely concerned about this issue. On this side of the House we are being accused of politicizing it and we are accusing the other side of politicizing it. I do not believe that is the issue at all.

However, we have to make very clear as well that no one wants to reduce the eligibility of those victims between 1986 and 1990 for the victims outside that period. Nobody wants to do that and I hear that. This is not about compensating additional victims at the expense of this group. That is not what it is about at all.

If hon. members remember, the guidelines for this group were based on the assumption, by former health minister Allan Rock, that there were not sufficient tests prior to 1986. That is completely not true. I have evidence that there were tests as early as 1981. The second issue that we have to be clear about is—

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Hon. Don Boudria: Madam Speaker, it is obvious that no one here has the intention of reducing the benefits for those who were between 1986 and 1990. That clearly is not the intent. That is why, in part, we have to wait for the actuarial calculation because that is the way the fund was established legally and that is the structure that we have. I see the hon. member is answering his own questions.

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think the hon. member mentioned, if I was correct in what he assumed last evening, which was a take note debate, that the opportunity was there to put that to a vote. I think that is what he said. I would say that would be against the procedures of the House and as a former House leader he would know that. I would ask that he correct those statements.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Time has run out and I think there is no response to the member for Cambridge and also to the point of debate.

• (1825)

Mr. Gurmant Grewal: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I see that more members wanted to ask some questions of the member. Could we have five minutes to ask a few more questions? You know that I was there to ask some questions.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The question as placed is for extended time so members can ask additional questions. Is there agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): There is no agreement. Resuming debate.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell started off in a tirade against the member for Winnipeg North. She is a member who, since I have been in the House and I presume long before that, has stood up time after time for the rights of those who have problems. She made a tremendous speech about people who have waited and waited for some just service from the government opposite and because of that she was attacked by the member.

However, he then did an about-face, and I will give him credit there, and said how his heart bleeds for these people and how he is going to see the minister and encourage him to push the issue in cabinet, to try to get compensation for those who have been affected through no fault of their own. Many of them are sitting and waiting and many of them are dying in the meantime. That member himself was in cabinet for a number of years and did absolutely nothing except turn his back on the request made by the people affected.

It is amazing to look at the issues that have been raised in the House since we have been back. The government has brought in a handful of inconsequential bills that have been debated. The real issues that have been debated in the House have been brought forth by the opposition parties.

There was the resolution from the Bloc about fiscal imbalance. We have been discussing the way the government is treating Atlantic Canada, particularly Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. We also have to look at the equalization program and the health issues that have not been resolved. These issues are constantly raised by people over here. The substantive debate has been on issues that have been raised by us, the opposition members.

All of a sudden the members over there, after they reject the opportunity—

Mr. Roger Cuzner: The debate about the equalization would not have been able to take place if we haven't got the money.

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Madam Speaker, some people are yapping over there. Could you muzzle them, please.

If the government members are so concerned about this issue, which is one of the substantive issues that have been brought up in the House, why is it that half an hour ago they rejected the opportunity to let members speak out? There are other members over here who feel the same way as the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Madam Speaker, I am going to give them another chance. I move pursuant to Standing Order 26(1):

That the House continue to sit beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment for the purpose of consideration of the motion to adopt the first report of the Standing Committee on Health presented on Monday, November 1, 2004.

Hon. Don Boudria: Madam Speaker, given that we are still in routine proceedings, I wonder whether procedurally the motion to extend the hours even applies. Could the Chair inform us as to whether or not a motion to extend the hours during routine proceedings applies?

Concurrence in a committee report, which is what we are doing, is a routine proceeding, not an order of the day. I understood that that rule could only be moved when we were on orders of the day. Therefore, I ask if in fact moving that motion is in order.

● (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): I refer hon. members to Standing Order 26(1) which reads:

Except during Private Members' Business, when the Speaker is in the Chair, a Member may propose a motion, without notice, to continue a sitting through a dinner hour or beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment for the purpose of considering a specified item of business or a stage or stages thereof subject to the following conditions:

Would those members who object to the motion please rise in their place.

And more than 15 members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Pursuant to Standing Order 26(2) the motion is deemed to have been withdrawn.

(Motion withdrawn)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, on October 4, Amnesty International released a devastating report denouncing the violence suffered by aboriginal women in Canada and the authorities' failure to take timely action to prosecute perpetrators.

