



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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VOLUME 139 • NUMBER 007 • 3rd SESSION • 37th PARLIAMENT

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, February 10, 2004**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 10, 2004

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1000)

[*Translation*]

### CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-3, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act.

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

\* \* \*

•(1000)

### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.)**: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, as well as the financial report relating thereto.

The report relates to the meeting of the APF, held at Cayenne, French Guyana, from January 21 to 23, 2004.

\* \* \*

•(1005)

[*English*]

### PETITIONS

MARRIAGE

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)**: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present another petition from my constituency. My constituents call upon the government to immediately hold a renewed debate on the definition of marriage and to reaffirm it as it was in 1999. They urge it to take all necessary steps to preserve marriage as a union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.)**: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions. The first comes from a number of residents of Montreal asking Parliament to maintain the traditional definition of marriage.

PAY EQUITY

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.)**: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a second petition.

It expresses support for the people of Canada who are covered by the pay equity settlement and who feel they are prejudiced by the imposition of interest on arrears, which considerably reduces the pay equity adjustments, thereby depriving them of equal pay for equal work.

This petition therefore calls on the House to remedy this abnormal situation. I wholly support this petition.

**The Speaker**: The hon. member is well aware that it is against the rules to express an opinion on the petitions we present in the House. I am certain she will not make the same mistake again.

[*English*]

MARRIAGE

**Mr. Rex Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls, CPC)**: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition, one of many that has been presented through me on behalf of my riding of Gander—Grand Falls and many throughout the whole country. This petition calls upon Parliament to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being a lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.)**: Mr. Speaker, I am in receipt of a petition from some 25,000 Londoners and people in the district of London, Ontario. I present now the latest approved 1,500 signatures to Parliament, calling upon the Parliament of Canada to uphold the traditional definition of marriage and to take all necessary steps to defend the institution of marriage as it has been constituted since Confederation of this country.

**Mr. Chuck Cadman (Surrey North, CPC)**: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of 143 constituents of Surrey North. The petitioners call upon Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

*S. O. 57*

HEALTH

**Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 it is my privilege to present to the House a petition signed by 200 concerned constituents of my riding of Cambridge. The petitioners underscore that physicians must provide complete information about the health risks of abortion and that they should be held accountable should they perform abortions without the informed consent of the mother or should they perform abortions that are not medically necessary. Therefore, the petitioners request that Parliament support legislation calling for a woman's right to know.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for saving the best for the last. I am pleased to present a petition today suggesting that star wars would undermine Canada's proud tradition of supporting arms control and acknowledging that Canada will not participate in a star wars missile defence program. The petition strongly condemns the destabilizing plans of the President of the United States. The petitioners urge parliamentarians to work with our partners in peace for more arms control and to bring an end to the production and sale of weapons of mass destruction and any materials used to build them.

\* \* \*

• (1010)

#### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Hon. Roger Gallaway (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 Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

#### REINSTATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** With respect to the consideration of the motion under government orders, Government Business No. 2, I move:

That the debate be not further adjourned.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30 minute period for questions.

I would like to know how many hon. members wish to ask questions. We will allow a maximum of two minutes per question.

[*English*]

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely shocking. We are six days into supposedly what is a new parliamentary session and the government is already invoking closure and shutting down debate. The Prime Minister is simply continuing in the path of the former prime minister.

I want to quote the current Prime Minister on his supposed democratic reform initiatives. In his letter accompanying the democratic reform package, the Prime Minister stated:

Parliament should be the centre of national debate on policy. For this to happen, we must reconnect Parliament to Canadians and renew the capacity of Parliamentarians—from all parties—to shape policy and legislation.

Let us look at another quote from the Prime Minister. In December 2002, he said, "My position on parliamentary reform is that closure should be the exception, not the rule".

Let us look at this Prime Minister's record. He has voted for time allocation and closure 85 times. Six days into a new parliamentary session, he is already invoking closure. How can the Prime Minister possibly say that he has any initiative or any intention to democratic reform or reforming this House of Parliament? This should be a centre of national debate and not just a place where he can shut down debate at his own whim.

**Hon. Jacques Saada:** Mr. Speaker, the quote that was given from the Prime Minister is quite accurate, and I will read it again. He said, "Parliament should be the centre of national debate on policy".

My colleagues across the way have tried to waste very valuable time on debates on procedures, as they demonstrated on Friday, which has delayed the debate on substance. As soon as this motion is passed tonight on reinstatement, we will have a chance to actually debate the issues of interest to Canadians, and that is what we want to do.

The second is in terms of closure. It is quite interesting to note that it is the very first time in the history of our country that closure will be subjected to a free vote in the House, or maybe I should correct that. It will be a free vote on this side of the House because on the other side they do not believe in free votes.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The House leader has suggested that there is a problem with dilatory motions, or a problem with wasting debate, I guess on the fact that we put forward an amendment to his previous motion. We are willing on this side to withdraw both our amendment and our subamendment in order to continue the debate if the House leader is willing to withdraw his closure motion. We could do that by unanimous consent and get—

• (1015)

**The Speaker:** I do not know that this is a point of order. It sounds like perhaps an offer for negotiations, which of course can go on behind the scenes, but we would not want negotiations proceeding on the floor, particularly during question time on this motion.

I am sure the government House leader will deal with the point of order, which is not a point of order, in his next response. We will move to the hon. member for Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, who wishes to raise a question.

*S. O. 57*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the least we can say this morning is, the more the government changes, the more it remains the same. The government is using the same old dilatory and partisan strategies and tactics to use the House to, in theory, improve the democratic process.

Last December, Jean Chrétien left the House and the new Prime Minister arrived a few months later. Would the government House leader admit that, in fact, the government would not have had to use this dilatory motion if we had continued to sit and if the House had not been prorogued? Thus, the fact is the same strategies, the same dilatory practices and the same partisan tactics are being used from one government to another.

**Hon. Jacques Saada:** Mr. Speaker, I would like something to be explained to me. Unless I no longer speak French, a dilatory motion or a dilatory strategy is aimed at extending and dragging out debate, whereas the motion we are now proposing, the initiative we are taking, is aimed at speeding up debate. There is a total contradiction in French.

The opposition should use the right terms, if we want to talk about the same things. What we are seeking to do is quite simple. We want to go through the procedural process quickly so that we can get to the substantive issues as soon as possible. When we talk particularly about issues such as the creation of an independent ethics commissioner, our role at the international level in helping Africa fight its pandemics, these are the substantive issues. This is what we want to do, and we are anxious to get to it.

[*English*]

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, surprise, here we are the second week back in Parliament and the government is reverting to its usual tactics by now bringing in closure on basically the first order of government business, which is its reinstatement motion.

I would like to ask the government House leader this. In the light of the fact that he has tabled his so-called action plan for the democratic deficit, how does he explain to the Canadian people that already the government is now shutting down debate? How is it that the government chose to prorogue the House, thus arresting all the legislation that was before the House? The government chose to shut down the House back in December, several weeks early, and now all of a sudden there is an urgency to rush back in with legislation and close down debate.

How does the government reconcile those realities and explain to the Canadian public that somehow it is addressing the deficit around democracy in the House?

**Hon. Jacques Saada:** Mr. Speaker, I take from the question of my colleague across the way that she is in support of the action plan and would like to see it implemented.

There is a difference between empowering MPs and preventing government from assuming its normal constitutional responsibility of management. Of course my colleague has used an expression which I find quite interesting. She said “shut down debate”. I want to shut down debate on procedures so we can open debate on substance. She should be interested in that.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is a truism in human affairs that actions speak louder than words.

The government talks a lot about the democratic deficit and how the new Prime Minister will address it. It will be a whole new regime under this new Prime Minister. Things will be different. Members of Parliament will really have a say in what goes on. There will be open debate. There will be free votes.

In the first week that the government has been back with a new Prime Minister, guess what. An offer of free votes has been mysteriously withdrawn. An offer of full and fair debate on an important matter on which legislation will come back before the House, chopped off, closure. That is not democratic reform. That is not actions that prove the words.

I want to ask the government House leader this. Is it not true that this is simply the same old corrupt, undemocratic franchise under new management?

● (1020)

**Hon. Jacques Saada:** Mr. Speaker, allow me not to use the same kind of vocabulary as my colleague across the way because I do not think it is very valuable for the House.

My colleague said something which I found very interesting. She says that actions speak louder than words. In this case could I perhaps be enlightened about the contradiction I see in a document produced by that member's party called “Building Trust”.

That party has recommended a number of items which are in our action plan on democratic reform. When I tabled my plan, which included these recommendations, the opposition backed off. Who are actually putting their money where their mouths are and who are not? The document proposed some action that we are prepared to take, and the opposition has refused.

Finally, when we talk about free votes, opposition members do not have the right to talk about free votes because they have refused to implement it for themselves. They have no lessons to give to anyone.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we see it time and time again: deny, distract, delay. This has become the trademark of the government. We will see it again today in the Auditor General's report.

Over 80 times now the government has intervened and shut down debate in the House of Commons. It took it six days, not a full calendar week, to intervene and shut down debate. It did it on what bill? It is on the early election bill, the ability to bring back legislation that will give the Prime Minister a mandate to call an early, a snap election.

*S. O. 57*

Was it important legislation about giving aid to the provinces for health care? Was it a bill to somehow aid our ailing armed forces? Was it a bill about BSE and how to address the crisis in agriculture? Was it something for fisheries? Was it something for students or the average Canadian who would get a break on his or her taxes? What was it about? It was about crass, political advantage. This House leader is following in the footsteps of his predecessor who is being used as a tool to manipulate Parliament, to shut down debate and to time and time again bring disgrace to this place.

Why is the government of the member opposite so intent on denying democratic debate in the House of Commons on important issues? Why is the government and that member so intent and so keen to delay important matters coming to the House of Commons for resolution rather than just this desperate clinging to power?

It reminds me of how Elizabethans used to deny that they wanted sex. Instead, with this government, it is power. It claims to loathe it. It claims to not need it, but it desperately has to hold onto it.

I would ask the House leader to give us his latest spin.

**Hon. Jacques Saada:** Mr. Speaker, first, the closure we are evoking now is aimed at getting to the substance of the issues because procedure is not what Canadians are expecting us to spend time on.

Second, it took us six days to come to this stage, but it took only one day for the opposition to go back to the old traditional way of opposing for the sake of opposing. It is opposing work which would permit us to have an independent ethics commissioner, to help Africa, to deal with electoral matters, to deal with a number of issues. We took the initiative to have a take note debate, which already took place in the House, to deal with the BSE issue.

One thing is quite interesting. I would very much appreciate if my colleague across the way, instead of simply being physically present in the House, would also be intellectually present in the House, listen to the Speech from the Throne and see all the issues that were included and addressed in the Speech from the Throne.

•(1025)

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I notice the rather frigid response over there to what is really going to be one of the most defining moments for what the Liberals consider a new government. I do not think they are fooling anyone.

