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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, April 1, 2003

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 1, 2003

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1000)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

•(1005)

YUKON

Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Yukon and I are here today to acknowledge an historic day for the people of Yukon. Today the Government of Yukon will take on responsibility for managing the territory's public lands, water, forests, mines and minerals and responsibility for environmental management. After today, land and resource decisions that affect the territory will be made in Yukon rather than in Ottawa, enabling local residents to better shape their own future.

Completion of this initiative will bring government closer to the people it serves because it places key development decisions in the hands of those most knowledgeable about local conditions and those most affected by the consequences of those decisions, Yukoners themselves.

Overall, of course, the federal Crown will continue to hold title to lands and waters in Yukon, and changes being proposed will not change the constitutional status of the Yukon territory. Nevertheless this devolution of powers respecting lands and resources represents a major step in the evolution of Yukon. It transfers the last major area of provincial-like responsibilities still under the purview of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to the Yukon government.

About a year ago, the House passed with unanimous consent a new Yukon Act. That act is being proclaimed today. Yukoners see

the Yukon Act as their constitution. In addition to giving effect to devolution, the new Yukon Act recognizes the reality of responsible government in Yukon that is similar in principle to that elsewhere in Canada.

In closing, I would like to underline the point that I have made before: that this is a key nation-building initiative. This is a good day for Yukon, for Yukoners and for all Canadians. The decision to proceed with devolution serves to affirm our commitment to end decision-making by remote control from Ottawa and put it in the hands of northerners. It demonstrates, not just to the territories but to all regions of the country, our willingness to put in place sensible, effective and accountable governance arrangements that foster both regional development and national development.

On my behalf and on behalf of the member of Parliament for Yukon and all parliamentarians, we want to wish Yukon the very best on this very important day.

•(1010)

The Deputy Speaker: For the information of those members responding to the ministerial statement, the minister took approximately three minutes so the Chair will allow three minutes to each member responding, beginning with the hon. member for Athabasca.

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the minister's statement. Certainly in principle, at least, we would support this initiative although I find it somewhat curious that the minister introduces this statement and this initiative to devolve his responsibility in Yukon for natural resource management and environmental management. In reviewing the recently passed Yukon Act, let me say that the act does not appear to give the minister responsibility to devolve that power so it is pretty hard to assess the impact of the statement just made by the minister without more information on exactly how this power will be devolved to Yukon.

However, our party has always been supportive of initiatives of the government to bring the territories toward provincial status and more control over their own affairs and the management of their resources and their environment. I think that is good, but rather than being in sync with the Yukon Act, it appears to do quite the opposite. In fact, the Yukon Act sets up a management board that is entirely accountable to the minister. Then the minister turns around and devolves the power that he has to the Yukon government. That does not make a lot of sense.

Routine Proceedings

Of course there is no mention, no insight at all, in the minister's statement or the Yukon Act on how the fiscal arrangement between the federal government and the Yukon Territory will in fact be affected by this initiative of the minister. Really all we can say is that we support the initiative in principle and that we look forward to more detail on how the fiscal arrangement between the two bodies will be adjusted in consideration of this initiative.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, of course this legislation replaces the Yukon Act, particularly because it recognizes the existence of a responsible government system in Yukon.

This legislation will rename a number of public institutions to reflect current practice and provide the Yukon Legislative Assembly with new powers over public real property and other Yukon properties.

The Bloc Québécois supported Bill C-39. We knew how important this bill was and what it meant. The Bloc Québécois knows that, most of the time, it is better for decisions to be made at a level closer to the people.

However, let us be clear; all too often, the government takes credit for such initiatives to show how generous the Liberals are, and this was clear from the tone of the minister's speech. Above all, we should recognize what it means for the people of the Yukon to fully participate in the process for making decisions that will have an impact on their future.

Therefore, we support this legislation because it seems to be in line with the will and the wishes of the people and the government of the Yukon.

[English]

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we in the NDP are very happy to support this development of Bill C-39, devolving these additional powers and authorities to the government of the territory of Yukon. It is a clear reflection of the desires of the people who live in Yukon to take on this additional authority to control their local affairs and not have to deal directly with Ottawa on matters that are much more appropriately dealt with at the local level. It has been some time in coming. The negotiations have gone on for well over a decade. We welcome this day, as I am sure all of the people of Yukon do.

• (1015)

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent of the House for just one minute to thank my colleagues for this great day.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the House give its consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, this is a great day for all Yukoners. I would like to thank all my colleagues in all parties for their support.

Today the budget regarding natural resource management has been transferred over to the Yukon government, and now our future, our destiny, is in our own hands. Yukoners are truly grateful to the Parliament of Canada for allowing us to take this big step in a new partnership in Confederation.

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report following the 11th annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from January 13 to January 15.

* * *

PETITIONS

CROSS-BORDER TRAFFIC

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today containing approximately 40 names of members from the City of Windsor. The petition deals with the cross-border traffic problem, and specifically with the problem of traffic on Huron Line.

The petitioners ask that the government respond to their needs.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present this morning. The first one is with regard to marriage.

The petitioners are from all across Canada, including my own riding of Mississauga South. They state that the majority of Canadians believe that the fundamental matters of social policy should be decided by elected members of Parliament and not by an unelected judiciary.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to use all possible legislative and administrative measures, including the invocation of section 33 of the Charter, the notwithstanding clause, if necessary, to preserve and protect the current definition of marriage as between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition concerns stem cell research and is signed by a number of Canadians, including some from my own riding of Mississauga South.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House the fact that Canadians do support ethical stem cell research which has already shown encouraging potential to provide cures for Canadians. They also point out that non-embryonic stem cells, also known as adult stem cells, have shown significant research progress without the immune rejections or ethical problems associated with embryonic stem cells.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to support legislation which promotes adult stem cell research to find the cures and therapies necessary for Canadians.

Government Orders

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that, because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended by eight minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2003

The House resumed from March 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-28, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 18, 2003, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is with a feeling of responsibility that I rise today to address Bill C-28, the budget implementation bill and to voice my opposition to the bill. I will get into some of the reasons why as I go through the bill.

In simple terms for all Canadians the bill is a blueprint for the Liberals to spend freely taxpayers' hard earned dollars, establish a legacy for the retiring Prime Minister and create an even larger and more bureaucratic government. The last time I checked with any of my constituents, none of these priorities were at the top of their wish lists.

The Canadian Alliance believes that rewarding the taxpayer should be the primary goal in the country. The Canadian Alliance has not forgotten who pays the bills in Ottawa. It is a shame that the Liberals have.

In fact it is the middle to low income Canadians who need all the help and benefits that a strong federal government should provide for them. There was certainly more than enough surplus to finally reward these hard working Canadian families by lowering the GST and personal income taxes. Instead, the government has ignored the priorities of average Canadians and has created more slush funds for grand scale promises that inevitably will be mismanaged.

Before I jump ahead of myself to oppose the irresponsible spending promises of the Liberal government, let me take a moment to realistically look at the figures of the budget.

The budget announces \$17.4 billion in new spending initiatives over the next three years but cuts taxes by only \$2.3 billion. This represents an increase in program spending of 88%, an 88% increase in spending in comparison to a mere 12% for tax reduction. We cannot afford in Canada to keep building budgets that outstrip more than the economy is growing. By outstripping growth, we will be back in a deficit position if we continue to do this.

Why does the government consistently misspend and mismanage money from the taxpayers today, while ensuring that taxpayers tomorrow will be paying for these programs indefinitely. When I look at newly born granddaughter, I do not want her to foot the bills of this free spending Liberal government in the years to come.

The new finance minister had a golden opportunity to put the brakes to free spending and chart a new and rewarding course for the majority of Canadians. Unfortunately, this minister has opted to continue the path created by his predecessor. The Liberal track record of broken promises and boondoggle after boondoggle speaks for itself.

We have seen a 500-fold overrun in the net cost of the firearms registry, \$1 billion spent and growing on fraudulent and inadequately administered human resources development grants and millions of dollars in advertising contracts that are now under investigation by the RCMP. It is a long list and it is not a list of which to be proud.

I would like to quote the leader of the Canadian Alliance on the government's wasteful record. He said, "Each wasted billion was a billion wasted opportunities for Canadians". That is exactly what that is. For every dollar wasted—

• (1020)

Mr. Ted White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There does not appear to be a quorum in the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Lethbridge.

Mr. Rick Casson: Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the statement of the Leader of the Opposition because it honestly reflects the irresponsible spending habits of the Liberal government and the lost opportunities for not just my own constituents but for constituents in communities across the country.

It is the Liberal government's addiction to spending that drove our taxes higher than ever. The myth that there is a Liberal tax reduction is simply that, a myth. Canada's blooming surpluses are all the evidence we need to prove that Canadians are being grossly overtaxed. Where are the breaks for the majority of Canadians? Where are the benefits for those who have worked the hardest to scrape by and foot the ever growing taxes levied by the government?

Working Canadians have the right to ask: If the Liberal government has cut taxes then why can they not see it on their paycheques? This backward budget reflected backward Liberal promises: \$2 billion scattered on an unspecified Kyoto measure but a mere band-aid for the crumbling armed forces.

The Canadian Alliance agrees with the Auditor General and many other organizations that call for an immediate increase of \$2 billion per year for the defence budget. The Liberal commitment of \$600 million per year falls far short of what is necessary to sustain our armed forces, let alone to start to rebuild it.

While the finance minister has promised to fill the accountability loopholes created by his predecessor, once again the Liberal track record speaks for itself.

Government Orders

How can the government be trusted to implement massive new spending increases for nearly every department, when it has proven its lack of management experience which has cost Canadian taxpayers billions of dollars in cost overruns? Need we remind the House of the gun registry's severe mismanagement and incompetence. Bad management turns good intentions into Liberal waste. It is simply cruel to Canadians in need to promise grand new schemes that will never pan out due to mismanagement.

The Canadian Alliance would immediately stop runaway Liberal spending. We support targeting most new spending only to priority areas neglected under the Liberal's watch. We agree with the increases in health funding announced in the new health accord but in general the Canadian Alliance believes that spending should only increase at a rate matching increases in population and prices.

There are a few other specific points I would like to bring to the attention of the House with regard to the budget.

We believe child care options should be given to parents, not to bureaucrats. We support a \$3,000 per child deduction for families, allowing them to choose the best child care option for their children.

Regarding the national child benefit, the Liberals could give this benefit to low income families with one hand, then tax thousands of dollars with the other hand. If they are so concerned about Canada's working poor, why do the Liberals tax them so heavily? Heavy Liberal taxes are collected through rising CPP premiums, overcharges on EI and low income contingent GST credits.

Since the money is on the table for health care, now is the time for real reform to take place. The Canadian Alliance will hold the federal and provincial governments accountable to ensure that new health spending buys real change, not just more of the status quo.

The Liberals have already spent over \$3 billion on Kyoto with no results to show for it. Simply throwing more money at it has led to Liberal waste and misuse. The Canadian Alliance supports targeted funding for new green technologies that will bring real environmental benefits.

A 40% reduction in the air tax is a good start but it will continue to discourage air travel in Canada. This tax should be eliminated, not reduced. That speaks for itself with the trouble in which our air industry is.

The government's move to increase RRSP limits to \$18,000 by 2006, increase the small business deduction limit to \$300,000, eliminate the capital tax over five years and lower the resource tax rate in line with the general corporate rate are positive steps except they are being implemented too slowly and fall short of what is actually needed.

Despite the good intentions the Liberal government has suggested in the budget, I remain opposed to it due to the government's terrible reputation for mismanagement and incompetence. How can Canadians place their trust in a free spending, non-responsible Liberal government when we know we will be paying for these actions for years to come?

In closing I want to mention that last Friday I was at the opening of a new library addition in the town of Coaldale in my riding. It was pointed out to me at that time that the federal government pointed

citizens to libraries to use them for Internet access to fill out the gun registry, to do their income tax and to send in things like that. However there is little support from the federal government for libraries. I indicated that I would bring this to the attention of the government and that I would be do more in the future on that issue. This is one area that some of the money could have gone to improve the life of all Canadians.

• (1025)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to explain how women feel about February's budget.

The federal budget, we believe, does not respond to the needs and concerns of women. Furthermore, it is far from recognizing the fundamental connection between social policy and economic policy, despite what the Minister of Finance says.

This budget and this government have ignored women and will continue to do so.

In October 2000, during the World March of Women, women demanded that the federal government take steps to end poverty and violence. Three years later, these demands have not been taken into consideration, and nothing has been done to help women cope with the poverty they, in particular, face because they are more vulnerable.

Usually, poverty is measured in terms of income. However, poverty also results from other factors and from a lack of access to various resources.

Housing is the first such factor. It plays an extremely important structural role. A roof over one's head, safe adequate accommodation, a place to raise our kids and be self-employed is essential.

Currently, 25,000 low income households in Quebec are battling the shortage of rental units, and over 300,000 other households are grappling with unaffordable housing.

This situation would not exist if Ottawa had not unilaterally stopped all participation in the construction of social housing since 1994, and if it had invested in this area as women and Quebec organizations advocating for renters had asked.

Unfortunately, the federal government insists on investing in affordable housing for, apparently, young persons and self-sufficient seniors. Under the affordability and choice today program, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is granting home builders subsidies of up to \$20,000 each to build this type of housing that will encourage urban areas to become more dense.

Government Orders

Since the owners set the rent, this type of housing has proven inaccessible to the poorest and most vulnerable members of our society. As a result, homelessness is increasing, a problem now affecting women and their families on a long-term basis. At the same time, discrimination against those seeking housing is increasing.

If this government truly wants to support a socio-economic program, it must consider social housing as an investment that ensures a community's long-term interest, which this budget does not do.

Women also suffer a great deal from a lack of access to employment insurance benefits. Since women hold the majority of part time jobs, since their status is often precarious, since they make up the greatest share of the self-employed, and since these jobs do not allow them to accumulate the 600 hours required to qualify for parental leave, sick leave and maternity leave, women are often forced to turn to social assistance to meet their needs.

By making the rules of eligibility for employment insurance more flexible, this government could truly demonstrate that it recognizes the fundamental relationship between social and economic policy.

Women had called for “the surplus in the employment insurance fund to be used to increase benefit payments, extend the benefits period, increase access and improve maternity and parental leave”.

Also, women need true maternity or parental leave. Nothing in this budget mentions the federal government's intention to negotiate with Quebec to reach an agreement for the transfer of employment insurance premiums to Quebec so that it can create a parental insurance plan.

• (1030)

Quebec's parental insurance plan is a new income replacement program designed to replace and strengthen maternity leave and parental leave under the federal government's employment insurance program. With improved eligibility—because self-employed and seasonal workers would qualify—and greater benefits, such as an income replacement rate of up to 75%, women could have children under much better and easier conditions.

A fourth factor that causes poverty is that, right now, old age security does not provide enough to live reasonably. The majority of seniors are women who live alone.

The budget contains nothing in terms of tax measures or other measures for seniors. There are no increases for pensions or old age pensions. Yet, income levels for this segment of the population have been declining steadily. Since women make up more than half of this group, they are the ones, for the most part, that are paying the price.

Safety is also an issue. For many women and children, poverty is often directly linked to family violence. The women taking part in the World March demanded that the federal government allocate “\$50 million to front-line, independent, feminist, women-controlled groups committed to ending violence against women, such as women's centres, rape crisis centres and women's shelters”.

Yet there is no mention of this in the 2003 budget. Judging by the statistics on this phenomenon, which show clearly that it is

increasing, what conclusion can one reach about a federal government that has nothing to say about it.

Now for the six weeks of compassionate leave mentioned in the federal budget. Taking care of a disabled person or a person requiring long term care implies that women, who are generally the ones to assume these responsibilities, will quickly become more impoverished, because they have fewer hours available to work for pay.

As a result, any pretence that allowing six weeks of employment insurance on compassionate grounds to those looking after a sick parent, child or spouse will compensate for lost earnings is a kind of “magical thinking”. When people are on EI, they are not making money. On the contrary, they are losing it. On employment insurance people merely exist, period. One might well ask how much money the government makes from the role of natural caregiver.

In closing, I will touch on the fact that the government also announced in its budget a higher ceiling for RRSPs. Even at the present level of \$13,500 for this year, I hardly need point out that there are very few women to whom this measure applies.

We could also discuss inadequate health measures. The response I will get is that improvements have been made to the national child benefit and access to child care. In actual fact, however, these actions are so tentative that they will have only minimal impact on women's struggle against poverty.

In Quebec, the Landry government has already put measures in place that meet women's needs, but it is hampered by the fiscal imbalance, which the federal government does not acknowledge.

If the money invested by the federal government in useless programs, in waste and in insufficient transfer payments could go to women, surely their living conditions would be improved.

• (1035)

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on the budget implementation act.

A budget was recently delivered and in that budget some of the key features and significant investments were in health care, families, research and development, learning and Canada's military, as well as tax reductions to encourage savings and investment, and new measures to make government spending more accountable.

The government presented a balanced budget for this year, the sixth consecutive balanced budget, and for the next two fiscal years as well. The budget would restore the full annual contingency reserve and economic prudence factors which have been part of our budgeting process since the government came into power in 1993.

Government Orders

The government recognizes the critical link between social and economic policy and continues its balanced approach to managing the nation's finances. This approach plays a critical role in building a Canada that all Canadians want.

It does that in three ways. First, by building a society Canadians value through investments in individual Canadians, their families and communities. Second, by building an economy that Canadians need by promoting productivity and innovation while staying fiscally prudent, which Canadians have also asked for. Finally it achieved the objectives of the budget by building the accountability that Canadians deserve by making government spending more transparent and accountable.

There are many provisions in the budget. I would like to address the Canada student loans program. I have three children. One has completed university, one is finishing off a master's degree at the University of Waterloo, and one is in the middle of her engineering program at Queen's University. I know very well how expensive it is to get an education in Canada, but I also know how important it is that our youth get the best education possible in the best interests of not only themselves but of Canada as a whole.

The government recognizes that skills development and lifelong learning are critical to the country's economic prosperity and to individual success. Between 1993 and 2001 the Canada student loans program assisted more than one and a half million full and part time students, an investment of approximately \$11.4 billion. In the 2000-2001 fiscal year the Canada student loans program provided \$1.57 billion in full and part time student loans at an average of \$4,554 per full time student.

Building upon our throne speech of 2002, it was our commitment to ensure access to affordable post-secondary education. Therefore, we continue to strengthen the student loans program by providing an additional \$60 million over two years in direct support to students.

The \$60 million measures in the 2003 budget are expected to be implemented by August of this year. They include, first, putting more money in the hands of students by allowing them to keep a greater share of income earned during their studies. The exemptions for income earned while in school would be increased to \$1,700 annually, being a maximum of \$50 a week, from the previous level of only \$600. Second, by extending access to interest relief, debt reduction, and repayment measures would help student borrowers experiencing hardship in their repayment. As a result of these measures, borrowers in difficult financial circumstances could have their student loan debt reduced by up to \$20,000 over three years. Third, we would be broadening the access to the Canada student loans program to protected persons, including convention refugees.

These actions respond to the key concerns of stakeholders and provincial and territorial governments who are partners in the delivery of the Canada student loans program.

This investment, along with other recent budget announcements, shows our ongoing commitment to ensuring that Canadians have the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge, and contribute to Canada's prosperity.

● (1040)

In my remaining time I would like to comment on an aspect that is not included in the budget. For a number of years now I have taken the opportunity to inform myself about fetal alcohol syndrome. Some know it as FAS. Fetal alcohol syndrome is a serious problem because the maternal consumption of alcohol during pregnancy turns out to be the leading known cause of mental retardation in Canada. It is a very expensive proposition and in fact fetal alcohol syndrome takes away the potential of a human being starting from birth. This is a tragedy.

When I first became a member of Parliament in 1993, and health care was recognized as the most important issue to Canadians, I asked to be on the health committee. When I went to that committee I looked at the history and tried to see what the committee had been working on in the prior Parliament. One of the reports it had issued was called "Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: The Preventable Tragedy".

I am married and have three children. I am well educated and very involved with my community. I spent nine years on the board of directors of my hospital but I had never heard of fetal alcohol syndrome until I became a member of Parliament. I cannot imagine how it was possible that I did not know about FAS or fetal alcohol effects, which is a similar problem. I did not know the risks we were taking as parents during the time we were having children.

If I did not know, I was absolutely convinced that other Canadians did not know. Although many people will suggest that it is common sense to abstain from or reduce the consumption of alcohol during pregnancy, as well as drugs and smoking, the fact is that the majority of Canadians do not know that it is not simply a matter related to people who are alcoholics. Canadians do not know that one drink at the wrong time can affect the fetal heart rate.

Fetal alcohol syndrome has associated with it characteristic facial features. I have done a lot of work on the issue of children right from conception and the research tells me that the facial features of a human being are established between days 15 and 22 of pregnancy. Canadian women do not even know they are pregnant between days 15 and 22. Those facial features are established within a human being between days 15 and 22 of pregnancy. For a woman waiting to find out that she is pregnant, it is too late.

In all the work I have done I have found that most of the NGOs and the programs we have are suggesting to women that if they are pregnant they should abstain or reduce their consumption of alcohol before it is too late. I have tried to convey the message that we should be speaking about the facts on a single sheet right across the country to say that if pregnancy is possible, if a woman is in her birthing years, if she is sexually active and not using protection, she should abstain from alcohol then and not wait until she has determined she is pregnant. Only then can we totally eliminate the risk of damaging the unborn child.

Government Orders

Although we have had references to fetal alcohol syndrome in past throne speeches and some moneys have been appropriated for public education, in this budget we have had yet again a false start. We have not made the kind of progress we should be making on fetal alcohol syndrome. I regret that this budget does not appropriate specific money to address this most serious preventable tragedy. I want my colleagues to know that I will continue to do the best that I can to promote public education about fetal alcohol syndrome, the preventable tragedy.

• (1045)

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say right at the top that I think it is a disgrace that it becomes necessary to call quorum here when we are discussing such important topics. I just listened to the speech by the Liberal member opposite who was talking about a very important subject and yet there was hardly anyone here to hear him, which is a disgrace.

Turning to Canada's fiscal situation, which is what we are talking about today, it has changed dramatically since the finance minister brought down his budget just a few weeks ago. I think everyone would have to agree that it is pretty obvious that the government's revenues will be way down this year from the predictions mainly because of the Liberals' incompetent handling of the Iraqi war situation and our relationship with the United States.

For example, I received an e-mail this morning from some Canadian friends who live in Sault Ste. Marie but who currently live in Tennessee. It stated:

Ted, I just picked up your email.

[We are in] Pigeon Forge [Tennessee and] our RV neighbour (from lower Michigan) said that he and his buddies had cancelled their annual fishing trip to Wawa, Ontario (north of the Soo) as they wouldn't feel comfortable under the current situation. When we played golf one day the starter said the executive of that golf course had held a vote on whether to ban Canadians from the course while the war was going on. The vote did not pass (so Canadians could still play) but in his view the vote had gone the wrong way.

Generally we have found an overwhelming sense of sadness that Canada was not supporting the U.S. but they can accept it. What they cannot accept is the assault by Canadian politicians on Bush and the U.S. position re the war.

Bill O'Reilly [a local talk show host] on his talk/news show [called the] (O'Reilly Factor) about a week ago stated that he had cancelled a planned holiday to Quebec for this summer. He did say that he would still consider going to western Canada because of their support [for the United States]. He is the one who has asked Americans to avoid travel to France and Quebec and to boycott buying products manufactured in France [and Quebec].

I received that e-mail from friends of mine who are in Tennessee and that is, apparently, what they are seeing on the ground there. That is happening all across the United States right now because of the incompetent handling of the Iraqi situation by the government opposite. It did not care when it made the statements in this place and outside of this place attacking Americans. It did not care what influence it would have and how it would affect our economy.

It will affect the government's budget because it will not have the revenues this year. It will see people lose jobs and income and it will lose taxes because of what it has done with its incompetent handling. It makes me pretty angry when I think about what the government has done to our economy through its carelessness and incompetence.

I will turn now to what the government does have in its budget. Earlier this morning the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern

Development stood in this place and congratulated himself and the government for turning over control of aspects of the government to the Yukon.

I can tell members of the House that the reason I and my colleagues in the official opposition are here is that we want something like that for western Canada. We want more control over our future in western Canada. We are sick of the government taking money out of western Canada to spend elsewhere and giving us very little say over our future and our destiny.

On March 10, 2003, a provincial congress was held in British Columbia hosted by our premier, Gordon Campbell, who is a Liberal but whose government just does not get on with that Liberal government over there. They really detest one another because the Liberal government of B.C. has more in common with the aims and ambitions of the Canadian Alliance than it does with the Liberals. Therefore Mr. Campbell is not very popular with the government. He called a provincial congress which was attended by elected officials from all around British Columbia: members of Parliament, MLAs, council members and mayors. We discussed issues that were affecting the province as a result of the government's budget, for example, federal fuel taxes. The fuel taxes taken out of B.C. by the federal government in the year 2000 amounted to \$750 million, but only 1/20th of 1% of that went back to British Columbia.

• (1050)

Are members aware that the United States government spent more on Canadian infrastructure at the border south of Vancouver than the federal government spent on all of the roads in British Columbia? What an absolute disgrace that the very neighbours the government is insulting and attacking are the ones who spent more on our infrastructure. It is a darn disgrace.

Let us look at another way the government is meddling in British Columbia, with no reason to do so. The federal Minister of Transport has asked VIA Rail to prepare a plan to run subsidized competitive services with the privately operated Rocky Mountaineer Railtours which runs a railway from Calgary into Vancouver. Rocky Mountaineer took over a money losing VIA Rail operation and turned it into a huge tourist attraction, running at a profit. Why is the minister trying to meddle with the private sector? I suppose he is promising up to \$3 billion more in subsidies for some incompetent railway to run services in competition with the private sector. We do not want it. The government is meddling in western Canada with this budget.

The softwood lumber issue is another example of incompetence. Over 80% of industry leaders now agree that it was the failure of the government to have a unified industry approach that is penalizing the British Columbia economy. It is why our forest sector is still in disarray. It is why the Liberal government of British Columbia is going it alone, visiting Washington, trying to get an agreement on lumber.

Government Orders

There is no doubt that the interests of the country are best served when the various levels of government work together. However there is no evidence that the federal government is the slightest bit interested in working with the Government of British Columbia and other western governments to make things better. It sees us as a cash cow to take money to spend elsewhere.

For example, there is mismanagement. The industry minister recently announced a \$60 million handout to two private companies in Ottawa headed by an Ottawa billionaire, Terence Matthews. The minister claimed that the money was not a gift and that he expected every nickel of the investment to be returned. Unfortunately, the minister's Technology Partnerships Canada does not have a very good record. In the time it has been around it has handed out close to \$2 billion but has only collected \$35 million back. Even if it had been a success, what justification is there to give a billionaire grants from the taxpayers' pocket? Surely Mr. Matthews' bank would have been happy to fund Mr. Matthews' research projects. As if the handout was not offensive enough, the government has accepted shares in Mr. Matthews' company as part payment for the loan. Now the government is getting into the stock market associated with its government handouts.

I know I do not have very much time to talk but I would like to mention social insurance number cards. Last year, Canada's Auditor General revealed that there were five million more SIN cards in circulation than there were people in the country. Can we imagine what that is doing to its budget? Five million more SIN cards are out there than there are people in the country. People are probably falsifying employment insurance claims and all sorts of other benefits, such as getting grants. We know the Auditor General has plenty of evidence and has uncovered other scandals where people have been getting grants using falsified SINS.

I wish I had time to talk for at least 20 minutes about the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada where \$140 million a year were blown away in ridiculous handouts. I probably have time to read one or two. The following was a grant given to Po Ling Smart at the University of Calgary who received \$27,000 to study chop suey and egg rolls. At the University of Toronto, Mr. Hy Luong received \$100,000 to study gender, class, religion and language socialization in Vietnam. Judith Knelman at the University of Western Ontario received \$21,103 to study deviancy and the new woman. Stephane Brutus at Concordia University received \$67,000 to study the cross-cultural investigation of multi-source feedback.

I have a long list of nonsense here that is wasted money. The government had better get its act together and revise its budget because its revenues are not going to be there.

•(1055)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise again, as the member for Lotbinière—L'Érable, even if the recommendations of the electoral commission now leave me with only 22% of the territory of my present riding. This redistribution has been a real cold shower for my constituents.

We have been working hard to turn our riding into a really rural and agricultural riding. Now, the Lotbinière RCM will be included in

a new riding with another urban area, and it will again be in the same situation it was in back in 1968, when it was in the same riding as another urban area, Victoriaville.

Between 1968 and 1997, it was Victoriaville that decided who would be the member for Lotbinière. After the recommendation made public last Friday, constituents in the Lotbinière RCM will have their member elected by the residents of municipalities that are now part of the new city of Lévis.

I still wish to make this comment because, since last Friday, I have received many calls from individuals and organizations. Obviously, this is a difficult situation, but I told them I would do my very best to advance the interests of the Lotbinière RCM and represent them in an appropriate way.

Since I am always talking about the situation in my riding of Lotbinière—L'Érable, allow me to add that when I started out in politics, in 1997, I had already realized that we had no federal services for a population of 70,000. A lot of work has been done since. However, people who want to deal with Human Resources Development Canada, particularly with the Employment Insurance Office, have to go to Saint-Romuald, Thetford Mines or Victoriaville, while some even have to go all the way to Drummondville, in a riding without public transit.

I have seen young people having to ask around to get a ride to Saint-Romuald, for example. Once there, they were told that the questionnaire had not been filled properly, that they had to get more references and come back. If that is providing federal services in a riding like mine, Lotbinière—L'Érable, there is a problem.

Moreover, since I became an MP in 1997, surpluses have accumulated in both finance ministers' budgets and in the EI fund, and that money could have been used to address these shortcomings.

Today, we are still in a difficult situation. As I was saying, since there is no public transit in my riding, my office has become the place where the people of Plessisville come to get services that the federal government does not want to provide in my riding.

I would also like to talk about the whole issue of agriculture, because the agricultural industry is in jeopardy.

When I sat on the standing committee on agriculture and agrifood, and taking into account the consultations I held on Canada's position on the matter, I became convinced that the current Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is going to impose national standards that will jeopardize entire components of the net income stabilization account in Quebec.

Quebec's agricultural model is a cost-effective system that allowed our agricultural industry to prosper. Unfortunately, however, with the new strategic framework proposed by the federal government, Quebec's entire agricultural model is in jeopardy, and the Financière agricole du Québec, which was created by the Quebec government, will suffer such a significant loss of revenue that it will have to make difficult choices in order to share the money it will have.

Why did the system work for so long, and why are we now in a situation where national standards are being imposed on us?

• (1100)

Is the Canadian government trying to say that we must achieve harmonization and implement national standards to be stronger vis-à-vis the World Trade Organization? It is incredible to see how this government is behaving.

There are problems at the border. Every day, we see substitutes coming in, butter and milk mixes. This government thinks that this problem will be submitted to the World Trade Organization, to a multilateral tribunal, to try to solve a bilateral problem. If the Minister for International Trade and the Minister of Agriculture start submitting to the WTO problems that could be solved bilaterally, I can tell you that things will go slowly here in the next few years.

I would like to touch on a third point where, once again, we have seen the real face of federal Liberals. We know that, with the Séguin report, with a commission where all the social and economic stakeholders in Quebec agreed that there was a blatant fiscal imbalance, the response of the new Minister of Finance—much like the response of the former Minister of Finance and the current Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs—has been that, no matter who the leader is, we will still deny that fiscal imbalance exists. No matter who the next Prime Minister is, we will still hold the Quebec people in a stranglehold. This will not change.

Again, the excessive centralization that we see with this government, which wants to standardize everything from coast to coast, makes us realize that it is unable to see the tax situation of the Quebec people for what it really is. The new finance minister had no trouble becoming as arrogant as the former finance minister, who might become the next Prime Minister. It is not very encouraging.

Let me tell you that the people of Quebec are not too eager to have as their next Prime Minister the man who has cut the health and education transfers and presided over the theft of the surplus in the EI fund. Before even taking over the reins as the next Prime Minister of Canada, the current finance minister is still arguing that there is no fiscal imbalance.

However, the Conference Board of Canada and all of the social and economic stakeholders in Quebec, including Yves Séguin, are saying exactly the opposite. Why will the government opposite not admit that there is fiscal imbalance? The other provinces have said there is.

The current Premier of Quebec has had to work very hard to get \$800 million to ensure adequate health care in Quebec. As long as Quebec remains in the centralized Canadian federation, it will have trouble providing adequate health and education services to our children.

Government Orders

Lastly, I would remind the House that I worked in communications for some time and I love to play with words. So, let me tell all Quebecers that we can be strong together on April 14. We are ready for a new referendum for a sovereign Quebec.

* * *

• (1105)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I believe if you seek it you would find unanimous consent for the following:

That following the conclusion of the debate on Bill C-280 all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill be deemed put, a recorded division demanded and deferred until 3 p.m. Wednesday, April 2, 2003.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster have the consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Does the House give its consent to the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2003

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-28, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 18, 2003, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, many people have spoken to the bill today and in past days and many will speak after I do as well. Rather than dwell on its specific details, I would like to talk about the whole concept of government budgets, how governments spend their money and for that matter why they spend their money.

In this country there is far too much government, particularly at the federal level. In order to deal with that we need to look at why we even have government. I recognize we need to have government, there is no question of that, but what exactly is it that government should be doing for us?

Government should exist for the purpose of doing things for people that must be done, which they either cannot or will not do for themselves. That is the sole purpose of government. What government should not do is be in business. Especially it should not be in business to compete against the private sector.

Government Orders

We need to reduce government to do only those things which people must have done that they either cannot or will not do for themselves. Having reduced it to that, we next need to bring the government as close as possible to the people it serves. People should have the best access possible to their elected representatives. If an issue can be handled at the provincial, regional or local level, that is where it should be handled. Only those things which are best done at the national level should indeed be done here in Ottawa by the federal government.

There is a role obviously for the federal government. There are things that are best done at the federal level, but the federal government is involved in far more than that. That is why there are such huge and wasteful budgets. That is why there have been such overwhelming deficits in the past. That is why there is still such an outstanding debt. The interest payments on it are eating up a lot of the money that taxpayers send to the government.

If we took this to its ultimate conclusion, we could quite conceivably reach a point where it no longer became necessary or indeed practical to pay federal income tax. I know there are a lot of people out there who think the federal government does not even have the constitutional right to collect income tax but in actual fact it does. I have read this. It has been brought up a lot in my riding. As a result of that I did check into it and I can sadly confirm that it does indeed have the right to tax Canadians, and tax them it does. If we reduced government to doing only those things that governments should be doing, then we may come to a point where it would not be necessary to collect federal income tax.