The next day, I asked the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to tell this House what specific action he planned to take to remedy the deplorable situation of aboriginal women. As the minister's answer was evasive, I am bringing the matter up again.

The Native Women's Association of Canada estimates that, over the past 20 years, more than 500 aboriginal women have been murdered or have gone missing under apparently violent circumstances. Statistics dating back to 1996 show that the risk of violent death among aboriginal women between the ages of 25 and 44 is five times higher than among women of the same age group in our society. Clearly, this is a serious situation that has to be dealt with.

It is important that the minister liaise with the police in the areas where aboriginal people live. The minister must make sure that police officers are sufficiently vigilant and that offences against aboriginal women are systematically recorded so that legal proceedings can be instituted in a serious manner.

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However, the police alone cannot eliminate discrimination against aboriginal women. We know that for more than a century, from 1870 to 1980, the federal government took away the rights and status of aboriginal women if they married a non-aboriginal man. The consequences of this government policy are still felt today. This policy split up families and communities and left women in dangerous situations of extreme poverty, homelessness and prostitution.

We must recognize the importance of helping associations that work for the well-being of aboriginal women so that these women can improve their living conditions. Together, drawing on their situation, background, and experience, they could find appropriate solutions for achieving the financial independence that is essential to self-affirmation and pride in one's community. They would be able to protect themselves from people who take advantage of their vulnerability to commit humiliating, unfair and far too often violent acts.

Amnesty International recommends the full involvement of aboriginal women in the formulation and implementation of all policies directly affecting their welfare. One way to achieve this objective is to encourage women to come together as a group, by way of financial support. We know that community groups generally manage to get a lot done with a little money.

The basic ingredient for an egalitarian relationship is respect. Let us show respect for aboriginals by recognizing their contribution to our society. In the report—

• (1835)

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Hon. Sue Barnes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Trois-Rivières for her question.

[*English*]

It is a very important one. The minister and I want to reassure the hon. member that the government recognizes the serious nature of the issue of violence against women and, in particular, violence against aboriginal women.

Violence of any kind in our society is unacceptable to the government and indeed to all Canadians. As has been mentioned in the House recently, we have been working closely with the Native Women's Association of Canada on this important matter. We are continuing to pursue discussions regarding solutions to the issues before us. In fact, in the spirit of mutual partnership, trust and respect, there has been and continues to be a great deal of collaboration between this key group and the Government of Canada.

We continue to work together with aboriginal organizations and leaders to reduce the gaps of living conditions that continue to separate first nations, Métis and Inuit from other Canadians. A key measure in these endeavours includes addressing the issues raised by Amnesty International in its "Stolen Sisters" report and dealing with

similar issues raised by the Native Women's Association of Canada through its "Sisters in Spirit" campaign.

We commend the Native Women's Association of Canada and Amnesty International for the work they are carrying out in this respect. Through their efforts they are rendering a great service to aboriginal women and to all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Native Women's Association of Canada has participated and continues to participate fully in the initiatives resulting from the Canada and aboriginal peoples' round table. These initiatives began in April of this year.

[*English*]

This organization's members are involved in the planning committee coordinating the follow-up activities of the Canada-aboriginal peoples round table in six key areas, including aboriginal health. They will be actively participating in each of the two day sectoral follow-up sessions scheduled to occur in the coming weeks.

In short, it is clear that aboriginal women's issues are on the national policy agenda. Real efforts to deal with them are underway, working in partnership and collaboration with aboriginal women, which the hon. member said was best. It bears repeating that the work of the round table is but part of the efforts the government and its partners are putting in place to deal with violence in aboriginal communities.

Investment by the government in the family violence prevention program continues. Last year our department allocated approximately \$16 million to three priority areas. We provided funding for 35 shelters across Canada, offering assistance to over 4,500 first nations people on reserve. We continue to provide education and outreach programs in order to increase public awareness, provide workshops and offer stress and anger management seminars, as well as support groups and community needs assessments. We provided contributions to the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, which provides coordination and builds capacity among first nations shelter directors.

In conclusion, the important issues facing aboriginal women are multi-faceted and compelling. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, I have outlined the concerns and efforts of our department. Other work that responds to these needs is also underway in other departments across the federal government.