The question the House leader has to answer is this. Beaudesne's makes it quite clear that it is the proper role of the opposition to use debate in the House of Commons to air its concerns and to raise public profile about issues of concern to Canadians. The only tactic available in a free and democratic society is the power to debate in the House. All the cards are held by the government. On this side all we can do is debate and show Canadians that are not happy with it, we propose alternatives and so on.

By shutting down debate, can the House leader not see what is happening? What he saying is the government will not allow a reasonable amount of debate. We debated this motion half a day on Friday and half a day on Monday. It is not like there has been weeks of delaying tactics. It is not like there has been a filibuster to end all filibusters. This is the first motion before us, and we have debated it for two half days. It is not the time for closure.

I reiterate the offer I made earlier in a point of order, which the House leader has chosen to ignore. He has brought in closure because he says that we are up to the same old games, that we will not debate this wisely and judiciously. Here is the offer again. We know what is going on over there. On this side of the House, we will withdraw our amendment and subamendment if the House leader will withdraw his closure motion.

In other words, let us get on with the debate. If we do not have a subamendment, there are no delaying tactics. We just want to debate the issue. If the House leader will withdraw his closure motion, we can continue to debate. He says he is favour of it and so are we.

**Hon. Jacques Saada:** Mr. Speaker, I fail to understand why opposition members are prepared to withdraw their amendment now when they proposed it in the first place.

Beaudesne's explains the rules and I think the rules should apply equally to all. However, by trying to use the rules to block debate on substance, they are using the rules to actually start debate on substance.

**Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, later today we will see quite an amazing thing happen in this place. We will see the current government trying to extricate itself from the previous government when the Auditor General brings down the report on the grant and advertising scandal in which the Liberal government is involved.

We probably will see all the ministers fan out and given their spin, in both official languages, to whomever they can, saying that no, that was Jean Chrétien's government; that was the previous administration; that was the other government and that they are the new government. They are not the new government. It is the same old group. They are using the very same tactics on the very first motion we have in this place.

How can the House leader possibly say that it is the new group when it is bringing in the old group's legislation and invoking closure with a sledge hammer six days into the new Parliament? They cannot have it both ways.

**Hon. Jacques Saada:** Mr. Speaker, when a bill is good for the people of Canada I do not care whether it was in the past or introduced by a new government, it ought to be taken into consideration and passed because it is good for the people.

In terms of the debate, I will repeat to my colleague what I have just said in answer to a number of questions already. I do not want to delay on the basis of procedure the important debate on substance which we need to undertake in the House. Canadians are not interested in our little bubble in Ottawa as if we were the centre of the world. They are interested in making sure we pass legislation that will serve them in their everyday lives and things of interest to them. That is what we want to get to.

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the new Prime Minister has announced not once but twice that he will stop discrimination against the west. Obviously he understands that there is discrimination against the west, otherwise he would not have made that statement. However in the next sentence he said that he was not prepared to take a look at the constitution.

At the present time in my province we have a \$177 million deficit. The farmers lost money at record speed. I have not heard one word from the government opposite as to what immediate measures it will take that are necessary to stop discriminating against the west.

• (1030)

**Hon. Jacques Saada:** Mr. Speaker, as a member of Parliament from Quebec, I understand the concerns of the west. I would not be honest if I were to say that I fully understand them. I want to know more and understand more about them. One of the ways to do that is to get to the substance of things. I want to really care about all the regions of the country on the basis of the substance of what will be useful to them to feel good and to be part of this country, not on procedure.

**Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the government House leader a question because, like I did, he probably heard the discourse, if we can call it that, from the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

In that speech the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough complained about one of the bills that he saw as being reinstated, namely the former bill to deal with the acceleration of the redistribution.

I want to know from the government House leader if he recalls, like I do, the speech given last August 28 or 29, I believe it was, when the same member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough was trying to take credit for such a measure, saying at the time that it could not be passed fast enough.

Is this another example of the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough doing a 180 degree turn, a little bit like he did with his signature on another document?

[Translation]

**Hon. Jacques Saada:** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the question that was just put to me includes a number of fundamentals, but everything revolves around the same problem. That party is full of contradictions. There is the contradiction regarding the proposals for a democratic reform. When we make such proposals, these people backtrack. There is the contradiction regarding the ethics commissioner. When we proposed the establishment of an ethics commissioner, they rejected the idea. Now, they want one, but at the same time they do not because they want procedures first.

S. O. 57

The contradictions in that party show to what extent it can be harmful, negative and counterproductive when politics take precedence over substance. That is what their problem is all about. It is one of credibility caused by the inconsistency in their positions.

[English]

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, the member down the way, the former House leader, reminds me a bit of a dog that has been run over by a tractor and then runs up on the lawn and licks itself afterward.

As a member of the opposition the hon. member opposite used to come into this place, light his hair on fire and do cartwheels down the aisle when the government invoked closure. This is the height of hypocrisy, and I know I cannot use that word, but it is absolutely bald faced and the height of hypocrisy for the member to get up now and to somehow suggest that because his rump is on the opposite side that he has cleansed himself of any previous statements that he might have made in the House.

However I do have a quote by the member for Etobicoke North who just yesterday stood up in the House and said that he will see that the government operates very differently.

Well, the previous government invoked closure on bills 83 times. It railed against members of the government in the Progressive Conservative Party but it exceeded that number within a shorter time. Now, just six days into what is really a fourth mandate that it is seeking as a government, it is offended that the opposition is somehow upset because it is invoking closure on a bill.

Here we see the incredible duplicity of the so-called new government that is practising things the same old way. It used "new" some 30-plus times in the throne speech but this is anything but new. This is trying to polish a rotten apple. It is an attempt to put on a new face. It is said that the fish stinks from the head. We know that the head of the government was the finance minister for almost 10 years and was part and parcel of every decision, every deception, every duplicitous statement that was made, including being an author of the red book.

Here we have it, plain and simple, laid bare for all Canadians to see. This is anything but new. This is a government that is simply reshaped, recycled and trying to reinvent itself now. It is practising the same old hammer approach when it comes to Parliament and when it comes to democracy.

• (1035)

**Hon. Jacques Saada:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think I need any lesson in integrity from a member who reneged on his own signature at the time of the Progressive Conservative Party leadership convention. I do not have to go that low as to rebut arguments that are really not arguments but simply an abuse of language in lieu of arguments.

We are very different. For the first time in the history of Parliament, the motion we have before us today will be subjected to a free vote and, hopefully for the last time, unless those members still do not understand it, I will hear a commitment from them that they will have a free vote on their benches on the motion we have before us today.

*S. O. 57*

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, it will be a free vote. However I do not understand how the government House leader can possibly think anyone on this side of the House is in favour of the government shutting down debate. I do not know what he is looking for. Does he want us to disembowel ourselves on this side of the House? Does he want us to just take the sword out and commit hara-kiri right on the spot? Of course we are going to vote against it. It is just logical.

The minister wants to bring back legislation concerning an independent ethics commissioner but the legislation is flawed. The position will not be independent. It will be an appointment by the Prime Minister. It is just not right. Besides that, the member, as well as the Prime Minister and the rest of them, voted against a verbatim quote from the red book creating an independent ethics commissioner when we brought it to the House two years ago. They voted against explicit words from their own document.

More than that, he keeps saying that it is about process. Well people out there in the real world do not care about process, and they are probably right. It is like watching sausages being made in this place. They do not want to see it, they just want the end result.

There is nothing to prevent the House leader from bringing forward specific pieces of legislation, and he has mentioned a few. He can bring forward the legislation on an independent ethics commissioner or the legislation on AIDS drugs for Africa. We will get right into the debate. Let us have at it. Drop the legislation on the table and let us start it.

Nothing is stopping the minister from doing that but he does not want to do it. He wants to bring forward an old agenda from the past government as a partly regurgitated process. He wants to put it on the table and now we are supposed to sift through the entrails and see if we can make heads or tails of it. Let him bring forward legislation that the minister likes and the Prime Minister supports, let him table in its entirety and let us start with it.

What we are debating today is not procedure. We are talking about the ability to bring forward legislation, some of it good, some of it flawed, from an old government that never had to get this stuff off the table. It did not have to prorogue Parliament but it did and it dismissed this legislation. Now the government wants to bring some of it back. It is wrong.

**Hon. Jacques Saada:** Mr. Speaker, the process we are going through is one, which I recall, was called originally in I think 1970 for the first time. Let me very clear. If the opposition members want to vote against the motion today that is okay, that is their privilege. However they will have to answer to the Canadian public for that.

They are in fact voting against an independent ethics commissioner. They are voting against bills on the protection of children. They are voting against aid to Africa. They are voting against public safety bills. They are voting against the Westbank self-government act. That is the effect of their position.

They want to talk procedure. I want to talk about those bills right here because they do count for the Canadian people.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** Mr. Speaker, first, the point needs to be clearly made that what the government has in mind is not an independent ethics commissioner. The commissioner will be appointed by the Prime Minister, report to the Prime Minister and

the Prime Minister will have the whole say about how cabinet ministers are dealt with, and the cabinet ministers are the problem. Let us not talk about an independent ethics commissioner because the government has no such thing in mind.

Last week the government brought forward a throne speech. What is a throne speech? It is a new agenda for the government: new Prime Minister, new agenda. Now we see that there is nothing new about this at all. It is not a new agenda. What the government is doing is fighting tooth and nail to bring back the old agenda, the old, tired, worn out, discredited agenda that this same bunch of people tried to push through for the last few months. Now they are at it again. There is no new vision and there are no new ideas.

The most bizarre statement, in what surely is a bizarre day for the government, was when the House leader said that this was good for the people. Well let me tell the government House leader that democracy means rule by the people. That means that the people's representatives should have a say on what happens in this Parliament and that is exactly what this government is cutting off. It is chopping off the debate, the rule by the people through their representatives in the House. That is a shame and a disgrace.

• (1040)

**Hon. Jacques Saada:** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest very kindly to my colleague that before making empty rhetorical comments on the ethics commissioner, she should read the bill again to see that the commissioner in fact will be reporting to the House and his or her appointment will be sanctioned by the House. This is a perfect example that shows that debate on substance is of no interest to them.

The last point that my colleague made is extremely important. She said that MPs should have a say and MPs who represent their constituents should have a say. On this side of the House, we will do that and we will give a free vote on this. They interpret the role of MPs only in a collective way. They are not prepared to trust their own MPs to stand up and vote in favour of their constituents.

**The Speaker:** The time for questions has now expired. Therefore, the question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion 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.