Obviously if the government still had a role at the federal level, which it would, it would have to have the money to fulfill that role. What is the alternative to the government taxing the residents of the various provinces and territories? It is simply this. Taxes would be done at the local level and the federal government in essence would bill the provinces for services rendered.

The bill would be based on the provincial GDP. Each province would pay a different amount of money for that service. That in essence would become the equalization payment. A province that was richer and had a stronger GDP would pay a little more for the service than a province that was having a little trouble with its economy. That would be adjusted constantly. It would actually work a lot fairer than the system we have right now.

Right now there is an incredible amount of waste in the government. It is almost inevitable that the waste will continue as long as there is a government which is spread so thinly over so many things and which is breaking in on areas of provincial and local jurisdiction. At times its departments are tripping over one another. The justice minister is trying to hand off the white elephant called the firearms registry program to the solicitor general. There are so many glitches between the departments he has not yet figured out how to do that. It would be a whole lot better if he simply shut it down.

As a member of Parliament I am often asked by people, particularly in my riding, how I like the job, if I enjoy the job, if there are things I do not like about it and whether I find it frustrating. I tell them that yes, it is frustrating and that the most frustrating thing is coming to Ottawa and seeing all the problems that confront this country. There are far more than the average person would realize. It

is frustrating to realize we could either correct or at least put on the road the solutions to almost every one of those problems in 12 months but there is not the political will to do it. That is incredibly frustrating.

● (1110)

Anytime I speak about government spending and budgets and everything else, I would be remiss if I did not mention my favourite ultimate boondoggle for the federal government and that is VIA Rail.

VIA Rail is an example of why government should not be in business. Aside from the fact that VIA competes directly against all modes in the private transportation sector, the phenomenal waste in VIA Rail is astounding. VIA Rail is subsidized by taxpayers, and those taxpayers include all of us in the House, subsidized to the amount of half a million dollars a day. Each year for just the operational subsidy of VIA Rail, the taxpayers of each individual riding send, on average, over \$600,000 to Ottawa for the government to give to VIA Rail to fund its operating deficit.

Since 1993 when the Liberals took power, VIA Rail has been subsidized by the Liberal government to the tune of almost \$3 billion. That is three times the amount of money it wasted on the firearms registry and we know how outraged people are about that. It is time that people started realizing how much of their money is actually going into VIA Rail.

With 301 ridings in this country, this means that, on average, taxpayers of each riding have sent to Ottawa \$10 million for the government to give to VIA Rail. Members should think about what they could do in their ridings with \$10 million. I am sure that in their ridings, like mine, they probably have some hospitals that are underfunded and need some modernization or some new equipment. I am sure there are roads and highways that are in disrepair. There is a variety of different problems, including housing and others. Members should think about how many of those things could be dealt with if they had the \$10 million that taxpayers have sent to Ottawa in order to fund VIA Rail.

The firearms registry is yet another example. The Auditor General said that the Liberal government has now spent \$800 million on a program that was supposed to cost \$2 million. That is 400 times the estimate. If the program worked the way the government claims it works, some people might scratch their heads and say that \$800 million is a lot of money but if some good can come out of it then perhaps, no pun intended, it is a bullet we need to bite and we need to spend that money.

However, let us think about the two things the government claims. The government claims that the gun registry it is going to prevent crime. Really, how is causing law-abiding duck hunters to register their long guns going to prevent crime? Criminals, by definition, break the law, so all the government has done is give them one more law to break and I am quite sure they are quite willing to do that.

Government Orders

Aside from that, after over 70 years of a strict handgun registration system, handguns are still the weapon of choice of criminals. Criminals have chosen to use something that has been subject to strict registration while all other firearms have not been registered even though this meant breaking the law. Those who are going to rob the 7-Eleven or the local bank do not stop to think whether or not they are breaking the law by having an unregistered firearm.

The whole concept that the gun registry will prevent crime is absolute nonsense and absolutely unsustainable.

The other claim is that it is going to save lives. The government likes to throw figures around. It has said that the registry will save lives in a variety of ways. I have never heard one real, substantive explanation of how that will occur. The government says it has prevented people who should not have firearms from getting permission to buy them. We had a firearms acquisition program before, one that we supported, one that the firearms community supported. We support the registration of the owners; it is the firearms that are questionable because of the cost and because of the uselessness of that particular program.

The government says the registry will prevent domestic violence. How? It is not going to prevent anything. First, any number of things are used in cases of domestic violence. The mere fact that someone has acquired a weapon legally and the fact that the weapon is registered is not going to make it any less deadly or any less threatening for someone who would break our laws. Whether it is a firearm, a kitchen knife, or a rope, or whether it is burning down a house, it does not matter in terms of registration. That does not stop a thing.

• (1115)

Had it cost the \$2 million the government said it would, perhaps we could say that even if it saves only one life it is worth it. By the end of this year the cost will be close to \$1 billion and an end is nowhere in sight. Now the government admits that the program, which was to cost only \$2 million, is going to cost between \$60 million and \$80 million a year just to sustain it once it is up and running.

These are the kinds of things the government is doing in wasting taxpayers' dollars. It then comes forward with a budget and says, "Look how good we are and all the wonderful things we have done".

There is a tremendous amount of increased spending in that budget. Instead of increasing the amount of spending, the government should have diverted some of the money currently being wasted on things like the firearms program and VIA Rail. These are the kinds of things for which the government has to start reining in its spending. If it wants taxpayers' support and wants taxpayers to understand why they are sending that money to Ottawa, taxpayers have to understand that the money is being spent responsibly. At this point it is not, and there is no indication that it will be anywhere in the near future, at least not before the next election.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me an excellent opportunity to speak about something

close to my heart, something that has been talked about a lot in the past year. All the members of the Bloc Québécois also feel strongly about this issue, as do a good number of other members in this House. The issue is the status of seniors.

I want to talk about the living conditions of senior citizens, who are among the most disadvantaged in our society. When I talk about disadvantaged seniors, I am not necessarily talking about all senior citizens. I agree that most seniors probably have the means and the health they need to take care of themselves. However, I am speaking of those who are eligible for the guaranteed income supplement and who have not received it for a number of years.

About a year ago, the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, discovered that some 270,000 Canadians, including 68,000 Quebecers, had been denied the guaranteed income supplement. We must remember that the guaranteed income supplement is given to seniors who have pretty much nothing to live on but their old age pension. It is an amount that is added so that people who do not have another source of income, or who have very little in the way of other income, can live a bit more decently.

For example, a single person whose income is below \$12,600 is eligible for the guaranteed income supplement. For a couple, the income figure is around \$16,400; if their income, not counting the old age pension, is below that level, they are entitled to the guaranteed income supplement.

It turned out that 270,000 people in that category across Canada, including 68,000 in Quebec, were deprived of this bare minimum, just because they could not be found. People who cannot be found are seldom rich people. Rich people are usually found. The tax man manages to find them and get their money, you can be sure of that. However, when the Department of National Revenue or the Department of Human Resources Development owe money to the most disadvantaged, strangely enough, they often cannot find them. Those who cannot be found are often the most vulnerable.

People who are vulnerable because of their age, old age, are not responsible for their situation. Over the weekend I met a very well-known gentleman of our region. He is 82 years old and recently suffered a stroke that left him all but disabled. With only 20% vision, he can no longer read nor write. As a man of the Church, he has people around who can help him. Yet, he told me, "I have been thinking about this issue of yours. Without all these people around me, I would be extremely vulnerable; I would not be able to even assert my rights".

And these are the people, those who qualify for the guaranteed income supplement, who were forgotten, deliberately forgotten by the system. The more I discuss this issue, the more I tour Quebec—I have held 30 meetings across Quebec to meet with these people, the press and those concerned about this issue—the more I realize that people are shocked. They have been forgotten.

Government Orders

There is \$3 billion in the public coffers that belongs to these people. I will not keep my lips sealed, I will repeat it, because it makes no sense. It is unacceptable, especially in such circumstances.

This tour has yielded results. Now, in Quebec, at least 20,000 of the 68,000 individuals that we were trying to reach, have been contacted. This means that 30% of the people that I was looking for have been contacted and, today, they are getting the guaranteed income supplement to which they are entitled. However, the retroactive period is 11 months.

• (1125)

If a person owes money to the government, what is the retroactive period? It is at least five years. And if the person is deemed to be partly responsible, the retroactive application is full and includes penalties and interests.

In this case, because the most vulnerable persons were not responsible for this situation, the government applied an 11 month retroactive period once these people were located.

What is even more shocking is what happens when these people try to protect their rights. André Lecorre initiated a class action suit on behalf of all those people whose rights had been violated. However, the government is not challenging the substance of the issue, but its form. The government pleads its case before the court to which we have referred it, but it is never the right court. We are now before the federal court. The government will once again argue that this is not the right court and will say that we have to go before an administrative tribunal.

The result of all this is that it will take seven or eight years before the seniors whose rights were violated get what they are entitled to. But how many of them will be left in seven or eight years? The government is hoping that these people will no longer be around. It continues to violate the rights of these people and to rob them. This is a disgrace. It does not make sense.

I would like the support of the House—I know that my party supports me—and the support of all those responsible for the most vulnerable members of our society. I am asking for the government to show some honour.

A class action suit has been filed. If the government takes the position that this money is not owed, it must at least plead the case on its merits. If it owes no more than eleven months, then fine, these people will not be left waiting and hoping. They will just know that their rights were ignored.

It has to stop making the case for form's sake and wasting time. It does not have the right to waste time at the expense of people whose days are numbered. Whether it likes it or not, these people are not in the bloom of youth but in their twilight years. It has no right to waste time here.

The very day the judge told André Lecorre that he was talking to the wrong court, he had lost his wife at 6 a.m.

Obviously, the government owes a little less money now that she has passed away. How many other people like her have died and will never get their due?

This is a good opportunity to talk about it again, in hopes that we will be able to convince the government that this situation is shameful in a country such as ours.

Three billion dollars has been allocated to paying off government debt. It is not true that these people are responsible for this debt. This \$3 billion must be given to the people that are located and to whom we owe money.

We need to stop being stingy and stop wasting time. If we really want to find out whether or not we owe this money, we need to base the argument on the substance of the issue. Let us find out now, instead of dragging the case from one court to another, so that all of the plaintiffs are dead by the time it comes time to pay up. This is unacceptable. I will use every opportunity I can get, in the House and outside, to argue this matter.

You may be surprised, Mr. Speaker. I have contacts in the field you used to work in. You must know that there is money in sports. Someone you know very well said to me, "I am prepared to carry a sign and demonstrate over an issue like this because what we are doing to our seniors is not right".

We are violating the rights of those who helped build our society. Most of them are mothers who had families and never had an opportunity to work outside the home. They are the ones who have been wronged the most.

My colleague, the member for Sherbrooke, was with me during a meeting in Sherbrooke where we met a family whose mother was deprived of \$90,000 over her lifetime. She lived with the barest minimum, yet, when she died, the government owed her \$90,000. To me this is unacceptable.

I thank the House for allowing me to raise this one more time.

• (1130)

[*English*]

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to the budget implementation act, Bill C-28.

Budget 2003 reflects our government's commitment to make Canada a land of ever widening opportunity for all our citizens. It acts on the promise in the Speech from the Throne that benefits of the new knowledge economy will touch every community, every family and every Canadian.

When the House was not in session for two weeks recently, I took the opportunity to go to my riding. There are over half a million square miles to cover. I took the opportunity to travel to the upper part of my riding. I have 33 communities. I went to Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour and Holman Island. These are very remote communities but very thriving. In remote communities the cost of living is very high. Everything the government does really impacts on the lives of the people who live in the remotest regions of our country.

In the community of Sachs Harbour I was blessed to meet with the mayor and council and talk about some of their needs. It is interesting that the issue of policing came up. There are no RCMP stations. Mayor Andy Carpenter was very well pronounced on that issue.

Government Orders

We addressed the issue of aboriginal policing in the budget. That was very appropriate and might prove to be very useful.

I also went to Banks Island where there are 50,000 muskox. The Inuvialuit people of that region have taken it upon themselves to cull some of the herd. They use every part of the animal basically for food. They brought in a food inspector from Alberta to go through the whole food inspection process from the beginning to the end.

The hide of the animal is taken to a shearer in less than 15 minutes so it does not cool off. They use what is called the qiviut, wool of the finest quality that comes off of the animal. It is rendered into a wool that is like mohair. It is called qiviut in the Inuvialuktun language. It is an absolutely fabulous industry.

I wish I were wearing my sweater today. I know we are not allowed to use props but qiviut sweaters are absolutely beautiful. I was given one by Nellie Cournoyea, the chair of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. These products are rendered from all of the byproducts of the animal. The hide itself is rendered into different leather products. It is very stylish and classy.

One of the people who is forging ahead and working with the different government departments on this initiative is a guy by the name of Patrick Schmidt. The work this man does on behalf of the Inuvialuit is outstanding.

I am so proud of those people. The people in Sachs Harbour live in a small remote community. The weather was very bad but the plane landed in close to blizzard conditions. Travelling is an enormous undertaking. We provide some very good opportunities and good facilities for their undertakings. There is an airport.

I went on to Holman Island, the home of printmaking. It is absolutely fabulous. The land is so beautiful. As I flew from Sachs Harbour to Holman, I could see Cape Parry or Pin Main where the distant early warning system is quite evident. We get all of our information for the military in the remote regions of Canada through this system.

• (1135)

It is tremendous to think of the role my riding and the occupants of those lands play in the whole issue of Arctic sovereignty. That is very important as well.

Not all of the issues that relate to the military are necessarily financial ones. A lot of technically complicated international agreements speak to the kinds of things that are happening up there.

I also went to Paulatuk. Paulatuk is interesting because it has a young population, as do most of those communities. It is looking to build a youth centre. It is working with its young people to help develop the community.

I am supposed to be talking about the budget, but the budget relates to the way people live across the country.

Going back to Holman Island, the interesting thing about Canada is the kind of travel that people do. We went to the school in Holman. The teacher in charge is an Inuit woman who speaks the Inuit language. We went through all the cultural classes and looked at the quality of education the kids are receiving. It is awesome.

I also noticed that there is a high number of people from Newfoundland. Think of the distance between Newfoundland and Holman and how far those people have come. Those people are really resilient. The Atlantic sends a lot of people to that region.

It is awesome to do this during my time off because it really puts me in touch with the people at the community level. There are perhaps another 15 communities to visit before I have completed the cycle. The riding is so huge and the transportation costs are enormous.

Someone told me in Paulatuk that it costs \$9 for a grapefruit. Imagine paying \$9 for a grapefruit. Imagine what people pay to feed their families properly. That is why the communities are highly reliant on caribou and country foods. It is a very healthy way for the community to sustain itself and it is also why issues that affect that are really important to them.

The region I come from has a very young population. There are many things happening. We live in one of the most beautiful parts of Canada. All of the Northwest Territories comprise my riding. It reaches out toward Yukon, into the high Arctic, over to Nunavut and down to the Alberta-Saskatchewan-B.C. borders. It is absolutely phenomenal what is in the territories and the potential that exists right now.

The \$2.5 billion annual federal investment on the national child benefit has helped to reduce poverty to the lowest level in 20 years. It has had a really good impact. That is important for my riding because it has a very young community.

I noticed another thing in my community. If we are going to do resource development, we have to invest money. I do not think we are a sinkhole for money in the Northwest Territories. We have the greatest opportunity to become self-sustaining. We need infrastructure. We need money to make it cheaper, for instance, for us to build a pipeline.

If we have a completed road, it will be cheaper for us to build the pipeline that we are talking about. I am convinced in my heart of hearts that we are going to build the Mackenzie Valley pipeline first. We need to get behind it and support it. It would be good for the north and for all of Canada. It is something we need to do to sustain our energy needs.

Along with infrastructure, I also wanted to talk about how we have managed to work with the new industry that has hit Canada. I am not sure we have done enough. There is a lot more to do with the diamond industry.

On July 15 I believe we will be opening the second diamond mine in the Northwest Territories. We are the top fourth diamond producing jurisdiction in the world and may end up being the first. We are exponentially putting money back into the fiscal coffers to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. We need to invest in that industry. We need to help those people to do a better job. We need to help the syndicated jewellers and the value added industry build a stronger economy in the north because the opportunity is there.

Government Orders

• (1140)

The other thing is in the north we have the absolutely best opportunity to set a template for the rest of Canada and the world because it is majority aboriginal populated. To build something that will sustain itself, the government will get money back if it invests in the north. That is absolutely important, and the budget speaks to that.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today and join the discussions on the budget implementation.

The last member spoke eloquently about the impacts, or lack of impact in some areas, of the budget in her riding. I guess we all face that same dilemma. Certainly it is difficult to come up with a one size fits all budget that addresses issues across the country.

However we see a spending spree with this budget. It is a kind of shotgun approach to everything and anything that has been on the Liberal list for the last nine years. We almost swear there will be a spring election this year when we start analyzing the budget. I know you look up with shock and awe, Mr. Speaker, but when we look at the spending, a little here and a little there in dribs and drabs, we swear somebody is shaping up for an election so he or she can point to all the wonderful things that finally have been done. Maybe it is just somebody shopping for a legacy. Maybe it is not an election at all; maybe it is just a legacy budget. However not a lot of folks out there fell for it.

I have become part of a new committee in the House that reviews government spending and looks at the estimates. How the money is allocated to different things is done in the budget and then we start to approach it from the standpoint of whether it is working. My interest in that committee lies more in the performance reports on a lot of these initiatives we see lined in a budget. Did we get bang for our buck? Did taxpayers actually get a program in which they were interested? Is there anything in there that they could say it is good for them? The more and more I talk to my particular constituents, they say that it has missed them totally.

I will not give the travelogue that the last member did but my riding is very dependent on agriculture. We have been on a downhill slide for the last five years, I guess since the demise of the Crow rate. We did not get the second half of that package to do the value added out west. The government took away the Crow rate that gave us the subsidy on shipping our product but it did not allow us then to take over the remanufacture of and add to the value of our product. That was supposed to be the second half of that package. We are still waiting for that, and that was five or six years ago. It has not happened. We felt that sting in my riding.

We look at this budget and the previous budgets. The same agriculture minister is still here so I guess it rests with him in an AIDA program, which he and his bureaucrats in Ottawa developed. It was supposed to address issues out west. They missed the target. The formula was wrong. The level of support was totally wrong. The area I represent Saskatchewan was hardest hit. It did not qualify for any of that money.

Of the money that went into the program, a good chunk of it, some 35% to 40% went into administration; money in, money out. Then the government compounded the problem by coming out with a

program called CFIP, a son of AIDA. The only thing that carried on through were all the fundamental mistakes. There was still no way to trigger that sucker for most of the farmers in my area. They just could not make it work. The few that did systematically faced audits and clawbacks by Revenue Canada, with interest and penalties attached. In its wisdom the government retroactively and arbitrarily changed the rules. It did it all by itself.

There is a lot of discussion in this place about retroactivity in laws. We cannot do it with the sex offender registry because we are invading the bad guy's privacy and his constitutional rights. We cannot do retroactivity in a DNA database because their constitutional rights as criminals supercede the victim. However we can retroactively change the rules and regulations against farmers, and less people qualify. It flies in the face of logic and a lot of my folks are starting to come to terms with it. In spite of the government and its lack of initiative, they will carry on. That is the pioneering spirit which is alive and well.

I have a tremendous base in my riding too that are elk producers. There has been a lot of discussion about the elk industry in the last while. Unfortunately, a lot of it has been negative press with the chronic wasting disease. There has not been an instance in the past year and some. That is great, maybe we are on top of it. However we see the numbers. Roughly the same number of elk have been put down, as we saw with the scarpie epidemic in Quebec and the east side of Ontario.

The government is coming out now with a new policy. It has started valuing the elk at \$2,000 a head when probably the average value is \$15,000 to \$16,000. The government is paying \$2,000 for a \$16,000 elk when it puts it down. We saw that same formula used in scarpie where a sheep or goat was valued at \$300 or thereabouts and the government doubled it. It paid out at \$600. How do we justify that to elk producers who see the value of their herd? The government increased the pay out to \$4,000, which was still a quarter of the market value at that time, yet it doubled the value for the sheep payout.

Government Orders

• (1145)

It is Liberal logic and Liberal math. How can Liberals do that? I guess their MPs represent some of those areas so they have paid out and taxpayers have taken it through the nose. However my guys suffered on account of that. I still have folks who are doing battle with the agricultural inspection agency under Agriculture Canada because it has quarantined their ground. They have cleaned it up and have done everything the CFIA has asked of them. They dug up all the top soil, hauled it away and buried it with lime. They sprayed down the equipment, the buildings, the barns, the corrals, and everything else to sterilize the ground according to CFIA, the same thing the sheep producers had to do. My guys are still not allowed to put elk back on that ground, yet the sheep are back grazing in those pastures in Quebec.

My guys are to the point now where they have initiated a lawsuit against the government, and good for them. They need to wake somebody up here. Why are the rules different in one area than in another? Scrapie and CWD are the same diseases. They are attacking different livestock but they are the same darn thing. Why are my guys being punished? They did not see anything addressing a program in the budget. They wanted a three year program to put elk back in, then go back and test them but it is not in the budget. CFIA says that it cannot do it because there is no budget. Where is the money? It has money for a lot of other pet projects. Where is the money for the elk guys? It is not in here.

That is not all that hit farmers. The agricultural minister has come out with another new program. He changed the initials again. Now it is the APF. He shortened it by one letter. Maybe it will be better but I do not think so. Again, he cannot sell the darn thing to the provincial agriculture ministers unless he blackmails them and beats them into taking it or else. He cannot sell it to any farm group. Nobody out there supports it.

He had set an arbitrary deadline of April 1. He has backed off on that because he cannot find anybody who agrees with him other than his own bureaucrats. Rightly so because it will be a dismal failure. The funding has been cut again. The funding for agriculture, the third largest contributor to our GDP, is 1% of federal spending. We lose more than that through the cracks in one day. It is just not fair. My farmers realize that the APF will be a dismal failure as well. Most of my guys will not try to qualify for it.

I have another problem with the tail end of the CFIP. That program ends in 2003. All the billing and everything like that will be cleaned up by October. I have more and more guys in my riding who finally were able to trigger something in the 2002-03 crop year. However they cannot apply for CFIP because their fiscal year-end falls past January 2002. It just does not work for them. They are being told they have to wait for the applications for 2003. There will not be any because the program will be done, so my guys get squeezed out again because of a non-fiscal year end.

Did the bureaucrats not consider all this stuff? Apparently not. They wrote a program to get the public relations spin in the big cities so we had a safe, secure food supply. Again that is where the money will go in this budget. It will not go to the ordinary producer. Milk does not come off a shelf at Safeway, it comes out of a cow. Somebody had to get it there. Meat does not come off a shelf in the

butcher shop, it came off an animal. It had to get there. With the bread, somebody had to grow the grain before they could grind it.

Agriculture has been forgotten totally in this budget. We have seen other instances in Saskatchewan over this past winter. We saw Revenue Canada come down with a heavy boot on junior hockey. It is saying that the little stipend the junior hockey players get for room and board, the \$250 or \$300 a month paid directly to the parents who board them, is income. The players are under the age of 18. Revenue Canada is saying that the player has income on which he has to pay EI. He does not have to pay CPP because he is not 18 yet.

We have generated tax and EI. Some of these poor little hockey teams, which are run by charitable organizations, have been hit with up to \$14,000, and they do not have it. They have charitable status. Not only that, the young hockey player who gets hit with a bill for \$600, \$700 or \$800 does not have it. He is a young guy still going to school. The government had that program in effect through Saskatchewan. It whacked all the hockey teams there. It moved into Manitoba and it quit. I guess it hit a Liberal riding. It does not dare go into Ontario with that because that is the heartland for Liberalism, but it has not given the money back.

Taxation is all about fairness and we have not seen it. If the government is going to tax hockey players in Saskatchewan and their teams, then it should carry it across the board, and I would not have a legitimate complaint. However if it is only going to target Saskatchewan, then I have a complaint and a righteous one.

• (1150)

We look at the ludicrous amount of money spent in Bill C-68. We look at our junior hockey teams being hammered. We see agriculture being left out of the budget. We see a security budget from last year that left out the police and our military again. This budget just does not do it for the ordinary Canadian.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be recognized to speak on Bill C-28, the budget implementation bill.

I listened to the comments of the members who spoke previous to me. Since there was no opportunity for questions and comments, I will add a few comments during my speech to the budget.

It was interesting to hear the member from the Northwest Territories speak about diamonds. It is an extremely new and valuable industry for Canada. Without question, I think there is probably as much opportunity or more opportunity in the diamond industry today than probably any other sector of the economy in Canada. It holds great promise for northern Canada, our aboriginal peoples and the newcomers to the north.

Government Orders

However an issue about diamonds, which the member did not bring up, is the fact that the diamond industry has flourished basically on its own. The government has ignored it. Perhaps that is to the benefit of the industry. Most things that the government pays too much attention to become overburdened with red tape.

If the member is really interested in the diamond industry, there are a couple of things she could pursue, and I would suggest she does. First, traditionally it has taken four and a half years to permit a new mine, which is ridiculous and entirely too long. Understand that these mines are environmentally friendly. They do not use a lot of noxious chemicals and they are in isolated areas. In some instances that process has been shortened to two years. With an industry that does not pollute, mines should receive environmental permits within a 12 month period, and everybody would be happy with the process.

Second, the government has ignored for so long the cutting and polishing industry. Finally we have a fledgling industry in the NWT in Yellowknife and in Edmonton. We should get rid of the excise tax. This tax is no longer relevant on manufactured jewellery and stones in Canada. It is time to get rid of the excise tax. If the government really wants to encourage an industry, then it has to do something about the tax system that holds that industry back. If the member would like to work on those issues, I am sure she would get some benefit and gain for her constituents.

The budget will be known as the Liberal spending budget of billions of dollars that Canadian taxpayers will be paying for a great many years.

What is in Bill C-28 is almost as noticeable as what is not in the bill. The Alliance member who spoke previous to me said that it was a shotgun approach. Those are exactly the same words I intended to use. It is a shotgun approach where a person has a shotgun with a load of No 8 shot, stands back about 25 yards points at the target and hits just about everything on that target. What is hit on the target is important. However what is even more important is what has not been hit on this target.

Our trading relationship with the United States has not been hit on the government target. It has been ignored. For example, again a member speaking to this budget bill mentioned the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. What has been the response from the CFIA on the American bioterrorism bill? Where are we in this country with north-south trade?

I will tell the House where we are with north-south trade after the actions of the government in recent weeks. We are in serious trouble with it. We are also in serious trouble in lack of response and lack of infrastructure to deal directly with the bioterrorism bill.

• (1155)

The basis of the American bioterrorism bill is to ensure food quality and food safety of all food products entering the United States. Part of the bill would mean that any exporter in Canada would have to give 12 hours' notice. There are all kinds of products that come out of Canada without 12 hours' or 24 hours' notice. The majority of Canadian products are on less than 12 or 24 hours' notice.

Fish products that come out of southwestern Nova Scotia from the South shore are about six hours from the Canadian border. They

cross on the ferry in Digby, which is two hours from Calais and the American border. Fresh products destined for New York or Boston markets are expected to be there on same day delivery. Exporters cannot afford to have a 24 hour, 36 hour, 72 hour delay or whatever it may be. That delay is there now.

The best thing that the budget could have done would have been to shore up and guarantee our continued trade and therefore our continued prosperity with our major trading partners.

Let us take one example out of the budget which is the roughly \$68 million which was voted for the gun control bill. The Liberals continually call it the gun control bill. It is not a gun control bill. It is for a registry that has milked money from Canadian taxpayers and if this bill passes through the Senate it will continue to milk money for generations and it will never stop.

It is even more interesting what the present and former ministers of finance are saying about this. The former minister of finance, when he was minister of finance, thought this was fine. It was okay to hide money from the Canadian public. It was okay to take money that was supposed to be in the main estimates and put it in the supplementary estimates. It was okay to move money from department to department through the Treasury Board. It was okay to hide the truth from Canadians.

Now, that same former minister of finance is saying that all members of cabinet must bear responsibility and that he is prepared to accept his share. That is a big statement to spend \$68 million of taxpayers' money and \$800 million in total, soon to swell to \$1.2 billion, soon to become even more swollen to \$1.4 billion, \$1.6 billion, \$1.8 billion, \$2 billion and on into perpetuity.

What else did the former minister of finance say? He said that the cost overruns were revealed to Parliament. That would be incorrect. The cost overruns were not revealed to Parliament. Parliament found out about them.

He said further that what we must get the report the minister commissioned and we must ensure this kind of thing never happens again. Well, it happened on that former finance minister's watch. That is every bit a juvenile response to an excessive amount of overspending under the former finance minister's watch as the juvenile response that the present Minister of Finance has given to a similar issue dealing with Canadian security.

All of a sudden the present Minister of Finance is interested in talking about a perimeter with the United States for trade that would protect the Canadian economy in years to come. The Progressive Conservative Party has always supported a perimeter for trade. We think it is a smart idea. How much money, of the billions spent in the last budget, went into looking at a safe perimeter for trade and safety for the people of North America, Canadians, Americans and Mexicans? Zero.

• (1200)

I appreciate having the opportunity to speak to the bill and I am sure that there are many other members who will want to.

Government Orders

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to the budget implementation act. The official opposition will be opposing it when it comes before us for a vote.

We will oppose it because we think the bill and the budget upon which it is based represent the wrong choices for Canada at a critical moment. They are the wrong choices economically and financially with respect to our national security. We believe that it is the continuation of a string of wrong choices which have led to the largest expansion of the federal government in post-war history in a three year period. Over the past three years spending increases have averaged 10% per annum, levels which have not been seen since the late 1970s and indeed are projected to grow by a further 20% over the next three years.

In total, this budget represents a government which is expanding faster than the ability of taxpayers to finance it, faster than the rate of growth in the economy, faster than the growth in our population, and faster than increases in inflation. This is an unsustainable level of spending which was established by the budget and is in the bill before us today.

The government seems to misunderstand its fundamental responsibility and priority. The first responsibility of any responsible national government is the security and defence of its sovereignty, and the fulfillment of its commitment to its allies to defend their sovereignty and security. This budget, like the one that preceded it last year, fails utterly in that regard.

We live now in a world in the midst of war, not only the war against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by the dangerous dictatorship in Iraq, but the larger global war on terrorism which has gone on at a low and often unnoticed level for the better part of the last two decades but which came home to all of us in the most dramatic way on September 11, 2001.

Following that great tragedy, there were many pious sentiments expressed in this place and elsewhere about how things would never be the same again, how our priorities would have to change, not only those of our American friends, but those of us here. There were expressions that we as Canadians are also exposed to the threats imposed by international terrorism and the rogue regimes which support it.

We have seen over the past 18 months a tepid and sometimes indifferent response to that new global security threat which is most acutely felt and directed at our principal ally, the United States. Even after the modest spending adjustments in this budget and the previous 2002 budget for the RCMP, CSIS and the Department of National Defence, none of those critical security functions of the government would reach the same spending levels they were at in real terms back in 1993 when the current government took office.

That reflects a radical misunderstanding of the responsibilities which history has presented us with today. We continue to underfinance our intelligence capabilities as a nation in a radical way. In relative terms, either measured as per capita or as a percentage of gross domestic product, we have one of the lowest expenditures on intelligence of any NATO or OECD country. Similarly, after this budget is implemented, we would continue to

have the lowest defence expenditure among the 19 countries of the NATO alliance with the sole exception of Luxembourg with its standing army of 800 men.

• (1205)

That is a black mark on this country. It is a betrayal of our once proud history as a responsible ally with a dignified military past. It is a betrayal of our values on which we pride ourselves, values of being a champion of democracy, of ordered liberty, and of international peace and security.

The budget and the 25 budgets which preceded it have cumulatively betrayed not only our allies, traditions, history, and values, but indeed has put Canada on a holiday from history at a moment of great historical importance to the world. This irresponsibility has not gone unnoticed by our allies, as we know, in the current crisis. This irresponsibility will not go without affecting our standard of living.

It is in our national interest to meet our moral and strategic obligations to our allies. It is well known that today we have the largest bilateral trade relationship with the United States in world history. We know that \$1.8 billion of Canadian goods and services cross that border every day, and that 40% of our national income and 40% of Canadian jobs are dependent upon that relationship.

We know that 50% of Ontario's GDP is dependent on trade and that 96% of its exports go to the United States. That is the enormous importance of this relationship which is being taken for granted and further undermined by the wrong choices in this bill.

Even after the modest emergency increases for the Department of National Defence, which would simply finance enormous maintenance shortfalls for simply the maintenance of current equipment without even beginning the acquisition of new and urgently needed equipment or new hiring of personnel, it still means that we will, after this budget is implemented, have the second lowest defence commitment in NATO and spend less than half of the NATO average on defence, at 1.2% of GDP, compared to the NATO average of 2.1% of gross domestic product.

The budget reflects fundamentally the wrong priorities and neglects our principal responsibilities.

Let me turn briefly to a couple of other matters that I am quite troubled by in this budget. One is the increase in so-called child care subsidies.

Millions of Canadians choose to provide, and would like to choose to provide, child care at home with a parent. This budget chooses to discriminate against them. It would effectively raise their tax burden in order to finance the child care choices of those who choose child care outside the home. That is fundamentally unfair.

It is time that Parliament recognized that both child care choices are equally valid, including the choice to make the economic sacrifice to raise children at home. For that reason, I am opposed to the prejudicial increase in government funded child care subsidies with no offsetting recognition of the sacrifice of stay-at-home parents.

Government Orders

Similarly, I am sorry to see that there is no substantive tax relief in the bill. Canada would continue to have the highest income tax burden as a percentage of gross domestic product in the G-7, the third highest in the OECD.

I am distressed to see that it would take far too long to bring equity to self-employed people for their retirement savings in RRSPs. I am further distressed to see that there is little or no commitment to long term scheduled debt reduction.

In conclusion, I hope that in the future the government will finally seize itself with what is its principal responsibility, the defence of our sovereignty and the security of our allies, and will have a radical change of course.

• (1210)

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there are days when it is a pleasure to rise in the House to say some positive things about what is happening but, unfortunately, Bill C-28, the implementation of the budget, is not one of those times. In fact this budget is an HEC budget. It is hypocritical, embarrassing and confiscatory.

Why do I use those descriptors? First, I believe the budget denies the principle of being proud to be a Canadian. It is hypocritical because it pretends to do something which it really fails to do. I believe the Minister of Finance said that Canada needs to become a country that is competitive, that will compete successfully with other nations in the world.

Not long ago the executive director of the Business Council on National Issues published a book together with a fellow by the name of Stewart-Paterson. They did some very interesting things in the book. They showed very clearly that Canadians were not competitive in the global economy and that if we were to be competitive in the future, that we had better have a good look at that.