I want to assure the hon. member opposite that the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is committed to continue to work closely with his cabinet colleagues to protect and improve the quality of life for aboriginal women across Canada.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for this information. We know that the government has an obligation to protect aboriginal women against all forms of discrimination. I am pleased to see that the government is aware of this whole matter. We intend to closely follow the issue of aboriginal women, so that eventually these women receive care in terms of housing, health and everything else that is necessary to ensure their protection.

[*English*]

Hon. Sue Barnes: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for raising the question because it shows interest from all members around the House. I think we all have to work together to address this problem.

A number of other federal government agencies and departments are also working on the issue with other levels of government and aboriginal organizations on many different initiatives to assist aboriginal women, in addition to the work underway at Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Allow me to reiterate to the House that there are horizontal initiatives underway, such as the Vancouver agreement, which is developing alternative strategies and mechanisms to support urban aboriginal women. Furthermore, the Status of Women Canada, in particular, is making a commitment to fund national initiatives undertaken by aboriginal women's organizations on the issue of violence against aboriginal women.

The Department of Canadian Heritage is also focused on addressing violence against aboriginal women through the aboriginal women's program. This initiative enables aboriginal women to influence policies, programs, legislation and decision-making that affect their well-being. The Attorney General of Canada has implemented the national strategy on community safety and crime prevention, which provides support to projects supporting crime prevention and increasing the personal security of women and girls.

There is considerable effort underway with regard to ensuring that aboriginal women can achieve the equality of life which they so rightly deserve. Indian and Northern—

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week I asked a question of the Minister for Natural Resources, who happens to come from my province. The question was why the Prime Minister had not lived up to his commitment to give Newfoundland and Labrador 100% of its revenues from offshore petroleum production. I also asked what part of the 100% did the Prime Minister not understand. That is neither here nor there in the question.

The minister stated in his response that Newfoundland and Labrador was receiving 100% of the revenues. Nobody really agrees with that. He also said:

Last Thursday evening, when they concluded negotiations between the finance minister of Newfoundland and the finance minister of Canada, the premier called me and said that it was going for sign-off and to make sure that sign-off was done.

I made sure the sign-off was done....

He did not get to finish. We know there has not been a sign-off. I am sure the minister will explain it when he rises.

What are we talking about? For the record, I am going to read what the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador says about it. He states:

On June 5 of this year, after months of discussions and aggressively pursuing the federal government, the Prime Minister made a commitment to me personally and to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. He acknowledged the commitment to local and national media.

He committed to accept our proposal for 100 per cent of our offshore revenues under a revised offset in the Atlantic Accord.

The Prime Minister and I had an agreement that would finally allow this province to benefit from our offshore resources.

This agreement did not include a cap or a reference to fiscal capacity. It did not include any linkage to the fiscal capacity of other provinces. And, it did not include a time frame. In fact, it specifically excluded it.

The agreement was simple and clear. The province of Newfoundland and Labrador would receive 100 per cent of all of our provincial offshore revenues with no clawback.

Our proposal that was given to the federal government clearly illustrates this.

This would be accomplished outside of the equalization formula so that we, as a province, could finally achieve self-sufficiency, fiscal stability and prosperity....

We have sent several pieces of correspondence and documentation to the federal government throughout this period.

Included in that information is a formal request for the federal government to put their commitment to the province in writing.

The federal government refused to do so, and we had little choice but to continue to take the Prime Minister at his word....

My clear understanding of the agreement reached between myself and the Prime Minister and confirmed to him in writing was never refuted....

The Premier of Newfoundland is saying that he gave to the Prime Minister of Canada the agreement as he perceived it. That was never refuted by the Prime Minister. The government and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador feel that a commitment has been made and a commitment has been broken. It has not been followed through.

I hope the minister can clarify that because he his answer last week certainly was not satisfactory. However, if we look at the transcript, he did not get a chance to finish answering the question. I presume he will clarify it now so I and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the people of Canada will know exactly what the government is offering Newfoundland and Labrador, and then we will ask the government whether it will accept it.

• (1845)

Hon. R. John Efford (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this topic. Through you, Madam Speaker, I want to speak to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is an opportunity for the people of our province to benefit from the offshore oil resources that they have been wanting since the Atlantic accord was signed in 1987. The accord stated that Newfoundland and Labrador should be the main beneficiary. However, an offset mechanism was put in the Atlantic accord that allowed Newfoundland and Labrador to receive only 30% outside of the equalization formula.