• (1125)

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

*(Division No. 2)*

### YEAS

#### Members

Adams	Anderson (Victoria)
Assad	Assadourian
Augustine	Bagnell
Bakopanos	Barnes (London West)
Barrette	Bélangier
Bellemare	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Binet
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Bonwick	Boudria
Bradshaw	Brisson
Bulte	Byrne
Caccia	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carroll	Castonguay
Catterall	Charbonneau
Coderre	Collenette
Comuzzi	Cotler
Cullen	Cuzner
DeVillers	Drouin
Duplain	Easter
Efford	Eggleton
Eyking	Farrah
Folco	Fontana
Frulla	Fry
Galloway	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Guarnieri	Harvard
Harvey	Hubbard
Jackson	Jennings
Jobin	Jordan
Karetak-Lindell	Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson
Kraft Sloan	Laliberte
Lancôt	Lastewka
LeBlanc	Lee
Lincoln	Longfield
MacAulay	Macklin
Manley	Marcil
Marleau	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCallum	McCormick
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan	Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Myers
Neville	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly	Owen
Pacetti	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Patry
Peric	Peschisolido
Peterson	Pettigrew
Phinney	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pillitteri	Price
Proulx	Provenzano
Redman	Reed (Halton)
Regan	Robillard
Saada	Savoy
Scherrer	Scott
Sgro	Shepherd
Simard	Speller
St-Jacques	St-Julien
St. Denis	Steckle
Stewart	Telegdi
Thibault (West Nova)	Thibault (Saint-Lambert)
Tirabassi	Tonks
Torsney	Ur
Valeri	Vanclief
Volpe	Wappel
Whelan	Wilfert — 136

### Government Orders

### NAYS

#### Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Bachand (Saint-Jean)	Bailey
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)	Bergeron
Bigras	Blaikie
Borotsik	Breitkreuz
Cadman	Cardin
Casey	Casson
Chatters	Comartin
Cummins	Dalphond-Guiral
Davies	Desjarlais
Doyle	Duceppe
Duncan	Fitzpatrick
Gagnon (Québec)	Gallant
Gaudet	Gauthier
Godin	Gouk
Grewal	Guimond
Hearn	Hill (MacLeod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Jaffer
Keddy (South Shore)	Laframboise
Lebel	Loubier
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Marceau	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse	McDonough
McNally	Ménard
Merrifield	Mills (Red Deer)
Pallister	Paquette
Penson	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Proctor
Rajotte	Reynolds
Robinson	Rocheleau
Roy	Sauvageau
Schellenberger	Schmidt
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	St-Hilaire
Stoffer	Strahl
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Tremblay
Wasylcia-Leis	Wayne
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### PAIRED

#### Members

Asselin	Bertrand
Bourgeois	Fournier
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)	Girard-Bujold
Grose	Mahonoy
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**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** I declare the motion carried.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### REINSTATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

The House resumed from February 9 consideration of the motion, of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with considerable interest that I participate in the debate regarding the intention of the government to push to reintroduce all those bills from the last session which died on the Order Paper when the government made the decision to prorogue the second session of the 37th Parliament of Canada.

*Government Orders*

I find it incredible that the government would even propose this motion. How could the government pretend that it is somehow different from the one led by Jean Chrétien when what we have before us is a motion to reintroduce the same old policies, word for word, without even the pretence of introducing something different?

The government refuses to realize what the Canadian public has understood for years, that a serious democratic deficit exists in Canada. Paying lip service to this shortfall in our political life serves nothing. Canadians are in no mood for games being played by insincere politicians.

In my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke the unemployment lines are getting longer, while the government is bankrupt of ideas other than the usual handouts to friends. Figures of those collecting unemployment insurance in communities in my riding show an increase of 11.6% for claims in Pembroke, a 13.9% increase in Arnprior and a 20.2% increase in unemployment insurance claims in Renfrew this past month. These figures do not include the self-employed farmers and those who have given up looking for work because it simply does not exist.

It really hurts the small businesses in my riding that face an ever increasing tax bill to see the Prime Minister himself avoid \$100 million in taxes. He is able to do so because he can afford to hire an army of high-priced tax accountants and lawyers whose sole purpose is to look for ways for unethical businessmen to avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

It may be that big business and the friends of the government party can afford tax shelters in offshore locations, but what about the husband and wife who work 60 to 70 hours a week at a corner store just to try to make ends meet? Explain to small businesses that are not only overtaxed but are made to be GST tax collectors on behalf of the government the fairness of certain large corporations not paying their fair share of taxes.

Is it any wonder that one of the bills from the previous session which the government is including in this motion is the one dealing with the ethics commissioner, an idea that was first proposed in the 1993 red book of broken promises. The motion represents another cynical move by the government to try to fool the people regarding its attempts to distance itself from the Chrétien legacy. That bill is seriously flawed. Reintroducing it in its current form is a waste of the House's time.

We in the opposition were expecting a break from the past, such as a new piece of legislation that boldly sets out a plan to stop scandals such as the payoff scandal involving the previous minister of public works.

Canadians are not looking for another inquiry into another government scandal. They want the problems fixed now. At the rate the current government is going, there will be no judges left to conduct investigations. They will all be busy examining cases of government corruption.

Canadians have had their considerable expectations dashed to the ground in short order by a government that is led by a Prime Minister who promises by his actions—and actions always speak louder than words—to be worse than his predecessor, that is, if such

a feat is possible when it comes to the numerous conflict of interest scandals that are the legacy of the former prime minister.

• (1130)

Recently I had the opportunity to consult with my constituents regarding their opinion on what they thought was the most important issue facing Canadians today. The list of possible answers was a long one and ranged from taxes, energy, health care and jobs to affordable housing, education, daycare, the armed forces and the environment. However, the number one issue for the people in my riding was honesty in government.

Here are some of the typical responses that I received from ordinary Canadians in my riding: "If we have an honest government, all the rest of the areas will be cared for. Honesty and integrity usually go hand in hand". Another one said, "First we need honesty in government, something we have never had. All MPs should vote according to their constituents' wishes and not according to the Prime Minister". Another one said, "All the issues above are important issues, but honesty in government should be a number one priority. The wasting of taxpayers' money is disgraceful. The gun registry should be scrapped and more money given to the armed forces".

Another one said, "Honesty in government would greatly help all those other areas listed above". Finally, another one said, "Without honesty in government, how would any of these issues be properly dealt with? Keep up the good work".

Those were some of the responses with respect to honesty in government. We need to remember that it was the government party that was trying to hold itself as something different to the Canadian public. Members on the government side in the debate on this motion have cited what they call precedents of the practice to reinstate bills from a previous session into a new session. What has not been clearly acknowledged is that in all the other cases that were cited, it was the same government and the same prime minister. Let us be clear with what we have before us. We have a motion to reinstate bills that is unprecedented as far as the House of Commons is concerned.

I have also listened to the members opposite make the argument that we would be rehearsing the same testimony. When the former prime minister opportunistically called the 2000 election, many pieces of legislation died on the Order Paper, some dating back to the 35th Parliament. However, the ethics commissioner said it was okay, just like he said it was okay to twist the arm of the president of the Business Development Bank to lend money to a buddy of the former prime minister. That argument is wearing very thin with the Canadian public.

Power Corporation is part owner of CITIC Pacific Limited. Canadian funded research and development is being funnelled to companies like Power Corporation to move its operations to low wage countries at the expense of Canadian jobs. What we are seeing here is another example of opportunistic arguments being put forward by the government members.

I also listened carefully to the member for Scarborough—Rouge River when he talked about efficiency and saving time in the House of Commons. That argument sure was missing in 2000. If the member is concerned about saving time in the House, I am pleased to state for the record that I am prepared to stay sitting in this Parliament doing the job the electors elected me to do straight through December with no breaks, if that is what it takes to get the business of the nation done.

The Canadian public understands that the longer the government sits with its recycled leader, the more mismanagement is exposed.

• (1135)

This is not a question of how the official opposition feels about the individual bills that would be reintroduced to the House at the same stage of debate they were at in the previous session of Parliament. This is not a debate about whether this has been done previously or even about the wording of the motion. The core of this debate is honesty in government. If the government believed in democracy, it would not have introduced this motion to reintroduce previous bills and it would not have moved closure on this motion to cut off the democratic debate on this motion.

Actions speak louder than words. Let the Prime Minister stand in his place and tell Canadians that he is proud of the Chrétien government record. Let him confirm to Canadians that \$1 billion spent on a useless gun registry rather than on health care is the direction in which he wants to continue. Let him stop the charade that just because Mr. Chrétien was forced to retire, his policy of neglect for our armed forces moved along with him. Let the government explain to our unemployed softwood lumber workers that the government policy of insulting our largest trading partner is really helpful, especially when people are out of work in a one industry town. If the Prime Minister was prepared to take this action, we in the official opposition understand our duty to provide Canadians with solutions.

Maybe with such a bold declaration, unanimous consent which was sought on this motion would have been given. This is the real issue. Yes, the government will try to explain closure as a procedural matter, that it is really not a serious debate and that a fundamental issue is not at stake in this motion, but honesty in government is what is being called for. Canadians can count on my colleagues on this side of the House and me to continue our roles as guarantors of the public integrity.

The reality is that what we are witnessing is a tired, worn out party that has recycled one of its tired, worn out members into a new leader in the hope that nobody will notice. Recycling old government business or recycling a leader, there is no difference. The government is the slave of a small corporate elite and that will never change.

The decision to have the ethics commissioner continue to report to the Prime Minister is an example of bad legislation that we saw with the previous prime minister. It is clear to Canadians that the government just does not get it when it comes to ethical behaviour. Canadians see a conflict of interest when we have the former leader of the Liberal Party meeting in China with China International Trust and Investment Corporation, CITIC, scarcely two months after being

### *Government Orders*

forced out of office. He is having his cake and eating it too, just like this motion to bring back the legislation.

The Prime Minister knows all about this as Canada Steamship Lines would rather have its ships built in Shanghai than employ idle Canadian shipbuilders in Atlantic Canada. He himself is having jobs exported to Shanghai; meanwhile in the Maritimes our shipbuilders are out of work.

The corporate agenda is the democratic deficit. Follow the money to understand what the government is all about.

• (1140)

Canadians should not be surprised by the motion before us today, which looks to carry on just like the previous prime minister.

Let me suggest for a minute, Mr. Speaker, that you were the Chinese prime minister, Wen Jiabao, and that you had a potentially embarrassing situation with a former trade official who had been in the Beijing embassy of his country and was privy to details that could be embarrassing to China, and that certain friends in multinational corporations would be embarrassed by these secrets becoming public too; just send him back to his country, a country with a long list of human rights violations, where he would surely be executed. Dead men tell no tales. Is it diplomatic pressure from China that has led to the deportation of this individual? Will Canadians ever know the real reason for Mr. Chrétien's visit to China? Follow the dollar.

What is clear is that as long as the government insists on returning flawed legislation like the old Bill C-34, nothing will ever change. The democratic deficit is real and ongoing. I can certainly see why the government wants to bring back the unfinished legislative agenda from the last session. By carrying on with the old agenda, the Prime Minister has a scapegoat for its flaws, flaws he is only too eager to perpetuate because it is business as usual with the Liberal Party.

The issue before us has nothing to do with whether or not we think all the pieces of legislation that are affected by this motion are good or bad. The Canadian public is not consumed by the procedure in Parliament. What the public does want and what it understands is honesty, the basic sense of right and wrong.

The use of closure is the same argument. I can assure members opposite that the public sees the trampling of democratic rights. Let us be clear. That is what the use of closure is. It is a part of the sickness that is now being diagnosed as the democratic deficit.