Let me give the House one particular illustration that I found most dramatic. It compares the competitive advantage of a Canadian earning \$65,000 and an American earning \$65,000. I will give some numbers and those people who are listening will find those numbers interesting. A Canadian earns \$65,000 and we will assume he or she has a dividend income of \$2,000. On \$65,000 and a \$2,000 dividend income the Canadian would pay a tax of \$498 on the dividend. On a salary of \$65,000 the Canadian would pay \$15,160, leaving a discretionary income of \$51,342 out of \$65,000 plus \$2,000 dividend income.

Let us compare that to the American. This is based on the recently proposed budget of President Bush. A U.S. taxpayer earning an income of \$65,000 plus a \$2,000 dividend income would pay zero dollars on the dividend income and on the \$65,000 salary would pay \$3,795, leaving a discretionary income of \$63,200.

Let us compare those numbers now. The comparison of discretionary income with \$65,000 and a \$2,000 dividend income would be \$51,342 for the Canadian. The American's income would be \$63,205, so the American taxpayer would have \$11,863 more than the Canadian. Even if we were to double the tax for the American taxpayer, which would then bring it up to \$7,590, it would still not be comparable with the \$15,000 the Canadian is taxed.

To say that we are making Canadian workers more competitive is simply false. It is hypocritical to make a statement that we are helping people in Canada to become competitive. Is it any wonder that some of our best educated, best trained and most skilled people are leaving Canada for the United States? We can give lots of examples of this.

The point here is that the finance minister said that he would do one thing but in fact he created a budget that does the opposite. Not only is it bad, it is also embarrassing.

My hon. colleague recently talked about how little money there was in the budget for the Department of National Defence, which is \$800 million. The Auditor General said that what was needed was \$2 billion. That is almost three times as much as what is in the budget. The Prime Minister built on this and said that we were not in the war. Yesterday, however, the Minister of National Defence admitted that we have soldiers at the front and ships in the gulf. This creates the ironic situation of having our armed personnel participating in a war that the government is not supporting. This is embarrassing.

• (1215)

I found out something last weekend that hit very close to home and it involved Canadians who were visiting Florida. On their way down to Florida they stopped at a service station to buy some gas. The service station attendant noticed their Canadian licence plate and told them they had better move on. He said that there was no gas for sale to Canadians at his station. I am sure that is not a common occurrence but it did happen, and that is embarrassing. What do we do in situations like that? How can we support a budget that does those kinds of things to Canadians?

I want to add a third description to the budget. It is a confiscatory budget. It confiscates money. We have already compared a U.S. taxpayer with a Canadian taxpayer. However the far more serious issue, because the government does not have a plan to repay the debt in this budget, is that it is not only confiscating our income, it is confiscating the potential income of our children and our grandchildren. That is where I draw the line.

What is happening here is that there are some expenditures included in the budget for which we are not prepared to pay. Somebody might say that the budget is balanced right now and that there is even a bit of a surplus. Yes, that is true, but that is because the government listened to what we had to say. The point is that the present debt is cutting into our current revenues in a major way. Service costs on the budget run around \$40 billion to \$42 billion a year. Imagine what would happen to the health care budget if we did not have to pay out the \$42 billion in service charges. That would be a great advantage. The government is taking money that it should not take and it has no plan to pay the debt.

Some people might say that this is a prudent budget; \$3 billion worth of prudence, and it is in the budget for emergencies. If there is an emergency, the money will go toward it. If there is no emergency, the money will be used to pay down the debt. Is that the way a prudent house manages its mortgage payments? Is that the way a prudent business manages its loan payments? No. They carefully analyze the situation and make sure money is available to pay down their debt on a systematic and regular basis.

Government Orders

The budget is called a prudence factor but it is not a prudence factor at all. It does not protect future citizens from paying the services charges on the debt. It bothers me a lot that there is no plan to pay down the debt.

I would now like to speak to the budget in a broader sense. The budget was supposed to be a budget that would help us to be more responsible in expending funds. What has the government done? It has increased spending by some \$17.4 billion. It tells us that we will receive great tax breaks. It tells us that we will receive \$2.3 billion worth of tax cuts. That is a net increase of \$15 billion. Is that telling the truth about what is happening?

We also need to talk about health care. This is an example of another hypocritical position taken by the government. The government has said "Look at all the money we are putting into health care". It is true, it is putting a lot more money into health care. In fact, it brought it up to the point of where it was at in 1993-94 when it took all the money out. However there is no accounting for the inflationary increase during that time. The government has misled Canadians into thinking it did a great and wonderful thing. It has done nothing of the kind. It simply brought the figure back to where it was and even shortchanged it by the inflation that is involved.

The time has come for us to be very clear and to recognize that this budget is hypocritical, it is an embarrassment to Canadians and it confiscates the income of future generations.

• (1220)

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and represent the constituents of Saanich—Gulf Islands on this very important matter. When we add up the total federal budget it equates to spending in the magnitude of \$200 million or \$300 million a day.

I want to focus my comments on three areas: first, the out of control spending, which was mentioned by a number of speakers; second, the lack of accountability, the corruption and the waste we have seen in the past and how it reflects on the budget; and third, and most important, where we are going to see a potentially huge loss of revenues which have not been accounted for.

First I will talk about the spending priorities. The government has a habit of taking from the one hand and giving us back a little; taking a dollar, giving back a dime and then wanting us to say thanks. Again we see it in this budget. I do not think there was any member in the House who was not crying for more money for health care. Finally we got some back, and the government expects us all to stand up and cheer that it finally gave money back to health care that was so long overdue. However it is really important not to forget that it is was that government that cut the money in the first place, that cut the transfers over the last 10 years which brought the health care system to its knees.

Finally we have seen some of the money given back, but the more troubling part is that the government has gone on this spending rampage of \$17.4 billion. It is wildly out of control. It is the single largest percentage increase in government spending in over 40 years. If we listen to some of the think-tanks they are all criticizing this. Why? Is it so that the Prime Minister can have a legacy? This is not

his money. This is taxpayer money. Something like \$3 billion has gone into Kyoto right now, and what do we have to show for it?

That leads me into my second point, the corruption and lack of accountability. The member for Yorkton—Melville has spoken tirelessly on the gun control registry for 10 years. He has brought to the attention of the House, every journalist and the Auditor General so many countless times how the gun registry was ballooning to \$1 billion. Well, guess what? It happened. It is at \$1 billion and growing. What did we do here last week? We gave that ill-fated gun registry another \$60-some million. It is wrong.

We can look at the billion dollar boondoggles we saw at HRDC and at the Groupaction contracts under Public Works. We see the mismanaged gun registry under Justice. The government's latest little ploy, which I believe may come under Public Works, is to spend \$100 million in an electoral cycle to fund political parties. The list goes on and on. It is neverending.

Yes, some of the departments are wildly out of control, but the government is hopelessly out of control. It is blowing money. It might as well toss it in the trash or put it through a paper shredder. It has no respect for the hardworking Canadian taxpayers. It just turns this money into its own slush fund.

We see it over and over again. We saw the Shawinigate scandals. They never end. This latest one is absolutely ridiculous, forcing the taxpayers to fund political parties against their will. If we actually listen to the Prime Minister's rationale, he will tell us that the government has to limit unions and corporations from making political donations because its shareholders or members may not agree with giving that money to a political party.

• (1225)

And who in the heck are the shareholders of the public purse? The taxpayers. Yet they are being forced to give hundreds of millions of dollars. It is dead wrong.

We have heard all the numbers in the budget. I have them all in front of me. The military has been shortchanged once again. Yes, it received a little more money but again that was after draconian cuts. Again the government takes a dollar, gives back a dime and then wants us to be thankful. Even the Auditor General said it would be \$2 billion just to meet the military's basic needs and it did not get nearly that; it got less than half that.

The government's spending priorities are so wrong. Yet if people are in some way affiliated with the Liberal Party, and we have seen it, the facts speak for themselves. They would be thrown in jail if they were in the private sector; this would be criminal and it would not be allowed to go on, but here it continues.

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Let me go to my last point. This is the most troubling aspect of all, which is starting to be touched upon by some of the members in the Canadian Alliance, and that is our relationship with the United States. How does it impact this budget? We trade in the magnitude of \$1.5 billion a day with the United States. I received a card the other day, and I get them all the time, which showed the trade levels of different countries. The United States was at 87.7%. The next was Japan at 2% or 3%, and it might have been as high as 4%, and then the levels drop off to below 1%. The point is that it is 87% or \$1.5 billion a day.

We have listened to some of the testimonies of members on what is happening in the U.S. With how we have been acting, I am ashamed to be a Canadian and go to the United States. It is one thing to have a debate on whether we should have sent troops. I can accept that debate. Personally I think it is right that we should be supporting the Americans, the British and all the other members of the coalition. I think it is the right thing to do. It may not have been the most popular, but it is the right thing. I can accept that debate.

What we cannot accept are some of the names stated on the record, referring to the Americans as bastards and morons. It is unacceptable when ministers of the Crown are slugging the President of the United States. That is unacceptable. That is going to have such a severe impact on our economy and on our direct relationship with the United States. It is going to affect this budget. It is very serious.

I looked at an e-mail that one of the members received from someone in the U.S. I do not know the validity of it, but it reflects some of the comments we are hearing. One member talked about having a conversation with someone who was not permitted to buy gas. Another member who travels to the U.S. a lot was speaking with someone at the Canadian Automobile Association—again I say that this is unconfirmed—who was cautioned about travelling to the U.S.

What is going on? How could the government have let our relations deteriorate so badly? It is all on this administration's shoulders and it goes back to before the war with Iraq.

Our Prime Minister seems absolutely intent on poking a stick into the eye of the president at every single opportunity, as opposed to fostering this relationship with our neighbours to the south that is so vital. It is going to have very grave consequences for our economy. It is going to have a serious impact on revenues. Where I come from, Victoria, tourism is going to be very seriously affected.

My wife is an American. We travel to see family and friends in the U.S. When I call these people the first thing they ask is, "What in hell are you guys doing up there? What is going on? What is with your government?"

If I may, I will leave the message that the government had better clean up its act and have a hard look in the mirror at what it is going to do to this country. It could have very serious and grave consequences.

•(1230)

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and debate the budget implementation act.

I want to begin by pointing out that the world is a dangerous place. The world has always been a dangerous place, but that was really brought home to us on September 11, 2001. At that time, I think a lot of people understood for the first time that just because we are in North America it does not mean we are immune from a lot of the conflicts that regularly afflict a lot of the world.

For a lot of the time we have taken our security for granted. I think we saw that reflected in how we planned our finances. We did not spend a lot of money on security. We did not spend a lot of money, certainly in Canada, on our military. That is a well known fact. All of that changed as of September 11, 2001, but although a lot of people recognized that we had to change how we look at things, the government did not recognize it.

For a number of months here, we have been debating the issue of going to war with Iraq. It has been debated for a long time. Last fall, Colin Powell, Secretary of State of the United States, went to the UN and talked about it. Despite that fact, despite the lingering effect of September 11, 2001, the subsequent war in Afghanistan and terrorist attacks around the world, the government, in these very uncertain times, brought forward a budget that looks like a budget one would plan if one knew the future was going to be completely rosy.

What do most people do in uncertain times? We know what they do. They frankly assess their finances. They have a hard look at their finances and say that they have to be honest with themselves about the situation they are in, that they have to take a look at what they owe and at what their equity is and make some judgments based on that. They look at their spending patterns and ask what spending they could do without. If the future is uncertain, they ask, "What can I do without?" Then they cut that spending and take the benefit of that cut and put it toward paying down debt, for instance. That is what prudent people do in times of uncertainty.

What did the government do? Did it do any of those things? No.

What did the finance minister announce in the budget? He said, "We are going to take a look at spending and we are going to cut wasteful spending". Did the government do it? No. There is not one dollar mentioned in the budget in an area where it has decided it is going to trim spending, not one place, not one dollar. In a time of uncertainty, the government did not say, "This is something we can do without. We have to sustain the programs that are important to people, so we will take money from this and put it to that".

Did it have a plan to pay down debt like an average person would have? No. What do the budget documents say? They forecast zero debt repayment over the next three years.

What did the government do? It decided it would crank up spending by an incredible amount. Spending will go up by \$17.7 billion over the next three years. That is in new initiatives. That does not include spending that was already slated to rise over the next three years. That is \$17.7 billion in new spending and \$2.3 billion in tax cuts. In other words, 88% of surpluses from this point forward, over the next three years, will go toward increased spending, with 12% to reducing taxes and none to paying down debt.

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Maybe some people would be okay with that if the debt were \$50 billion or \$100 billion, or maybe even \$200 billion or \$300 billion, but it is \$500 billion-plus. Twenty-one cents of every tax dollar goes to pay interest on the debt. Twenty-one cents. And at a time of economic uncertainty, we should be prudent. We should be paying down debt, not cranking up spending, not bringing in all kinds of new programs. That is imprudent. It imperils the future of Canadians.

Rather obviously, that is something the government does not care about very much. Other colleagues have already talked about the government's imprudence in how it deals with our largest trading partner.

•(1235)

By the way, just so we are clear on this, I do not advocate that we should take a position in favour of our allies going to Iraq on the basis of our trade ties with them. I think we should do that because it is the right thing to do, but I do want to point out that it has a profound economic impact as well.

When a country trades to the degree that we trade with the United States and when a government is completely unaware of the program of anti-American slandering that the government has done against our American colleagues and unaware of the consequences of that, it is irresponsible. This government has been completely irresponsible when it comes to this issue, to the point where normally benign people are infuriated and writing e-mails and sending letters asking, "What's going on?"

Many of us have American family. I am one of them. I have many relatives in the United States. Like a lot of families, my family came from Norway, went through Minnesota and the Dakotas, spending about a generation there, and then came up to Alberta at the turn of the century. I have a lot of cousins in the United States. It is a very common story in my part of the world. My friend who just spoke has a wife who is an American. It is a very common thing.

When the government turns around and slanders the Americans, our best friends, our best allies, our biggest trading partner, it cannot help but have an impact. If members across the way say that they have not heard from constituents who have told them that they were not allowed to gas up in the United States, that people would not take their VISA cards, that people have cancelled orders because they are Canadian, if they do not admit that, then they are not telling the truth, because it is happening.

This is such a vital economic tie that we cannot afford to let that happen. It is irresponsible of the government to carry on this campaign of slandering and slurs. It does so and it just does not seem to end. The Prime Minister should take the responsibility. He has had many chances to stand up publicly and not just half-heartedly apologize but to take his government to task and tell people that if it happens again they are out of caucus. That is what should happen, because the stakes are too high.

I get tired of this. People do not understand the impact it is having on the lives of ordinary Canadians. I have never been more disappointed in this government in the nine and a half years I have been here and that is saying a lot, because I have been deeply disappointed in this government at many points in the past, but as for

the level of disrespect, I do not even know how to say it. The superlatives escape me. I have used them all up, so I do not have any more to express my disappointment in how the government has acted. I see a member across the way who has been engaged in this somewhat and I am just going to get more worked up.

Suffice it to say that members across the way have an obligation to bite their tongues when they know that the economic future of Canadians is at stake. If they do not like the war, that is one thing. We respect that and they can debate it in a respectful way, but to run down the President of the United States and run down Americans in general is not acceptable. It is not acceptable and I want to see it end.

There are so many things I could talk about, but I suspect my time is coming to an end. I will simply wrap up by stating that the government has been imprudent in many ways. It has driven up spending at a time of economic uncertainty caused by war, by a sluggish domestic economy in the United States and by other problems such as SARS, which is another thing. The government has been driving up spending and on the other hand it is doing its best to undermine our closest economic relationship, our relationship with the United States, which is responsible for 87% of all of our trade. From here on in, let us hope that members across the way get the message that they have to be prudent, not only in how they spend but in how they treat our best friends in the world.

•(1240)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Rochelleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak on the budget implementation act, 2003, particularly since this budget—like the budgets of recent years—is, in a sense, very consistent, reflecting as it does a continuity in the building of a new post-referendum Canada, a new Canada that is increasingly centralized, unitarian and standardized.

As I said, this budget, like the previous ones, continues this process. This is a process that is being conducted without any mandate—the federal government was never authorized to act in this fashion—without any debate in Quebec or in the Canadian provinces, without consultations and, more importantly, without any referendum to give real legitimacy to the government to act as it is doing and to completely change the rules of federalism in this country.

This change is being implemented in obvious contempt of the Canadian Constitution of 1867, which provides a rather clear sharing of powers. However, this change fully complies with the letter and the spirit of the social union agreement reached in 1999 between nine provinces and the federal government. As we remember, Quebec bluntly refused to sign this document, and it was right to do so, because it went counter to its interests and, indeed, still does.

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So, the social union agreement applies even though there were no debates, no consultations. In my opinion, the social union agreement that governs the spirit of this budget completely changes the rules of the game, including—and this is a key element—the spending power, which, as we know, was officially given, when the provinces signed this agreement, to the federal government. The Canadian provinces, with the exception of Quebec, have accepted that, from now on, the federal government will invest in whatever area of jurisdiction it chooses at any time it chooses, in the name of Canadian public interest.

So, it is not the Canadian constitution that is being applied, but the social union agreement, which is an administrative agreement. The way this agreement is being applied, we feel as though we were hearing a provincial finance minister when we hear the Minister of Finance talking the way he did when he delivered the budget speech.

He interferes without restraint in areas of provincial jurisdiction, to such an extent, as I have said, that one would take him for a provincial minister concerned—as would be legitimate for a provincial minister—with matters of health, education, government relations with the family, or direct connections with individuals. These areas are, however, in keeping with the 1867 constitution, termed provincial responsibilities. The federal government is assigned the responsibility for international relations, foreign affairs, defence, international cooperation, postal services and the like. Over the years, however, a policy has developed, that has created a new Canada, the policy of “nation building”, creating a standardized Canada, a unitary entity that is definitively centralized.

To give some examples that stand out in the budget speech, on page 6, the minister states that he wants to establish:

—a plan for timely access; for quality care and for the sustainability of this Canadian advantage; for reform of family and community care; for access to home care; for coverage of catastrophic drug costs; for reduced waiting times for diagnostic services; for innovation; and for real accountability to Canadians.

The last concept is in direct reference to the social union of 1999. There is more and more reference to accountability, but who is to be accountable? The federal government? No, the provinces, who will have to be accountable within their own areas of jurisdiction to a government whose mandate does not encompass those areas.

• (1245)

This basically amounts to changing the rules of the game. The provinces will have to be accountable in the areas they are responsible for. They will have to be accountable to a government that is not responsible for these areas. This makes fundamental changes to the rules of the game without any mandate, without any consultations and without any referendum.

On page seven of the budget speech, it says that in addition to health—an area of provincial jurisdiction—Canadians want their governments to tackle the issues of poverty, homelessness and dependency.

If we were to respect the Constitution, this would refer to a provincial minister who answers to individuals and families and who has to manage the link between the provincial government and citizens.

Further on, the speech mentions child poverty and the national child benefit. This is the federal government, not Quebec. The federal government has so much money at its disposal that it is interfering in provincial matters.

The budget speech refers to persons with disabilities. The government dares to do so despite the fate it has dealt persons with disabilities in recent years. By raising the eligibility criteria for the disability tax credit, the government has significantly reduced the number of people whose disability can be recognized. This has had an impact on the daily lives of people who are clearly vulnerable.

This is reprehensible from a government that, we know, has built up a surplus by stealing from the EI fund by depriving—as my colleague, the member for Champlain, said so well—people who were eligible for the guaranteed income supplement. This is akin to fraud the way they are being deprived of the money. The question needs to be asked.

Now it is even bragging about what it will do for persons with disabilities. The government is saying how much better off they will be.

One would think it was the provincial minister talking when we hear that poor families need more than an income supplement. This is in reference to parents and single parents in particular.

This government is interfering in other areas of jurisdiction and is using money that belongs to others.

On page 8 it says, and I quote:

No approach to poverty will be successful if we do not do more to address the issue of homelessness.

In Quebec, there is the Initiative de partenariats en action communautaire, an initiative that brings together community groups. This initiative is managed by the Government of Quebec. The federal government is duplicating what is already being done. In Quebec, hundreds of millions of dollars is being provided for community groups. It is being carefully managed by the secretariat established by the Government of Quebec for the initiative. There is no need for the federal government to come in and duplicate the work being done by the Government of Quebec.

Further on, the budget refers to education. It refers to innovation and learning. It says that we must provide Canadians with:

—the best universities that produce the best knowledge and the best graduates—.

This is still the federal government saying this. The speech goes on:

We have connected all of Canada's schools and libraries to the Internet.

There is also reference to the millennium scholarship foundation, and the speech goes on as follows:

This government created the Canada Foundation for Innovation to modernize the infrastructure of our universities.

This is the federal government speaking. The universities are primarily a provincial responsibility, particularly in Quebec, which has always administered the matter fairly.

Government Orders

Reference is made to university research chairs and to the Canada Student Loan program. The system in Quebec—and this is no idle boast—is the best. Our scholarships and loans are the highest, and the debt load the lowest, in Canada. The budget speech also makes reference to the Canada Graduate Scholarships.

In closing, I will touch upon the proposals relating to the municipalities. There is a new development in this connection, and it is grandly presented. To quote page 14:

Virtually every initiative I have described today can be placed in the context of renewing urban and community life in Canada.

The municipalities are creatures of the provinces. Yet we get the feeling that the next great step in the evolution of this centralized Canada will involve the municipalities.

In the meantime, while the federal government has responsibility for international cooperation, it allocates only 0.3% to it, whereas the international standard is 0.7%. This was criticized this morning in committee by Stephen Lewis, the representative of the UN Secretary General. While the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom allocate 1%, this government, while interfering in all manner of things that are not its business, gives 0.3%.

This is the kind of Canada that awaits Quebec if Quebeckers do not wake up. We will be totally swallowed up by a centralized and unitary Canada.

•(1250)

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and a pleasure to speak to Bill C-28, the budget implementation act.

As senior health critic for the Canadian Alliance, it is very important as we look at this implementation act to discern just how many dollars are actually going from taxpayers' pockets into health care. It is very important that we discern where the numbers are. I would like to talk a little about how those numbers break down and what we need to do with those extra dollars that go into health care, whether or not they are adequate, and the state in which we find the health care system right now.

Before I get into that, it is very important that I spend a minute explaining our position with regard to the SARS virus that is presently upon our nation and the world. I am a little frustrated because last week the Canadian Alliance wanted to be very non-partisan in dealing with an issue of utmost importance that goes beyond any political issues. As an act of good faith, I talked to the Minister of Health and gave her the actual questions I was going to ask in question period with regard to this issue, so that she could put forward her message and relieve the pressure and the fear on most Canadians' minds with regard to the outbreak of the SARS virus.

That is the first time that has ever happened to my knowledge. It certainly is the first time I have done that. This is a political arena. We have tried our very best to non-politicize something that is of such importance in the national interest. Those are the facts.

The minister has been very weak in coming forward to alleviate some of the fears most Canadians have about the SARS virus. The quarantines act was implemented in 2000 to limit the amount of

mosquitoes coming in on bamboo. An act was implemented to limit bamboo and mosquitoes yet the government is reluctant and very shy about imposing the quarantines act to deal with what could potentially be, as the World Health Organization stated, one of the largest crises the world has seen to date, spread by airlines.

I do not understand the reluctance of the government being so shy to do this. I want to spend a minute or two on that to explain our position. We will work to hold the government's feet to the fire to assist it in getting its message out to alleviate the fears regarding this virus and also to encourage it to not be shy in doing what needs to be done.

The issue is twofold. The spread of SARS has to be dealt with but even more important, we have to limit the collateral damage of a nation that could become quite phobic about how this is being dealt with. We have to discern both sides of it. There could be more individuals, more Canadians who would die because of waiting lists, those who are on waiting lists but are not able to receive the service, than actual numbers that would perhaps not make it through an attack of the SARS virus.

That is important as we discern the budget implementation act and the number of dollars going into our health care system. We have to look at the state our health care system is in nationally. Waiting lists have increased to unbelievable numbers. Tens of thousands of Canadians lack access to family physicians. Actually when we talk to most Canadians they say if they get to the service, Canadian health care services are actually very good and the service providers do their very best to provide the services needed. The problem is trying to get to those services.

A study was done at one of the hospitals in Hamilton last year where 50 patients died just waiting for heart surgeries. Therein lies the dilemma and one of the problems we have in our health care system.

It is very important that we stop the rhetoric and the dispute between the federal and provincial governments when we look at how money is being spent. This comes out of the health accord which provinces say they did not sign and the federal government says they wish they would have signed. It does not really matter. They took the money. They got up from the table having agreed on a process and at least \$12 billion, and I will talk about the numbers in a minute, but \$12 billion more going into the core funding of the health care system.

The important thing is to stop pointing fingers and blaming anyone. Let us start implementing the best measures possible so that we can have an efficient sustainable health care system into the 21st century. That is what is important. That is what we will hold both levels of government to because of what they did in the health accord.

•(1255)

There are some good things in the health accord and there are some things we wish were not there. Nonetheless, let us talk about some of those things.

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The official opposition welcomes a lot of the measures in the health accord. It moves forward the agenda of health care reform in the sense that it does not limit the provinces from implementing reforms that would put health care on a sustainable footing in the foreseeable future.

It also would help to change the paradigm shift needed in health care away from the health care system to putting the patient's needs first and building a system that would provide services for the individual who is sick. The patient is the individual who pays for the system. That is what we really need to refocus our energy and our thought process to as we look at our health care system into the 21st century. It is very important that we discern that. It is very important that we get around the rhetoric and start reflecting on that whole idea and what is very positive about that.

We are very nervous about some of the health care reform measures. They could open up the system into home care, pharmaceutical care and palliative care, all of which are good and all of which the provinces provide in varying degrees in their respective areas.

Nonetheless, when we apply it through federal money and if we apply the federal money inappropriately and do not leave the flexibility, we will waste the precious health care dollars. We do not want to waste them. We want to make sure that every dollar that comes out of the taxpayer's pocket with regard to health care is spent in the most efficient way possible. Therein lies the ultimate goal.

Believe me, if people think that the system is stressed and stretched now, just wait until the demographic shift hits our health care system. Think of when the high costs and the dollars spent on our seniors at age 65 and beyond hit our system. As the bulging baby boomer generation hits that system over the next decade, the problems we see in health care now will look small in comparison.

We need to get over the rhetoric and deal with how we can effectively contribute to the debate on health care renewal and reform. That is very important. If we were to look back at the last decade, we would see a federal government that not only stopped contributing more money into health care but actually pulled money away from health care and allowed it to falter and drift into crisis. That is what we have seen over the last decade.

Some of the critics on the other side would say that is not true, that the health accord of 2000 solved that problem. Not really.

I was sitting on a regional health authority at that same time. We had to deal with the reduction in money coming from the federal government. What happened to the system at that time was absolutely devastating. Nonetheless we worked through it.

Almost 40% of provincial program spending is on health care. Mr. Romanow said that this year's federal contribution is 12% of every dollar that the provinces spend on health care. It is very important to understand the difference between the two and that the federal government has really neglected to apply the money.

The health accord of 2000 was a five year program. As of today we are into the fourth year of that program. The money did not get into the system until now. It was an illusion to think that the money

would deal with health care problems at that time in the 2000 accord. It was more about winning an election.

Unfortunately, the Canadian health care system has suffered because of that lack of foresight. Hopefully that will not happen again. That was a missed opportunity in 2000 and there is another missed opportunity with the health accord right now.

Health care in Canada is all about values. Our values in Canada are that we will not allow an individual to lose their home or their security because of a serious illness. The Americans have a different value system. They say, "We will make sure that you stay healthy. We will provide the health care but we will allow you to pay for it and you could lose your home". That is a different value system. I do not judge theirs and I am sure they do not judge ours.

We need to protect our values in our health care system and make sure that we sustain it. To do that over the next decade, we will have to use our resources not in a fight but in reforms that would actually sustain our health care system in the 21st century.

We need to put the patients first. It is high time we did that. It is high time we got there in health care.

● (1300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me, for the first time since I regained my freedom, to speak in this House as an independent. Not being bound by party discipline, I naturally intend to speak my mind about the budget allocations, the way the federal government is managing them and also the response of my friends, both in the Bloc Québécois and the Canadian Alliance.

If Canada is what it is today, it is because Quebec, having been asked in 1867 to be part of this great Canadian federation, insisted on keeping its French language tradition, its customary rights or its Civil Code, created in the early 19th century from the Napoleonic Code, and also its right to freedom of religion. Otherwise, Canada would not be what it is today.

For all the other anglophone provinces in Canada, one all-powerful government sufficed. At the time, there was not much west of Ontario. The other provinces joined later. If the current system exists, it is because the province of Quebec insisted on keeping those rights that I have just named.

The constitutional jurisdictions were divided up under sections 91 and 92. Section 91 of the Constitution Act, 1867 concerns federal jurisdictions, in which the federal government has the right to legislate, namely, defence, the postal service, divorce and aboriginals, to name but a few.

Quebec and the provinces, under section 92, have constitutional authority over such areas as education and health; I will not name all of them.

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Unfortunately, I listened to the hon. member of the Bloc Québécois for Trois-Rivières, who is a friend, at least he was until I rose to speak; I do not know if he will be afterwards. I have trouble understanding this hon. member's attitude. In his speech, he mentioned, at least five times, referendums, nation building and the fact that Canada is about to become a new country coast to coast, *A mari usque ad mare*; he told us that Canadians were not consulted, that they were not asked what they wanted for the future of their country.

The truth is subject to a double standard in this country. I would like to ask a few questions of my hon. friend from Trois-Rivières. In Quebec, did we have a referendum on municipal amalgamation? Did we have a referendum, or is anyone promising one, on the latest hot topic in Quebec, the negotiations with the Innu? Did we have a referendum when we, in this House, agreed to change the name of Newfoundland to Newfoundland and Labrador?

Did we have a referendum when we, in this place, adopted the Firearms Act? This issue is entirely relevant to the budget now before us. This slippage will have cost Canadians \$1.25 billion. Moreover, it is an encroachment—and one of unprecedented scope—on areas of provincial jurisdiction, particularly freedom, civil law, property, and hunting and fishing. The issue of firearms control touches on many jurisdictions.

What did the Bloc Québécois say against this? It was politically profitable, it seems. At the time, women's groups insisted that the act be passed, with no consideration of the areas of provincial jurisdiction that had been given to us under section 92 of the Constitution Act, 1867.

Just recently, this party voted an additional \$60 million or so to implement the program. The only province that has not yet challenged it before the courts is Quebec.

• (1305)

Yet, is the message being sent—and this is my question to the hon. member for Trois-Rivières—that the federal government can meddle in our constitutional jurisdictions, as long as we gain from it financially? If we get funds, if the federal government gives us some money, it is no big deal. Are we prepared to take cash for these constitutional jurisdictions, which were granted to us very sparingly in 1867 only because we threatened not to become part of the Canadian federation? Now, if it is politically expedient, if there is some money to be gained, it is acceptable.

Take, for example, the negotiations with the Innu. An amount of \$377 million will be paid to the Innu, who had claims before the courts that totalled a similar or slightly higher amount. The federal government will pay \$300 million out of the \$377 million. All of a sudden, the respective constitutional jurisdictions become less important, because the federal government will provide \$300 million.

So, there may be a tendency to be more flexible in such cases and let things go. However, if we have principles, they should always apply, even if they work against us. This is what a principle is all about. Sometimes, it may hurt to follow it, but the important thing is what results from it.

I have always found my Bloc Québécois friends to be rather flexible on this issue, provided there were some economic spinoffs for the provinces. It is their choice and I respect it.

However, I say that when we have principles and when we jealously guard a constitution that we did not quite want but that governs us, we should at least try to have it complied with. Right now, we make sure it is complied with when there is nothing much to be gained, but when there is something to be gained, it is a different story.

Take the example of the municipalities. When the federal government arrives with its millions for municipalities, it will be interesting to see what happens. The mayors will ask for help from the province, and the province will look at its interests and say, "Let us go ahead with this".

There is no doubt that the constitutional system in which we find ourselves is very bad for the provinces, and particularly for Quebec, since it stands apart from the others in confederation.

Our friends from the other parties, the anglophones in the rest of Canada wanted a single national government. They wanted a federal government. This is why we said that there were two nations in this country.

The fact remains that, speaking of referendums, I believe in the merits of referendums that the hon. member for Trois-Rivières seems to be promoting. All the better, except that this must apply at all times to our political reasoning, and not only when it suits us.

I also want to address our hon. colleagues in the Canadian Alliance, who say that friends like the Americans should not be treated as they have. Forgive me if I do not totally agree with them.

First, I would say that parliamentarians here are in no danger of getting killed in Iraq. It is easy to send other people's children, so long as we do not have to go ourselves or send our kids. Speaking of friends, I would say that when it came to defending their own interests, the Americans stomped all over the interests of Canada, their friend.

Take, for example, softwood lumber. When it came to defending their softwood lumber interests, our American friends did not show much respect for us. They did what they had to defend their interests.

Why is the government avoiding doing something in Canada's interests and the public's interests? If softwood lumber is important to the Americans, the lives of our children are as important to us, at least as much as wood is. If we cannot admit that, I think that there is something really wrong.

What I mean is that I support fully respecting our Constitution. The fact that there is too much money in federal coffers as the result of a tax authority benefiting the federal government and penalizing the provinces where the needs are, is why the current sovereignist movement in Quebec started. I am still a sovereignist, and I will probably die one.

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●(1310)

However, we must apply our political theory or political principles right down the line; otherwise we end up contradicting ourselves. This can be dangerous for a cause's credibility. I mentioned, as an example, the Firearms Control Act. There are other examples.

I urge parliamentarians, when they are defending the interests of others, to defend them to the end, independently of their own interests.

[*English*]

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in the budget implementation act debate. Not having had a chance to participate in the budget debate itself, it is good to have an opportunity to participate in this.

I have listened to the debate over the last number of weeks on this issue and have watched the chest pounding from the government side of the House about what a tremendous budget this is and how it is a major step toward, in their words, building the kind of Canada we want. It always shocks me when members of the Liberal government use that kind of rhetoric. The kind of Canada they appear to be building is not really the kind of Canada I want. I do not know how they feel they speak for Canada when they make those kind of statements.

If the government were a corporation and the cost of servicing the debt of that corporation was the single largest expenditure, it would probably make Air Canada's financial situation right now look pretty attractive. Essentially the government in the last number of years seems to have abandoned the whole focus on the debt and debt servicing and has turned to increased spending.