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What I have done, as the Minister of Natural Resources responsible for the Atlantic accord, is to follow through on the Prime Minister's commitment to allow Newfoundland and Labrador to receive 100% of the offshore oil resources outside of the equalization formula. In other words, the provincial revenues, including the corporate taxes, other taxes, other fees and royalties would go to Newfoundland and Labrador with no clawback on equalization. That commitment was made by the Prime Minister to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That would determine the 100% revenues go to the province.

There has to be a threshold set. The equalization formula that all Canada benefits from, outside of Ontario and Alberta, has been enshrined in the equalization policy. It helps those provinces that cannot help themselves through their revenues to equal that standard set across Canada.

The equalization formula under which Newfoundland and Labrador has benefited from for so many years is now giving the province of Newfoundland and Labrador an opportunity to become self-sufficient. The Prime Minister of this country made a commitment to the people. The Prime Minister of this country has and is keeping his word and will keep his word.

Let me go very quickly to the issue here. First, since the Atlantic accord started and since the oil started coming out of Hibernia and then Terra Nova, Newfoundland and Labrador has received 100% of the provincial revenues. In the Atlantic accord there was an offset mechanism where 30% of that was not taken back on equalization. That is there and that will stay.

In the other offset there was 70¢ that would be clawed back. For the first five years, from 1999 to 2003, 7% was taken back. From 2004 to 2011, it would be a declining formula where at the end of 2011 we would lose the full 70¢. We have reopened that accord with seven years left. The government has said to the province of Newfoundland and Labrador that it will now pay the province an offset mechanism equal to 100%.

In other words, the province still will receive all the revenues and it still will receive all the equalization. Then the province can keep that 30% that was written in the Atlantic accord with no clawback. On top of the 30%, the federal government will pay that 70¢ to the dollar. This is what Newfoundland and Labrador has wanted for so many years.

At the same time the province has all of that, hopefully, we will see more oil, gas, income and revenues for Newfoundland. That revenue will keep increasing, even with the debt mechanism. Let us keep our fingers crossed that this happens. All of Newfoundland, and my colleague opposite and myself are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we want to see that happen. However, once the province gets above the threshold of Ontario, the province will start losing equalization on top of all of that.

The thing we must keep in mind is the province will receive all of that while it is still receives the revenues.

Let it be clear. Newfoundland and Labrador will still receive the revenues even above the Ontario threshold. The revenues will keep coming the same as Ontario and Alberta. We will become a self-

sufficient province, what every Newfoundlander and Labradorian wants.

• (1850)

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for staying around this evening. Quite often when we have these discussions on questions, the ministers send in their parliamentary secretaries or somebody else to read a prepared speech. They read the prepared comeback to my comeback and most of the time it is not even related. I want to thank the minister for staying around for this very important issue because it is important to him and it is important to us.

Having said that, let me say to him that there is something wrong here. What the Minister of Natural Resources said, the individual who should be the person in charge of all of this, does not jibe with what the Minister of Finance was saying. Unfortunately, the deal made between the Prime Minister and the Premier of Newfoundland was not in writing. We do not have anything with which to compare. However, we do have the letters from the Premier of Newfoundland which undoubtedly must have been accepted by government.

The government did not say it would not accept it until two days before an imposed deadline, imposed by the Prime Minister by the way. The letter from the Minister of Finance really did not say what the Minister of Natural Resources was saying. They talked about the cap, they talked about deadlines, and they talked about fiscal capacity of other provinces, so somewhere in between there lies the truth. For the minister's sake, for my sake, and for the sake of the people in our great province, we hope we find it, and find it very soon.

Hon. R. John Efford: Madam Speaker, what is wrong here, and I will say this respectfully to my colleague, is that we should not be carrying on this discussion in public. We should be sitting down at a table and looking at a proposal that benefits Newfoundland and Labrador.

What the Prime Minister and the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador discussed was the basis for an agreement. The finance minister and I are saying exactly the same thing. This will never be resolved with rhetoric. This will never be resolved in public. We have to put all of that aside because the losers here are the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

While I am standing in the House of Commons, with all the respect that I have for this House, I will never allow the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to lose on this deal. My obligation is to ensure we get the benefits out of these offshore resources. I am quite content and satisfied that the Prime Minister is standing by his commitment, and that Newfoundland and Labrador will receive 100% of the revenues, the equalization, the 30% and the 70%.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): As the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup is not present to raise the question for which adjournment notice has been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

Adjournment Proceedings

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:54 p.m.)

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