In closing, I would like to point out that it was the government, not the official opposition, that prorogued Parliament. If the government now finds itself in a situation that it does not like, let us be clear: this is a situation of its own making.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on the motion before us. I listened to part of yesterday afternoon's debate and I found that there were many reasons to oppose the present motion.

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I will begin with the issue of the current Prime Minister. I remember that what was behind the unseating of the former prime minister, the current Prime Minister's offensive against the former one, was that there would be a fresh, new wind sweeping through the House, a wind of change. Someone new was needed. And in order to have someone new, a new organization and a new cabinet were needed. And that is what happened. I think about 80% of the cabinet was changed to make the new one.

It was necessary, as well, to prorogue the House. The current Prime Minister probably has some of the best image makers, or spin doctors as they are known, and they tried to put the idea into people's heads that a new prime minister would be good for them. A whole system was developed by these spin doctors to ensure that all the government's actions are geared toward this fresh, new change.

Parliament was prorogued when the former prime minister resigned, to indicate that things would begin on a new foundation, with a new—80% new—cabinet, and a new philosophy.

It is hard to figure out why, in this context of change, we have a motion before us today to bring back all the former bills. Perhaps not all of them. Some people have been arguing since yesterday that the government has to have some flexibility, but flexibility within the list of former bills which died on the Order Paper with the prorogation.

I think there is a basic inconsistency in boasting about having a new prime minister, a new cabinet and a new philosophy, saying that Parliament is being prorogued because they want to start off on a new foot, and at the same time bringing back all these old bills. It is fundamentally illogical. As members of Parliament, it is our responsibility and our duty to evaluate what can and cannot be reinstated. I will get back to that in a moment.

First I would like to address some of the arguments made yesterday. One of these was change, but there is no real wind of change. It is all the same. Depending on one's view, the current wind is the same, if not worse, as the one that was blowing when the former prime minister was here. Personally, I think it is worse, because whether the answer is yes or no, it comes with a smile, whereas before it did not. That is about the only change I can see.

Some have mentioned the fact that considerable time was spent studying these bills and that it would be a waste of time to start everything over. I would like to remind those people that all the bills currently being considered for reinstatement have been subject to time allocation motions.

We have always maintained that time allocation is detrimental to democracy. It cuts short the debate, not all the witnesses are heard, the system or the bill under consideration is not fully considered, and the government immediately puts forward a motion for time allocation. It may take a little longer sometimes, but the result is the same: it puts an end to debate.

The fresh approach that was promised to us, once again, will change nothing. We are already subject to time allocation. Parliament has been back for barely two weeks and already the government House leader is bringing in time allocation.

I would like to remind the House that we in the Bloc Quebecois have always said we would oppose, and have always opposed, time

allocation motions in a vote. It is important to us to get to the heart of the bills, to be allowed to consider the bills in their entirety, and to have a full and complete debate.

To do so, members, who represent the public, must not be told, "Ten members having spoken on the issue, to satisfy the Liberal government's political agenda, this debate has now concluded".

• (1150)

This seems quite consistent with the previous regime. I have not seen many differences over the past two weeks, on matters such as time allocation.

Most of the bills that the government wants to have the flexibility of reinstating were subject to time allocation. Consequently, we are not prepared to give our consent to reinstating everything the government wants.

We have been victims of time allocation. They impose time allocation, now, to tell us to "Move on", even though these bills must be considered. Yes, they must be considered, because when a decision is made to reinstate them—and we do not want to—we must consider what may be reinstated.

Since the start, there have been bills that we do not necessarily like. I can mention, among others, Bill C-13 on assisted human reproduction. Once again, this is consistent with the previous regime. There is no difference between the current and the former prime ministers with regard to the federal government's capacity to encroach on Quebec's areas of jurisdiction.

There is no difference. We saw it in the throne speech. We also see it in the government's intention to reinstate bills that intrude on Quebec's jurisdiction and that encroach on its areas of jurisdiction.

The Assisted Human Reproduction Act contradicts and conflicts with thirteen Quebec laws. We had asked that the bill be split. We were in agreement regarding the prohibition on human cloning. However, the moment they want to establish agencies and tell the provinces what to do in their own jurisdiction, we can no longer agree.

However, with regard to Bill C-13—and I think that the government has already floated some balloons—there was interest in eventually reinstating it. What will be reinstated?

Yesterday, we heard government members says, "We want some flexibility". They already have too much power with a majority I consider tyrannical, because they are imposing time allocation. Now, they will say, "We will decide which bills to reinstate". We are afraid that this kind of bill will be reinstated, and once again the areas of jurisdiction belonging to the provinces and Quebec will be trampled on.

*Government Orders*

Let me tell you about Bill C-17. I believe you are very familiar with that piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, since you chair the legislative committee studying this issue. As you know, we spoke against some of its provisions, including the incredible powers granted to the intelligence services where passengers are concerned. Some even went as far as saying, "We can even extend that to railway and bus transportation". Under very little control, these companies would be able to collect information about their passengers and release it to the RCMP and CSIS. This is something that Quebeckers have always feared.

We all remember the 1970 crisis. The RCMP itself burned down barns and then blamed it on somebody else. Granting that kind of power to the RCMP and CSIS, even with a commissioner reviewing the issue once a year, is cold comfort. In fact, knowing that information about passengers is collected and then transferred to the RCMP and CSIS is of no comfort to me at all.

We do not agree with many other provisions found in Bill C-17 that could be reinstated. The new philosophy of the government is to align its policies with those of the United States. We have come to realize that our national defence and foreign policies are being aligned with those of Washington. God knows that public safety is Washington's top priority these days.

I think the bill was drafted to meet the concerns of the U.S. It grants greater power not only to intelligence services, but also to ministers in general, through interim orders. Under this bill, a minister could make an interim order without bothering to check if it is in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms or the enabling legislation and say, "I am making this decision".

That puts too much power in the hands of one individual, a minister. Consequently, it is very important for us to say, "You have not listened to what we had to say. You have imposed closure on all these bills." We cannot tell the government today, "We give you the right to reinstate these bills at the same stage."

● (1155)

We want to have an indepth debate.

If the government is serious and if it wants to get to the bottom of things, it should reintroduce the bills at first reading. We will take the necessary steps and get to the bottom of things. We will not allow the government to make a selection, say they want to bring back only certain bills and expecting the bills listed to be brought back to the House.

There is also the bill respecting the effective date of the representation order. The Prime Minister said he wanted to see this bill passed. Again, what is the difference with the old regime?

At least before I could say that the current regime is going further and more to the right. It pays less attention to the democratic significance and input of the House, introducing a bill to advance the effective date of the representation order. It is interfering with legislation that should be non-partisan. The electoral officer should be the one setting the standards.

With a piece of legislation, this government wants to tell the chief electoral officer what he should do. In this bill, it says that the new legislation will take effect on April 1, instead of August 26. This is

because the Prime Minister wants to call an early election. He knows that, if he does that and the new legislation takes effect of August 26, some Canadians will probably be upset. I think the number of ridings will be increased from 301 to 308. The government and the Prime Minister fear the reaction of Canadians, mainly in western Canada.

What does this bill provide? I do not want to talk at length about Canadian history, but when this federation was born, we had this concept of two nations. We never hear about that, nowadays. All we hear about is the Canadian nation and, sometimes, the aboriginal nations, but the Quebec nation has completely disappeared from the radar screen. The throne speech does not mention this at all. In the past, we had equal representation, because we had two nations. But with the development of western and of Upper Canada over the years, the representation of Quebec has been eroded, and it is still being eroded today.

We used to have 25% of the seats in the Commons. And then, some people tried to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. They told us Quebec had 75 seats and would never have fewer. But they changed the other side of the equation. Instead of reducing the number of members from Quebec, they increased the number of members from the rest of Canada. The net result is a constant erosion of Quebec's representation in the House and its impact. We are aware of that. That is what is provided in the bill the Liberals want to put before us. Originally, both founding nations were equal. Today, there is no longer equality, and not even fairness.

● (1200)

This is a constant dissolution and dilution of the powers of Quebec. We saw it coming for a long time, and we were right. That is, moreover, why we even signed a letter, along with the hon. member for Trois-Rivières, denouncing that attitude. This is just the kind of bill they will be bringing back to us.

We have a number of reasons to be offended, to raise objections. We are not here just so the government can bring back the legislation it decides to select for reinstatement, that same government that brings in time allocation to get it rammed through, often at the end of a session. The government was the one holding all the cards. If it was so keen on these bills, all it had to do was not prorogue, and have us sit in November and December. We were ready to do that.

Why did we not sit in November and December? Perhaps because the new Prime Minister's image makers told him that it was better to keep his halo untarnished, and enjoy his popularity. He did not have to answer questions from members, but could stay in his little cocoon. The image makers could work on polishing up his image, selling him as the man to bring in a wind of change.

Now people in Quebec are beginning to realize that there has been no wind of change, no breath of fresh air, just more of the same. That this federal regime cannot be changed, that no matter who is in the PM's chair, no matter who is in place in Ottawa or Quebec, nothing will change. The system does not work. People are beginning to realize this.

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There is no difference between the former Prime Minister and the present one. We see the same political philosophy, the same federal system they are trying to defend. As a result, they are going to react by trying to introduce bills their way, at the same stage they were at before, when they are the ones responsible for prorogation. There is no difference between the old and the new regimes.

The government is still looking to protect the millionaires club. When I hear prime ministers saying that there will be income tax cuts, will anyone but the richest benefit from them? If we look at the behaviour of the current Prime Minister, we can say without doubt that he does not much favour the people in the middle and poorest classes. He has done nothing at all to correct the inequities surrounding the employment insurance fund and has used tax havens to shelter his own companies.

There has been no change. The millionaires-club is still being protected and the democratic deficit still exists. Even if they were to introduce a bill saying they were fixing the democratic deficit, nothing would get changed. Look at the government's attitude as it brings in closure on the item before us.

All that tells us this is still the same old thing. The same political philosophy is still there. The same attitudes are still there. The same muzzling of committees. The standing committees of the House have become very partisan. The Liberal majority controls the committees. The government controls what happens in the House of Commons. It is the government that imposes time allocation motions. It is the government that decides which bills will be reinstated. It is the government that decides when closure will be applied to bills. It is the government that decides when we will vote. It is the government that decides how we will vote, too, because with its often tyrannical majority, it is the government that sets out the whole course for all the bills.

We have many reasons to say that we do not agree with what is going on. Yesterday I listened to the hon. member for Yukon congratulating the Bloc Québécois, whose members had not yet even spoken, which must mean that, in his opinion, they agreed with the party in power. I am sorry to break his heart, but we cannot agree with the motion now before us.

Moreover, we have expressed our objection to the government's time allocation motion, imposed on the motion to reinstate bills. Certainly, now that we will have a vote on the principle of the matter, we will not surprise anyone by saying that we are not in agreement with the continuity of the old regime.

● (1205)

[*English*]

**Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and debate the question before the House. I do not consider it a complex question. Members opposite have had lots to say about it. I suppose I could compress my remarks into three or four minutes, but the ethic of the House is such today that we might as well have a fulsome debate. The clock is running on a vote. This debate will take us to a vote this evening. In a sense we are, as they sometimes say in sports, running out the clock.