As some of my colleagues said earlier, I do not how the government could possibly justify, given the economic times we face today, bringing in a budget with a 20% increase in government spending. To me that seems to be absolutely irresponsible combined with the fact that the debt is still hanging over our heads like a black cloud. If inflation were to increase or we were to move into a recessionary period, that debt could once again threaten the very viability of the country.

I really have concerns about the whole direction of the budget and the return to the old style Liberal spending with no regard for future generations or for the consequences of that spending.

Specifically to deal with the budget issue, I would like to focus a little on the areas for which I as the critic for natural resources for the Canadian Alliance am responsible. There are a number of areas of the budget that are very relevant to my critic area.

The issue that seems to prevail in this debate, and the debate in the last couple of weeks in the House, is our relationship to the United States and the harm to that relationship. It is not so much the decision not to send troops in support of the coalition to Iraq but rather the anti-Americanism and the remarks flying around in and outside the House about the Americans, and the Liberal attitude toward the Americans.

On the issue of natural resources and energy, our economy depends on our relationship with the United States and must continue to depend on it. I can understand why there is not much

regard for that issue by the Liberal government. Energy exports to the United States are primarily from western Canada, although there are electrical energy exports in central Canada. Primarily fossil fuel energy in western Canada would not really be of a concern to the Liberal government, and I think that is a given.

●(1315)

Considering how important the auto industry in Ontario is to its economy, I am amazed the Ontario members of Parliament are jeopardizing that industry and the survival and viability of it by those kind of comments. That is certainly relevant to this debate and needs repeating over and over again. Hopefully the government will see the light on that issue.

There were a couple of other areas that were relevant. One of them, which was addressed in the budget, was the issue of how the resource industries were treated on corporate taxation and the bringing in line of the rate of that taxation with other industries in Canada. For whatever reason, and I have never quite been able to understand why, the government decided to reduce the corporate tax rate from 28% to 21% for all industries in Canada, exempting the natural resource industries.

There was some reference to other programs and treatments of the resource industries that compensated for the tax reduction other industries got. I do not think it is a valid argument at all. The resource industries have long had what they refer to as the resource depletion allowance, which is simply a compensation program for the costs of provincial resource royalties that resource industries pay to the provinces. That is not a giveaway or a subsidy. It is simply a recognition of the impact on a resource company's bottom line of paying provincial royalties. The cost of provincial royalties comes right off the bottom line of any company and therefore hardly can be considered a subsidy or a giveaway to that industry. I do not accept that argument as being valid.

We have heard much criticism, particularly from the greener members across the way, about accelerated depreciation allowance and some of those other programs that apply in the resource industries. While those programs are designed to encourage growth in those industries, for example in the tar sands or in the mining industry, programs like flow-through shares and those kinds of treatments are specifically designed as tax incentives to encourage that growth. They hardly can be considered to replace the resource industries receiving that tax reduction program to 21%. We have to look at each industry that receives those benefits and judge whether that industry continues to need the incentive, or if the industry has matured to the point where that incentive is no longer valid and should be reviewed. However it has nothing to do with the overall tax rate.

I was very disappointed in this budget to see that the government decided to allow the resource industries the corporate tax reduction to 21%, but at the same time it took away the resource depletion allowance and proposed to somehow replace it with some another form of taxation.

Government Orders

I was very disappointed with the government's failure in any way to address the issue of the sale of federal government shares in Petro-Canada and Hibernia. The government, as any government, has no business of being in the business of business and retaining that. We could have garnered some substantial benefit to help some of these other issues like the climate change initiative and all the rest of it.

The other area, which continues to be a thorn in our side, is the issue of Kyoto and another \$1.5 billion on top of the almost \$2 billion already announced for the Kyoto protocol. We still have no substantive plan in place to deal with it, other than millions of dollars of national television advertising to convince Canadians it is the right thing to do.

Overall this is a pretty sad effort and a pretty pathetic budget in terms of benefits to Canadians. The government could have done much better.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on the budget implementation act, 2003.

I will start by indicating my total agreement with my colleague from Trois-Rivières' statement that this is a budget of continuity for the central government. That government's vision is of centralization and of trampling on areas of provincial jurisdiction.

The budget brought down a few weeks ago by the Minister of Finance is a real example of that continuity. As well, it is a very striking example of the extent of the fiscal imbalance between the federal government and the provincial governments.

Since the Liberals came to power, Ottawa's revenues have risen from \$123 billion in 1993-94 to \$185 billion in 2003-2004, a 50% jump. This additional 50% is what enables Ottawa to encroach on areas of jurisdiction that do not belong to it. As well, it enables it to create structures that have no connection whatsoever with the federal government, be it health, education, or other areas under provincial jurisdiction.

Today, given the extent of this fiscal imbalance, I am not surprised that the people of my region have taken the trouble to write the Minister of Finance. Every year I write to him, and to the Prime Minister, in my capacity as Bloc Québécois critic for regional development, in order to indicate what the provinces and regions need. The feds need to be told that we must at least be given back the interest on what we pay in taxes to Ottawa.

It must be pointed out that this 2003 budget does not make any reference whatsoever to the fact that we need to move on to phase 2 of the softwood lumber crisis. The government had told us that we would move on from phase 1 to phase 2.

The same thing has been said by the Association des centres locaux de développement for the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region, through its spokesperson, Mayor Lawrence Potvin of Métabetchouan-Lac-à-la-Croix. The day after the budget was brought down, he met with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the Minister of Justice in order to share with them what the people of my region wanted from this first budget by the new Minister of Finance.

Mr. Potvin took the time to write the Prime Minister, saying, "It is sad to say but, true to form, your government has always ignored the needs identified by the community, whether in connection with the softwood lumber issue or the EI account". In tabling the last budget, the Minister of Finance said that balance had been restored to the EI fund.

I wonder what he thinks is balanced about it. This year again, the Minister of Finance grabbed \$3 billion from the EI fund. If that is what he calls balance, I think he should go back to school or step aside. He just told us and the provinces, "We have not done anything, we have simply balanced the fund". In fact, he has grabbed \$3 billion from the fund.

With this \$3 billion, he could have taken action on the softwood lumber issue. My region of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean was the hardest hit by job losses and sawmills closing down. What lies ahead with a budget announcing huge budget surpluses? Absolutely nothing.

• (1325)

As we know, we had a regional summit in Quebec. Following this summit, the people in my region decided to set up a regional fund so that our region could make investments based on priorities set by the people in our region.

They then turned to the federal government. This would be a fund of approximately \$400 million, with the federal government, the provincial government and the region each contributing one third. The Quebec government is on board, but there was no response from the finance minister in his budget.

While I questioned the Minister of Finance a few times on this, the answer came from the minister responsible for the regions, who said, "We will not be investing in that". But these are needs inherent to my region.

Once again, the federal government would have us believe that it is listening to the regions, but ignored the regions in this budget. This has been going on for years, and each year, I would write the former finance minister. In its request, the CLD stated that the government ought to listen. My region, the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region, has been designated "Aluminum Valley".

Based on this, the Government of Quebec provided tax breaks to encourage businesses to come and invest in our region. We asked the federal government to do the same so that our region, which is losing so many of our young people, would be able to create jobs to allow them to come home. Once again, the government has turned a deaf ear and has done nothing for the needs being felt in my region.

Another request was made of the government. Everyone was talking about it this winter. Indeed, the most disadvantaged families were severely hit by the incredible rise in prices for gas and heating oil. We asked that the government do at least what it had done in a previous budget: provide relief, or money for these families.

I met with seniors. Some women told me that they had set some money aside to buy themselves a little treat for Easter, and that the money was now gone. They will not be able to buy themselves a treat because they have had to use all that money to pay for their heating oil.

Government Orders

The government has even turned a deaf ear to these people. We thought the federal government was also going to talk about the income supplement. For eight years, it has been depriving several hundred thousand senior citizens of the guaranteed income supplement for which they are eligible. We thought that there would be something in this budget to compensate these people who, in the past, were penalized because of the carelessness and negligence of Human Resources Development Canada. Once again, there was nothing.

I think this is very sad. The Liberals are building up surpluses, encroaching on provincial jurisdictions, and telling the regions and provinces, "We have the right to do it".

Also, there is the issue of infrastructure. The Mayor of Laval, Mr. Vaillancourt, who is the chairman of the Coalition pour le renouvellement des infrastructures du Québec, said that this government would have had to invest a billion dollars a year for the next 15 years in order to upgrade our infrastructure in Quebec, that is, sewers, waterworks, and so on. What have they announced? A mere \$3 billion over the next ten years, and that is for all of Canada, along with \$1 billion for municipal infrastructure. Between you and me, that adds up to \$25 million per year; we will not get far with that.

Allow me to repeat once more that this government is deceiving the taxpayers and making believe that it is responsive to people's needs. The Minister of Immigration said to the people from our region who met with him, "We are listening. We will make sure your demands are heard". Once again, this government is not listening to the regions and the provinces, and it is listening even less to the people.

• (1330)

[English]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on Bill C-28, the budget implementation act of 2003. This is another budget brought forward by the Liberals that has failed Canadians. In fact, in my address in the reply to the budget on February 26, I enumerated several reasons why the budget has failed Canadians.

I spoke of the government's complete refusal to address GST fraud, which we all know is quite a large issue. I looked at the government's failure to address security concerns at our airports as well as the steps it has taken to punish those saving for their retirement through RRSPs. Payroll taxes such as EI and exorbitant income tax rates continue to kill the Canadian economy.

Still, the government claims that the budget is a success. It is not. The government should be ashamed of itself.

We are debating a bill that if passed will implement this failed budget. Needless to say, I, along with my colleagues from the Canadian Alliance, will be voting against this.

Why will I be voting against it? As I have already expanded in my previous speech on the macro reasons why this budget is a failure, let me instead focus today on one specific department within the government and on why the budget has failed that department and hence failed to protect the security of Canadians.

Specifically I would like to talk about the members of the Customs Excise Union, who do a great job at Canada's borders as front line customs officers and inspectors. Customs inspectors are part of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency but do much more than the average CCRA employee. The fact is that our customs officers do a tremendous job, especially when we look at the number of statutes they are charged with enforcing, their limited resources and their inability to protect themselves from the potential dangers inherent in border protection.

We believe that Canadians and our customs officers would be better served by moving Canada Customs out of the tax collection agency it now falls under into a new law enforcement department or under the Solicitor General of Canada. Just as Canada Customs now enforces the statutes of several departments, it will continue to enact National Revenue's policies of trade liberalization.

The revenue minister has announced more money and the hiring of customs officers. She has fallen very short in addressing the deficit that existed prior to September 11, never mind today. The customs union is calling for 1,200 new officers. It is getting 130, but these new officers still will be unable to adequately protect our border because they will lack the tools to do their job.

It is evident that CCRA is a department focused on streamlining accounting systems and collecting revenues. It is not focused on security. The logical question is why the government continues to treat our border guards, Canada's first line of defence, as bean-counters.

Mr. Speaker, you are a logical person. If you witnessed a crime in progress would you call the police or your accountant? Clearly you would call the police. Why? Because they have the training, the knowledge and the tools to protect society and enforce the laws.

What do our customs officers need to do the job? They need full authority as peace officers to enforce the statutes they are charged with. That includes a need for side arms for their protection. The first step is to move customs away from revenue and create a police force at our border. Canada Customs enforces over 70 federal statutes from numerous government departments, including the justice, health, agriculture, immigration and finance departments, and the Solicitor General's department. The recent focus on Canada's porous border is not necessarily a reflection of Canada Customs as much as it is a deficit of legislation, mandate and resources focused on security and protection.

Bill C-7, passed in the 35th Parliament, moved the Canada Customs Agency under the jurisdiction of Revenue Canada, thus creating the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. We were opposed to this move to facilitate trade and tourism while expediting the remittance of revenues to the Crown because of the lack of focus on security and protection.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security believes that its primary function is law enforcement, whereas unfortunately Canada Customs claims to have a dual mandate: processing revenues and border security.

Government Orders

●(1335)

A greater focus on security is required to harmonize customs standards with those of the United States, which cannot be achieved under the current CCRA. The Canadian Police Association proposal of a national border protection service should be considered seriously as legislation. The association is calling for a border protection service to provide strategic and coordinated protection and enforcement across Canada's borders and points of entry, separate from the Department of National Revenue. Such a service must be endowed with full peace officer status and equipped with the required technological aids, including CPIC and FOSS computer systems as well as NCIC and Interpol and access to vital statistics.

Right now, and the House will be shocked, 45% of our borders do not have access to these law enforcement tools. Customs officers have no way of knowing if the person in front of them has a criminal record or is on the terrorist watchlist. There should be an immediate network hookup of all computers and all customs software at all ports of entry across Canada. It is unacceptable for some customs officers in ports across Canada to have limited or no access to electronic customs systems that provide intelligence and support to customs officers who must undertake interdiction and detention decisions and actions.

Indeed, the current attempt to share information with our government departments has been a complete failure. There should be an agreement among immigration, RCMP and CSIS to share information daily. Information should then be further shared with our American neighbours regarding exit and entrance data and criminal background checks.

The government must provide customs officers with the authority, support and equipment necessary to do their jobs. One piece of equipment that is necessary is side arms so that customs officers can protect themselves and Canadians. This should be done regardless of whether Canada Customs becomes its own separate agency or stays a part of CCRA. This is an issue of safety for these customs officers. I have already outlined how these officers are basically police without the formal title. They are police without the protection of the law.

The Canadian Alliance takes this issue seriously, but unfortunately the Minister of National Revenue does not. In the past she has called these agents nothing more than glorified bank tellers. As recently as March 26 she said to the House, "...giving guns to customs officers would be like giving 3,000 accidents an opportunity to happen".

On March 28 I asked her to clarify her remarks in the House, and her response was to call me "Charlton Heston". I do not mind being compared to Moses nor do I mind living here in what seems like the *Planet of the Apes*, especially with the government across the way, but to have the minister making light of the issue was an insult to customs agents. In fact, my office has received numerous e-mails and letters from irate customs agents asking me how the minister can make so much fun of them. My answer, unlike that of the Liberals, is that the Canadian Alliance has always believed and will continue to believe in respect for these people.

This issue of firearms is not one that the Canadian Alliance has invented on its own. It actually comes from a report by ModuSpec,

which was commissioned by the government to examine this very question. The interim report called for an armed presence at our border and especially at some higher traffic border crossings where our customs agents are at higher risk.

What does this all boil down to? I will use four points to conclude.

First, there are not enough people, as I have outlined. There are one-person ports when there always should be two people working together. Currently there are ports that close at 10 p.m. and we argue that they should be open for 24 hours, especially some of the more remote ports where proper barriers are not even put in place once they close down in the evening. There are chronic staff shortages and not enough staff to accommodate shortages if training needs to be done.

Second, we often do not have the right people. Students do not belong at the front line without proper supervision and/or proper training.

Third, there is not the right equipment. There is no CPIC at the front line and there are no computers at 45% of our border crossings. As well, some facilities need rebuilding. For example, in Victoria they are working out of a 30 year old trailer at the ferry terminal, where almost a million people travel yearly.

Finally, they do not have enough pay. CCRA admits that its job classification system is archaic and fails to fully assess the value of jobs. CCRA is moving to a new classification standard. What about the fact that customs officers have been underpaid for years, up to and including today?

●(1340)

All these issues still have failed to be addressed by the minister. Quite frankly I think the minister has been an embarrassment because she has not represented the interests of security and protection for Canadians at our border.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, again we are engaged in the debate on the budget implementation act. There has been lots of food for discussion here this morning.

The budget represents a \$17.4 billion announcement in new spending. That is the single largest increase in government spending in 40 years. I want to suggest why this is not prudent at this time.

There is nothing in the budget for debt reduction. I want to emphasize that these are uncertain times.

I see the member opposite taking exception to my remarks already. May I remind her that these are uncertain times. The member opposite is one who has made it a point of going to the Middle East to engage with the people involved in the conflict, with Iraq, with Mr. Aziz, a person whom she found engaging.

I want to emphasize to the member opposite and others that these are uncertain times. We are at war in the world and it does not look like it is going to be easily resolved. The world economy is already showing signs of failure right across the world.

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Also, in our own country we are faced with a new challenge, the SARS epidemic. Canadians are concerned. We are not used to seeing people walking in our streets or entering our hospitals and airports with masks over their faces. Now because of a virus, or a combination of agents as the exact agent is yet to be identified, alarm is spreading throughout our society and internationally. There are unknown economic costs associated with this illness. There is the potential to harm the airline industry which is already in decline because of the instability in the world.

These are uncertain economic times. It is not the time to go on a spending spree to the extent which the government is making great promises to Canadians, promises on which it may not be able to deliver.

There is about \$2 billion scattered on unspecified Kyoto measures. There is a mere pittance for our armed forces. These are reasons to be concerned.

At the same time the government is increasing the civil service by 29,000. What employer would throw open the doors to 29,000 people? Is it possible to suddenly have a need for so many people all at once, or is it a sense that the government wants to swallow a good chunk of the budget surplus in extra employees who will be loyal to its particular brand of partisan politics?

On the defence issue the Auditor General called for a \$2 billion increase for our armed forces. It is shameful the way the government has had a consistent pattern of neglect for our military. The Liberal government has been undermining the military since it came to power.

There was a need for new helicopters when the Liberal government came to power. It cancelled the helicopter contract that the defence department was counting on at that time to replace the aging Sea Kings. That was over 10 years ago. The Prime Minister said at the time that there would be zero helicopters for the armed forces. He made a gesture with his hand, zero helicopters. That is exactly what we have today, 10 years later, zero helicopters.

Canadians faced the embarrassment of a helicopter dropping out of the sky and damaging our ship which limped back to harbour because. It cannot even function in a non-war environment let alone in a combat situation. This undermines Canada's credibility and impairs our ability to fulfill our defence commitments with NATO and our other strategic alliances.

Then the government will not spend money on submarines. I wish the government had had the foresight to consult British Columbians before it bought the prototype submarines the British navy was so anxious to get rid of. British Columbians had an experience also with a government that was venturing into job creation through a fast ferry program which created some behemoths that probably would work somewhere in the world. British Columbia spent nearly \$400 million of the taxpayers' money on three vessels that should have cost about \$80 million according to original estimates and then \$200 million. They sold recently for about \$37 million.

• (1345)

The federal government invested in used submarines. It paid \$750 million for four leaky subs that have yet to be put into service. This is shameful. Our armed forces deserve better.

The Auditor General recommended a \$2 billion increase and the government provided \$282 million immediately, which, considering the war effort and our troops being deployed, is only a pittance of what they need. A commitment of \$800 million per year falls far short of what is necessary to rebuild the equipment and provide the personnel that our armed forces require.

Canada has the second lowest defence commitment of our NATO allies. We commit only 1.2% of our gross domestic product compared to an average of 2.1% for NATO countries. It is the second lowest of all NATO countries. It is an embarrassment for Canada. It undermines our international credibility to play a significant role in the world or even for our own domestic needs.

We have no heavy lift capacity to move our troops and equipment. We have to hitch a ride from our neighbours to the south if they have equipment available, which certainly would not be true right now.

Even if we faced a domestic crisis, we may not be able to move our forces to help with it at this time because our friends, who we used to call our allies, to the south are occupied with the situation in Iraq. They may not be able to give us the lift we so often require even to move forces within our country. This is shameful and needs to be addressed. The government is spending money hand over fist, but not for the military and not for security.

There is a lack of funding for security for border agents. We heard my hon. colleague from Edmonton refer to the remarks of the Minister of National Revenue about customs agents. The government refuses to take security matters seriously. It will not arm our border guards. It considers our border agents to be tax collectors. I think the minister's remarks were reprehensible when she suggested that to give arms to our border agents would be like setting the stage for 3,000 accidents. I feel this is an insult that was certainly unnecessary and uncalled for but reflects the government's attitude toward security.

Perhaps it is appropriate to remember the remarks of the American ambassador who was deeply offended, and I think appropriately so, by the shameful remarks of condemnation against Americans which came from members opposite. The American ambassador recently remarked on this and made the comment that Canada seems to think the issue for the U.S. is trade. We are worried about our border tax collectors and we will not arm them. He remarked that for Americans, security trumps trade.

Frankly, the careless remarks made by members opposite offend our neighbours to the south, especially at a time when their sons and daughters are on the front lines. The remarks were certainly undiplomatic and rude. Especially at a time of such crisis those remarks were hardly appropriate and may well damage our trade relations and personal relations with our neighbours to the south for some time to come.

Security trumps trade. I fear, frankly, for the safety of our own country because the government refuses to take security seriously. I fear that Canadians may have to pay a price for our lack of due diligence in security issues.

Moving on to issues of domestic significance, the government is willing to put money into child care, but for a government brand of child care. Canadians need help with child care. These are stressful times on families, incomes being what they are, but we believe that child care options should be given to the parents. Canadians should be free to choose how they receive their benefits. We would like to see a \$3,000 per child deduction for families, allowing them to choose.

There is a smoke and mirrors aspect to the budget. The government uses inflated numbers to make promises in funding, such as \$3 billion for infrastructure spending over 10 years. What kind of a budget comment is that? How can it make promises for 10 years?

• (1350)

I am sure members opposite would like to think they will be here to deliver in 10 years but that is a huge assumption given the political realities of the day. To make promises that they will not be here to deliver is disingenuous. Canadians deserve better.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to specifically address the budget as it impacts or does not impact, as the case may be, on bettering our environment.

We have heard from the Minister of the Environment and other government members that this is the greenest budget that has ever been passed. Historically one could take some issue with that but if it is, it is sorely lacking.

There was an opportunity for the government to address some of the issues that confront this country with regard to bettering our environment, cleaning up the environment, providing for a cleaner environmental future for subsequent generations.

The background work I did in preparing for this debate was interesting. Some of the environmental groups have prepared a government scorecard. They listed a half a dozen to a dozen issues that need to be addressed, longstanding concerns. They assessed the situation, determined what was necessary in government policy to deal with the issues and whether the budget addressed those issues to a satisfactory degree.

Not surprisingly, the results are not very favourable as far as the government is concerned. Let us look at some of the issues.

Do we have a meaningful energy efficiency building retrofit strategy? That one had a partial check mark as opposed to a total no. The only reason is that there is some money in the infrastructure dollars which may provide for a retrofit program but we do not know about that. It was not detailed in the budget at all. Part of that is because it is part of the whole Kyoto plan which the government has been so slow at getting off the ground.

The next point was whether there was a renewable energy strategy. Again, they could not really quantify this or give it a score other than to say that it is addressed but there are no particulars. They do not really know what the government is doing. That of course

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comes to the same point. There is supposed to be a Kyoto implementation plan, but in fact it does not exist. It was interesting to see how little material there was in the budget as far as implementing the Kyoto protocol in Canada is concerned.

Another issue which follows along the same lines of energy efficiency but also begins to address the issue of clean air is whether we are going to phase out the massive subsidies provided to the fossil fuel and nuclear energy industries in Canada. There were no changes in this regard at all from past practices. Those subsidies which run into the hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars each year will continue to be accorded to those industries and will continue to allow them to pollute the environment.

With regard to a sustainable transportation strategy and fund, there is some money so the government received a partial plus on that one. Again it comes back to what the Kyoto implementation plan is going to look like. It was impossible to tell how meaningful the approach would be.

One of the issues the budget could have addressed has been raised by environmental groups and by our party for quite some time, I would say going back three to five years. That has been to address a taxing figure for toxic waste and toxic substances so that there would be incentives to clean up the use of toxic substances and to clean up toxic waste sites. A very small amount of money was put into the budget to encourage that.

There was nothing done with regard to the ongoing use of toxic substances. There was no tax to discourage their use at all.

• (1355)

Of particular resonance for my community is the use of coal as an energy source. Rather than doing anything to discourage the use of coal, this budget would provide a new tax incentive for the mining industry. The coal industry would get part of this subsidy and Canadians will be encouraged to continue to use coal as an energy source.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

HOUSING

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that April is New Homes Month, an annual event sponsored by the Canadian Home Builder's Association to profile building industry professionals, and their products and services. It is also an occasion to provide consumers with home buying information.

As Canada's national housing agency, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is the most reliable and objective source of housing information in Canada. CMHC continues to provide a wealth of information to Canadians to help them sort through the many choices and decisions involved in buying, renovating and maintaining their homes. CMHC plays a key role in helping many Canadians make informed housing choices.

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In this, and in many other ways, CMHC is committed to helping improve the quality of life for Canadians and communities across the country.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canadians value the various mechanisms for seeking redress available to them when they feel they have been treated unfairly.

Tragically, first nations individuals have not had the same kind of mechanisms available to them. Both the Indian Act and the federal government have failed to provide grassroots natives with an impartial trusted process designed to resolve grievances with band leadership and with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The first nations governance act which revises the Indian Act, provides a window of opportunity. Written properly, Bill C-7 could provide first nations individuals with a truly independent ombudsman who would be genuinely trusted by grassroots natives. The ombudsman would be empowered to obtain the information needed to complete timely investigations and to provide that redress.

This would be an important step toward holding band governments and the federal government to account and would contribute to bringing justice and hope to Canada's aboriginal peoples.

* * *

● (1400)

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is the Canadian Alliance's view of the social sciences and humanities as expressed by an Alliance member during the budget debate. He said:

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council spends money on all sorts of queer and strange projects... It does not produce any wealth for this country at all. Most of what it hands out... appears to go for vacation time for academics to travel... and take photographs. It is certainly not contributing to the running of the country.

It is in difficult times, nation building times, that we most need the humanities and social sciences. Education and research in these areas help us understand, appreciate and run our society. Without self-knowledge as individuals and as a nation, we are nothing.

It is disgraceful that the Alliance can condone such shortsighted, thoughtless, and damaging views such as these. The announcement by the Minister of Finance that funding to the social sciences will be increased received a standing ovation on this side.

Thank goodness the Alliance will never form the government.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ENTRAIDE JEUNESSE QUÉBEC

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Entraide jeunesse Québec is celebrating its 15th anniversary this year. I would like to recognize the commitment and energy of those who began such a wonderful initiative.

An organization founded by young people for young people, Entraide jeunesse Québec has been there every step of the way for thousands of girls and boys between the ages of 12 and 25 and their families. The topics discussed and the projects set up have enabled them to acquire and develop a number of essential personal skills.

Through its remarkable work, this organization has become a major community resource in the Quebec City area.

At the age of 15, you have the energy to take up challenges and meet them with success. My wish is that the team at Entraide jeunesse Québec will continue to do just that.

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WORLD FENCING CUP

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the finals of the Montreal World Fencing Cup were held in my riding, Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, at the Leonardo da Vinci community centre, with the cooperation of Sport Canada, the Canadian Fencing Federation, and the sponsors, including Saputo and Divco.

This competition was enormously successful. I would like to congratulate the approximately 200 fencers from 30 different countries who participated all week in this tournament's 14th edition.

On Saturday, March 22, 2003, the finalists, including gold medal winner Fabrice Jeannet, from France, demonstrated their true championship skills, in the finest sporting and humanitarian spirit.

* * *

[*English*]

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, today the federal government's Youth Criminal Justice Act comes into force.

So what is the big change? It used to be called the Young Offenders Act, but now it is called the Youth Criminal Justice Act. It must be a good thing that the government changed the act today because yesterday I listened as probation officers told me the significant problems they are having with young offenders: stealing from businesses, using drugs, beating up senior citizens in home invasions, leaving school early and leaving their homes for the streets.

Yes, after 10 long years of pushing the government to help improve life within the family unit, and to help put common sense and discipline back in the courtrooms, we get legislation that is costly, complex and offers no substantial improvements to the old act. This country needs a change all right, but it is a change in government that is needed.

The best the government could do is change the name of the act from the Young Offenders Act to the Youth Criminal Justice Act. What a disgrace. What a pathetic excuse for a government.

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April is Canadian Cancer Society Daffodil Month. The daffodil is the Canadian Cancer Society's symbol of hope in the fight against cancer. Every April thousands of volunteers across Canada raise funds in their communities to support the work of the Canadian Cancer Society.

Daffodil month is about more than raising funds, however, it is also about raising awareness of cancer issues, and the work that the society does in support of its mission, which is to eradicate cancer and enhance the quality of life of people living with cancer.

In 2002, an estimated 136,900 new cases of cancer and 66,200 deaths from cancer occurred in Canada. Health Canada, in partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society and other major cancer stakeholders, manages the Canadian strategy for cancer control.

I would like to ask all members to join with me in wishing the Canadian Cancer Society and its volunteers across the nation wonderful success in their activities during the month of April.

* * *

• (1405)

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the race to see which Liberal will be the poster child for April Fool's Day has begun, and they're off.

First one out of the gate is the member for LaSalle—Émard, bobbing, weaving, ducking and hiding while hoping no one notices that he is always out of position.

Close on his heels is the current Minister of Finance, doing his best on the heavy track, but being tripped up by the constant anti-American mud flinging that this race is famous for.

On the outside but already starting to fade is the heritage minister, still running hard while eating Tim Hortons donuts and hoping that someone will actually notice her next public pronouncement.

Now, the member for Mississauga Centre has pushed into the lead, flailing Americans left and right, and thrashing exporters indiscriminately about the head and ears.

And look at this, the Prime Minister has entered the race riding backwards on a camel and refusing to fight anyone while wondering which race is which.

But now, out of nowhere, comes the Solicitor General and the Minister of Justice, teaming up on a horse called "Gun Registry", throwing potfuls of money in all directions, transferring control of the horse first to one then to the other, then finally giving up and dropping the reins altogether.

It looks like the winner is the dynamic duo, "Gun Registry", for betting the whole farm on an additional \$59 million in funding and then announcing today that they cannot even transfer control of the gun registry on time and budget. They may be winners in this race, but the payout is nothing because the Canadian taxpayer is nobody's fool.

S. O. 31

CANADA CUSTOMS AND REVENUE AGENCY

Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Brampton West—Mississauga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency we are committed to providing fairness to our clients and to protecting their rights through a fairness policy.

The CCRA successfully manages one of the largest dispute resolution services in the federal government. The dispute resolution service deals mainly with issues relating to income tax, GST, customs and CPP/EI.

If clients were to disagree with an assessment, the CCRA would undertake a full professional and impartial review of their case. The voluntary disclosures program promotes voluntary compliance and gives the CCRA the discretion to help clients who cannot meet their tax obligations. It is a fairness program aimed at providing clients with an opportunity to correct past omissions and provides a greater level of fairness to all clients and stakeholders.

The CCRA's declaration and guide called *Your Rights* pledges the CCRA's commitment to client rights and fair treatment.

* * *

CARL RIDD

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Dr. Carl Ridd, a citizen of Winnipeg and of the world who died last Saturday.

As a young man he was known as King Carl for his excellence on the basketball court, playing with Canada's Olympic team in 1952. His love for basketball was great, but his love for justice and for the truth was even greater. As a professor of religious studies, a Christian in the prophetic tradition, and a social and peace activist, he made his mark on our community. His last public act was to oversee a protest against the war in Iraq on February 15.

As a friend, former student, and fellow Christian struggling to see the world as God would have us see it, I am sure I speak for many in Winnipeg when I express sincere condolences to Carl's wife Bev and his family. His enthusiasm for life will be an ongoing inspiration to all who had the good fortune to know him.

* * *

[Translation]

INVISIBLE WORK

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, April 1 is Invisible Work Day. I want to pay tribute to the contribution made by all the women and men who work behind the scenes, particularly those who work in the home and volunteers in the community.

Close to 70% of the work accomplished in our society is unpaid work done by women. Statistics Canada estimates the annual value of unpaid work to be between \$235 billion and \$374 billion.

S. O. 31

I am taking this opportunity to make hon. members, and particularly the federal government, aware of the need to recognize invisible work. The lack of measures remains an obstacle for women and, all too often still, it traps them in a spiral of poverty.

My Bloc Quebecois colleagues join me in paying tribute to the women and men who work behind the scenes to help build our society.

* * *

[English]

YUKON

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, April 1, is a history making day in Canada's nation building. Today most of the residual provincial type powers have been transferred from the federal government to Yukon. Another great part of our Confederation has come of age. Now Yukoners, like all other Canadians, can manage our own natural resources, our own minerals, our own forests, our own lands and our own waters.

With great authority comes great responsibility but Yukoners are no strangers to great challenges, and we will prevail and thrive as we have for centuries.

It is therefore with great joy and gratitude that we accept the key to our own destiny and the fulfillment of our dreams. *Massi cho.*

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● (1410)

NATIONAL 4-H CITIZENSHIP SEMINAR

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, this week in Ottawa, 4-H members from all across the country are attending the National 4-H Citizenship Seminar.

Those of us who have had the opportunity to be leaders in the 4-H movement, fully realize the value of being a member of this great national organization which instills such values in our youth. Pledging heart, head, hands and health for the betterment of the country is a laudable initiative.

We congratulate the leaders, the organizers and the sponsors of this event. We welcome all of them to the seminar, especially those from the great district of St. John's West and, on behalf of my colleague, of South Shore.

* * *

FIGURE SKATING

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, Chatham's own Shae-Lynn Bourne and Vancouver's Victor Kraatz were victorious at the World Figure Skating Championships in Washington, D.C., coming home with the gold medal.

This victory crowns 13 years of outstanding Canadian athletes skating into our hearts, our arenas and Canadian history. The couple has appeared in three Olympic games, nine world championships and they hold 10 Canadian titles. The win represents Canada's first ice dance title in 51 years of championships. I can think of no better way to retire than carrying the world title as champion.

I congratulate them on their tremendous win and flawless, outstanding performance in Washington. I wish them well in their future endeavours. They have made us all proud.

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[Translation]

DIVAS OF QUEBEC SHOW

Mr. Jean-Guy Carignan (Québec East, Lib. Ind.): Mr. Speaker, on March 22, the second edition of the show "Les Divas du Québec" was presented in Quebec City. The purpose of this blockbuster artistic event is to underscore and promote the cultural involvement of Quebec female singers in the Francophonie.

This time the show featured 17 Quebec performers with powerful and remarkable voices. Another goal of the event was to support the Quebec breast cancer foundation.

This top-notch artistic event was produced under the direction of Nicolas Lemieux, from the Agence Sphère. Mr. Lemieux, who is a resident of the Quebec City neighbourhood of Les Saules, created his agency two years ago and he has quickly established himself as one of the top producers in Quebec.

Mr. Lemieux is to be commended for his ongoing commitment to producing original and professional shows, and his involvement in the promotion of humanitarian causes.

Mr. Lemieux's determination to become a successful producer of high quality shows and his willingness to lend his expertise to a humanitarian cause should be an inspiration for all young entrepreneurs in Canada.

The best moments of the show "Les Divas du Québec" will be presented on Mother's Day, May 11, at 10:30 p.m., on TVA.

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[English]

ELECTIONS

Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to Elections Canada, only 25% of eligible voters between the ages of 18 and 24 voted in the last federal election. All parties in the House and indeed all citizens should be doing all they can do to encourage young Canadians to get involved in the political process.