Hopefully, in running out the clock, we will have some interesting things to say. I will do my best to add to the substance of debate,

even though the debate itself is not essentially one of substance. It is really a procedural motion. The motion itself would allow the government to reintroduce bills in this session of Parliament, the bills being at the same stage they were in the previous session of Parliament.

To most Canadians that would not seem too out of line, too extraordinary or too undemocratic, but the opposition seems to think there is a problem with this. Even though it is roughly an eight or nine line motion in both official languages, we are probably going to have a few hundred pages of debate on whether or not it is a good motion. Let us keep in mind it is not substance. It is just a procedural mechanism to allow the reintroduction of bills, which in the ordinary course will be debated and dealt with by the House, and by the other place in due course, with lots of debate of course attendant in those procedures.

Why does the government want to introduce this motion and reinstate bills? What is reinstatement? At the risk of repeating a subject that has probably already been discussed in the House, I want to talk about reinstatement. It is not new, but it is not old.

I recall when I was elected to the House in 1988, it took me a couple of years to learn some of the rules and procedures. I recall in 1990-91 rising in this place and speaking about the stupid waste of paper and time, when at a prorogation all of the existing private members' business was trashed and put in the garbage can. Then when all the members came back in the new session of the House, they would have to reintroduce identical bills and they would all be reprinted with new bill numbers.

There were thousands and thousands of pages of private members' business which, as a result of prorogation and tradition, were trashed. All that private members' business was simply put in the garbage. We were just getting into recycling then. What a terrible waste of resources and House time because every one of those private members' bills, and some members had several items, had to be reintroduced in the House. They were normally introduced in the identical form that they were in at the end of the prior session.

I stood in this place, said it was a dumb thing to do, and asked if there was some way we could allow for reintroduction or reinstatement of these private members' bills in the same form that they were. Many members in the House said yes, we could probably do that. It would save us a couple of tonnes of paper and quite a few hours of House time because every time a member introduces a bill there is some House time taken. It ultimately became part of a minor procedural reform which was at first done on an ad hoc basis by the House leaders. Ultimately, the rules were changed to allow individual members to reinstate their bills. That is the concept of reinstatement.

● (1210)

If that logic flowed for the private members' bills, it did not take the House leaders long to figure out that they could do the same thing for government bills, and so there were packages for reinstatement prepared following a prorogation.

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This of course differs from what happens when there is an election. When there is an election, of course, all of the parliamentary business ends, the whole legislative agenda washes and Parliament begins afresh in a new Parliament. But just the changeover between sessions is what we are talking about here and that involves a prorogation.

The House leaders then found a way to do this and we changed the rules. This reinstatement procedure, while not a long-standing tradition, is certainly not new and it is used. If it is good for private members' bills, the logic must flow that it is good for government bills. It may be trite these days to say that it saves a whole lot of paper, but it probably does and it saves a whole lot of House time.

I will say that in the past I recall a fair bit of political brokering, shall we call it, at the time the reinstatement motion was introduced. In other words, the opposition parties sometimes would meet with the governing party and negotiate what was reinstated as opposed to just allowing a blanket reinstatement. That seemed to work. There are certain bills, of course, that are not too controversial around here and it seemed to be pretty logical and efficient, if I can use that term, to reintroduce them using that mechanism. So there is nothing unprecedented or inappropriate about this, and I will use the term efficiency. Others may not like the use of that word, but it is good enough for me. It is worth something.

I also want to address a small piece of logic here. If we were to take the position that there should not be a reinstatement, we would also have to recognize that there would be a reintroduction. If the government wished to reintroduce a bill that was not passed in a prior session, it simply would reintroduce it, but not at the same stage it was at when the House prorogued. It would reintroduce it at first reading and bring it through that way.

Just because there is a prorogation does not mean that all the legislation that existed is never going to see the light of day again. It is going to be reintroduced. If members wish to use the term reinstate, they could use that term as well. The bill could be reinstated, but it would be reinstated/reintroduced at first reading.

In terms of logic here, there is nothing wrong or inappropriate about bringing back a bill. The bills that matter are going to get brought back anyway. The only question is whether we will bring a bill back into the House at the same stage it was at when the House prorogued. I never had a big problem with this concept when I was in opposition and I do not have a problem with it now that I am in government.

To be sure, there are bills on the list, which I will go through in a moment, that the opposition does not like or does not want to pass. That is okay. Rarely is there full agreement in this place on bills. The opposition, in objecting to reinstatement, simply is being tactical in doing what it can to slow down, stop or obstruct the passage of bills that it does not like. There is nothing wrong with that either. That is actually the job of the opposition: to test the strength of the government party and to test the integrity of the legislation.

I do not have a problem with the opposition objecting to reinstatement providing there is some logical basis for doing it, and I of course listened for those reasons. It is not logical to object to reinstatement because we do not like the bills that might come back,

because if the opposition does not like the bills that come back it is fully capable of debating against those bills and voting against them when they come back.

•(1215)

The one exception to that, and this may be a reasonable position, is a bill that came back to this House after third reading, if I can put it that way. If a bill has already been passed at third reading, it would simply be sent off to the Senate. Where the bill died at prorogation, the House would not have another crack at the bill, but we have to remember that the bill had already been passed by the House fully and sent to the Senate at the time of prorogation.

Anyway, the motion now does not want to deal with each of the bills themselves. It is dealing only with the mechanism of reinstatement and whether the government should have the ability to bring back those bills using the reinstatement mechanism. It is really a simple question. We are now in the situation where the debate was dragging on this very simple question.

Mr. Speaker, you know from the content of the debate here that any number of issues are being debated under the rubric of this reinstatement motion question.

I heard an opposition member yesterday complain about the fact that the government had stolen an element from his private member's bill and used it in a government bill. That is a nice comment, but there is no property in a bill that is public and we all know that.

I know what the member was referring to. There are some good ideas around the House on both sides and occasionally those good ideas get collected, bundled together and put into a bill, which is usually a government bill. Sometimes there are some good opposition bills over there too. That happens. But the theft of the content of a bill, if I can use that term, the borrowing of the content of a bill, is surely not a major issue that should be debated in this motion at this time.

We have the debate sliding around, and because the issue is fairly simple I am pretty comfortable with moving the question to a vote tonight. The mechanism that moves it to a vote tonight is called closure. I am not comfortable with closure happening day in and day out and all over the map. It is a form of bringing a close to debate after a debate, but in this case the question is simple, as I say, and the issue is not unprecedented. I would say it is procedurally routine now and I am happy to deal with it in a vote tonight.

By the way, in that vote there will be votes for and against and that to me looks democratic. If the government succeeds in the vote tonight, the government will bring back bills that have already been here, bills that we have already debated and voted on. They will be brought back here in the same position they were in when the House prorogued.

*Government Orders*

In case somebody thinks that is just simply a very dumb thing to do, we must keep in mind that this is precisely what we all do with our private members' bills. They come back in the same position they were in when the House prorogued. There are members opposite who may argue strenuously against what the government wants to do in this case but who will bring back their own private members' bills using the virtually identical or analogous mechanism, the mechanism that was established here about 10 years ago for the same purpose. There are some crocodile tears, but they are routine in this place.

What is the list of bills? I thought it would be interesting or helpful to add some meat to the procedural sandwich here. I suppose many Canadians do not notice a lot of the bills that go through this place, but there is an interesting bill to amend the Statistics Act, which had come to this place from the Senate. That is a bit of a sleeper for most Canadians, but it is on the list.

• (1220)

There are bills governing reforms to how our first nations govern themselves. These bills are actually quite controversial. On two occasions in the last session, I stayed up all night when I was in the saddle, as they say, with a committee and was awake and without sleep for 47 hours. The committee did not meet for 47 hours, but I had other duties besides the committee business. On two occasions that happened. Therefore, I as one member—and there were many other members involved in this—have a whole ton of public MP time invested in some of this legislation. Those first nations governance bills were one of the envelopes wherein that time was invested. They may come back. They may not come back. Maybe the government will reconsider. I recall there was some concerted opposition to some of those bills, not all of them but some of them.

There is a citizenship bill for which we have been waiting for a long time, perhaps three years.

There is a bill to amend the Criminal Code for protection of children and other vulnerable persons. I sit on the justice committee. We made special efforts to get that bill through before the House prorogued, to finish our business and get it back to the House. My colleagues and I invested a fair bit of time on the justice committee. This is a good bill. I do not think there was any opposition objection to that bill. I think there was support for it, which is why we got it through the committee so relatively quickly. However, prorogation ended the bill. I think it would be reasonable to bring back the bill and get it through if we can, with the support of members of the House, and through the Senate.

There is an amendment to the family law act.

There is what looks like a technical amendment to the Canada airports act, the transportation amendment act. The Canada airports act is going to need some work. The federal government transferred responsibility for airports to a number of local airport authorities. That was something that had not ever happened and there were a few little gaps and a few procedural niceties that came to light during and after the process. We are remediating those items. It seems reasonable to fix them. It is a repair bill. It seems reasonable to bring the bill back and try to deal with it without putting it back at home plate at first reading.

There is a bill to deal with transfer of offenders. It also went through the justice committee. I do not think there was any significant objection to that bill either. It would improve the effectiveness with which we bring back Canadians from custody or detention outside the country. It would simplify the justice response to circumstances involving many Canadians in many different countries and in many different circumstances. Most Canadians accept that we in many cases are in the best position to deliver the corrections piece of the justice system to Canadians when they get into trouble in other countries. Not everyone agrees with that. Some think we ought to leave Canadians over there to serve their time, but on most occasions it is appropriate to bring Canadians back. That is what the bill would do.

There is an amendment to the Canada Elections Act. We all know about that because in that bill there is a trigger date for the new boundaries for the new ridings. I believe that the current date is sometime in August. The government bill would move that up to April 1, so that any election called after April 1 would be on the new boundaries. Most of us in this place would like to have an election on the new boundaries.

Rather than go through all of that, in short I want to say that there are some good bills, bills that are actually supported on both sides of the House. It is appropriate, logical, effective and efficient to bring them back. Tonight we will have a chance to adopt the motion that will do that. I am going to vote in favour of the motion.

• (1225)

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to speak.

All the gobbledegook we just heard about the bills that will come back means nothing. We are reinstating the bills is for one reason only, and that is to have an early implementation of the Canada elections changes so there can be a quick election, and none of these bills will be debated.

The member knows it is all about that. The government is not doing this to bring back an array of interesting bills about issues affecting Canadians. It is only doing this for one reason: to accommodate the Liberals' election agenda.

I find it all very confusing. When leading up to this, the new Prime Minister said that he would correct the democratic deficit, that he would give MPs new power, empower all of us, and that he would create this new wonderful world for members of Parliament.

*Government Orders*

I bet this is a world record for closure for a new government, or it calls itself a new government. No government has probably ever moved closure so fast as this one. That is a true sign of circumventing the democratic system. Why is the government moving closure? So it can bring back the old bill. The Liberals are trying to say that they are a new government, but all they want to do is recycle old bills. They want to bring them back at the same stages they were when the House rose.

I do not know how they can say that they want to be a new government and that they want to have democratic reform, when they really are desperately trying to recycle themselves by coming back with old bills. Rather than bringing in new bills that are of interest to and affect Canadians and serve their needs, they are serving their own needs by bringing back a bill so they can then have an early election. It just seems to be completely contradictory to everything they have said.

Yesterday, I raised the issue in question period that the Prime Minister had said on television that his biggest failure was not resolving western alienation. Yet every day the government advertises for jobs in Ottawa and says clearly that these jobs are just for a few postal codes around Ottawa and nobody from the west is allowed to apply for these jobs. I just checked this on Sunday night. There were 20 jobs advertised by the Government of Canada in the nation's capital of Ottawa. Citizens of Canada cannot apply unless they live in this little circle of postal codes around Ottawa. It is just not fair.

People in your riding, Mr. Speaker, cannot apply for a job in the capital city of their country. People in my riding cannot apply for jobs in the own capital city because they have the wrong postal code. It is just wrong. When I raised this yesterday, I was trying to point out that the Prime Minister said that the biggest failure was western alienation. However, every time these jobs are advertised, the Liberals do not want input from the west. They do not want to hear from the west. They do not want ideas from the west. They sure do not want anybody from the west working in Ottawa because those jobs are reserved for special people in this little circle of postal codes around Ottawa.

Even though the people from Newfoundland are citizens of Canada, they cannot apply for the jobs in their own country. People in Nova Scotia cannot apply. That certainly creates western, eastern and northern alienation. I find it offensive that any country would say that its citizens cannot work in their own capital city because they have a postal code that does not suit the government.

It is even worse than that. The ads say that within a postal code area, preference will be given to Canadian citizens. Theoretically, citizens from Chile, or Slovenia or some other country can work in the capital city as long as they have a postal code from around Ottawa and a work permit. However, somebody from Manitoba or Newfoundland, a citizen of Canada, cannot work the nation's capital. The government absolutely guarantees western and eastern alienation as long as it continues to do this.

I move on because I want to talk about the bill. One thing that has not come up or I have not heard much about is the effect of the bill will create a lot of chaos because the whole thing is being driven by the Liberal election agenda. Apparently the Liberals want to have an

election call around the 1st of April. To do that they have to change the rules and distort the Election Commission's recommendations. We hired the Election Commission to make a recommendation. It recommended that the ridings be changed as of August 25, 2004, but the government brought in a bill to implement those changes early just to accommodate its election agenda

● (1230)

At the same time the government has introduced a bill to change the names of 38 ridings, including mine. The name of my riding right now is Cumberland—Colchester. However that name could be anyone of three names in the next election, depending on whether we go by Elections Canada commission rules, or by the early implementation rules, which we will talk about later, or by Bill C-53, which is the name change bill. It is really confusing.

We have two bills now that will affect the name of my riding and 37 other ridings. My riding is currently Cumberland—Colchester. The Election Commission says it should be North Nova. Then the government moved a bill last year to change it back to Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley. There are three completely different names for my riding.

If the government calls an election now, it will be Cumberland—Colchester. If it gets the early implementation bill through, but not the name change bill through, it will be called North Nova. If it gets both bills through, it will be Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley. There are 38 ridings like that, and it is causing massive confusion. Elections Canada cannot adapt fast enough. It will be unable to change its election maps if we have an early election.

Again, all this confusion in 38 ridings and extra expense is because the Liberal government wants to have an early election. It should simply calm down, back off, let the Election Commission recommendations go through, as they are supposed to on August 25, and let Bill C-53 go through so there is only one name change. If the government has its way right now, my riding of Cumberland—Colchester will be called North Nova for a couple of months. Then if the Liberals win the election, it will be changed back again to Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley.

Why put everybody through this confusion, not only Elections Canada but the parties and the citizens? People do not know what the names of their riding are. I cannot even refer to the name of my riding now because the name Elections Canada refers to it now is North Nova, even though that name does not take effect until August 25. Then there is a bill to change it after that.

*Government Orders*

I know it is confusing, but the fact is there are three possible names for my riding and 37 other ridings. Because the government is in a panic to rush this bill through and force closure in record time, it will create a lot of havoc in those 38 ridings. It does not have to. There is no need for this. It needs to calm down and let Elections Canada follow the rules.

Elections Canada has a set of rules it follows and it should be allowed to follow them. Everybody should have a one year notice of the changes recommended by Elections Canada. That is the rule. We should allow everybody to have a one year period to get ready for the changes, to reprint the pamphlets and brochures, and prepare election signs and everything else.

Certainly Elections Canada has to have maps to show where the polls are and the names of the ridings in all the brochures and it has to have voters' lists for the ridings. If it is printing them now as North Nova and the other bill goes through, which I understand is supposed to move parallel to the early implementation act, then it will have to change them again.

In any case my riding will have three names because the Liberals are in a hurry to have an election and rush it through. It is just an extra expense, it causes a great deal of confusion and it does Canadians not one bit of good. It just accommodates the Liberals in their attempt to have an early election.

The Prime Minister has talked about democratic deficit over and over. Now with this motion, in effect we are here to do away with democracy, and not let members speak on the bill or speak about the status of a number of bills. We are going to whisk that opportunity away. We are going to take the opportunity off the board. We are going to deny everybody here the opportunity to speak if they wish to speak. There will be a few speakers, but we will not have much time between now and the time this comes to a vote.

It is all because the government has brought the hammer down. It has said that it does not want to hear the opinions of anybody nor does it want to have any amendments.

The government has done the same thing to the people in the west. It pretends it wants to hear from them, but it does not want them working in Ottawa. Certainly it does not want anyone from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, P.E.I. and Newfoundland working here either. That is what it says in all its job offers.

● (1235)

My point is that all of this is not in the interest of Canadians. It is only in the interest of the Liberals and their election agenda, and we should stop them from doing this. We should vote against the motion, and I will.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the reinstatement motion before us is a motion which, of course, does not at all satisfy the Bloc Québécois, particularly in light of the events that have occurred over the past few months within the government and the Liberal Party of Canada.

This motion would have been totally pointless if, after the election of the new leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, the former Prime Minister, Mr. Chrétien, had decided to leave and had allowed the

new Prime Minister, assuming he wanted to do so, to keep the session open. Instead, for reasons of politics, they preferred to prorogue, supposedly to allow the new Prime Minister to prepare the Speech from the Throne. However, when we look at the speech that was delivered, we immediately realize that this was an operation simply designed to prepare for the upcoming election.

Similarly, no one is fooled by the reinstatement motion. If we look at the bills that were selected, such as C-17, C-13 and C-49, it is obvious that the motion is only necessary for Bill C-49, because the Prime Minister's stated objective is to call an election as soon as possible once the new electoral map comes into effect.

So, we have this reinstatement motion which, as I mentioned, includes the following bills: C-17, on public safety; C-13, on assisted human reproduction, and C-49, on the effective date of the representation order. However, no mention is made of Bill C-34, on the ethics commissioner. According to this bill, the ethics commissioner should now be accountable to the House and not to the Prime Minister, as was previously the case. In my opinion, the review of this legislation is much more urgent than that of the bills included in the reinstatement motion.

This is particularly true today, considering that the Auditor General's report will be tabled in a few hours, if not a few minutes. I think we really do need an independent ethics commissioner who is accountable to all the members of this House.

Therefore, the Bloc Québécois will oppose this reinstatement motion. First, as I mentioned, the motion would have been pointless if things had been conducted in a normal fashion, if the new Prime Minister had taken over Mr. Chrétien's duties within a normal timeframe, and not the way it was done, by using that time to avoid having to answer questions in the House.

We will vote against this motion on reinstatement, particularly since we had previously voiced our opposition to Bill C-17 on public safety. We have absolutely no interest in seeing this bill come before the House again. The public safety bill extends the responsibilities of the RCMP and CSIS. In November 2002, the privacy commissioner himself wrote, and I quote:

But my concern is that the RCMP would also be expressly empowered to use this information to seek out persons wanted on warrants for Criminal Code offences that have nothing to do with terrorism, transportation security or national security.

What is the point in reinstating this bill when the privacy commissioner himself considers it problematic.

The same goes for the bill on assisted human reproduction. This bill has been long awaited. Perhaps there is a serious need to adopt various rules on, for instance, cloning, but Bill C-13—true to Liberal government form—encroaches on the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces in terms of health.

● (1240)

On October 7, 2003, Quebec's health minister, Philippe Couillard, expressed concern that Bill C-13 encroached on Quebec's jurisdiction. He said,

*Government Orders*

We have sent a clear signal to the federal government that we are very concerned about certain aspects of the bill, which we see as a clear encroachment on provincial jurisdictions.

So, why would the Bloc Québécois support reinstating a bill that, in the opinion of Quebec's own health minister, infringed on Quebec jurisdiction?

Finally, there is Bill C-49. Although our criticisms are known, they deserve repeating. If any area deserves the utmost objectivity and the most transparent neutrality—the need to set aside all partisanship with regard to the Canada Elections Act—if any legislation should be non-partisan, this is it.

These reasons, which are exactly the same as those leading to the fall prorogation, so a new Prime Minister could prepare a throne speech that was ultimately a failure, account for the introduction of Bill C-49. In other words, so that the effective date of the new electoral map could be moved forward, thereby allowing the new Prime Minister to go before voters in short order.

Consequently, as in the case of the last session, which was adjourned, and the reinstatement motion, it is for partisan reasons only that Motion No. 2 is being put forward. This is unacceptable.

It is all the more unacceptable that the strategy of the new Prime Minister and the Liberal government is to put off all the problems that are priorities for Quebecers and Canadians.

For instance, the Prime Minister does not want to take a stand in the same-sex marriage issue so he asked the Supreme Court a fourth question. The answer will come after the election, of course.

In the Arar affair, the Prime Minister began by saying that the Americans must have had a good reason to deport Mr. Arar to Syria. Afterward, he realized that Canadians and Quebecers thought this a rather weak response. He then spoke of a possible independent inquiry. Then he said that the Government of Canada had nothing to be ashamed of. Again he realized that public opinion was not with him. His next move was to call a public inquiry, the results of which will be made known after the election.

What came out of the meeting with the provincial premiers is that things are grim with respect to transfer payments to the provinces. Here again, the approach is to put things off. We are told a serious discussion will be held on this issue—which is urgent now, not six months from now, I would even say it was urgent the day before yesterday—but not until next summer, or after the election.

No one is being fooled by this strategy of postponing matters. The Prime Minister wants to keep all his options open and have *carte blanche* from this House, Canadians and Quebecers to do what he thinks is best. This will not work because the opposition, the Bloc Québécois in particular, will require him to provide answers now and during the election campaign.

I bet that with the tabling of the Auditor General's report on the sponsorship scandal, the Prime Minister will try to come up with some trick to postpone the findings and his positions until after the election. An independent inquiry will probably be recommended without any set date, again to ensure that the findings are not made public until after the election.