At noon this Sunday, April 6, as part of the Juno celebrations here in the national capital region, a number of leading Canadian artists will lend their support to "Rush the Vote", a national initiative that encourages young Canadians to become more aware and to effect change through their direct participation.

"Rush the Vote" will be launched with a block party in downtown Ottawa on Laurier Avenue, with live musical performances by Juno nominated artists, celebrity appearances and electoral information. I invite all members and all young Canadians to come out and help "Rush the Vote".

Oral Questions

[Translation]

ART THOMPSON

Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Laval East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I announce the passing of Art Thompson, the renowned aboriginal artist from the west coast of Canada.

He earned international recognition for a particular form of aboriginal art. Thompson is known for drawing attention to the free-spirited style of artists of the west coast of Vancouver Island, through his attention to detail and mastery of technique. Of a generous nature, he shared samples of his work and gave technical demonstrations, which also helped this form of art gain recognition.

A member of the Nitinaht first nation, Thompson actively supported the aboriginal people, dedicating time and energy to this cause and denouncing the treatment he received in residential schools.

He was one of our great west coast artists. Our deepest sympathies.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

• (1415)

[English]

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the issue of war requires moral leadership. We believe the government should stand by our troops, our friends and our allies and do everything necessary to support them right through to victory.

Others believe that the war is unjust and cannot condone putting our service personnel in mortal danger for a cause they do not believe in.

Which position of moral leadership does the Prime Minister intend to give to our military personnel: to bring them home or to back them up?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of people in that part of the world and they are fighting the war against terrorism. We have four ships in that area at this time. We have planes. They are involved in fighting terrorism and getting ready to move into Afghanistan in the months to come. It is the position of the government that we are supporting them. We appreciate the extremely good work they are doing there.

In the case of Iraq, we do not have soldiers there but there are a few who are part of an exchange program. They are performing their duties according to the agreement signed between the two countries.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, a real leader does not put his troops in the field and then wash his hands of their cause.

The defence minister said yesterday that Canadian troops were in combat but not really in combat. He said that they were armed but not allowed to fire. He said that they were in the war theatre but not really participating.

Why is the Prime Minister so incapable of being upfront about his position on this war?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were very clear a year ago when we said that there would be no participation of Canadians in a war in Iraq if it were not approved by the Security Council. We were very clear. We said that to everybody. We delivered on what we said to the Canadian people and to the Americans and the British.

I had many discussions with the President of the United States and with the Prime Minister of Great Britain and there was no confusion at all. They knew Canadians would not participate unless it was approved by the Security Council.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it may not be so clear to our troops as the bullets fly over their heads.

[Translation]

In the beginning, this government said that Canada would not take part in the war against Saddam, but our soldiers are taking part in it. The government also said that Canadian soldiers were not in Iraq, but now we know that they are. It finally admitted that our Canadian soldiers were in Iraq only to support the effort. Now we know they are there in combat.

Why does this government refuse to tell Canadians the truth?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already told Canadians that there are, I believe, 31 soldiers on exchange programs that have been underway for several months with American, British and Australian troops. These are exchanges that have taken place between the various countries for generations.

When someone is on one of these exchanges, he or she must follow the rules of the troops to which he or she is assigned. Clearly this is a very limited number of Canadians who are carrying out these duties. As is always the case with Canadian soldiers, they are carrying out their duties very well.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, SARS is a health issue that is significantly important to Canadians. The Ontario government has taken preventive steps. However, when the federal government was asked by the World Health Organization to screen all outgoing passengers, the minister said no.

I would like her to explain that.

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to the WHO recommendation, we do have screening procedures in place. It appears quite clear that the screening procedures not only meet the requirements of the WHO but it has asked us to post those procedures so that other countries can learn from what we are doing and perhaps put in place similar procedures.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that is not exactly what I was getting at.

The WHO asked us to screen passengers as they depart. It did not ask us to put posters on the wall. It did not ask them to self-diagnose.

Oral Questions

My question for the health minister is straightforward. The WHO has asked us to screen passengers as they depart Toronto, just like we screen for our baggage contents. Why can Canada not do that, with this minister at the helm?

• (1420)

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is not what the WHO means by screening.

In fact, we have been in constant contact with the WHO. We have put in place procedures that certainly meet the requirements of this public health concern at this time. If in fact other steps are required we would take them.

However we are monitoring the situation and, to the best of my knowledge, as of 15 minutes ago the WHO believes the procedures we have in place at Pearson International Airport in relation to outgoing passengers meet its recommendations.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IRAQ

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is all very well for the Prime Minister to keep saying that Canada is not at war with Iraq, but international law on armed conflict is clear. In fact, according to article 2 of the Geneva Conventions, when soldiers of two countries confront one other, there is armed conflict between the two countries, even if the state of war is not recognized by one of them.

Since Canadian soldiers are currently taking part in combat on Iraqi territory, will the Prime Minister finally acknowledge that, under international law, Canada is at war with Iraq?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we respect agreements signed with other countries long ago, and when troops are assigned to another country, they act under the authority of that country.

Under such circumstances, the hon. member is not right in saying we are at war at this time. We have made it clear that we were not taking part in the war in Iraq.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Defence has acknowledged that there were Canadian soldiers in Canadian uniforms in combat zones. This seems clear to me, according to international law.

Is the Prime Minister telling me that, no matter what another country does, and even if we are not in agreement, if we have entered into an exchange agreement, our soldiers are going to go to war, even an unjust war, a war that has been condemned, a war in which we are not even taking part, a war that we have even condemned ourselves?

The Canadian position does not hold water.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry but, in military tradition when there are exchanges of this nature, such circumstances do arise. The military personnel on duty are fulfilling their duties as military personnel. I am sure that the few Canadians who are on Iraqi territory are fulfilling their duties with honour and skill.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of National Defence answered a question by saying that historians were looking into whether or not Canadian soldiers have ever taken part in a war while on exchange with another country's armed forces, without Canada officially being at war.

Can the Minister of National Defence tell us if they have found the answer to this question we have been waiting on for several days now?

[*English*]

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can take any amount of muddle-headedness from the Bloc and the NDP but I wish the Alliance members would spare us their rank hypocrisy.

When they speak of us washing our hands of our troops or not supporting our troops, I take extremely strong exception to those comments.

Having visited Afghanistan in July and having been bowled over by the courage and performance of our troops, I have repeated this time and again in the House. It is the Canadian Alliance that is trying to score cheap political points on the backs of our soldiers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, now the minister is indirectly answering questions from the Canadian Alliance rather than answering the questions that the Bloc Québécois is asking him.

I asked him a question about historians. I have the feeling that the answer is that these historians have not yet done their job.

The Minister of National Defence will have to admit that there are Canadian soldiers who are in a combat situation in Iraq, without Canada taking part, officially, in the war. As far as we are concerned, this sets a precedent. This precedent demonstrates that the Canadian government is saying one thing about the war against Iraq and doing the opposite in reality.

• (1425)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on occasion the questions from the Canadian Alliance provoke me a bit more than the completely repetitive questions that come from the Bloc Québécois. Obviously the government did not make its decision based on historic precedents, because we continue to look for this type of precedent.

This decision was made for the reasons that I have explained a thousand times in the House. Does the Bloc Québécois not have any other issues to raise?

* * *

[*English*]

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the right hon. Prime Minister. The Prime Minister seems to be hiding behind the agreement that pertains to the exchange of troops between Canada and the United States. He also used the word tradition.

Oral Questions

As I made clear in the House yesterday, the very agreement that the Prime Minister is referring to provides for the parent nation, in this case Canada, to withdraw its troops from a combat zone if that government so chooses. The Prime Minister cannot hide behind the agreement or tradition. It is a government decision.

Why did the Prime Minister decide to undermine his own very valid position by continuing to do this?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I said and I will repeat that we have an agreement with the American government and the British government which we are respecting at this time. That does not mean we are participating in the war.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence admitted yesterday that we do have Canadians participating in the war. The agreement that the Prime Minister is referring to provides for the government to be able to withdraw. It would not be breaking the agreement to withdraw these 31 soldiers from the units in which they are.

I ask the Prime Minister this. Can he imagine in the past Pierre Trudeau or Lester Pearson opposing the war in Vietnam but having Canadian troops in the Mekong delta? I do not think he can imagine that. Why is he putting himself in that kind of position?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we clearly indicated two weeks ago that the troops that were with the Americans, the British and the Australians were to carry on with their duties. We made that declaration at that time and we informed everybody. We will respect the agreement we made with them.

* * *

HEALTH

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. To this point, governments are relying on voluntary quarantines and voluntary compliance to limit the SARS outbreak. The Quarantine Act allows the government to enforce quarantines and compliance. It can be invoked at the minister's discretion. A Health Canada official is quoted as saying that would be "an extreme measure" in these circumstances. The minister must be considering this option to protect public health.

Under what circumstances would the government consider invoking the Quarantine Act?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Quarantine Act can be invoked in a variety of different circumstances. We have been monitoring the situation daily on an hourly basis. There is no necessity at this point nor has any particular situation presented itself that would require the invocation of the act.

If someone were to come in to Vancouver International Airport and there were reasonable cause to believe that they were ill and they did not submit to voluntary isolation, my quarantine officers on the ground could invoke the act to hold that person.

* * *

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Rex Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls, PC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Transport said that government assistance to Air Canada would not come in the form of a cash bailout. He would not rule out any loan guarantees or other financial

arrangements. Earlier today Air Canada filed for bankruptcy protection, and a related announcement by the Government of Canada is imminent.

Could the Minister of Transport outline what guarantees he has received from Air Canada that this most recent bailout will be effective? Has he asked to see a new business plan? Has he seen a restructuring plan?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am unsure as to what the hon. member is referring. I made statements in the House yesterday that the Government of Canada was not interested in participating in a cash bailout of Air Canada, but we would help in the restructuring process. I have nothing further to add at this time, nor will I comment upon speculation about what the company may or may not be doing.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Air Canada is filing for bankruptcy protection because it desperately needs to reduce its costs.

United Airlines, in a similar process in the United States, by May 1 will have a court imposed or negotiated solution for its financial crunch. American Airlines yesterday announced a \$1.8 billion deal that will keep it flying. In both of these cases, these private sector companies reached their necessary agreements without government interference.

Will the Minister of Transport agree that offering any government assistance to Air Canada would be unfair to other airlines, and it would hurt taxpayers overall?

• (1430)

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at no time have we interfered with the operations of Air Canada, and I stand by my answer of yesterday.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is actually a bit ironic and perhaps poetic justice that today is the one year anniversary of the introduction of the \$24 air tax and this is what we see with Air Canada.

What the Minister of Transport could do, which would be progressive, would be to reduce fuel taxes, eliminate the air tax and deal with the airport rent issue. Nothing has happened for the air industry from this government except that it continually increases taxes and hammers it into the ground.

Will the transport minister agree today that his responsible role is to lower taxes so the air industry can fly, and to get off its back and stop treating the air industry like the cash cow it is not supposed to be?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not that long ago we brought down a budget which included a reduction in the air transportation security charge of over 40%. I would like to see that bill passed in Parliament as soon as possible but that party across does not want the bill to proceed. What is he talking about, Mr. Speaker?

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***IRAQ**

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the rules governing military exchanges are clear: should the host nation become involved in hostilities in which the parent nation is not a party, the exchange personnel shall not engage in combat, enter a combat zone, or deploy with troops, pending direction from the parent force.

By agreeing to give such directions, will the Canadian government acknowledge that it went against its official position of opposing the war in Iraq?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government made its decision; the government considered the matter of these exchanges. The government has alliances and, for us, these alliances are extremely important, even crucial. If these exchange personnel are withdrawn, it could endanger the lives of members of allied countries. That is our decision, and we are not going to change it.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, is this not proof of the government's contemptuous conduct toward its own soldiers, in ordering them to act against its official position and put their lives in danger in a war it calls unjustified?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, life is full of risks, especially military life, and the government must manage these risks. The government must consider a number of factors. The government takes this responsibility extremely seriously.

What the government has decided, all things considered, is that it is best, given all the factors I have already mentioned, to leave the soldiers where they are.

[English]

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of National Defence said that the Canadian troops taking part in the war in Iraq were not in direct combat situations because they were not allowed to fire unless fired upon. These men and women are serving in combat units and they are in combat zones.

Will the minister simply admit that Canadian troops are fully involved in the war or does he honestly believe that the Iraqi troops will not shoot at Canadians?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said what I have said. I have said it correctly. I have said that we will honour our decision that the soldiers there are not involved in direct combat and that they are authorized to use force in self-defence. I do not know how many times I have to repeat the answer to the same old question after question.

That is the position of the government. I wish members opposite would understand that point.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of National Defence said that Canada's commitment to the war on terrorism justified keeping those exchange troops in Iraq.

Since the minister admits that the war in Iraq is inseparable from the war on terrorism, which he did yesterday, and since he claims that Canada is dedicated to the war on terrorism, why will the government not stand fully behind our allies on the war in Iraq?

● (1435)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the first of those premises. The hypocrisy of the Canadian Alliance members is showing up one more time. They agree with us on the ships. They do not want us to bring our ships home. They agree with us on the exchange soldiers. They do not want to bring them home.

What is all the fuss? Once again they are scoring cheap political points on the backs of the brave men and women of the Canadian Forces.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, when there is a war, it is very likely that people will be taken prisoner.

When the Minister of National Defence ordered Canadian soldiers to go with the British and American units, when he gave them that order, what were his instructions to them in the event they were taken prisoner? Did he tell them that Canada would represent and defend them if that happened?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, the government will not answer hypothetical questions.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to get across to the defence minister—and I hope he will be somewhat receptive—that it is not asking him a hypothetical question to ask what instructions—that is straightforward—he gave soldiers the day he told them to go to war as members of other battalions. What instructions did he give them?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said a thousand times already, we are not at war. What we are doing is honouring exchange agreements we have had with our allies for decades. These soldiers follow their orders in the field as they would in Canada. It is the job of soldiers to follow orders, and that is what they are doing.

[English]

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yes, he has said what he has said. The government has an indefensible position on the war in Iraq. It says that it is staying out of the war but it sends Canadian troops over there into combat areas, claiming that “exchange programs” just do not seem to count.

Angie Little from Nova Scotia is a second lieutenant on an exchange mission with Britain's Desert Rats. She is fighting Saddam loyalists in Basra clearing landmines and explosives.

How can the government claim that it is not participating in this war, while troops like Angie's are risking their lives, no matter what category they are under?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet another example of hypocrisy out of the mouths of the Canadian Alliance members.

Oral Questions

I said yesterday that they should put down their political tools for just one moment, stop telling us where we should be and where we should not be and honour those who are there in the region, thank their families and thank them for their service and let us all hope that they will return safely.

I think once again they are scoring cheap political points on the backs of the men and women of the Canadian Forces.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, what a disgusting display of partisanship from that prince over there.

Let me just ask, regardless of whatever category they under, what about Mike Bullock, a Canadian Forces major presently serving alongside the British army in this conflict? His father, Mel, says, "He's extremely proud but demoralized by the lack of support by this current government", not the official opposition.

Mike's commitment to Canada and to this war is unconditional. Why will the Prime Minister not stand up and give him the same unconditional support?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said time and time again that I support our men and women of the Canadian Forces. I acknowledge their bravery and their service to the country. I do not say this only in times when I can score political points. I say this all the time.

I will not enter into a competition with those people as to whether they or we care more about Angie Little and Mike Bullock and every other brave person of the Canadian Forces.

* * *

FIREARMS PROGRAM

Mr. Andy Savoy (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. In recent weeks the government has introduced an action plan that will improve the efficiency and accountability of the gun control program. It is apparent that Bill C-10A, which is currently awaiting House approval, is a linchpin of this action plan.

Could the government tell the House what specific benefits will be delivered by Bill C-10A?

• (1440)

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for this very important question.

We all know that we have tabled a good plan of action. Of course one very important part of that plan of action with regard to gun control policy is Bill C-10A. Bill C-10A will have a very positive effect and impact on the program. Just to name a few positive effects, we will simplify the requirements for licence renewal, for example, stagger firearms licence renewals as well, increase the use of the Internet and establish a pre-application process for temporary importation by non-resident visitors.

Therefore I look forward to the support—

The Speaker: Order, please. It is almost impossible to hear in the Chamber today. I know members are full of enthusiasm in their questions and answers but we have to be able to hear the person who

has the floor. It now happens to be the hon. member for Windsor West, who sits a distance away from the Chair. If everyone is making a lot of noise I cannot hear.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government shelved a review of drug patent laws. As a result, drugs, such as Losec will have no generic versions despite being available in Europe and the U.S. This one example alone would save the health care system \$100 million.

My question is for the Minister of Health. What side will she choose on the war on drugs? Will she side with big pharma or will she join Canadian patients and Roy Romanow? Will she stand up to the industry minister who is trying to gouge Canadian patients?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think these remarks are totally uncalled for. If the information that was given to me is correct, this was a study under Standing Order 108(2) by which a committee is master of its own destiny. It obviously did the job as it saw fit. I think the hon. member, as all members do, should respect that members of Parliament have that kind of freedom in committee, at least on our side of the House, although perhaps not on his.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today UN special envoy on the world HIV-AIDS crisis, Stephen Lewis, challenged Canada to offer leadership on the catastrophic pandemic facing sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and eastern Europe. This means Canada meeting its obligations to the global fund, which it has not yet done. It also means ensuring that generic drugs to prevent HIV-AIDS infection and to treat those living with HIV-AIDS are available.

Will the Prime Minister today commit to increase Canada's global fund contribution and to work toward the removal of barriers to generic drugs for HIV-AIDS? Will the government commit to do that?

Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been meeting its commitment to the global health fund. We committed \$100 million U.S. We have paid our first two instalments and will pay another instalment this year. On top of that, we have quadrupled the amount of money we are spending on HIV-AIDS from \$20 million to \$80 million per year. We put \$50 million into the vaccine, particularly for sub-Saharan and all of Africa, to find a vaccine for HIV and AIDS. Canada is definitely doing its part.

*Oral Questions***CANADIAN FORCES**

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence has stated that members of Canada's armed forces in Iraq "are in a situation of combat around them". Members of the Canadian Forces and their families are not eligible for veterans' benefits unless cabinet passes an order in council and yet Parliament is kept in the dark.

Would the Minister of National Defence assure the House that such an order has been tabled to protect our military personnel in Iraq?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House that the people who are currently in Iraq will receive exactly the same benefits and treatment in every way as did our soldiers in Afghanistan and in other areas of conflict. No distinction will be made.

Notwithstanding the fact that Canada is not at war, those individuals will receive treatment as good as and totally equal to what they would have received had we been at war.

* * *

MEMBER FOR LASALLE—ÉMARD

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

In her 2002 report, the Auditor General noted that a special new rule established by the Department of Finance, "...allows dividends from Barbados international business corporations...to qualify for tax-free treatment".

Could the Prime Minister advise whether the former minister of finance, the member for LaSalle—Émard, stepped aside from all discussions regarding these new tax rules? Could he also advise whether the establishment of Barbadian subsidiaries of Canada Steamship Lines was discussed during any of the several briefings the former minister has admitted receiving about his businesses while he was minister?

•(1445)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have always said, and I will repeat, that the former minister of finance, when there was a question of there being a conflict of interest, always informed the cabinet and withdrew from the discussions.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday a man with symptoms of SARS arrived at Pearson International Airport on a flight from Las Vegas. No health care officials could be found, so the man was allowed to leave the airport and told to see a doctor.

Is the government now prepared to invoke the Quarantine Act to ensure that passengers with symptoms of SARS can be isolated?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, we have Health Canada officials, physicians, nurses and quarantine officers at Pearson and Vancouver airports. At this point we do not intend to invoke the Quarantine Act.

However if we have reasonable grounds to suspect that a passenger may be infected with SARS and that person does not submit to voluntary isolation, then under the Quarantine Act we do have the power to compulsorily quarantine that person for a period of time. If we need to use that power we will.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is only the health minister who actually has the power to invoke the Quarantine Act. She did it with bamboo imports in 2000. Why is SARS not more important than that?

The number of SARS cases continue to increase in places like Hong Kong, China and Singapore. Yesterday the World Health Organization declared SARS "the most significant outbreak that has been spread through air travel in history".

Do we have a commitment from countries with SARS that air passengers travelling to Canada are being screened before they enter the planes?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working through the WHO and through our own contacts to ensure that other countries, other airports, such as those in Hong Kong and in Beijing, have standards in place that are similar to or equivalent to those that we have in place.

However we have quarantine officers and other Health Canada officials on the ground at airports, such as Vancouver, Pearson and Dorval, meeting planes from Singapore, Beijing and Hong Kong. In fact, passengers are being screened. They are being informed about the symptoms of the disease and we—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lotbinière—L'Érable.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BILINGUALISM

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Treasury Board keeps giving more time to allow senior public officials to become bilingual. Yesterday, the President of the Treasury Board said that she wanted to protect the right of public servants to work in the official language of their choice.

Will the President of the Treasury Board admit that the right which is involved here is not only the right of a public servant to use the language of his choice, but also the right of a person to get services in his language from the public service?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are two responsibilities here. We must provide services in the language chosen by the public in the regions that are designated as bilingual, but we must also allow public servants to work in their language in the workplace. There are the two responsibilities. Senior public officials must achieve a high degree of bilingualism to be truly able to fulfill both obligations.

Today, I announced that remarkable progress has been made over the past two years. Unfortunately, there are some people who did not achieve the required level of proficiency and they can no longer occupy the positions that they have occupied until now.

*Oral Questions***AIRLINE INDUSTRY**

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that after giving chance after chance to senior public officials, more than 200 of them are still not able, after years of getting extensions, to serve people in the language of their choice.

Will the President of the Treasury Board admit that each time she grants another extension to public servants, she is postponing the right of francophones to get services in their own language?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, will the Bloc Québécois recognize that there is no extension? I said it once, twice, three times, and I am saying it again to the Bloc Québécois: there is no extension. As of today, those who do not meet the requirements can no longer remain in their positions.

* * *

• (1450)

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in February, Ernst Zundel was admitted to Canada even though the immigration minister had advance warning. Unbelievably, the minister also allowed Zundel to make a refugee claim to avoid charges in Germany of spreading hatred.

Zundel has already been found by CSIS to be a security threat to Canada. The minister can refuse Zundel's claim. He said "Just watch me". That was weeks ago.

Is the government so weak that it cannot even get rid of an identified security threat?

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always have a problem when I see that members opposite do not respect the rule of law. We have a process and we must comply with it. To my knowledge, the individual in question is being detained. This must mean something.

[English]

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I remind the minister that CSIS reports Zundel could influence his followers to commit acts of serious violence in Canada. The minister has both the responsibility and authority to protect us from such security threats. He can put a stop to Zundel's refugee claim.

Canadians are watching the minister. Why is he still playing Zundel's game?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the ones playing Mr. Zundel's game are the opposition members who are trying to give him publicity.

I want to make sure that everybody understands that first of all we respect the process. That individual has been detained and I believe the reason he has been detained is that we are doing our job. Let the process work, please.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have just been informed that Air Canada has in fact filed for protection under CCAA.

Could the Minister of Transport please advise the House with further details?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Yes, Mr. Speaker. Subsequent to my earlier answer, I was informed of Air Canada receiving permission from the Supreme Court of Ontario providing creditor protection under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act. The company is also making a concurrent petition under section 304 of the U.S. bankruptcy code.

Air Canada has been able to secure 100% debtor and possession financing from General Electric Capital Canada. Not a penny of taxpayer money is involved.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Peak of the Market, a successful Manitoba export business, is feeling the impact of the Liberal government's anti-American actions and statements.

This farmer owned company has had orders from longstanding U.S. customers cancelled. Manitoba farmers and vegetable growers are among the first to feel the economic backlash.

What steps has the agriculture minister taken to improve relations with his U.S. counterpart?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister for International Trade, the Deputy Prime Minister, myself and our officials are in constant contact with officials and the industry in the United States.

If the hon. member has a specific issue, a specific case, that he would like us to look into I would ask him to give that to me because to date he has not brought that to my attention other than just now. If he would, I would be pleased to look into it.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister to phone Mr. Larry MacIntosh in Winnipeg. I am sure he knows who he is and he will hear the same story.

Canadian farmers rely very heavily on trade with the United States and the Prime Minister and deputy minister are making a terrible mess of our trade situation with the U.S.

I would like to know how large a negative economic impact the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Deputy Prime Minister are willing to accept before they speak up about the need to improve relations with our best trading partner and friends.

Oral Questions

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether that is a promotion or a demotion, but let me say that we have very good relations with the United States, as the ambassador himself said last week.

However I do not think that Canada can stand by and say that we should not take a principled position on matters of war and peace because we are afraid of some or other trade action being taken by our partners.

Surely to goodness, the notion of national sovereignty includes the fact that we make political decisions, especially of such importance as when we put our soldiers at risk, on the basis of principles that are bigger than whether or not we can make a buck out of having better relations.

* * *

• (1455)

[Translation]

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr. Robert Laucôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Court of Appeal of Quebec rendered a unanimous opinion concluding that certain provisions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, formerly the Young Offenders Act, are contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Now that the court of appeal has confirmed what we have been saying for years, does the Minister of Justice intend to suspend the operation of this act which contravenes the charter?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this legislation, which has wide support in this House and among the Canadian public, has come into force today.

Yes, we have received the judgment of the appeal court. We are particularly pleased to see that the constitutionality of the act was upheld, which means that this act is indeed within the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada.

There are a few elements that are more closely linked to the charter, and we will take the time to analyze the entire judgment and come back later with an official position on these two aspects.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Jacques Saada (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the chair of the Standing Committee of Procedure and House Affairs.

This committee was charged with writing a new code governing conflicts of interest for members. As there has not been a conflict of interest case involving a member since 1993, this code will be mainly preventive and must reflect the opinions of members as a whole.

Numerous consultations have already been held. What will the next step be?

[English]

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the committee has already circulated a draft report seeking comment from all members. It will hold a second open round table tomorrow at noon. Members who wish to comment on the conflict of interest code are urged to attend tomorrow's meeting or submit written submissions by the end of this week.

* * *

[Translation]

FIREARMS PROGRAM

Ms. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, Ind. BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

The government's recently unveiled action plan for the gun control program is already failing. In fact, moving the program to the Solicitor General, which was supposed to be a major shift and which was supposed to happen today, has been put off indefinitely.

Instead of getting bogged down in this all but vaudevillian improvisation, what is the minister waiting for to suspend the gun control program in order to get to the bottom of this waste of public money?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a somewhat surprising statement from the member, because she knows quite well that the gun control program has a great deal of support among Canadians.

Second, this is a program that is already providing benefits in terms of public security. This is something that goes to the core of Canadian values.

Since the Auditor General's report, we have drawn up an action plan. It is a good action plan to ensure that we move forward with the program. That is exactly what we will do, specifically by proceeding with—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

* * *

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs has just concluded four weeks of hearings across Canada, where there is overwhelming opposition to the first nations governance act.

When it comes to its own practice of governance, the government is clearly anti-democratic in ramming through this flawed legislation. Will the minister today commit to go back to the drawing board, abide by the democratic principle of respect for first nations and hear their opposition to the bill? Will he go back to the drawing board because there is so much opposition, overwhelmingly so?

Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think we have to take any lessons from the NDP about good governance. I have had the opportunity to see Bob Rae in action.

I can say, though, that what we are doing is looking very closely at wanting to improve the lives of first nations citizens. How we improve the lives of first nations citizens is by putting in the fundamentals of good governance.

The committee has just concluded its hearings. It is now looking at the discussions and the amendments that possibly could be made. We did send the bill to committee before second reading to give committee members plenty of time to look at it in detail. We hope that they will come back with a report that will make the lives of first nations—

• (1500)

The Speaker: The right hon. member for Calgary Centre.

* * *

IRAQ

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, I have a short question for the Minister of National Defence.

On Thursday, March 20, the government voted in favour of a motion that read, and I quote:

That this House call upon the government not to participate in the military intervention initiated by the United States in Iraq.

Was the Minister of National Defence aware at the time of the vote that members of the Canadian Forces currently on exchange with foreign units could find themselves in front line combat situations?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the right hon. member I am sure is aware that while the motion he describes was indeed passed by the House, there was an amendment to that motion which was defeated by a massive four to one margin, a motion calling upon the government to bring back the ships and bring back the exchange officers.

Contrary to what we have been hearing from that corner of the House, the government would, if anything, be in contempt of Parliament if we did what the NDP is suggesting and brought back our ships and exchange soldiers, which of course we are not proposing to do.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of all hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Neil Andrew, M.P., Speaker of the House of Representatives of Australia, and his accompanying delegation.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Stan Hagen, Minister of Sustainable Resource Management and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries of the Government of British Columbia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Private Members' Business

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CANADA TRANSPORTATION ACT

The House resumed from March 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-314, an act to amend the Canada Transportation Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: It being 3:03 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-314 under private members' business.

Call in the members.

• (1510)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 133)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)	Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Benoit	Bergeron
Bigras	Bourgeois
Breitkreuz	Cardin
Casson	Chatters
Clark	Crête
Cummins	Dalphond-Guiral
Desrochers	Doyle
Duceppe	Duncan
Epp	Fitzpatrick
Fournier	Gagnon (Champlain)
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)	Gagnon (Québec)
Gallant	Gauthier
Girard-Bujold	Goldring
Gouk	Grey
Guay	Guimond
Hearn	Herron
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom	Jaffier
Johnston	Keddy (South Shore)
Laframboise	Lalonde
Label	Lincoln
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Mayfield
McTeague	Ménard
Meredith	Merrifield
Mills (Red Deer)	Moore
Penson	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)	Reynolds
Ritz	Rocheleau
Roy	Sauvageau
Schmidt	Skelton
Solberg	Sorenson
Spencer	St-Hilaire
Stinson	Strahl
Vellacott	Venne
Wappel	White (North Vancouver)
White (Langley—Abbotsford)	Williams
Yelich — 83	

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Allard	Anderson (Victoria)
Assad	Assadourian
Augustine	Bagnell
Bakopanos	Barnes (London West)

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Bellemare	Bevilacqua
Binet	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Boudria	Brown
Bryden	Byrne
Calder	Cannis
Caplan	Carignan
Carroll	Castonguay
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Coderre
Collenette	Comartin
Copps	Cotler
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies	Desjarlais
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Dromisky
Drouin	Duplain
Easter	Eggleton
Eyking	Farrah
Finlay	Godfrey
Godin	Goodale
Graham	Harvard
Harvey	Hubbard
Jackson	Jennings
Jordan	Karygiannis
Keyes	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
Lastewka	LeBlanc
Lee	Lill
MacAulay	Mahoney
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marcil
Marleau	Masse
McCallum	McDonough
McGuire	McLellan
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Myers
Nault	Neville
Normand	Nystrom
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Reilly
Owen	Pacetti
Pagtakhan	Paradis
Patry	Peric
Peterson	Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Pillitteri
Pratt	Price
Proulx	Reed (Halton)
Regan	Robillard
Rock	Saada
Savoy	Scherrer
Sgro	Shepherd
Simard	St-Jacques
St. Denis	Steckle
Stewart	Szabo
Telegdi	Thibault (West Nova)
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)	Tirabassi
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Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Wasylcia-Leis
Whelan	Wilfert— 132

PAIRED

Members

Asselin	Bertrand
Bulte	Gaudet
Karetak-Lindell	Lanctôt
Loubier	Macklin
Marceau	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCormick	Paquette
Redman	Tremblay— 14

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from March 31 consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, an act to amend the Criminal Code (protection of children and other vulnerable persons) and the Canada Evidence Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that the question be now put.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the previous question at the second reading stage of Bill C-20.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I believe that you would find consent in the House that those who voted on the previous motion be recorded as voting on the motion now before the House, with Liberal members voting yes.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Dale Johnston: Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members here today will vote no to this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois are voting against this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the members of the NDP are voting against this motion.

• (1515)

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Progressive Conservative Party will be voting no to this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Carignan: Mr. Speaker, I am voting in favour of this motion.

Ms. Pierrette Venne: Mr. Speaker, I am voting in favour of this motion.

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 134*)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Allard	Anderson (Victoria)
Assad	Assadourian
Augustine	Bagnell
Bakopanos	Barnes (London West)
Beaumier	Bélanger
Bellemare	Bevilacqua
Binet	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Boudria	Brown
Bryden	Byrne
Calder	Cannis
Caplan	Carignan
Carroll	Castonguay
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Coderre

Collenette
Cotler
Cuzner
Dhaliwal
Dromisky
Duplain
Eggleton
Farrah
Godfrey
Graham
Harvey
Jackson
Jordan
Keys
Knutson
Lastewka
Lee
MacAulay
Malhi
Manley
Marleau
McGuire
McTeague
Mitchell
Myers
Neville
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Owen
Pagtakhan
Patry
Peterson
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Proulx
Regan
Rock
Savoy
Sgro
Simard
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Harvard
Hubbard
Jennings
Karygiannis
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
LeBlanc
Lincoln
Mahoney
Maloney
Marcil
McCallum
McLellan
Minna
Murphy
Nault
Normand
O'Reilly
Pacetti
Paradis
Peric
Pettigrew
Pillitteri
Price
Reed (Halton)
Robillard
Saada
Scherrer
Shepherd
St-Jacques
Steckle
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi
Torsney
Valeri
Venne
Whelan

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Benoit
Bigras
Breitkreuz
Casson
Clark
Crête
Dalphond-Guiral
Desjarlais
Doyle
Duncan
Fitzpatrick
Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gauthier
Godin
Gouk
Guay
Hearn
Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom
Johnston
Laframboise
Lill
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Masse
McDonough
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)

Ablonczy
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Bergeron
Bourgeois
Cardin
Chatters
Comartin
Cummins
Davies
Desrochers
Duceppe
Epp
Fournier
Gagnon (Champlain)
Gallant
Girard-Bujold
Goldring
Grey
Guimond
Herron
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Jaffer
Keddy (South Shore)
Lalonde
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayfield
Ménard
Merrifield
Moore

Government Orders

Nystrom
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Ritz
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Schmidt
Solberg
Spencer
Stinson
Vellacott
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams

PAIRED

Members

Asselin
Bulte
Karetak-Lindell
Loubier
Marceau
McCormick
Redman

Bertrand
Gaudet
Lanctôt
Macklin
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Paquette
Tremblay— 14

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because the last vote was done as a private member's vote, it is going to take some time to do a calculation, the exact numbers of yeas and nays on the vote, but I am advised by the Table that the motion would carry given the number of votes. Accordingly, I declare the motion, that the question be now put, carried.

Hon. members will be able to read all the figures in tomorrow's *Journals*. It is fascinating stuff.