They said to us, “We have to shut down the House, because we have serious work to do; we have to prepare a Speech from the Throne to set a new direction for this government”, which, it seems, was worn out after its 10 long years in power.

What do we find in the throne speech? Nothing: nothing concerning the priorities of Canadians and Quebecers. There is absolutely nothing to settle the fiscal imbalance. I remind the House that this is a very serious problem.

We do know that the agreement on health which was signed in February 2003 by the provincial premiers and former Prime Minister Chrétien will expire next year, and that the amounts have gone down considerably.

This year, even with the injection of \$475 million for Quebec, which has been announced three times, or the \$2 billion ad hoc injection for the health sector by the federal government, even with that, according to the study by Quebec's finance minister, Mr. Séguin, the Government of Quebec will receive 4.5% less in federal transfer payments. Equalization payments will decline by 38%.

● (1245)

We might have expected that the Prime Minister would at least tell us the schedule and what his guidelines would be concerning negotiations on the equalization agreement, which expires very soon, on March 31, in fact. That is not after the election, and so now is the time for answers.

Meanwhile, the provincial finance ministers and premiers have to juggle with speculation about the future of health financing. We know that health financing also determines all kinds of other choices to be made in government policy for the provinces, particularly for Quebec.

I will give the House an example. The Quebec finance minister, Mr. Séguin, told us several months ago that there was a shortfall of \$3 billion, and that he did not want to touch either health or education. The Quebec budget, setting aside health and education, amounts to \$9 billion. Can the Government of Quebec reasonably be expected to cover this \$3 billion shortfall out of this \$9 billion?

Because of the unwillingness of the federal Liberal government and the current Prime Minister to provide answers, the Government of Quebec will have no other choice but to reduce its health and education costs. Health and education are priorities for Quebecers and I am sure for all Canadians.

We would have expected the federal government to tell us, in the throne speech, how it intends to deal with fiscal imbalance, whether it is through equalization, the social transfer for health or other sectors, or even through tax point transfers, which is, as you know, the option preferred by the Bloc Québécois.

*Government Orders*

However, the throne speech is silent on this issue. It is not mentioned at all. As I said earlier, the announcement was like a lead balloon. We were told that \$2 million would be forthcoming. The former finance minister could have made the announcement in his economic statement, last October 31. It could even have been announced as soon as the agreement with the first ministers was struck in February 2002, if my memory serves me well.

So, there is nothing for health. The throne speech does not even mention the fiscal imbalance as an issue that the government will have to deal with. There is nothing on employment insurance. This is rather odd, particularly considering that, back in June, the Prime Minister himself promised a coalition of community groups and unions called the Sans-chemise in the Charlevoix region that he would settle this issue. Not only is the issue not settled, it was not even mentioned in the throne speech as an issue for which the federal government needs to find a solution quickly.

As we know, seasonal workers will soon be entering the so-called spring gap. These workers will no longer qualify for employment insurance, but they will not have gone back to work yet. There is nothing for these people, who cannot get social benefits, because one must use up a significant amount of his assets before qualifying. So, these people will have to use up their savings, because the federal government cannot find a solution to a problem that it recognizes, since the current Prime Minister had pledged to the Sans-chemise coalition that he would find such a solution.

So, there is nothing on employment insurance and on the fiscal imbalance. As regards our seniors, the hon. member for Champlain conducted an extraordinary campaign on the guaranteed income supplement, and this resulted in thousands of Quebeckers and Canadians getting this supplement, because for years the federal government had been as discreet as possible about the existence of this program. Now, things are easier thanks to the Bloc Québécois, although this supplement was not made fully retroactive.

Indeed, those who were deprived of the guaranteed income supplement for years and who just found out that they are entitled to it are getting 11 months of retroactive payments, when they should at least get the same retroactive period that the current Prime Minister gave himself with Bill C-28. As we know, Bill C-28 was passed in 1998, but was retroactive to 1995, the year when Canada Steamship Lines International transferred its headquarters from Liberia to Barbados.

• (1250)

Consequently, the Prime Minister gave himself a retroactive measure. However, in the case of the elderly, this retroactive measure would represent too much money for the federal government. Once again, we must say that, even if the surplus is perhaps lower this year, due to economic circumstances, the government will still have quite a major surplus.

Thus, this reinstatement motion is presented to us in this context. I believe that, in this context, the opposition has no choice but to oppose this reinstatement motion, because we would be playing the partisan game of this government and this new Prime Minister, who is absolutely not a champion of change. Indeed, he wants, perhaps through a veneer, to pursue the same type of operations that were taking place when the former prime minister, Mr. Chrétien, was here.

Indeed, let not us delude ourselves. The Liberal Party of Canada is a structure, a machine that has, unfortunately, governed Canada too often and for too long and that has a vision of Canada that in no way reflects Quebecers' interests. The only specific aspects in the throne speech that was presented to us reflect just that.

The Liberal Party of Canada has a centralizing vision of the Canadian federation. It is Ottawa that must make the decisions. For the federal government, the provinces—I said this once in front of mayors, and I will say it one last time to tell you this anecdote—are big municipalities at best. Of course, mayors in my region were shocked. So I then used another expression. Now I say that, for the federal government, the provinces are big regional boards at best. I can say this now that the Liberal government in Quebec City has abolished them. This no longer shocks anyone.

A number of means will be decentralized, but the federal government will still have control over the way the money is spent.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member for Joliette. The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester on a point of order.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bill Casey:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This is a very important debate we are having about closure and I do not see a quorum.

*And the count having been taken:*

• (1255)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before resuming debate, I would like to inform the hon. member for Joliette that he has roughly three minutes remaining.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the opposition cannot be a party to this process that began with the election of the new Prime Minister at the Liberal Party convention.

In this context, we have no choice but to oppose this reinstatement motion not only because the bills being presented are bad, but because the procedure is partisan. In November 2003, we could have very well continued the session and passed or rejected not only the bills before us, but the other equally important ones that were on the Order Paper.

Instead, everything was stopped, allegedly, as I mentioned, to allow the current Prime Minister to prepare a Speech from the Throne, in which, as I also mentioned, there is no solution to the true problems of Quebeckers and Canadians. However, there is a multitude of proposals aimed at interfering in provincial jurisdictions.

*Government Orders*

As I mentioned before, the federal government considers provinces as huge regional boards to whom money is given, very little at a time, when the pressure gets too much. The provinces are told how to spend the money, despite the fact that it was the federal government who created the problem by cutting transfers to the provinces. The cuts were made by the current Prime Minister when he was finance minister.

However, when we examine the specific issues raised in the throne speech, we realize that they all infringe upon the jurisdictions of Quebec and the other provinces. The issue of education is mentioned, probably for partisan purposes. The government is trying to get the support of young voters. Given all the student loans and scholarship programs it has promised, it will be interfering in an area under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, even if Quebec already has a student loans and scholarships system that has been working very well for the last several decades.

Why is the government trying to infringe upon that jurisdiction? It is not to help students or to support education, because that could be done by restoring transfers to provinces. No, its goal is to reach out and get young votes in the upcoming election.

Where municipalities are concerned, we all agree on one thing: municipalities are creatures of the provinces. However, it is important to know that one of the few specific measures mentioned by the government and the current Prime Minister in the throne speech has to do with transferring funds to municipalities.

I do not have anything against transferring funds to municipalities, but what I find strange is that the government has money for municipalities but not for the provinces. What the government is trying to do here is to create division between the provinces and the municipalities. Again, they are trying to strike an alliance with the municipalities in time for the upcoming election.

Faced with that kind of masquerade, the Bloc Québécois and all of the opposition parties are left with one choice only. Not only do we need to vote against this reinstatement motion, but we must also expose the partisanship behind this whole tactic.

[*English*]

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to add some comments to this debate on the reinstatement motion.

The aspect that members have taken is broadening the debate somewhat and not sticking strictly to this particular motion. I feel that it is part of a bigger issue that we have been dealing with here in the House in the last number of years. Certainly, it gets into the whole issue of democracy, and the lack of it to some degree, in the House of Commons. That has become a rallying cry of the new Prime Minister, but it is something that we have talked about in our party ever since the first member of the Reform Party came to the House in 1988.

We have talked about the lack of democracy and the way that the entire institution is structured, particularly at the committee level, which is structured so that every committee is weighted in favour of the government. We have seen whole ranks of Liberal Party members at a committee being jerked out and replaced by other members who would toe the party line when the Liberal members

got too far away from what the minister or the Prime Minister wanted.

That to me is an absolute disgrace. It stifles proper debate. Members who sit on these committees and listen to the debate day after day, who hear Canadians who come forward to offer their expertise, ideas and views, and who have formulated opinions on those debates, are pulled out and replaced by members who have not sat through one minute of any of the debate and do not know what is going on. Most times they do not even know what they are voting on. They are whipped into these committees to take over and make the wish of the government felt.

If we want to talk about the democratic deficit, we are debating this motion under closure. There was quite a discussion by previous speakers about that issue. They claim that in the past, and they name the years, these motions were introduced and passed unanimously in the House. I used to chair a few meetings back in my municipal politician days, and when anything was unanimous one had to start to worry that maybe we were getting into a groupthink type of situation where we needed a naysayer somewhere among the group just to keep everybody honest and to open up people's minds and eyes on other issues.

We are in a situation today where the House was prorogued so that the governing party could elect a new leader and put him in as Prime Minister under the guise that there was going to be this great change, this empowerment of members of Parliament, this great democratic deficit fighter. However, the first thing we find out after the Prime Minister was put in place is that there will not be any free vote on an issue that is of concern to many Canadians. I am talking about funding for the gun registry system.

The first issue that will be brought into the House that would require a free vote, so that a lot of the members on the government side could vote the wishes of their constituents, is going to be a whipped vote. The government can come up with all the reasoning it wants about why it has to be a whipped vote. It does not, and it would be nice to see that somebody who campaigned and talked a lot about restoring democracy to the House of Commons would not let that happen; however, it looks like we are going to let that happen.

Another issue, which ties both democratic reform into western alienation and into a whole lot of other areas, is the reform of the Senate. Quite a while ago now, we elected two senators-in-waiting in Alberta. Bert Brown won that election. He got more votes in that election than all the Liberals in Alberta put together. He is the choice of the people of Alberta. There have been Alberta vacancies in the Senate. The first step to reforming the Senate, or to reforming how this institution works, is to get some elected people in the Senate. This would be one way to do it. We now have other provinces that are talking about electing their senators and putting up a slate from which the Prime Minister could pick.

*Government Orders*

●(1300)

That is a small step to a Triple-E Senate, but it is the first step. The people who would be in the Senate would be the choice of the people that they are representing. Does that not sound familiar? Is that not what democracy is supposed to be about? We do not have it in the upper house. It can overrule the elected body. This all ties back into this whole democratic deficit issue and gets us back to the fact that we are debating this bill under closure.