[*Translation*]

The next question is on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-20.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, the House would give its consent that members who voted on the previous motion be recorded as having voted on the motion now before the House, with Liberal members being recorded as voting yea.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

Mr. Dale Johnston: Mr. Speaker, members of the Canadian Alliance will vote no to this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois are voting in favour of this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the NDP is voting yes to this motion.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Party will be voting no to this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Carignan: Mr. Speaker, I am voting in favour of this motion.

Ms. Pierrette Venne: Mr. Speaker, I am voting in favour of this motion.

Government Orders

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

[*Editor's Note: Division No. 135 reflects the changes made in Journals Corrigendum of April 28, 2003*]

(Division No. 135)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Allard	Anderson (Victoria)
Assad	Assadourian
Augustine	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bagnell	Bakopanos
Barnes (London West)	Beaumier
Bélanger	Bellemare
Bergeron	Bevilacqua
Bigras	Binet
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Bonwick	Boudria
Bourgeois	Brown
Bryden	Byrne
Calder	Cannis
Caplan	Cardin
Carignan	Carroll
Castonguay	Catterall
Cauchon	Chamberlain
Coderre	Collenette
Comartin	Copps
Cotler	Crête
Cullen	Cuzner
Dalphond-Guiral	Davies
Desjarlais	Desrochers
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Dromisky
Drouin	Duceppe
Duplain	Easter
Eggleton	Eyking
Farrar	Finlay
Fournier	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Champlain)	Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gauthier	Girard-Bujold
Godfrey	Godin
Goodale	Graham
Guay	Guimond
Harvard	Harvey
Hubbard	Jackson
Jennings	Jordan
Karygiannis	Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson
Kraft Sloan	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lastewka
LeBlanc	Lee
Lill	Lincoln
MacAulay	Mahoney
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marcil
Marleau	Masse
McCallum	McDonough
McGuire	McLellan
McTeague	Ménard
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Myers
Nault	Neville
Normand	Nystrom
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Reilly
Owen	Pacetti
Pagtakhan	Paradis
Patry	Peric
Perron	Peterson
Pettigrew	Picard (Drummond)
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Pillitteri
Plamondon	Pratt
Price	Proulx
Reed (Halton)	Regan
Robillard	Rocheleau
Rock	Roy
Saada	Sauvageau
Savoy	Scherrer
Sgro	Shepherd

Simard
St-Jacques
Steckle
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi
Torsney
Valeri
Venne
Wasylycia-Leis
Wilfert— 163

St-Hilaire
St. Denis
Stewart
Telegdi
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tonks
Ur
Vanclief
Wappel
Whelan

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Breitkreuz
Chatters
Cummins
Duncan
Fitzpatrick
Goldring
Grey
Herron
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Jaffer
Keddy (South Shore)
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Mayfield
Merrifield
Moore
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Ritz
Skelton
Sorenson
Stinson
Vellacott
White (North Vancouver)
Yelich— 51

Ablonczy
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Benoit
Casson
Clark
Doyle
Epp
Gallant
Gouk
Hearn
Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom
Johnston
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Penson
Reynolds
Schmidt
Solberg
Spencer
Strahl
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams

PAIRED

Members

Asselin
Bulte
Karetak-Lindell
Loubier
Marceau
McCormick
Redman

Bertrand
Gaudet
Lanctôt
Macklin
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Paquette
Tremblay— 14

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

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

[*English*]

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, government orders will be extended by an additional 14 minutes for a total of 22 minutes.

* * *

● (1520)

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2003

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-28, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 18, 2003, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Windsor St. Clair has four minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks.

Government Orders

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before question period I was in the midst of doing the report card on the budget as seen by environmental groups. I was just concluding my comments with regard to the tax break that was given to the mining industry which will benefit specifically the coal industry, allowing it another tax incentive in effect to continue to pollute the environment.

As part of the goal of the environmental groups, there was also a request that a fund be established to deal with the agricultural sector, in effect to foster and encourage the development of organic agriculture. It is interesting that on its own it is the fastest growing industry within the agricultural sector. Even though it is a very small proportion, it could go some distance, we have been told. As much as 10% of the Kyoto target could be achieved if organic agriculture were allowed to expand to a significant degree.

I have a couple of more points with regard to the report card. That takes us over to the funds that were allocated for national parks. We had heard from the Prime Minister in the throne speech in the fall of 2002 about the expansion he was proposing in particular with marine conservation areas. When the budget came down the allocated funding was somewhat less than one-third of what would be necessary to obtain the desired results in terms of establishing those new national parks and marine conservation areas. There is no indication whatsoever where those funds will come from to establish them. The budget as proposed is simply not sufficient to meet those goals.

There was also a proposal to establish an information system for the environment. This would allow us much greater capacity in this country to monitor the state of the economy and whether we are achieving our goals on sustainability, on cleanup and on preparing the environment for future generations. There was absolutely no provision for that.

Finally, one item we had pressed for was a relatively modest one from a financial standpoint. It was to encourage ecological gifts and to allow them to be tax deductible. There would be a tax incentive to encourage private owners to make ecological gifts, mostly in the form of land transfers to governments and authorities. Again, a very modest amount was estimated. It was estimated that it would cost approximately \$5 million per year in lost tax revenue. That was not proceeded with in the budget.

Coming back to my opening comments and the government's touting of this budget as a green budget, it is anything but that. Many additional items could have been put in, some that were of minimal expense and others that would have required significant financial contribution and commitment by the government. It did not do that.

Again, we are left way behind where we need to be in terms of meeting our Kyoto requirement, meeting our requirements to biodiversity and meeting our requirements to clean up the environment. It is just not there. The budget did not accomplish any of those ends to any significant degree. The government should be ashamed of its record in that regard.

• (1525)

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I was interested in the member's remarks about Parks Canada funding.

I agree with the member that in the budget itself there was an announcement of \$74.4 million. This was supposed to be for the establishment of new parks and national marine conservation areas. There was an additional amount of money equalling \$15 million for the purpose of returning ecological integrity to the parks for a total of \$74.4 million.

I agree with the member that this amount of money is totally inadequate for the purposes the Prime Minister wanted to put it to.

I have done a little research. I received excellent cooperation from the bureaucracy at Parks Canada. It turns out that in 2003, \$27.2 million and in 2004, \$32.2 million were the amounts announced to go to the new parks. Parks Canada submitted to the finance minister the following figures: 2005, \$26.2 million; 2006, \$29.2 million; 2007, \$29.2 million, for a total of \$144 million.

It is generally agreed that for the \$144 million it is possible that the 10 parks and five marine conservation areas could actually be established. The mystery is why in the world with those figures having been submitted by the Parks Canada bureaucracy, by the people who knew the numbers, why those numbers were not included in the budget. It was a very baffling budget.

There is another very interesting figure. On ecological integrity the announcement was for 2003, \$5 million and for 2004, \$10 million. That was in the budget as part of the \$74.4 million, but those were not all the figures. The department had set aside in its budget for 2005, \$15 million; for 2006, an additional \$20 million; for 2007, \$25 million, for a total of \$75 million.

These figures are reasonable to anyone like my friend and members of my party and I who are fully appreciative of parks understand the importance of what they represent within our society. I am told by people who are more knowledgeable than I that these figures are totally reasonable for Parks Canada to come forward with plans for ecological integrity or for the new national parks.

What I find tremendously baffling is why in the world with these numbers available we ended up with the bowl of porridge we got on the day of the budget. What was the motivation? What was the motivation for the finance minister to announce only \$74.4 million when in fact the total was \$144 million plus \$75 million? I do not really understand. Was he afraid that there would not be proper support for national parks? Is that why he did it?

It was pointed out by one of my colleagues that the minister came forward with a budget that had some one year budgets, some two year budgets, some three year budgets, some five year budgets, one seven year budget, an awful lot of ten year budget figures and indeed one even with a figure for eleven years. It was a very confusing document.

Government Orders

In the case of Parks Canada he actually withheld information from the House that would have made it much clearer to my colleague, myself and others in Canada who are concerned about parks that the government was serious about going forward with the parks. I am not aware that anywhere in the budget there are additional figures for rust out funding and operating reserve that come to Parks Canada courtesy of the President of the Treasury Board.

• (1530)

I will give the House the following figures: 2000-01, \$17 million; 2001-02, \$58 million; 2002-03, \$47 million; 2003-04, \$12 million; and 2004-05, an additional \$4 million for an additional amount of \$138 million. Where do those figures appear in the budget? They do not appear anywhere in the budget. These are numbers that come from either previous budgets with the estimates, or from other supplementary estimates or from new planned supplementary estimates.

What kind of buffoonery is going on with our finances that the government feels compelled to come forward with incomplete and confusing numbers to the point where the Minister of Canadian Heritage stood in the House and said that Parks Canada would be receiving an additional \$411 million or \$417 million? She had taken all the numbers that appeared on a piece of paper and tallied them up to the best of her ability to come up with what the actual commitment of the government was to Parks Canada. Even the minister herself could not work through the financial maze of the Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board.

She also announced, at the second minister's round table on Parks Canada held in Ottawa last March 24, that \$220 million over five years had been secured to create 10 new national parks and 5 new national marine conservation areas. She referred to the fact that an additional \$54 million had been secured in ongoing funding.

The minister announced, more specifically, that over 5 years, Parks Canada would receive \$144 million for the establishment of 10 new national parks and \$75 million to improve ecological integrity. The minister confirmed the one time supplementary funding of \$138 million between 2001-02 and 2004-05. The figures are a total maze. It is absolutely impossible to figure them out.

Parks Canada falls under the department of heritage. Taking a look at the requirements of Parks Canada and living with four mountain parks in my own constituency, I am aware of not only the rust out, but the fact that due to a starvation of funds from Parks Canada roads are literally falling off mountainsides. Sewage lagoons and sewage situations are completely out of control and damaging the environment.

There is a situation in my constituency in terms of ecological integrity where Parks Canada has undertaken a program of creating more forage and more winter range for the rocky mountain sheep in Kootenay National Park. This is immediately outside of the park and Parks Canada is working in cooperation with local landowners and the province. This is a worthy program.

As a result of the suppression of forest fires in my constituency, which is totally understandable being a built up area and having merchantable commercial timber in the area, we understand why we would have fire suppression. As a result of the fire suppression, the

winter range for the rocky mountain sheep is all but grown over. As a consequence, Parks Canada, in a good cooperative program with the province and with local landowners, has entered into this program of clearing smaller growth trees.

It is doing it scientifically so that the trees are properly spaced so the sheep will have the ability to hide from predators or to see predators from a distance. It is all scientifically done. Some prescribed burns will be necessary in that area as well as building up the forage. That is part of the whole ecological integrity that must be done throughout the rocky mountain trench and I would dare say in Gros Morne National Park in Newfoundland and Labrador or in Riding Mountain Park in Manitoba.

A lot of ecological integrity work must be done. Because of the haphazard, patchwork way that the government goes about doing its financing, without laying all its cards on the table and allowing people who have positions of responsibility to be able to look over its shoulder and hold it accountable, we do not have any idea if this winter forage area will go ahead or not.

• (1535)

There are many programs. As a matter of fact, it is estimated conservatively that at least \$450 million would be required just to bring Parks Canada's facilities and ecological integrity back up to snuff. The budgeting system of the government is an unfortunate, sad joke that is being played, not only on humans but also on the animals that reside in our parks.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Speaker: The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Speaker: At the request of the deputy government whip the vote on the amendment is deferred until tomorrow following question period.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

SEX OFFENDER INFORMATION REGISTRATION ACT

The House resumed from March 31, consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, an act respecting the registration of information relating to sex offenders, to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts be read the second time and referred to a committee; and of the amendment.

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on Bill C-23, an act respecting the registration of information relating to sex offenders, to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

I must state right at the beginning that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the principle of protecting society from dangerous sex offenders.

It must be kept in mind that I introduced Bill C-208 back in January of 2001, with a view to increasing the penalties for sexual offences involving minors. This bill also required any person who is convicted of such an offence to undergo treatment as the court directs. The governor in council would have had to make regulations setting out the situations in which the convicted person should undergo treatment. It is important to note that this type of treatment should in no case interfere with the bodily integrity of the convicted person. It should be psychological treatment only, because physicians agree that the predisposition to pedophilia, which is a sexual attraction to children under 10, is first and foremost a psychiatric problem.

As is evident, my bill really addressed sexual predators who prey on children and engage in pedophilia.

Why must we require psychological treatment for the perpetrators? According to André McKibben, a criminologist and therapist at Montreal's Pinel Institute, a criminal who has been cured of sexual deviancy will not reoffend. The results obtained at Pinel seem conclusive on this point and show a 50% reduction in repeat offences by repeat offenders.

Unfortunately, there is no legal obligation for a sex offender to go into therapy. Bill C-23, which we are debating today, does not raise this point either. I find this most unfortunate. I am, however, still in agreement with its principle and objectives, even though it could go further than it does.

I would like to tell our audience what this bill is all about. It is called Bill C-23, and its full name is "an Act respecting the registration of information relating to sex offenders, to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts".

It comprises 26 clauses. Its main purpose is set out in clause 2 as being to help police services investigate crimes of a sexual nature by requiring the registration of certain information relating to sex offenders.

This bill creates obligations. Clauses 4 to 7 deal with the obligations of sex offenders. A sex offender shall report in person to the registration centre within 15 days after: first, the order is made but he is not given a custodial sentence; second, he receives an absolute unconditional discharge if he is found not criminally

responsible for the offence on account of mental disorder; third, he is released from custody pending the determination of an appeal; or he is simply released from custody.

Subclause 4(2) provides he must register again after a change of address, a change of name or surname, and every year as an update. It is important to emphasize this.

• (1540)

Clause 5 outlines the information the sex offender must provide. It is important to note that currently this clause lists the type of information the sex offender must communicate, namely his given name and surname, his date of birth, his gender, his home address and work address if applicable, his phone number, and the number of any mobile phone or pager in his possession. Also, the sex offender will have to provide the person who collects information with a description of any physical distinguishing mark such as tattoos.

Clause 6 sets out how the sex offender must provide notification of any absence or stay abroad.

As you can see all these clauses, namely 4(2), 5 and 6, are a very important part of the registration process.

Then come the responsibilities of persons who collect and register information. They have responsibilities. Such a person will register without delay in the database the information on the sex offender in a manner that ensure its confidentiality.

The sex offender will be entitled to receive a copy of the information, free of charge, either at the time of registration or promptly by mail. The sex offender may, at any time, ask that the information contained in the database be corrected if it contains an error or omission. Therefore, the person who collects information will have, without delay, to make the appropriate corrections as soon as requested by the sex offender.

The bill also provides for prohibitions and the protection of data.

Clauses 14 and 15 deal with the retention of information in the database, which will be part of the automated records retrieval system that is maintained by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The RCMP maintains an automated criminal conviction records retrieval system. The information will be kept in the database indefinitely except when there is an acquittal or pardon under the Criminal Code provisions on clemency.

Clause 16, which is very important, deals with the prohibited uses of the databank. The basic principle is a total prohibition except for people who are authorized in order to perform the duties provided for in Bill C-23.

The bill mentions specifically that authorization to consult the database is given to all police services for investigations on sexual crimes. The bill provides that the police service must have reasonable grounds to believe the crime is of a sexual nature.

As mentioned in clause 16(2)(b), a person who collects information is authorized to consult the database to record or correct data.

Government Orders

Under clause 16(2)(c), a person who does research or statistical analyses can consult the database if he or she has been authorized by the RCMP under clause 13. Before accessing the database, one must have authorization from the RCMP commissioner. It is very important to emphasize that this database will not be accessible just anybody.

• (1545)

Any employee of, or person retained by, the RCMP is also authorized to consult the database in order to maintain it, as is any person authorized by the Commissioner.

The third paragraph of clause 16 sets out that the data may only be matched for the purpose of an investigation of a crime where there are reasonable grounds to believe that it is of a sexual nature. The resulting matched data may only be used for the purpose of that investigation or a resulting prosecution.

The bill also contains offences resulting from failing to comply with the registry. The punishments contained in the bill apply to offenders who provide false information and anyone who contravenes the offences specified in section 16, which I just read.

The punishment for offenders varies from a \$10,000 fine or imprisonment for six months, or both for a first offence of providing false or misleading information. For a second offence, the punishment can include a \$10,000 fine or imprisonment for a term of not more than two years, or both.

This bill makes amendments to the Criminal Code. Clauses 20 and 21 of the bill would add sections 490.02 through 490.09 to the Criminal Code. Clause 20 of the bill designates the offences that require that information be provided.

They include: sexual offences involving children; invitation to sexual touching; sexual exploitation, incest, child pornography; luring a child by means of a computer system; stupefying or overpowering for the purpose of sexual intercourse; living on the avails of prostitution of a person under age of eighteen; sexual assault; sexual assault with a weapon; aggravated sexual assault; removal of a child from Canada; indecent acts; murder or manslaughter in commission of offences.

This bill also contains consequential amendments. The Access to Information Act, the Criminal Records Act, and the Youth Criminal Justice Act will be amended accordingly.

Clauses 22 to 25 of Bill C-23 will make the manager of a federal institution—this is important to highlight—responsible for any sharing of documents that contain information. The Access to Information Act is amended to prohibit any disclosure of information. This is in clause 22.

Clause 23 of the bill amends the Criminal Records Act to include orders relating to the mandatory registration of sex offenders and adds the list of restrictions.

Finally, the purpose of clause 24 is to coordinate this bill with the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

I agree completely that sex offenders should be centrally registered. Every year, I meet people from the Canadian Police Association who believe that such a system will help them better

monitor sex offenders who move from one neighbourhood to another.

• (1550)

In my region, a woman by the name of Anne-Claude Girard has been a great success in recent years. She has been raising the public's awareness of sex offenders involved in pedophilia.

All the police officers I have met have said, "It is very worthwhile for someone to do that, but we do not have a registry to identify sex offenders, so they can just go somewhere else". Someone could come into my region and I would have no way of knowing if he is a pedophile and no way of ensuring that he will not harm young people.

Therefore, it is important to have such a registry. The protection of our children is at stake. Unfortunately, I think that the government should have included in the bill measures that would ensure a psychological follow-up of sex offenders. Because, it must be said, sex offenders have mental problems which must be addressed so that they do not reoffend.

We must also offer support to victims and their families. Never think that convicting an offender will be enough for them. The victims will feel distress and despair for years, possibly for all their lives, because of what happened to them.

In recent years, I have met young people who are still going through a terrible time after having been abused by a pedophile. It hurts to hear young people come to our office and tell us, "It was not my body that was violated. It was my soul, the only thing that belonged to me".

This bill should provide for assistance to help these young people cope. Many victims are even under the impression that they ran after trouble. That is wrong, they did not bring any of this upon themselves.

Why did the Minister of Justice not see fit to support these people through Bill C-23? It is all fine and well to have a registry, but there are still criminals and victims. I would have liked this bill to address the victims' perspective as well.

I suggest that the Minister of Justice ponder on this and amend his bill accordingly. I find it irresponsible to leave victims of sexual abuse without any government support.

This bill ought to have gone further. Like the Bloc Québécois, I agree with the principle of protecting society against dangerous sexual predators. I would also have agreed with the minister if he had taken gone all the way by providing assistance to the victims as well as treatment for those who abused them.

• (1555)

[English]

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I get to speak for 10 minutes on this. I originally thought I would have about 40 minutes when this started but I was not back in Ottawa.

Government Orders

I initially wrote the bill on the national sex offender registry and feel somewhat attached to it having brought it into the House. In fact I had a difficult time getting the solicitor general at the time to understand what we were looking for. I think it was the lobbying between ourselves, victims rights groups and police across the country that got the bill into the House. I am glad to see that happen.

I find myself in a very awkward position of having originally written the national sex offender registry and now I will be voting against it because the government seemingly could not take very simple legislation and turn it into something that would be productive. I will go through that in a minute.

I asked my staff last week for a list, covering the last three months, of sex offenders, their convictions and things that have had happened with regard to sex offenders. Here is what is walking the streets of Canada today. These are all at random.

Colin Fuson, 39, was charged with committing an indecent act and breach of probation order and is subject to public alerts. He was released from jail last summer after a 10 year sentence for raping a Surrey woman.

Donald MacPherson, 44, was granted a conditional sentence on a sexual assault conviction of October 17. He is under house arrest, to have no contact with his victim and to take a sex offender rehab program.

Ross Lee Daniels, 47, was sentenced in 1992 to eight years after pleading guilty to sexually assaulting a young girl over a four year period. Parole board records indicate every imaginable sex act was engaged in with the girl who was 11 when the assaults started. Springhill termed him high risk to reoffend. He was transferred to Dorchester and put in a sex offender program. He was deemed a high risk even after serving five and a half years. This guy is out on the streets or will be soon. This guy is in a community somewhere and we do not know where. Imagine that.

I could go through all of them all but I will not.

Brent Murray Gullison, 46, was initially sentenced in the spring of 1995 to 15 years in prison for molesting five boys who were between three and eight years old. In November 1995 the Alberta Court of Appeal reduced his sentence to 12 years. Gullison pleaded guilty to six counts of sexual assault. He is out on the streets and we do not know where.

Gregory Dean Knockelby, 43, has 21 previous convictions for indecent exposure. He admitted to exposing himself about 2,000 times. He went back to jail for two years on seven new charges. He is out on the streets.

Patrick Joseph Anthony Carson, 46, is an untreated sex offender released from jail and is labelled a predator who engages in extensive planning to secure his victims. He was sentenced last year to 18 months for sexually exploiting three girls under the age of 18 outside of Edmonton. He had a previous five year sentence for picking up underage prostitutes and choking them. He will be out on the streets in six months and we do not know where. We do not know what name he will use. We do not know anything about it.

This is why we brought the proposed national sex offender registry to the House. This is the reason I wrote it originally almost

three years ago. What do we get from the government? It comes in here and brags about how it has the new idea of having a sex offender registry. It basically said that it would put in all the things I originally put in the national sex offender registry except for the last two pages of the law. The last two pages are the joke of all time, a sick joke at that.

The registry will contain the names and addresses, dates, births, lists of sex offences and other necessary information about persons convicted of sex offences anywhere in Canada, including tattoos and markings, that sort of thing. That is a good idea and it is what we put into it. It was modelled after Christopher's bill in Ontario when the Ontario sex offender registry came into being. Jim and Ann Stephenson worked so hard with victims' rights groups after their son Christopher was murdered by a sex offender. It is necessary.

● (1600)

The bill states that every offender will register at a local police station once per year to provide updated information. That we put in the original registry. That means whether something has changed or not an offender must go to a police station and say that nothing has changed and, therefore, everything is A-OK. If offenders do not do that, they can be picked up on a warrant. This is good because then the police are proactive in going out and looking for these people.

It is good that a police officer can obtain a warrant to arrest any sex offender who fails to register and report as required. This offence would be punishable by a maximum of six months in prison for a first offence, up to two years for any subsequent offence and/or a \$10,000 fine in either case. In other words, if a person does not report, it is an offence and the individual could be fined or sent up. That is good.

Sex offenders will be required to remain registered for one of three periods: 10 years for offences with 2 to 5 year maximums; 20 years for offences with 10 to 14 year maximums; and lifetime for offences with a maximum life sentence or where there has been a prior conviction for a sex offence. Those were all issues that we had in the original bill.

Offenders can ask to see personal information contained in the registry at any time to correct and update it. That is great. There is no problem there. In fact we had all those issues written up in the original bill.

What is wrong with this bill and why do I have to, as the originator of the original sex offender registry, vote against it? It is not that there is a bunch of people listening in here. There are three people on the other side.

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay: Quality.

Mr. Randy White: Quality, the member on the other side says.

Government Orders

Now that the quality people are listening over there, this is what is wrong with the bill. The legislation will not be retroactive. This fear of offending the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms on such things is ridiculous. Ontario made its sex offender registry retroactive. There was not one grievance filed against it. It is absolutely critical in the bill. Now that the government has come 50% of the way and could go all the way on this and agree with us, this is a critical point: the bill must be retroactive. It must record sexual offenders. It must record people in provincial facilities. It must record people currently housed in federal facilities. That is about 10,000 people.

If that does not happen, then individuals who are currently in prison will be able to get out of prison with a high risk of reoffending as sex offenders and will not enter the registry until after their next sentence. In fact what it amounts to is a free sexual offence of the offender. That does not make any sense at all. We brought this up at the time of the DNA databank. It should have been retroactive as well and would have resolved a lot of cases. I ask the government to please look at this issue.

Since I only have one minute remaining, I will assign two other problems with this legislation. The first is registered offenders will have the right to appeal their registration order. That is just crazy. They will all appeal this. The second is the Crown prosecutor must apply to the courts to have the offender added to the registry. It is crazy to allow lawyers the discretion. Put the offence in legislation and anyone convicted under that offence goes on the registry. Do not leave it to lawyers and judges to make that discretion. They fail consistently on that.

•(1605)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to indicate that Thursday, April 3 shall be an allotted day.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, will it be an allotted day for the Bloc Québécois or for the Canadian Alliance?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Good question. Could I have the attention of the government House leader? Will it be an allotted day for the Bloc Québécois or for the Canadian Alliance?

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, in answer to the question put by the hon. member, as you probably know, it is not up to the government to determine which allotted days go to which political parties. That decision is made following discussions among the parties. However, according to the usual pattern, the first allotted day goes to the official opposition. Of course, the opposition parties are free to make that determination on their own.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I believe that answers the question of the hon. member from Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, who now has the floor to speak to Bill C-23.

SEX OFFENDER INFORMATION REGISTRATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, an act respecting the registration of information relating to sex offenders, to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to the other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am addressing Bill C-23, just like my colleague, the hon. member for Jonquière, and our critic on issues relating to the Solicitor General, the hon. member for Châteauguay.

I am well aware that this is no ordinary bill. When it comes to sex offenders, there is a mix of caution, rejection, biases and, of course, anger. Indeed, it is not easy, from a human point of view, to explain behaviours that we find reprehensible from early age and from the moment we begin to socialize.

Having said that, the Bloc Québécois wants to be cautious. Our critic on issues relating to the Solicitor General, the hon. member for Châteauguay, pointed out that we support the principle of establishing a sex offenders' registry. Of course, we would like to see a number of benchmarks that Bill C-23 currently does not meet.

I should point out that, as Quebeckers, 1993 was a great and memorable year for us. As we all remember, this is the year the Bloc Québécois became the official opposition. It is also the year an interdepartmental committee was established with the Deputy Minister of the Solicitor General, the Deputy Minister of Health and the Deputy Minister of Justice. We began working on a framework that was to lead to the creation of the registry that is now the object of this bill.

It is interesting to remember that the 1993 report included a number of findings. The first one was that a separate registry, that is a specific registry for sex offenders, would duplicate part of the information that is already collected by the Canadian Police Information Centre.

As a member of Parliament, I had the pleasure, in the nineties, to sit on the subcommittee on organized crime, when the situation was particularly disturbing. That committee travelled all across Canada. I was able to see that the Canadian Police Information Centre has very sophisticated files, as it should. We already have databases that allow us to track down individuals who have been convicted of a punishable offence, whether by summary conviction or criminal indictment.

The working group's second conclusion was that it would be desirable to have access to the full criminal history, rather than narrowing it down to sex offences. That is debatable. Should we have a specific registry for sex offenders or should we know all about the criminal background of an individual who has been convicted of any criminal offence?

We were told that a separate system would be expensive, that there would certainly be privacy issues—I will come back to that because it is extremely important. And of course, a comprehensive screening system is necessary.

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We are in favour of establishing a sex offenders registry. We would hope there would be a number of safeguards along the way. There is, of course, the issue of protecting personal information and also that of proportionality in sentencing. That is very important.

I cannot agree with the previous speaker who seemed to be saying that compatibility with the charter is not important. As you know, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has great strengths and great flaws. It invalidated important provisions of Quebec's Bill 101. So for us it is negative. The late René Lévesque opposed the charter because the section on multiculturalism was incompatible with the social choices made by Quebec. But in terms of main protections in criminal law, such as the doctrine of *audi alteram partem*, the right to be heard and to have a fair defence, and the other main protections found in section 7 of the charter, we are in favour.

• (1610)

These provisions are also found in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

Quebec was one of the first legislatures, the first nation within Canada, to adopt a Quebec charter, in 1975. In 1977, the Parti Québécois government made significant changes to it, even adding social condition to article 10, which is still not part of the Canadian Human Rights Act, despite the many bills tabled by this member of the Bloc Québécois.

Our colleague, the hon. member for Sherbrooke, has taken up the cause since this matter relates to human rights.

The intent of the bill is to amend the Criminal Code. This is interesting because criminal law constantly seeks to maintain balance.

I can say that there was a former Minister of Justice who, in the early 1970s, published a white paper. The Criminal Code, obviously, is used to sanction, to coerce and to invite us to maintain a balance between the great values of integrity of person and peace among communities. Which Minister of Justice published this white paper on criminal law reform? The one who is now Prime Minister.

It is interesting to note that the then member for Saint-Maurice was the Minister of Justice. Unfortunately, these years bring back bad memories because that Minister of Justice unilaterally patriated the Constitution, which Quebec's own National Assembly has never accepted. The National Assembly is not likely to ratify this document from 1982 any too soon. It is a document which eroded the authority of the National Assembly, and we will never accept this. The Bloc Québécois is the direct outcome of this rejection of the Constitution Act, 1982.

That said, Bill C-23 adds an extremely important provision to the Criminal Code. This provision amends sections 490.02 to 490.09. It would, therefore, establish a certain number of offences. For persons found guilty of this series of offences, the courts can determine, at the Crown's request—this must be kept in mind; it is not automatic—the list of offences, which I will share with you and which lead to the offender being listed on the registry.

These are pretty serious offences, as hon. members will see. We are talking about sexual offences involving children, and this is

covered, of course, by section 490.02, under invitation to sexual touching and sexual exploitation for instance.

You may remember, Mr. Speaker—I think you were a member of this place at the time—that in 1995 the Criminal Code was amended to include sexual exploitation taking place not only in Canada but also abroad.

We were witnessing the emergence of the whole sex tourism industry. Unfortunately, there were fellow citizens of ours who travelled abroad, often to such sun destinations as Cuba, Mexico or Thailand, to have a good time without always bothering to respect the dignity of those whose country they were visiting and, sadly, engaged in activities related to sexual exploitation, against which there was no legal recourse.

Back in 1995 and 1996, the hon. member for Québec had put a bill forward. The debate that took place in this House was most worthwhile. Once again, we can clearly see how vigilant the members of the Bloc Québécois are.

That having been said, offences requiring registration include sexual offences against children, invitation to sexual touching and, of course, sexual exploitation.

Another extremely reprehensible activity, which people do not want to be negotiable for those engaging in it, is incest. There is also child pornography, which the Fraser commission dealt with in the days of the Conservative government. There is luring by means of a computer system.

• (1615)

Mr. Speaker, without imposing, would you be kind enough to ask if I could have another five minutes to finish my speech?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent for the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve to speak for five more minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. member will therefore have five more minutes.

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I think that there is a spirit of great camaraderie developing increasingly in this House, and we are better parliamentarians because of it. I will continue in this spirit of frank camaraderie, which makes us all better human beings.

Clauses 490.02 through 490.09 list some extremely important offences. I had got as far as incest, which has been in the Criminal Code since the 19th Century. This cannot, of course, be tolerated.

Then there is child pornography. As I said, the Fraser commission addressed this in 1985, and then there is luring a child using a computer; stupefying or overpowering for the purpose of sexual intercourse; living on the proceeds of prostitution of a person under age of eighteen.

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As an aside, in connection with prostitution, in the summer of 2000, the leader of the Bloc Québécois, the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, mandated me along with my colleague, the member for Longueuil, and my former colleague, the member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, who as members know is not an independent Bloc MP but an independent MP, to head a task force on the phenomenon of street prostitution. This is not a trifling matter in major centres. For instance, in Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, there are some 100 to 120 sex trade workers in operation from the time the snow melts until October.

We must not show prejudice here. None of us ever knows how life's ups and downs will end up affecting what happens to us. When one addresses the phenomenon of prostitution, one realizes it is not one-dimensional. These are not just women with a drug abuse problem. That is one reality, and certainly a dominant one in the prostitution picture, but it would be wrong, and overly narrow, to try to bring the debate down to that dimension alone.

Incidentally, I would like to share a little secret. I know that everything that is said here is highly confidential. When I was first elected in 1993, one of the first issues I had to deal with, as the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, was street prostitution. There was a march organized in my riding, where I met with sex-trade workers. You can imagine my surprise to learn that one of the sex-trade workers I met was a former page in the House of Commons. She had worked here. This is not a joke. This helped me understand one thing clearly, and that is that we never know where life will take us. Some people's lives take a turn for the worse and they face hardship. However, that does not make prostitution acceptable for most people.

In the report we tabled, we proposed a whole plan. I am convinced that prostitution must be removed from residential neighbourhoods.

There is quite a selection process to become a page in the House of Commons. One might think that if someone is a page in the House of Commons, that this person comes from a good family, that this person was well off. This person, relatively speaking, is quite well educated. However, despite all this, there I was dealing with a person who was a sex-trade worker. So we see how there are lessons we learn in life that shape us and that help us reconcile ourselves with fate.

In closing, I would like to say that even though we support this bill, our concerns will revolve around the whole issue of protecting privacy. We have in mind the example of what they did in Great Britain, where they set up a registry that is not available to the general public. I will have an opportunity to speak further on this at third reading.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I think that if you ask the House would give unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, presented on Wednesday, March 19, 2003, be concurred in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Does the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons have unanimous consent to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SEX OFFENDER INFORMATION REGISTRATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, an act respecting the registration of information relating to sex offenders, to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The question is on the amendment. All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Pursuant to Standing Order 76 (8), the recorded division on the amendment stands deferred until tomorrow afternoon after question period.

* * *

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION ACT

Hon. Bill Graham (for the Minister of Health) moved that Bill C-13, An Act respecting assisted human reproduction, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is obviously a pleasure for me to speak today on Bill C-13, An Act respecting assisted human reproduction. This bill has been long awaited in Canada. All the members and all Canadians know that this bill has been long awaited. It is truly a delight for me to speak on this subject.

In its current form, Bill C-13 reflects the contribution of numerous groups and individuals, including the members of the Standing Committee on Health, whom I want to thank for the enormous amount of work they did on this bill. It was not always easy. There were many important aspects. I believe that everyone devoted time and effort and, today, the bill is better for it. I would also like to mention the contribution of many of the members of this House.

There is no doubt that this bill today is different from the legislative proposals presented to the Standing Committee on Health almost two years ago.

Significant changes have been made since the bill was introduced last spring. The greatest change is the power to establish the assisted human reproduction agency of Canada.

However, there are also differences in many of the details of the bill, such as the Parliamentary review of regulations, the anti-discrimination clause and the firm rejection of any reimbursement of expenditures. As we all know, the bill will fill a legislative void.

We know that the current situation has serious consequences not only for infertile couples and Canadians born through assisted human reproductive technologies, but also for society as a whole. Having recognized these consequences, Canadians have clearly stated that they want the federal government to show leadership in this area.

It is up to us to protect the health and security of Canadians who are turning to assisted human reproduction technologies to help them build families. It is also up to us to follow up on concerns that science and technology should not be able to continue to evolve without regulation.

The bill also recognizes that approximately one in four Canadian couples has to deal with infertility, and this figure is increasing. These couples must overcome a fundamental obstacle to one of the most human wishes, that of having a family. Assisted human reproduction technologies offer the chance to overcome this obstacle.

The bill will be a significant development for people who use these technologies in the hope of conceiving a child. It will ensure that they can do so knowing that their health, safety and privacy are protected. It will ensure they are not discriminated against.

Having a child is a major decision for anybody. But those who use assisted reproductive technologies are faced with added difficulties requiring they ask themselves some pointed questions. Is the technology safe? What are the chances of success?

This is why informed consent is a key element of the bill. To make an informed decision on assisted reproductive technologies, whether we are directly involved or not, we need tools.

Bill C-13 puts great emphasis on the availability of reliable information on assisted reproductive technologies. It recognizes how important it is to keep Canadians informed of the possible causes of infertility, prevention measures and treatment.

Couples who opt for in vitro fertilization or other forms of assisted reproductive technologies must have reliable information on the technology and treatment they choose. Bill C-13 will make sure clinics provide this kind of information.

Moreover, the agency established under Bill C-13 will have the power to monitor and evaluate new developments in Canada and abroad. It will become a known and informed source of reliable information for those considering using assisted reproductive technologies in Canada.

Couples should have access to professional help to evaluate the psychological, emotional and social stress they and their children might face.

• (1630)

So Bill C-13 attaches a great deal of importance to counselling, so much so that it has generated a considerable amount of interest for many members.

Although it is true that protecting the health and safety of Canadians who are seeking to start a family is at the very core of Bill C-13, there are still other important aspects to it.

Recent events have drawn the world's attention to the more sombre aspects of assisted reproduction. For many people, the necessity for such a bill has been crystallized by the claims, false though they may be, that a cloned baby was born prior to last Christmas. The spectre of that possibility was of huge concern to us all.

As a society, we have a duty to set out in legislation what we will accept and what we will not. That is precisely what Bill C-13 does. Without it, cloning will continue to be legal in this country.

The use of cloning techniques to produce a child is deplorable to Canadians. Health and safety issues aside, cloning for reproductive purposes is ethically and morally repugnant.

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The deliberate creation of genetically identical humans is contrary to human dignity and to diversity. It blurs the distinctions between reproduction and production.

It virtually ignores the well-being of the cloned child. Any child born as the result of cloning techniques would have to cope with unprecedented psychological, social and emotional challenges relating to identity issues.

Cloning is not, however, the only unacceptable aspect of assisted reproductive technologies. Bill C-13 makes a number of other practices illegal as well, practices which Canadians simply will not accept, including gender selection for other than health reasons, the commercialization of reproduction, and the creation of animal-human chimera.

Clearly, the problems addressed by Bill C-13 are profound ones. We therefore consider Bill C-13 to represent a balanced approach.

The path to that balanced approach was not an easy one, but I feel that, overall, the bill establishes a very solid framework, a framework that will enable us to address the rapidly evolving technologies and the changes in public opinion.

I will cite the example of the approach the bill takes to donor identification. I recognize the valid concerns of those who would like to see donor identity disclosure made mandatory.

I firmly believe that Bill C-13 marks a major step forward. Let me be perfectly clear: under this bill, the identity of donors may be disclosed provided consent was given.

At present, the many Canadian descendants of donors are denied access to the most basic genetic and medical information about their genetic parents. Bill C-13 will ensure that future Canadians conceived with donated gametes have full access to the detailed medical and genetic background of the donor.

However, information from which the identity of the donor could be inferred will remain with the agency. This would mean that, in a medical emergency such as a bone marrow transplant, a medical practitioner will be able to contact the donor in confidence.

In addition, we cannot ignore the fact that, to date, most provinces and territories have not clarified the status of donors in family law. This means, for instance, that identified donors could possibly be asked to support a child or could have claims against their estate made by genetic descendants of theirs.

The international experience seems to indicate that for a system based on the mandatory identification of donors to work, legal protections must be provided.

This bill could well be a catalyst for such a legal clarification in Canada. Parliamentarians may therefore want to review this issue, as part of the mandatory review of Bill C-13.

•(1635)

Another area where we have achieved an appropriate balance is that of research on surplus embryos. Given current scientific and technological capabilities, surplus embryos are a virtually unavoidable result of in vitro fertilization.

Therefore, as legislators, we have a duty to establish parameters regarding the fate of these embryos. Bill C-13 will ensure that, if a couple decides to donate an embryo for research purposes rather than simply have it destroyed, as is often the case now, the procedures relating to this embryo will be conducted in compliance with the rules of ethics and with the values of our society. Again, a balance has been achieved.

I want to reiterate to the House that, without Bill C-13, there is no legislation governing the fate of surplus embryos. There are no rules that are authorized by the legislation and that govern research on embryos.

It is important to point out that Bill C-13 will make it easier for parliamentarians, provincial and territorial partners, stakeholders and Canadians to make a commitment. The act establishes a process that will allow Canadians to address, on an ongoing basis, complex issues that surface quickly.

Parliament can legally conduct a comprehensive review of this legislation and, in the meantime, it will review all the regulations and it will receive reports on the full performance of the agency.

The structure of the assisted human reproduction agency of Canada owes much to the members of this House. As recommended by the Standing Committee on Health, the agency will be at arm's length from Health Canada and will be governed by a board of directors reporting directly to the health minister.

The agency will aim for the greatest transparency possible, while ensuring that privacy rights are upheld.

The board members will come from a wide variety of backgrounds. They will each bring their unique expertise to the board. There is however one issue on which we will be adamant. No member will represent a specific organization or sector. Instead, the board members will work together in the best interests of all Canadians.

Lastly, let me quote the wise words of Louis Pasteur, the man who unlocked the mysteries of rabies and anthrax and was responsible for laying the groundwork on which much of modern science is based.

Pasteur said, and I quote, "Chance favors the prepared mind". Bill C-13 sets up the framework that will prepare us, as a society—and as legislators—to assess and follow up on a variety of scientific discoveries and ethical challenges, now and in the years to come.

The bill now before the House might not solve all of the ethical dilemmas related to new technology. Some of these ethical issues go way beyond the scope of the bill. But the bill does provide for a balanced approach, a reasonable and reasoned approach. It is a global approach which is based on the experience and the best practices of countries the world over, but still remains our very own.

It is a truly Canadian approach that will help us meet the challenges of the new century.

•(1640)

[English]

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and pleasure to rise on third reading, and give my voice to the bill one more time. We have had a number of opportunities to speak out strongly and firmly on a piece of legislation that will impact our nation in a significant way into the 21st century. I do not think we need to understate that. We must state it as clearly and strongly as we possibly can so that the people of this great nation understand the road that we are about to embark upon.

This legislation has the potential to change the ethics of a nation. It is the first time that we will approach the idea that it is okay as a nation to destroy human life for the sake of research.

In doing so, we set out that the ethic we stand on is for the greater good. If we shrink ourselves to the place where the only ethical ground that we stand on is that for the greater good we should do something, then we are on a slippery slope as a nation that will disregard the value of human life as we have seen in many different countries around the world.

It is important that we discern the intensity of the impact of this proposed legislation. After a year of draft work on this bill and after going through committee stage, report stage and third reading, which brings us to this point now, we must understand that we have tried to explain this all the way through.

We ask for the wisdom of the House that it discern clearly and carefully the actions and the voting pattern that will set this in motion or stop it, and with some wisdom throw caution to going down this road so aggressively.

Having said that, we need and have called for legislation in this area. My colleague talked about the banning of cloning, chimera, sex selection, and all the prohibitions within the bill that are important. We must ensure that happens.

However, when it comes to Bill C-13, it touches matters of a great human affair. It touches matters of life and death, and the desires of parents to conceive children. Couples are attempting to build families. That is how the bill started. The problem with the bill is that it goes beyond building families.

As my colleague has said, one in eight Canadians are having difficulty with the experience of becoming fertile and creating a child. That is where the bill started. It started with the idea that the bill should address how to assist those individuals to create a replica of themselves.

Bill C-13 touches on the hope for the treatment of debilitating diseases and conditions. It is important that we address both the ethical complexity that is so highly controversial as well as the other side, which is the whole area of whether the proposed legislation is going in the right direction with regard to the science behind where we will allow ourselves to go.

I believe that Canadians have been driven by the value of protecting human life and respecting it. Whether young or old we have an intrinsic value to respect our creator. Human life is special; it is not to be disregarded. It is not to be created for the sake of

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destruction. It is important that we have that concept and because of that we should respect life right from conception to natural death.

•(1645)

I regret the government has chosen the uncharted path of embryonic research which may lead in a direction other than human health.

Let us go back 10 years to the evolution of this piece of legislation. It started in 1993 with the royal commission and a piece of legislation came forward. Bill C-47 died on the Order Paper in 1997. It came forward again as Bill C-56 and died on the Order Paper at the prorogation of the House. Now we have Bill C-13 that we are debating.

It is important to understand that in the drafting of this legislation we did something special and unique. In a non-partisan way we had a piece of legislation that was drafted and went to committee. For nine months we listened to the greatest minds and the most informed to give us the input that they had with regard to how it could be amended and how it could be a model of legislation that would be used around the world.

We had the opportunity to have the best legislation of any nation in the world. It is for those reasons that we fought so hard to put in place some of the changes to this legislation prior to it going to committee after it was introduced.

What I find astounding is that the report that came out on the draft piece of legislation is significantly different from what we have before us today. There were many cautions put before the committee. The committee members at that time were nervous about the idea of embryonic stem cell research. The committee was explicit on how we should deal with the regulatory body that will allow or not allow certain practices to occur in the area of reproduction.

The bill we have before us seems to ignore much of the work that was done. It ignores much of the work of the witnesses who came forward and advised the committee. This is why, if we talk to many of the committee members privately, they are frustrated with a piece of legislation that has ignored the recommendations after nine months of hard, non-partisan work and nine months of truly looking at a piece of legislation that would be the best for Canadians. Canadians deserve no less. They deserve the best piece of legislation. They deserve their values to be protected. The bill falls short of that. We must be cautious when we move down this road.

I would like to spend some time on some of the things we support in the bill. It is important to state them and to understand them. It is important that if the bill falters at this stage that we go back and look at the things that we would all agree on, such as the things that are prohibited in the bill, for example, banning either reproductive or therapeutic cloning.

Cloning is an emotional issue that has been publicized in the last while. The threat or the possibility of cloning is a reality that we see coming closer and closer as the days pass. In fact, there are those who have suggested that they have cloned already.

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We applaud the idea of the prohibition of reproductive or therapeutic cloning in this piece of legislation. That reflects Canadian values. If such a piece of legislation were to come forward in the House it would pass as quickly as a salary increase, in 72 hours. That is how quickly it would pass because there would be unanimous consent from every seat in the House.

The idea of animal and human hybrids; the idea of chimera, mixing animal and human; and the idea of sex selection is appalling. The idea of germ line alterations that last forever once they are created, and the idea of buying and selling embryos and paid surrogacies are all areas in this piece of legislation that we agree should be prohibited. These are things that are important and we cannot understate them. We cannot overlook that the prohibitions are in this piece of legislation and we should applaud and embrace them.

However, there is one other thing which is an important part of this legislation and that is the agency. The agency will either allow or disallow what will be carried forward in research in this whole area. It will either enforce or not enforce the things that are in this piece of legislation. It is important that we discern who the individuals are that will sit on this regulatory agency. It is important that they are men and women of character who understand the intensity of what is being asked of them in order to control this whole area as the legislation comes into being.

• (1650)

The other thing we need to understand is the whole idea of cloning. What is frustrating for me is that before the ink is even dry and before the bill even passes third reading, scientists are clamouring to say that therapeutic cloning should be allowed.

This goes back to my opening remarks when I said that we were on a slippery slope. We should be very cautious and careful about the legislation. Before the ink is even dry and before we even vote on the bill, the scientists are saying that somatic cell nuclear transfer or therapeutic cloning should be allowed.

Great Britain, which has been under a regulatory agency for the last decade, is now allowing therapeutic cloning. It has also allowed the creation of embryos solely for the purpose of research. If we as Canadians say that is okay, then we are on a slippery slope and we will not be able to stop.

It is actually more ethical to allow that than to place frozen embryos in storage and then thaw them because less than 5% of them go on to create what we would like to create as far as research goes. Whereas if we could get them without the freezing process, it would be more ethical to use them that way.

The next battle we would be fighting in the House is whether we should move to that stage. I suggest that we are fighting that now, even before the ink is dry on this bill. We should be very cautious as we move forward on this legislation because the slope is more slippery than most members understand.

Canadian Alliance members oppose the whole idea of cloning. It is an affront to human dignity, individuality and human rights. It is very important that we make sure it does not happen.

We felt that this legislation should have been split. A motion was brought forward by my party in committee in September 2001

asking for some legislation that would put Canada on the prohibited side of this. We asked that reproductive cloning be something that everyone would have to agree on. At that time, the Liberals deferred the vote. Since they did not want to do it, we had no legislation in that area. That is appalling. It should have been included. If the bill had been split, we would have had the needed protection in the prohibited areas. We would have had more time to deliberate and move cautiously on the areas of controlled activity. We should be very careful as we move forward on this legislation.

I would like to talk for a bit to the preamble of the bill. Clause 2 states:

the health and well-being of children born through the application of assisted human reproduction technologies must be given priority in all decisions respecting their use;

It goes on to state:

human individuality and diversity, and the integrity of the human genome, must be preserved and protected.

Those are noble and thoughtful insights that we put into the preamble of the legislation. However my concern is that as a committee we ranked how we should approach this legislation. We asked ourselves what should govern our decision-making and what should have priority.

As a committee we said that the legislation was about building families and creating life and that obviously the child born by assisted human reproduction should have number one priority. Our paramount concern was that the legislation respected and recognized their rights and protected the rights of the most vulnerable.

The second thing we considered to be an important driver in the legislation were the adults who would be participating in assisted human reproduction.

The third consideration were the researchers and physicians who would be conducting the research on assisted human reproduction.

If we had kept in mind the child first, the adult second and then the science as we went through the legislation, we would have had a different bill in place than what we have right now.

• (1655)

We also must recognize where we have faltered, where we have mixed these things up, where we have allowed science and parents' rights to override the rights of the child. We should reflect on those as we go through the legislation and stop it at third reading if it violates those three priorities.

The preamble of the bill recognizes the priority of the offspring but it fails the offspring in other areas. Children born through donor insemination or through donor eggs are not given the right to know their biological parents. I will return to that a little later in my presentation.

The bill's preamble does not provide an acknowledgement of human rights and respect of human life. That is another misgiving because we believe that is a value that Canadians hold near and dear. The bill is intimately connected with the creation of human life and yet there is no overarching recognition of the principle of the respect of human life. That is a great deficiency and a grave deficiency in the legislation.

Government Orders

With regard to research using the human embryo, Bill C-13 would permit the use of the human embryo from supposed leftovers from in vitro fertilization treatments. It would allow stem cell research and it would allow the creation of actual embryos for reproductive research. I think this is an important fault in the legislation that we should recognize right up front.

Sometimes we overlook the whole idea of creating an embryo for reproductive research. Canadian laws will now legitimize the view that human life can be created solely for the benefit of others. This obviously goes against the view that life should not be created in order to be destroyed, yet this is what the legislation would allow. It is an ethical issue and it is something that divides Canadians right down the middle. It is something we should be very cautious about allowing. Canadians are very concerned about this. I know many members in the House have received many e-mails on it. Many of their constituents are very concerned because it violates their whole value system of respect of human dignity and integrity of human life. It is great that we have legislation that can wax eloquently in its preamble about respect but then it does not follow through with that in the rest of the legislation.

Embryonic research also constitutes an objectification of human life and a life becomes a tool in which it can be manipulated or destroyed for others, even to ethical ends. This is one of the things we have to understand.

People always ask me that because I think life begins at conception therefore it is just an ethical argument, so they dismiss it. Well, let us take the ethics out of it and just ask, biologically, whether life begins at conception. I would argue, biologically, that when 23 female chromosomes from an egg and 23 chromosomes from a sperm connect and begin to grow we have the same DNA at that stage as we do when we are 80 years old or lying on our deathbed. If it does not start there, then where does it start?

Protection under law starts when we are born. A fair debate would be on the kind of protection we should allow at the embryonic stage. However whether that is life is not debatable. It is just biological. As biologists will tell us, that is where life begins.

Let us have a true debate, not on the ethics but on the reality. The reality is, that is life. Do we protect it at that stage or do we not? The legislation is very interesting because it does give some protection at that stage. It protects it after 14 days. Therefore we would have to conclude that life begins, according to the legislation, at 14 days after conception. If not, why would we protect it at that stage? Why not just keep allowing it to grow until nine months in the womb, where it is protected under law? Obviously that is a little further than most Canadians would allow it to go. Therefore, from that perspective, we have to understand where that ethical argument is, and let us be realistic about it.

• (1700)

The other thing that really upsets me is that we do have an alternative. We do not need to put Canadians through this dilemma. The alternative is what is happening with the non-embryonic stem cells or adult stem cells. It is a terrific study. Some of the things that have been proven possible out of the study on non-embryonic stem cells have been absolutely astounding. We can get these stem cells from the umbilical cord, from tissue, from skin and from bone

marrow. Last summer a group of scientists out of Minnesota discovered that stem cells could be grown into any organ of the body

If we have an answer looking us right in the eye, it is very difficult for us as a nation to say that we should go to the embryonic stem cell. Why would we do that with our precious resources? Why would we do that when any organ that is grown out of an embryonic stem cell and then put into another individual would result in that individual being on anti-rejection drugs for the rest of the individual's life? We have to recognize that is not in the best interest of the patient either. Why would we do that when we have an alternative?

Most Canadians who have tried to take part in the debate on embryonic stem cells have failed to understand the difference between an umbilical cord stem cell, an embryonic stem cell or an adult stem cell. It is quite complex but we should make no mistake that the embryonic stem cell has the ethically charged problem.

Incidentally, the embryonic stem cell has its own problems. It is so elastic that it cannot be controlled to grow into the organ that scientists want it to grow into. They say that they need those embryos so they can trigger it appropriately. If that is true, I would say that they should carry on with their research but carry on with the research on animals, on embryos from the animals, carry on with research on the stem cell lines from the United States that have already been created and which we have imported into Canada. That would be fair. However let us move carefully and slowly, as Canadians, into the area where we would destroy human life for the sake of research.

Nonetheless, we are seeing some response and some results from the stem cells that are derived from the adults. Parkinson's patients are being cured. Leukemia is being cured. MS patients are improving. Conditions have greatly improved in the whole area of taking stem cells from the adult and using those. I think that is where Canadians' money should be placed. It is very limited. We need to use those dollars as wisely as possible if we are to create the kind of society that we want and the kind of research that is most productive for that society.

The minority report we had for the first draft of the legislation actually recommended that. The report said that we should pull back for a three year period to allow the scientists to continue their research on the adult or non-embryonic side and see where that goes. The report also said that we should continue with animal research on even the stem cell lines from the embryo but that at this stage we should not move to the place where the scientists could move the ethical guidelines, where we changed the line in the sand to as far as what we as a nation would find it appropriate to go.

Government Orders

It is interesting that the legislation uses the word "necessary". It says that the only way we should be able to touch the embryo is if it is deemed necessary. In saying that, one would think that it at least gives the agency, which would be validated to control this activity, an indication that it should only go there if it is necessary. Yet, in the definitions we do not define "necessary". When I asked what the word "necessary" meant to the scientists, they could not define what would not be necessary. In doing that, it indicates that everything would be necessary.

The health committee originally was very nervous about this so we put it in a different way. We said that if they were to go there then they could only go there if there were no other category of biological material that could be used for the purpose of that research. If they could prove that to the agency, only then should it be allowed. Even with that, there was a strong debate in the health committee and much nervousness in even allowing it to go to that point.

This entire area is difficult when we see how loosely this is worded and when we see that we have legislation that perhaps is taking us down the wrong road, the wrong road maybe with the right intent. Maybe we think that by doing it we can save some lives in the long run. I would suggest that has yet to be proven and until it has been proven we should not go there.

● (1705)

My biggest frustration is that for this piece of legislation the committee that was asked to report on it was not listened to. We reported on it and I believe we did so in a very non-partisan and very good way, putting some safeguards in place in the legislation. The health minister decided to ignore that. It gets even worse if we talk about some of the amendments made here last week with regard to allowing surrogacy. I will talk about that later.

When we talk about the regulatory agency and how important it is, in reality that is the most important piece of this legislation. If we get this wrong, we get it wrong for the 21st century. If we get it right, we then put in place something that will garner the confidence of a nation in this entire area. It is very important that we look at the agency, at how it is made up and how it is controlled.

When we look at the legislation, we see that it allows the Minister of Health sweeping control, complete and total control, of that agency. Because of this legislation, the minister can have sweeping control of this agency and I am not even speaking of the current minister but of any minister who comes along in the future. Because of this, it is very dangerous legislation. In fact, clause 25 would allow the minister to give any policy direction she would like to the agency, and the agency without question must follow it. That is what clause 25 states. I believe that clause 25 should be absolutely and completely removed from the legislation because it goes against anything that we would see as being wise.

The agency must be answerable to Parliament. It should not necessarily be answerable to a minister of health and her or his will. The agency has to recognize that it is important to have the wisest individuals in that agency. In fact, the health committee said that we should have men and women of wisdom, men and women of judgment. We do not care whether they are all women or all men; I do not. What is important is that they are men or women of wisdom and judgment who are not impacted by monetary gain, who do not

have a conflict of interest, and who are not driven by a certain constituency and controlled by the scientists or the special interest groups. They have to be outside that. They have to be above that.

In this legislation we had the opportunity to make that possible and I think we have failed on that count. That is what I would see as the largest failure of the legislation. How terrible it is when we had such a golden opportunity to get it right and we got it so wrong. When this agency is struck, I hope that the Minister of Health and the Prime Minister at the time will reflect on the wisdom of the committee originally and will reflect on who the personalities are that they place on this agency. It is absolutely critical that we get this right, in spite of the legislation, if it goes through the way it is now.

Donor anonymity is another area in the legislation and we have totally blown it. Although the agency would hold the information for donor identity, a child conceived through donor insemination or donor eggs would have no right to know the identity of the parent unless written consent were given.

Let us go back to the priorities I mentioned earlier. The priority should be the child, and then the parent, and then the scientists. This gets it wrong. This allows the parents to override the will of the children in knowing their identity. That is getting it wrong. Do we realize how many offspring this would impact? It is very significant. In Canada right now we have somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000 children born each year through donor insemination. That is a small community or a small village in many of our constituencies. That is how many are born not knowing where they came from. They have no opportunity to know unless they have consent.

● (1710)

When we look at the history of individuals who donate semen, we see that a good amount of the donations, almost 50% or more, are coming from the United States. Sometimes we have no idea of where they come from. We have no way of knowing. Sometimes they come from prisons, for goodness' sake. We need to look carefully at this whole area. The legislation fails in this. It fails to force individuals to allow their history to be given to the child who is born through donor insemination.

This was a very difficult issue at committee. In fact, it came to a vote and, if I remember it right, the vote was six to five. All the committee members were not there that day. It was a six to five vote. That is how close it was. We voted the wrong way. That was a terrible error. It was a terrible mistake that was not corrected at report stage and it should have been. It needs to be. What a golden opportunity it would have been to do what is right for so many if such a little change could have taken place.

Government Orders

One of the other things that upsets me is the grandfathering of the governor in council's exemption in clause 71. It allows the grandfathering of controlled activities until the day it is fixed by the regulations. Unfortunately, when we allow that sort of thing to go into the regulations, we really have created a clause that we could call a get out of jail free clause. It allows the scientists to actually go in a kind of free will and totally uncontrolled way into the whole area of using these leftover embryos before the legislation is actually enacted, because there is no grandfathering clause in it. Because of that, we will see a great rush to take the embryos that are there now and do research on them before the legislation and the controlling agency are in place. The agency would handle the controls. Because of that, this is a grave error in the legislation and the scientists are just sitting back waiting to make this happen.

In fact I was talking to one of the scientists the other day who said, "This is already in place. We are already starting on April 1". That is today. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research said it will not allow research in this area until today. Does this mean that tomorrow it starts? Yes, this means that tomorrow it starts. That is a terrible mistake. This legislation has sent the wrong message to our scientists. To allow this before the legislation and the regulations are even in place is very unfortunate.

The whole idea of chimera is something that is repugnant to most individuals. That is about combining humans and animals. In regard to chimera, the legislation talks about the human embryo being implanted with an animal cell, but it does not talk about the reverse. We tried to bring forward an amendment at report stage to change this, to tighten it, because it does not talk about an animal embryo being implanted with human cells. Because of that, it is just as repugnant, and actually more so, and yet the legislation is silent in that area.

Some things should be in this legislation and are not. Why not? If we are to bring forward legislation, let us deal with it completely. We know that we have had enough time, but what we have not had is the appropriate will on the part of the minister and her department to deal with it. That is regrettable.

Now I would like to talk about the whole idea of surrogacy. Allowing the individual who is to be a surrogate to be compensated for loss of work is detestable. It will allow the commodification of the womb. It is something that we have been very nervous about from the very beginning. It is one thing that on every side, whether it was the Liberal individuals at committee, the NDP or ourselves, the Canadian Alliance, we all found repugnant, yet we saw the motion to allow it pass in the House last week. It is a terrible mistake. It will vault us into the commodification of human life beyond anything we have ever seen.

We will find it becoming trendy for an individual who is a movie star to get a surrogate and some sperm from a superstar or a super-athlete and create a fashionable individual. Money would not be an object. It lends new meaning to the whole idea of prostitution. It goes beyond that.

• (1715)

This is a deplorable thing that we are now allowing in Canada. It should be looked at again. It is absolutely incredible that the amendment was allowed to pass last week in the House. I do not

believe that most of the members in the House understood what they were voting on. That is very shameful. We need to go back and re-examine it so that they understand what is actually in the legislation. I know that the members in this place are honourable and I know that this does not reflect Canadian values in any way. So why would we allow it? I really have to ask myself that. I know individuals from all sides of the House and I know that they did not understand this completely or they would not have voted that way on the amendment.

We are calling for a free vote in the House on this legislation. That is very important. It is important that on all sides we are able to vote the will of our conscience and the will of our constituents. That is the way it should be on every piece of legislation, but on this one in particular. We are calling for this because it is very important. We should look at how important this legislation is to the future of Canada and to where we should go as individuals. I cannot imagine being forced to vote for something that would have such ethical repercussions without clearly being able to vote our conscience. I cannot imagine being whipped into voting in this area on something with which we and our constituents disagree.

I would certainly challenge members to go back to their constituents to try to discern exactly where Canadians are, but to do it in a way that informs them, to do it in such a way that they will understand the differences in umbilical cord stem cells, embryonic stem cells and non-embryonic stem cells taken from bone marrow, skin, blood or other areas. It is complex, I know, but I would challenge every member of the House to do his or her homework and to truly discern what is appropriate for Canada as we look at this.

The bill is critically flawed. It sets us on a path we should not be on. I will be recommending that the Canadian Alliance vote against the legislation. It should not go forward the way it is. It is flawed to the point that it should not be accepted. It would be a terrible thing for Canadians to be pushed without their knowledge into something in this area that is so ethically charged. I do not believe that the debate has reached most Canadians so that they understand it well enough. That is a shame.

I have had people from the diabetes association, the Parkinson's association and others in my office. These are well meaning people who would do anything to save their loved ones or to save themselves. Unfortunately, embryonic stem cells have not been proven to be their answer. Adult stem cells have and that is where we should go. That is where we should be putting our energies and our efforts.

The way ahead is clear if we stick to our principles. This legislation should put the child first, followed by the parent and then the science. If we were to keep that straight, we would change much that is in here. Also, if we were to understand that this changes the ethics of a nation and that we should be careful where we go in that area, we would also be very cautious about moving in this direction. That is where we should go.

Government Orders

Because I am so concerned, I have absorbed myself in this piece of legislation for the last two years. We have had some of the brightest minds give us their wisdom and their input. With all my energy I have tried to impress upon the House that we should be cautious in going down this road and that we should change the bill to make it the best in Canada. We really should consider doing exactly that, because it has not been done to this stage.

Now that we are at third reading, it is important that I at least encourage the House to do one more thing, which is to amend the bill. I would like to put forward a motion. I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following thereafter:

Bill C-13, an act respecting assisted human reproduction, be not now read a third time, but be referred back to the Standing Committee on Health for the purpose of reconsidering clause 18 with the view to allow children born through donor eggs or sperm to know the identity of their biological parents.

I respectfully submit this amendment, Mr. Speaker.

• (1720)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I will take the amendment under advisement as there are some questions. We should come back to the House very soon, hopefully before we get into private members' business.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As you know, when we start the third reading debate on a bill, the first three speakers are generally allowed 40 minutes for their speech. I do not think there is enough time left for me to use my full 40 minutes.

With permission from my fellow members and the unanimous consent of the House, our colleague from the New Democratic Party could now be allowed to speak, with a 10 minute period for questions and comments. Then, with unanimous consent, the House could be adjourned thereafter.

I could use the 40 minutes I am allowed tomorrow, after oral question period, if the government intends to bring back Bill C-13.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the proposal?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I think that there would be consent of the House to grant the member's motion to switch positions with the NDP, provided that the Bloc member would retain his 40 minutes to start tomorrow, but that the House not adjourn. I think the problem was that he said that the House would adjourn. We would not adjourn, we would simply follow the normal process.

I would ask for unanimous consent for the Bloc member and the NDP member to switch positions.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1725)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Bloc Québécois. It is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today because this is a very important debate for the New Democratic caucus.

[*English*]

I am very pleased to participate in the debate on a bill that addresses as important an area as Canadians' approach to assisted reproductive technology. As we have heard throughout the debate, there are many compelling reasons to support the regulation of reproductive technology.

We are all familiar with the sensational stories about human cloning, about eggs being sold over the Internet, and about the acrimonious lawsuits over surrogacy. Last December the Raelians claimed to have successfully cloned a human being. While that claim may be unsubstantiated, it certainly shows the need for urgent action. It is but the outspoken tip of a much larger iceberg of unregulated research. We know, and I am sure all members in the House agree, that there are others around the globe who are absolutely committed to this and other dubious research objectives.

We are living in a time when the term "designer babies" has become part of the North American vocabulary. Parents are selecting the biological traits of their children. Internet sites compete in the trade of celebrity reproductive materials while countless others profit from those Canadians who are more than willing to buy access to any healthy eggs or sperm that might assist in their drive to have children. Gender selection has become topical with all sorts of new rationales being put forward in its defence.

Many of us by now are very familiar with some of the less sensational personal stories that have emerged from these technological innovations. There are stories of joy and heartbreak, as well as sacrifice and pain during infertility treatment.

Reproductive technologies have become widespread in Canada yet unfortunately, they remain beyond the reach of government regulations. Therefore, the debate on this piece of legislation remains critically important.

The question for all of us here today is, what took so long? Why did it take more than 10 years to get to the point where we are actually debating a concrete piece of legislation that may be passed through the legislative process? We all know that Liberal neglect by delaying the introduction of this legislation has allowed developments in reproductive technology to mushroom outside a regulated environment. No one more than New Democrats in the House want this situation changed.

Government Orders

Cloning and gender selection are areas where Canadians have expressed unqualified support for regulation for a good number of years, going back to over a decade ago and the recommendations of the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies which reported in 1993. The Liberal government has had ample opportunity to move quickly to stabilize the clinical and research environments. If it was unable to come up with a strategy of its own, it could easily have thrown its support behind a private member's bill presented to the House by a member of the Bloc, a bill to ban cloning, for example, or accepted agreement among other parties to expedite certain areas to introduce some legislative standards quickly. The government chose not to. Instead it opted to plow ahead and even trampled over health committee suggestions for improving its bill.

After failing in its previous attempt at regulating reproductive technologies in 1997, the Liberal government has left us today with a no win, no choice decision, a trouble or nothing kind of proposition. As we said earlier in the debate, that is a choice we cannot make. It is a choice we refuse to make because several major issues have not been adequately dealt with in this final legislative proposition before the House of Commons. Several major issues have not been adequately dealt with that will govern the application of the research and technology that we are addressing.

I want to list some of those concerns, starting with the paramount concern for those of us in the New Democratic Party and I hope many others in this chamber, and that is the health of women. It is women's safety that remains our concern here today. From the beginning of the whole process with the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies, New Democrats have been working, fighting and insisting that women's health concerns be paramount.

● (1730)

A colleague of mine, Dawn Black, the former NDP status of women critic, was very adamant about this point here in the House. She consulted extensively with organizations representing women from across Canada in developing recommendations for the royal commission itself. She pursued those concerns through the parliamentary process and was as disappointed as other women across the country when legislative initiatives did not come to fruition.

Dawn Black and other women across the country knew then and know today that it is women who put their health at risk by undergoing drug regimes with unsafe products. It is women who undergo the painful intrusive procedures to secure eggs for treatment or research for example. It is women who must try to make informed decisions about the pressure of societal expectations and commercial service promoters.

Many have commented on this issue. I want to reference the work done in February 2001 by Anne Rochon Ford, who wrote in a paper entitled "Biotechnology and the New Genetics, What it Means for Women's Health":

Particularly in the area of reproductive health, women receive a disproportionate percentage of medical tests including genetic tests and treatments. Many treatments and technologies once promoted to women as safe and effective were later found to cause harm.

She listed three: the hormone drug DES; the Dalkon Shield IUD; and of course as well we all know, the Meme breast implant.

Once again women are being asked to trust and comply with new technologies such as genetic testing and gene therapies about which relatively little is known. As the author went on to say, it is like being asked to take a leap into the genetic darkness.

That point is no more relevant than today with the news on CBC radio about its investigative reporting on unsafe medical devices which are currently on the market. The problem continues. We remain concerned that the government has not taken seriously the need to protect the health and well-being of Canadians at all costs and to ensure that the drugs we take, the medical devices that are on the market, the food we eat, the interventions that are made are safe beyond a reasonable doubt.

With today's news about Canadians who depend on implanted medical devices experiencing harm and danger as a result of using those devices, we ought to be concerned again when we acknowledge the fact that Bill C-13 does not do the utmost to ensure that the health and well-being of women are protected at all costs.

We tried very hard in committee to make those changes. We were successful to some extent, but on some very major issues we were not. Although we were able to improve the significance of women's health within the bill's principles at committee, the government has stubbornly refused to make precaution the overriding principle in terms of women's health.

If, as the government claims, the bill is concerned with women's health, what better way of giving that claim leverage for enforcement purposes than to state outright that the precautionary principle is the governing principle? Yet every single time we proposed amendments to entrench precaution, to ensure that the principle was imprinted in the legislation, our efforts were defeated by Liberal members.

We wanted to require the federal government to ensure that reproductive technologies, drugs and procedures specifically, are proven safe before they are introduced, that the risks and benefits of any treatment are fully disclosed and that the evaluation of reproductive health services include women's experiences.

● (1735)

Let me raise another issue of concern to us with respect to Bill C-13 that we have before us. It has to do with prevention. While it is crucial to have a regulatory framework within which these activities take place or do not take place, the intent of the bill should not be the creation of an industry. Our goal should be the reduction, as much as possible, of infertility in our society today. That overriding motivation would surely require the integration of an active prevention strategy as a critical element in the role of the new agency being created under Bill C-13.

Government Orders

When we were working at committee on the legislation, we proposed a stronger prevention mandate. Interestingly, this was again resisted by the government that in turn insisted on a narrow approach to a very broad issue. Unfortunately that has been the pattern. This is quite consistent with the government's overall approach to industrial and environmental health. Prevention is so much better for women but treatment is so much better for industry. For the government, that is unfortunately no contest.

Let me go on to briefly talk about a fundamental concern for New Democrats in the whole legislative process and that has to do with commercialization and commodification of reproductive technologies.

Many Canadians have expressed concern from the very beginning of the formal public discussion about reproductive technologies back in the 1980s. They have expressed concerns about the government agenda being driven by powerful biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries whose primary obligation is to their shareholders and not to women's health.

There is nothing in the bill, particularly relating to the control of research results, that distinguishes between the government's position and the interests of these industries. We raised the issue of patents and the need to ensure public access to the benefit of research. For us, patenting remains a critical issue.

Patenting remains for the government a separate issue while for most Canadians, and certainly New Democrats, questions of research and the control and application of research results are inexorably linked.

There is the recent experience with Myriad, the U.S. genetics company that developed genetic cancer screening techniques which it only made available at considerable expense, clearly demonstrating the hazards ahead.

We have to deal with gene patenting issues here and now, not off in Industry Canada stakeholder discussions but as an integral part of this debate on the future pertaining to women's health and the use of assisted reproductive technologies.

To ensure public interest was primary, we focused attention on the makeup of the board directing the assisted human reproduction agency. We have repeatedly cited the need to ensure the independence of decisions and advice made by the agency in its role as chief policy advisory body to the government on reproductive technology.

When the legislation was introduced, my colleagues in the NDP and I noticed immediately and were particularly horrified to find that the government had included no conflict of interest guidelines at all. We proposed and the health committee adopted strong requirements that would avoid potential conflicts. What happened? The government introduced an amendment at report stage that cut our proposal and the teeth out of the conflict of interest provisions.

The government claims to want to keep reproductive technology out of the commercial realm. We encourage the government to put some flesh on the bones of that sentiment. We encourage the government to follow the Manitoba government's example in

returning private for profit clinics to the non-profit public sphere. This bill could have set that agenda.

• (1740)

By leaving clinics in the private, competitive, for profit sphere the government has provided no assurance at all that some more complicated procedures may not become inaccessible to women as commercial firms drop them to keep their success rates high.

The federal government's de facto encouragement of for profit services in the recent health accord further confirms that women will be at the mercy of service decisions made according to market values in reproductive health.

The law of the marketplace has consistently failed to protect women's interests over the years. The commodification of women's bodies plays right into the hands of those who would profit. There is nothing in the bill to indicate the proactive approach to enforcement necessary to ensure women's safety. The government's under resourcing of other health monitoring is not encouraging at all.

Let me go on to the issue briefly of surrogacy because this is another area where the health committee hammered out a solid recommendation that was either rejected outright or substantially weakened by the government during report stage.

It was the committee's position that permitting commercial surrogacy arrangements would commercialize women's childbearing capacity. With government supported amendments, we are now left with a confusing mixed message that tries to accomplish two contradictory goals at the same time: banning paid surrogacy activity on the one hand, while simultaneously supporting it financially on the other hand.

In some ways other aspects of the bill have been overshadowed by the controversy surrounding research options using human stem cells. After careful and lengthy consideration, the health committee had reached a common position on stem cell research. Instead of adopting that position however, the government has decided to pass what is essentially a policy decision off to an administrative agency.

In the last minute available to me, I would like to just touch briefly on the matter of eugenics because much of the bill deals with the technological capacity which was still in the realm of science fiction a brief quarter of a century ago. The selection of genetic traits, as much as cloning, falls within this brave new world. The magnitude of these discoveries would to most Canadians beg a thoughtful and critical examination of their relationship to our traditional societal values. We have reached this critical point, however, with no government leadership around such a public evaluation.

As it stands, the bill does not clearly set out a set of guiding principles that would recognize and safeguard the value and integrity of the lives of all Canadians. It fails to clearly challenge the assumptions held by some researchers whose overall goal is to perfect future generations and eliminate certain conditions through genetic manipulation.

Government Orders

The concerns that have been raised by groups representing persons with disabilities about the value and contributions of all members of our society have not been met. We made constructive proposals to strengthen this aspect of the bill in committee and tried successfully to introduce an amendment at report stage. Regrettably, we have been forced to once again resort to a private member's initiative to deal with the concerns of groups representing people with disabilities.

Finally, we are at the end of a long process. In many ways our work is just beginning because provisions around the agency have been left wide open for further regulations and depend very much on government commitments in terms of appointments to the board and truly acting on the possibility of conflict of interest.

We must remain vigilant. We must remain purposeful in our deliberations to ensure that the health and well-being of women, children and families is preserved and protected throughout this process of regulating reproductive technologies.

• (1745)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Before we proceed to questions or comments, I would like to inform the House that the amendment, as submitted by the member for Yellowhead, is in order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-13 now before us is nothing new to the House, since it was first introduced as Bill C-47, in 1997, then as Bill C-56 and now as Bill C-13. Therefore, as parliamentarians, we have been pondering these issues for some years now.

Our hon. colleague from the New Democratic Party has raised a number of concerns. I would like to ask her a number of short questions, if I may.

First, I would like to know what she thinks of the make-up of the board of directors, which will consist of 13 members. At report stage, we recommended that half of the members be women. However, I understand that she would have liked to see more stringent provisions concerning conflicts of interests, and I would like her to elaborate on that.

I would also like to find out what she thinks of the requirement to disclose the name of the donors. There were two schools of thought on this issue. Some argued that the donors should remain anonymous and others thought that their names should be disclosed. I would like her thoughts on this.

Third, I would like to know if the preamble to the bill meets with her agreement.

I have other questions, but they will have to wait until next time. For now, I would like to hear what the member has to say about all of this.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his questions. I will try to answer each and every one of them.

[*English*]

In dealing with the makeup of the board, I will not attempt to answer that in French. We tried very hard to convince the

government that if it made sense anywhere, in terms of introducing the concept of gender parity and ensuring equal representation on a board or agency of the government, it was in the area of reproductive technologies. After all, we are talking about a women's health matter. Surely on such an issue, it makes sense, more than in any other area, to have women represented at least on a fifty-fifty basis.

We introduced the amendment at committee. We were successful. It came forward as part of the legislation and, lo and behold, the Minister of Health and her colleagues on the government benches decided to negate and nullify that amendment and the important work of the health committee. Interestingly, we came to the House with an amendment to put back on the table the issue of gender parity and equal representation on the board of reproductive technologies. Liberal members stood one after another and opposed the idea. Women themselves on the Liberal benches opposed the idea.

How could it have happened that on an issue as basic as this, we could not even get the government to show leadership on equality on a board like this? That is the tip of the iceberg on the government's handling of important issues put forward by New Democrats and dealt with at the committee level.

The second area about which the member asked me was conflict of interest and whether the provisions were significant to ensure that when appointments were made to the board, it would not be possible for representatives of big pharmaceutical companies and big biotechnological companies to be appointed to the board. Members should know that the government decided to veto, nullify and eliminate an important amendment presented by New Democrats at the committee and supported by the health committee. Again it was treated to the same disregard that we saw from the minister on the gender parity issue.

On two fundamental issues where the bill could have been improved, the government shut the door, turned back the clock and denied the work of the committee.

We also have concerns about the issue of donor anonymity. We believe very much that the identity of donors should be made known. That we believe to be necessary, after important deliberations at the committee level.

The preamble could have been strengthened. Suggestions were made by committee members to strengthen it to reflect some of the concerns about women's health and to ensure that the issues of people living with disabilities were included and incorporated into it. Some of those changes were ignored by the government.

Finally, after the intense discussions we have had on this bill and others, many of us are feeling a bit weary and anxious perhaps on one level to dispense with the rest of the day's agenda if possible and move on to tomorrow's work with new energy. However we have responsibilities to keep in mind. We have to keep cognizant of the fact that there are flaws in the bill. Although we want to see the bill passed and want to see legislation in place, we also know it could have been a much better product. It is on that basis that we will continue to express our opposition to this bill and our intentions to be vigilant in the days ahead.

Private Members' Business

● (1750)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): It being 5.52 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

PARTHENON MARBLES**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should call upon the United Kingdom to return the Parthenon Marbles to Greece in order to be restored in their authentic context, as the Marbles represent a unique and integral part of world heritage and should be returned to their country of origin, before the 28th Olympiad in Athens, Greece, in 2004.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to repeat Motion No. 318, so that not just our colleagues but Canadians who are listening today could hear the motion again because it really is something very unique that we are debating here tonight. The motion says:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should call upon the United Kingdom to return the Parthenon Marbles to Greece in order to be restored in their authentic context, as the Marbles represent a unique and integral part of world heritage and should be returned to their country of origin, before the 28th Olympiad in Athens, Greece, in 2004.

There is a significance to the 28th Olympiad in 2004 because these are trying and difficult times for all of us on this universe. We are seeing changes, conflicts and struggles. We are asking for the liberation of people. What used to happen during the Olympiad was that everyone laid down their arms no matter what conflict or wars existed. They all went as brothers and sisters to compete during the Olympic period in a truce. This also sends a very important message.

Let me give an historical perspective of the Parthenon or the Elgin Marbles as they are known. After Greece's victory over the Persians in 479 BC, Pericles wanted to rebuild the city and make it an artistic cultural as well as a political centre. The general artistic supervision of the Acropolis building was assigned to Pheidias. It took 15 years to build. The beauty of building this monument was that every citizen had the opportunity to participate.

Let me just fast forward several hundreds and hundreds of years. When Greece was ruled under the Ottoman Empire, the then high commissioner to the Ottoman Empire was Thomas Bruce, the seventh earl of Elgin, also known as Lord Elgin. We know and history has shown that Lord Elgin was an art collector and wanted to decorate his mansion.

We are looking at a piece of art that has been distinguished throughout history. Millions of people from all over the world have visited the Acropolis to see the Parthenon. I first went to Greece as a young boy of 11 years. It did not have the impact on me as it did when I visited it about four years ago when I actually had a tour guide walk me through and describe to me in detail why building A was situated on this angle and why building B was situated on that angle. It brought to life the golden age of Greece.

It was awesome for me to stand there and close my eyes, and try to go back in history to see democracy unfold on that spot. What happened during the Ottoman Empire was that Lord Elgin asked the Pasha, the ruler of that area, if he could get permission to take the marbles or the slabs, and basically take them. There was a document signed, which was under scrupulous circumstances, and translated by an Italian. The marbles were eventually crated and shipped to England.

The argument that was put forth was that they needed to be taken for observation and preservation. For years I think we accepted that argument because there was no facility at that time in Athens to house these treasures. Today there is a modern state of the art facility that is being built beside the Acropolis to house these artifacts.

● (1755)

Lord Elgin shipped them to England and from what I read they did not get there safely. Eventually they were dragged from the sea and Lord Elgin decorated his mansion. He then ran into some financial problems. Even the British government pointed out that the circumstances under which Lord Elgin took these marbles were a bit questionable. The British government gave him a sum of money and in its wisdom donated them to the British museum where they are today.

The other day my colleague from Hamilton and I were talking about the marbles. He actually visited the museum and just listening to the description of what he saw made me shiver. He has lent his continuous support on this matter.

This is not just a request that I am making personally. The other day I presented in the House of Commons one of many petitions. The latest petition contained over 2,000 signatures from right across the country. I visited the campuses of the University of Toronto and York University, and students of all backgrounds said it was the right thing to do. They were happy to sign the petition. I presented petitions from right across our country asking our government to call upon Great Britain to do the right thing because the time has come to indeed return these artifacts to their rightful owners.

People made the argument that it would be setting a precedent. On the contrary, it would not. A couple of years ago Canada returned a painting to Hungary. England returned the coronation stone to Scotland. If a precedent has been set, it has been set by Great Britain, Canada and other countries.

This is not a vase, a statue or a painting, it is a very unique piece of art that we are asking to be returned. These are actual slabs that belong to a structure that is not just Greek. It is a structure that is shared by the international community. It is a part of culture, history and civilization.

The motion requests that the British government go forward into the 21st century, do the right thing, and meet the deadline of the 28th Olympiad in 2004.

We can now confirm through various documents that Lord Elgin took the marbles under questionable circumstances. We are not here to condemn or criticize that. That was a different era and time. Those were different circumstances. We are now in the 21st century.

Private Members' Business

Over and over again there have been initiatives of this nature. I would be remiss if I did not mention the efforts of the late Melina Mercouri, who was the cultural minister of Greece in the 1980s. I must congratulate all the members of the various committees in Canada, the United States, Australia and Great Britain. I would like to point out that the attorney representing the initiative in Great Britain is Bruce Tattersal, a direct descendant of Lord Elgin.

UNESCO, the international body which we all respect and abide by, has supported this initiative. It was first introduced in 1982 by the late Melina Mercouri to the council of ministers of the cultural segment of UNESCO in Mexico.

● (1800)

In January 1999 the European parliament ruled in favour of returning the marbles to their original owner. The resolution of the 10th UNESCO intergovernmental council to promote bilateral talks between Greece and Great Britain showed the growing interest and importance that this issue has had in the international community at large.

It is not just this House that is bringing the motion forward. The United States congress passed a resolution. Let me bring it closer to home. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank the Quebec National Assembly which unanimously passed a resolution supporting the return of the marbles. We all know that it is only the federal government that speaks on foreign policy, but the fact that the gesture was made, or any gesture of this type that could be made at any level of government, is an expression of will and support. There is no question about that.

I know the Minister of Canadian Heritage has commented favourably over and over again, and I thank her for the continuous support that she has provided to this initiative. When she finds herself in international forums, she always brings this issue to the table and I thank her personally for her initiative.

What happened 200 years or 300 years ago should be forgotten. I stand in the House and ask that our country and Parliament support the motion to send the message asking the British government to return the marbles.

It is senseless for me to go on and provide pages of who said what and when it was said. The bottom line is that we not only must do the right thing, but we must do the honourable thing. Canadians have been noted to be leaders in many initiatives. We pride ourselves as peacekeepers. We pride ourselves in our high tech industry and cultural communities.

An hon. member: Agriculture.

Mr. John Cannis: That is right, we lead the way in agriculture as well as in our forests and clear cutting. We find ourselves so competitive in softwood lumber that our neighbours in other countries think we are subsidizing where, in essence, we are not.

I could go on praising what we have achieved as a country. Canada is a relatively young country compared to countries such as Greece or Italy, but in that short period of time we have distinguished ourselves because we have had to make those tough decisions.

I know in these difficult moments this might be a tough decision to make. However, should we find the courage to make this decision and support this motion, we would once again send a signal that Canada can make the tough and right decisions.

I know, Madam Speaker, you have been behind this effort as well. I know how hard you have worked in terms of communicating this right across the country and in your area of Montreal. This issue has been discussed, not only in British Columbia but in other parts of our country.

I am bringing to the House the voices of tens of thousands of Canadians, and let me point out, not Canadians of Hellenic descent. If one looks at the signatures on those petitions, they are a reflection of all Canadians of this diverse and beautiful mosaic that we often describe as Canada.

I believe in my heart that at the end of the day Canada and this Parliament will do the right thing and support the motion.

● (1805)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): We are under the new rules, so there are five minutes for questions and comments. Are there any questions and comments?

The hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question is for the hon. member. How quickly does he think he can get the motion through the House?

Mr. John Cannis: Madam Speaker, let me again thank my very good friend, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, for her continuous support, kindness, and understanding of the issue. When we reached out to her, she was there front and centre.

To respond to her question, I would say that yesterday could not be soon enough. Things are moving very fast. The Olympiad is but months away. This Parliament has the means and the ways to come together. Together with our colleagues in the opposition, we would seek consensus to move this forward and get the unanimous support. If we could get unanimous support at any point in time, it would be greatly appreciated. I would like to see it done as soon as possible.

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was very pleased to second my colleague's motion.

Canada has led the way in returning artifacts and prized possessions to first nations people. I think we were among the very first of all the nations to do that. Our museums and others came to agreements with first nations people. Where there were skeletal remains, for example, they very reverently removed them from the museums and returned them to be buried on first nations land.

I think there are precedents for this. If this were agreed to, would it physically be a large problem? Is this a big problem with the Elgin marbles, the Parthenon marbles? Are backhoes required to move them? Could my colleague describe the physical problem of moving them?

● (1810)

Mr. John Cannis: Madam Speaker, my thanks also to the member for Peterborough who seconded the motion. I know there have been people in his constituency from all walks of life that have supported this. I thank him.

Private Members' Business

Moving the marbles today is not an obstacle. They are housed at the British Museum. My colleague from Hamilton has visited them and described them to me. I have not seen them personally. Given today's technology, I have been told it would not be a problem to physically take them from the museum in Great Britain and house them in the Parthenon in Athens, Greece.

The Greek government is willing to get into a cooperative and sharing environment. This wealth will not be locked away. The Greek government has proposed various creative ways in which to share these artifacts. These artifacts should be shared by all humankind. It is part of our cultural heritage. What is cultural heritage today? It has no boundaries. When I was in the Orient, I was in awe. When I am in different parts of our country, I am in awe when I see the cultural diversity that we all share. We invite people to come and see them. This will unfold as well.

To answer the member's question directly, no there will not be a problem to physically take them in terms of damaging them. They have been well preserved. I congratulate the British government for having done so. I will congratulate the British government when they are returned as well.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, this is one of the most fascinating debates in which I have ever had the privilege to take part in the House. In 10 years there have been a number of things I have had to learn very quickly. I have taken the time to try to learn something about this topic.

There is a committee, and I will read from the Supporters in Canada website:

The recently formed Canadian Committee seeks to raise public awareness and provide support to the cause of the return of the Parthenon Marbles to Greece. The Committee was established as a result of the Canadian concern for the protection of world cultural heritage. Our aim is to assist in the return of the Marbles to Athens in time for the 2004 Olympic Games.

I would make one observation, a small criticism of that statement. It says that the committee was established as a result of the Canadian concern for the protection of world cultural heritage. If that is taken within the context of where these artifacts currently are, then perhaps that is a correct statement.

However, when I first read it, it struck me that when it said that the Canadian committee was established as a result of the Canadian concern for the protection of world cultural heritage, as my colleague from the Liberal side, the proposer of the motion has pointed out, the artifacts are at present in excellent condition thanks to the great work of the British. That one thing which I read from the Supporters in Canada website raised a bit of a question in my mind, the fact that the committee is fully aware that the British have handled these artifacts as they should have been handled.

I find this to be a very challenging debate. I can only guess at the feelings of compassion, pride and ownership, and the feeling that would come from within me had I come from Greek heritage. I cannot imagine how our friends in Greece or our friends originally from Greece who are now in our Canadian culture would feel about that.

I question the role the House of Commons in this issue. I could see having a motion. I could see having a petition by members of Parliament because all 301 of us have been uniquely elected by the

people. As such there is a certain value to our opinions simply because we represent the people. I could see members individually and collectively going out and working to get the signatures. I could see as many members as possible signing the petition, even signing individual letters, encouraging Britain to do this.

What I am waiting for in terms of this debate, and this truly will be a debate as far as I am concerned, is the reason the House of Commons, and as the minister has suggested, should proceed to the point of making a Canadian law. That law would be some kind of an official statement on behalf of the House of Commons and the Government of Canada to the people of Great Britain telling them what they have to do or must do, whatever the case may be.

I am sincerely trying to understand what place the House of Commons of Canada has in this issue.

Let me be very clear. I commend the committee and the work of the committee. I am very impressed with the number of people of great repute who are on the committee. I commend the members of the committee because of the volunteer work that has gone into this and for the work they have done to create an awareness of this issue and to turn around public opinion. I commend everybody who is involved in this matter, considering the fact that, to quote from the *New York Times*:

Greece has most modestly asked to borrow the Parthenon marbles for the 2004 Athens Olympics with almost prostrate guarantees of their safe return. Despite strong popular support in England for giving up the marbles, even this loan has been denied.

• (1815)

That is a regrettable decision on the part of our friends in England. I believe they are being a little short-sighted.

Many of the actions that we as a Canadian society have taken in returning artifacts of any type, be they paintings or artifacts of aboriginal cultures, whatever the case may be, that has been the route to go. Again I ask why should the House of Commons be asked to come forward with some kind of formal motion telling our friends in England what they must do?

I find this debate so fascinating. I will read from the website again:

The Greek government has made major concessions in recent years to try and accommodate the concerns of the British Museum and British government. They have made it clear for over two years now that ownership is not the key issue.... However, the relocation of the Marbles to Athens is a key issue for the Greek government and this could be achieved without raising the issue of ownership if the Marbles were sent to Athens on a permanent loan from the British Museum. In return, the Greek government has offered to loan the best of Greek antiquity to the British Museum on a rotating loan basis so that the gallery where the Marbles are currently exhibited can still be dedicated to Greek culture. They have also proposed that the British Museum could operate a branch of the museum in Athens, presumably in the new Acropolis Museum...where the Parthenon Marbles would be exhibited once they were returned to Athens.

It is terribly regrettable that the British government and the British museum do not seem prepared to seriously consider this option. I would be far more aggressive than that if I had an opportunity to speak to our friends in Britain, be they in government or members of the British Museum.

Private Members' Business

In spite of the fact of having done a small amount of research on this issue and having a small understanding of it, and truly wanting to understand where people of Greek heritage are coming from and trying to understand what is inside a person relative to this issue, I still have a question in my mind. I am prepared to be convinced, and I would be happy to be convinced, that I should recommend to my colleagues that we support this motion so this could come from the House of Commons.

This by far has to be one of the most fascinating debates I have ever been involved in. I will admit that due to my lack of knowledge, I assumed we were talking about a small box of marbles that we would play marbles with. However this is the starting point. I am happy to be convinced so I can convince my colleagues.

Canada, being the wonderful nation it is and being who we are, for many of us is where we came from. Some of us have had the opportunity to go back to our heritage, in my instance to Scotland, and perhaps in Madam Speaker's instance to Greece, and to incorporate it into our lives and bring our families and our children and our grandchildren into an understanding of our heritage. We can offer each other more and are stronger as individuals and stronger as a society.

I highly commend the members of the Canadian Greek community for their involvement in this issue. I certainly encourage them to do anything they can in terms of petitions and more public awareness.

• (1820)

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Madam Speaker, it actually is with some significant degree of pleasure that I rise to speak to the motion. I want to acknowledge the lobbying that I received from one of my constituents who is of Hellenic background and who has been pressing me to see if this issue could be raised in the House. I was very pleased when I saw that the motion would be coming forward.

This particular constituent has encouraged me to educate myself somewhat on the issue. I think it is worthwhile noting the nature of the marbles because we have all heard the jokes and the puns on this particular issue. We probably should not have called them the Parthenon marbles because these in fact are great works of art.

When the Parthenon was originally built there were actually three separate components in the marbles: the sculptures themselves; the frieze, which is probably the greatest number of pieces that are left in the marble collection; and then the pediment statues.

One of the tragedies of the history of the marbles is the fact that they are divided. Part of them are being cared for in a museum in Athens and the other bulk, almost equally, are in the British Museum, as we have heard this evening. Of the frieze, 36 are in Athens and 56 are in the British Museum. Of the sculptures, and the sculptures were the items that it is very clear Lord Elgin took from Athens in 1806, 39 of the statues remain in Athens and 15 in London. The marbles are roughly equally divided. One is in the Louvre. Quite frankly, I have not heard whether any attempt has been made by the individuals in the committee, which is pressing for these to be returned by England, to ask France and the Louvre to return the one it has.

The point is that it is crucial that these items be returned at this period of time, recognizing the significance that the Olympics will once again be held in Athens, Greece to commemorate the fact that they began there thousands of years ago.

The Alliance has asked why the House of Commons, as the legislature of this country, would get involved in this. The principle here that is becoming more adhered to is that items of this nature, which have such historical, architectural and archeological significance to another culture, as these marbles clearly do to Greece, should in fact be returned.

We had a great deal of this. In fact a number of the museums in Britain returned items, for instance, to Egypt, that were taken going back for extended periods of time through the British Empire, brought to England and then on request from the Egyptian government were returned.

It is very perplexing why the principle is not being adhered to by the British Museum with regard to the marbles. It has clearly been assured that the museum in Athens is capable of properly caring for them.

I will conclude my remarks so the parliamentary secretary will have enough time to address the issue.

This is an important period in time for the marbles to be returned. There is no reason that the principle, which is being adhered to more and more right across the globe, should not be applied to the British Museum to return the marbles to their rightful place in Athens.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak to this motion, particularly because this past January I spent some wonderful hours at the British Museum listening to a recorded description of these wonderful objects.

I am equally pleased to point out, as the motion sponsor has, that the Quebec National Assembly has also unanimously passed a similar proposal. As for my colleague from the Canadian Alliance, I would like him to know that the British Parliament will need to vote before this masterpiece can be returned to Greece. I read in an article in *The Economist* that it had carried out a mini-survey and found that 85% of Labour and Liberal Democrat members surveyed were in favour of their return. According to the sampling, this represents two-thirds of all MPs.

These masterpieces of course have pride of place at the British Museum. They are one of the top exhibits as far as visitor statistics go, and rightly so. It is moving to see sculptures of such great beauty. As well, of course, if one has seen the Parthenon, it becomes understandable that the Greeks want to regain these wonderful works of art, why they want them returned. We do know, however, that the frieze cannot be returned to its place in the Parthenon because of the pollution, or so I am told. It can, however, be exhibited in some other natural setting which will, I am sure, have some link with the Parthenon.

Private Members' Business

It seems to be that the House should give this motion unanimous support. It would be appropriate if I closed with a quote from the end of the speech delivered by Melina Mercouri, the former Minister of Culture and the first to make this request of Great Britain. I will read some excerpts from it. She said:

We are asking only for something unique, something matchless, something specific to our identity. And dear friends, if there were the shadow of a shadow of danger to museums, why would the International Council of Museums recommend the return, as they have done?

This wonderful singer and former Minister of Culture went on to say:

You must understand what the Parthenon Marbles mean to us. They are our pride. They are our sacrifices. They are our noblest symbol of excellence. They are a tribute to the democratic philosophy. They are our aspirations and our name. They are the essence of Greekness.

And she went on to say:

We are ready to say that we rule the entire Elgin enterprise as irrelevant to the present. We say to the British government: "You have kept those sculptures for almost two centuries. You have cared for them as well as you could, for which we thank you. But now in the name of fairness and morality, please give them back". I sincerely believe that such a gesture from Great Britain would ever honour your name.

And she concluded as follows:

Thank you.

It is important to remember, for those who do not know, that the Parthenon marbles were surreptitiously taken by Lord Elgin in 1801 during his time there as ambassador.

● (1830)

He obtained a decree from the sultan of the Ottoman Empire allowing him to bring them back to England piece by piece. Believe me, there were many enormous pieces. Originally, it was for his own house, his domain, his castle. He brought back these priceless treasures. He had not paid much for them, since he had given gifts to influential people who allowed him to bring back this priceless treasure.

However, Lord Elgin's luck did not hold out. He had financial problems and finally the government purchased the lot from him for 35,000 pounds and gave it in 1816 to the British Museum. The museum has kept them ever since and does not want to lose them.

It is true that the Prime Ministers have always supported the British Museum. As far as I know, this movement, like that we are part of, is supported by a majority of the members of the House of Commons, and Great Britain could make a very significant historical gesture.

We know that numerous works of art could be returned to their original countries, even if it is also essential for all museums to have examples of such admirable works that artists have created over the years. But it is also understandable that these countries want to recover some of them.

For all these reasons, I think, the hon. member of the Canadian Alliance could convince his colleagues so that Parliament could unanimously support this movement and Greece could, we hope before the next Olympics, get back what Ms. Mercouri called it "Greekness".

Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to speak in the House on a topic that is of such importance to the member for Scarborough Centre. He moved a motion to return from the United Kingdom, where they are currently located, to Greece, the series of sculptures from the ornamental frieze of the Parthenon, before the Games of the 28th Olympiad, which will be held in Athens in 2004.

I understand very well the emotions that the member feels, because I myself felt very strong emotions when I saw this magnificent temple for the first time during a trip to Athens. So, I can say that I understand why my colleague would want to restore the integrity of this temple.

Given the tremendous historic and symbolic importance of the ideals that the Parthenon marbles represent for the people of Greece and the world over, I would invite my hon. colleagues in the House to support this motion.

The Parthenon was built in the fifth century BC. It is the main temple of the Acropolis in Athens and one of the greatest masterpieces from the Classical Greek period.

Obviously, the subject we are discussing today is of particular interest to Greece and the United Kingdom and their citizens. However, it is also of interest to Canada, which, like many other countries, is concerned about the fundamental role that culture plays in the expression of peoples' identities and in the enrichment of all nations.

Since 1999, Greece and the U.K. have been involved in discussions over the Parthenon marbles and have been pooling their experience in order to better protect and preserve these architectural and historic treasures.

We remain subject to the authorities from international organizations such as the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation. This is a committee struck by UNESCO in 1978. UNESCO mandated the committee to research ways and means to promote bilateral negotiations in cases of disputes over returning cultural goods to their country of origin.

Since 1989, Canada has supported the recommendations of the intergovernmental committee on five occasions, recommendations to encourage Greece and the U.K. to resolve their dispute amicably. What better conclusion could there be for Olympic Games in 2004?

By supporting this committee's recommendations, Canada reiterates its trust in the mandate of international organizations such as UNESCO, whose actions and efforts favour negotiations as a way to resolve differences.

Between 1983 and 2001, Canada had the opportunity to act as an elected member of the intergovernmental council for several mandates. We also had the honour of chairing this committee from January 1999 to March 2001.

Private Members' Business

Although the Government of Canada reiterated its trust in the mechanisms put in place by UNESCO to settle disputes of this kind, it supports individuals and groups lobbying to have the Parthenon marbles returned to Greece before the 2004 Olympiad.

In view of the major historical and symbolical importance of the Parthenon marbles, and the democratic ideals they embody, I believe we must in this particular case stray from our traditionally neutral position and support the motion by the member for Scarborough Centre.

Therefore, I ask this House to urge the United Kingdom to return the Parthenon marbles to Greece before the 2004 Olympiad.

All this to say that when the eyes of whole world are focused on Greece, humanity as a whole will be able to fully appreciate these magnificent marbles in the glory their builders had envisioned in the first place.

• (1840)

[*English*]

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the few minutes left in this debate I would like to take this opportunity to describe the Elgin marbles, because I have seen them in the British Museum. I saw them the first time I went to England when I was only 23 years old and I think perhaps that affected the way I reacted to them.

I was a student in the north of England and went down to London for the first time to visit the famous British Museum. There was a little sign as one entered: "Elgin Marbles". I went in there. It was a large room very like this chamber, the House of Commons, not quite so high, and very dark. On the walls there was a white panel about four feet high that went the length of the room on one side and the length of the room on the other. The room was quite dark, really, and not very well lit. As one approached this white panel, it suddenly came alive. What one saw was figures on the panel, figures of horses, chariots and young men behind the horses.

As I got closer, I realized what I was seeing was probably the first attempt at cinematography, because as one looked from left to right on the panel, and this panel of sculptures was from the frieze of the Parthenon and the ancient Greeks would have looked up to see it, and I was looking up fairly high as well, what one saw was the start of a procession of horses and charioteers, young men on these chariots. The horses moved from being still on one side and then began to gallop and gallop toward the right. It was just incredibly profound. It was an incredible image to see the way these animals moved. It was just so striking.

Then there were the statues themselves that were taken from other positions in the Parthenon. Many of these statues were broken, but the figures were so perfectly carved. It was not just the bodies themselves of the gods and the goddesses; it was also the tremendous detail. One could walk behind the figures and see the drapery. They actually carved it in a way that even where one could not see, the exquisite carving was there. The marble itself was lustrous. It just sort of smote the eyes.

I think I can say that I was transported 2,500 years back in time. One could see the genius of the Greeks, which led to the creation of much of the thought of our western civilization, and one could see

how incredibly marvellous these statues were. I can understand why the people of Greece would like them back, but wherever they are, they are classic gifts to the world.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Editor's Note: The passage from "The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Carried." to "An hon. member: Point of order." has been added pursuant to Speaker's Ruling on April 10, 2003.*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Carried. The motion is carried.

(Motion agreed to)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Okay, I apologize. I did not hear a nay but I will start. All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

An hon. member: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Okay, I did hear the nay this time. Pursuant to standing order, I declare the motion negated. The motion does carry. Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 2, 2003 at the beginning of private members' business. It being 6:45 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

An hon. member: Point of order.

• (1845)

Mr. Jim Abbott: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if you could help me with what just happened here. My understanding is that in order to create a vote you have to stand five. I apologize that I was out of the House at the time, but I am unaware that five stood. Did five stand?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): No, five members did not stand, so the motion is carried.

Ms. Aileen Carroll: Madam Speaker, I seek clarification of just what was required in order to pass this motion. Would you enlighten the House?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): That is what the hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia wanted to know and put on the record. After I asked for the yeas and nays, in order for the motion to be defeated five members have to stand, and no member stood. Not a single member stood and I did ask twice.

We will proceed with private members' business.

*Private Members' Business***CRIMINAL CODE**

The House resumed from February 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-280, an act to amend the Criminal Code (selling wildlife), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading

stage of Bill C-280 are deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, April 2 at 3 p.m.

It being 6:48 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:48 p.m.)

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