I was alluding to the fact that in the past, there were unanimous votes on motions similar to this; however, I do not believe that those situations were the same as this one. We have a new Prime Minister who has worked very hard to distance himself from what he has done in the House for the last 10 years. He campaigned on the fact that he is a new man, this is a new party and that things were going to be different. Well, things are not different and things will not be different.

This whole city, Parliament Hill, the media and the government side, are being briefed by the Auditor General. We are just waiting for this bomb to go off, another scandal exposed, and I can predict what will happen. The Prime Minister will bury this some way so that the truth will never be known to Canadians. A public inquiry has been called into the Maher Arar issue. It has been taken off the table so we cannot talk about it. We have had the definition of marriage, one of the biggest issues to face this country that engaged almost everybody in this country in one way or the other. That was put to the justice committee. They travelled across this country, heard from thousands of Canadians on how they felt, and before the report could be tabled in the House, the government made its own legislation and sent it to the Supreme Court to be vetted.

All of those contributions by Canadians and all of the hundreds of thousands of letters and e-mails and petitions we received are no good. We are going to develop our own legislation. We are going to send it to the Supreme Court to be vetted before the voices of Canadians have a right to be heard. If we want to talk about democracy and changing things here, we are off to a rocky start with the new Prime Minister. It looks like we are going down the same road as the last Prime Minister.

We cannot have it both ways. He wants to distance himself from what has happened around here for the last 10 years and what he did as the finance minister—I certainly do not want to distance myself from my record here or the record of my party—but that cannot be done. He cannot then reintroduce a bunch of bills that the former Prime Minister introduced.

If bills are going to be reintroduced, if he is going to pick and choose which bills should be brought back, if he wants to introduce one, he should reintroduce them all. That is the only fair way to give all Canadians a say on all the issues.

What the government is doing through this motion is saying that it will bring back some bills, and others that are not going the way it wants, it will not bring it back. If one bill is going to be brought back, all of them should be brought back. That would be the fair way to do it.

If he truly wants to distance himself from what has transpired around him for the last 10 years—which he has been a big part of,

has been the eye of the needle, and that is the quote from the new Finance Minister, that the Finance Minister is the eye of the needle through which everything else flows in government—then he should scrap those bills and start over again. Certainly it would be a big issue. Certainly it would cause a lot of work for committees, but he would be able to honestly stand up and say that he has tried to distance himself, but he only distances himself when he wants to and he goes back to the old ways when it is convenient.

One of the issues that I find particularly appalling is the fact that last week we saw a statistic that the agricultural industry in this country as a whole is \$13 million in the red. Let us just think about what that means to Canada, a country that was created on the back of agriculture. When it is all added up, the amount of product and food that is produced for the world by that entire industry cannot break even. That in itself is a testament to failed government policies, failed government programs and a government that cannot go to the negotiating table when it is dealing with international treaties and get a fair deal for our producers.

●(1305)

Since the BSE issue hit Canada on May 20 last year, some 260-odd days have passed by. The House of Commons, where desperate people are turning to for help, has sat for 55 out of 260 days.

Why was that? We had an extended summer break. The House was prorogued so that the government could get on with the internal issues of the Liberal Party. Now it seems to me that in the middle of this crisis, when our entire agriculture industry cannot make enough money to get into the black, the Prime Minister is going to call an election. That is absolutely irresponsible.

When there are problems of this magnitude in the country, the government should stay here, keep us here until something is resolved. It is turning its tail and going to the people, claiming the government needs a mandate to do its job. Well, the government's job is here. There are some problems that need to be addressed. It should damn well do them and find some solutions. It should go south of the border and get forceful with our American neighbours if that is what is needed, but do not turn tail and go to the people.

I sincerely hope that the Prime Minister does do that, drops the writ on April 4 as everyone is speculating he will do. We do not know in Canada because it is up to the whim of the Prime Minister, but Canadians will hold him responsible for turning tail, for only sitting for 55 out of 260 days, when one whole industry in the country is suffering.

We do not have to go very far to find a sector of our economy that is hurting badly. There is the steel industry. In the middle of all of this, does the Prime Minister still have enough gall to call an election? I hope Canadians remember. I hope they hold him to task and they boot that government out of power, and put one in that will listen to people and will bring some serious democratic reform to the House.

I have talked about a number of issues that have come forward and that tie everything in with this reinstatement motion, where members are trying to distance themselves from what has transpired.

*Government Orders*

It is interesting that all the ex-ministers and ex-parliamentary secretaries are convened in a few rows near the back door. There is quite a bit of chatter that goes on over there. I was wondering the other day if that was a wise move by the House leader to put them all together.

Another item that was brought up by the House leader from the previous government was that we wanted private members' bills reinstated. He felt that there was some kind of a contradiction here that we would want private members' bills reinstated, but we did not want government bills reinstated.

Most of us who have brought private members' bills forward have not tried to distance ourselves from what we did in the last few years. This is unlike the Prime Minister across the way. When we put a private member's bill forward, we believe in it. We will back it up no matter how many times the government prorogues or how many times it adjourns. It is because it is the right thing to do. We will bring it back. I found it a little offensive to draw that comparison, the fact that we would want private members' bills reintroduced and not support this motion.

The government has the ability to pick and choose. I have talked about that to some degree. The government has put forward a motion and expects it to pass. It then moves closure so it will come to a vote and then its members vote for it and it passes of course. However, when there is a motion that allows a government to pick and choose the bills that it wants returned, think about that for a minute. That means that a lot of the work that has gone on is worthless and means nothing. It means that some of the things that are a priority for the government mean more. It means the government will bring those bills back. It is an interesting issue.

There is a bill that I have concern about that will be brought back. It is one that is causing some controversy. I believe it needs a lot of discussion and work to make it ready for the Canadian people. It is the bill decriminalizing marijuana. There are people on both sides of this issue. My party has a concern and I personally have a concern with this issue.

● (1310)

I spoke to some law enforcement people about this and they have a grave concern that if this thing is not handled right it will feed right into the hands of organized crime. The fact that one aspect of organized crime will be partially legalized or decriminalized which will allow it to get its hooks into that aspect and funnel money to support some of its other illegal functions is something we need to be absolutely clear on. If the government chooses to bring back that particular bill we must ensure that it does not play into the hands of the criminal element in this country. It is of grave concern to the police forces across Canada that it will.

One of the issues in the bill, that young people would be segregated out and treated less harshly if they are caught with marijuana, sends the wrong message. The issue of the amount is a huge concern to our party because the amount that was suggested is too much and is not relative to what could be considered to be personal use. If that amount is put in, it would create a whole problem there.

There is also the issue of driving under the influence of drugs. How do we control that? What do we do at the roadside when someone is stopped and is obviously under the influence of drugs? What does one do with them? How does one test for that? Is there such a thing? That whole debate goes on.

The one issue that really gets my goat is what the government did with the definition of marriage. It even brought in a couple of weeks ago another clause or another statement that it wanted the Supreme Court to vet.

A lot of what the government is doing is taking controversial issues that need to be debated in a campaign and by Canadians and taking them off the table by either shovelling them off to the courts or creating inquiries to have them put aside until after the election. I truly hope that if we go to the polls and are out campaigning during April and part of May that Canadians will remember the history and record of the government on a lot of these issues and hold it to task. I hope Canadians put the blame where it belongs, right there with that party.

I will wrap up by saying that I appreciate the opportunity to do this. The fact is that this debate is going on under closure under a Prime Minister who promised to come back and make a difference. He promised that when he got that chair he would make such a difference in this country that we would not even recognize it.

I suggest to the House and to Canadians that nothing has changed. I think as time goes on it will become more and more evident that it is the same old, same old. It is time for a new and fresh look at how to run this country and we will be reminding Canadians of that in the few months to come.

● (1315)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to address the motion tabled by the government to reinstate bills that have already been passed.

Earlier, I had the opportunity to question the parliamentary leader on the real motives behind this motion. We on this side of the House could not help but come to the conclusion that there is no valid reason to put forward such a motion today, a motion that more or less seeks to gag the opposition and avoid debates on issues that we feel are fundamental.

This strategy is essentially a stalling tactic and a partisan ploy, and the opposition can only condemn it today.

I will read the reinstatement motion for the benefit of those who are listening to us today and who may be trying to understand why, a few days after the beginning of a new parliamentary session in the House of Commons, the government is resorting to such tactics to prevent the opposition from expressing its views on three bills, among others.

The motion reads as follows:

### *Government Orders*

That during the first thirty sitting days of the present session of Parliament, whenever a Minister of the Crown, when proposing a motion for first reading of a public bill, states that the said bill is in the same form as a Government bill in the previous session, if the Speaker is satisfied that the said bill is in the same form as the House of Commons had agreed to at prorogation, notwithstanding Standing Order 71, the said bill shall be deemed in the current session to have been considered and approved at all stages completed at the time of prorogation of the previous session.

In our opinion, this motion tabled by the government is nothing more than a tactic to prevent, as I said earlier, the opposition from expressing its views.

Over 80 motions of this type have been tabled by the Liberals since they were elected. One would have thought that, with the coming into office of a new government, the methods and strategies used would change. I should point out that this motion would not have been necessary if the government had not decided, in November 2003, to prorogue the House. If the government had let parliamentarians fulfill their role and carry on with the parliamentary business, as scheduled in the parliamentary calendar, today we would not be debating a motion to reinstate three bills.

As a result, it was possible for the government to avoid this motion, this gag order on three bills. How so? By continuing Parliament in keeping with the parliamentary calendar, not proroguing as they did last year.

On the one hand, the public would have preferred to see their MPs sitting. What can be more fundamental, when people have given a democratic mandate to their elected representatives, than to see them sit in the House and debate? No, here we are again today in a situation where we are debating a motion on bills which would very likely could have already been passed.

Let us review the political motives behind the government's decision to prorogue the House at the end of 2003. It wanted to show clearly to the public that there was now, in Canada, a new government with a new and different vision. That vision was expressed in the Speech from the Throne read on February 2.

● (1320)

When we see what is going on, in the light of our first few days experience of this session, can we honestly conclude that what we have before us is a new government, both in form, tactics and parliamentary strategy, and in its vision as set out in the throne speech? The answer to that is not long in coming.

On the one hand, as far as tactics are concerned, we have a government like the other. It is making use of what I have seen only rarely since I was first elected here in 1997: a fast way to gag parliamentarians on bills which of course, in actual form, are the same as before, but which are much changed in partisan terms.

Taking Bill C-49 on electoral boundaries, for example, when the former government introduced it, it was certainly not in the mind of the former government, that is the Chrétien government, to launch itself quickly into an election campaign. Today, why do they want to step up the process of implementing Bill C-49? Precisely because now the government wants to have an election soon.

Bill C-49 postpones the implementation of the new electoral map to August 26, 2004. That is the date that has been set. Why does the government want to hasten the adoption of this bill? Because it

wants to call an early election in the spring, which was not what the previous government, the Chrétien government, intended to do. The political context and perspective in which we would have had to study these bills are different from the situation that exists today.

In terms of parliamentary strategy, we are basically seeing the continuation of the same type of policies from the old government to the new one.

Let us not forget that the prorogation of the House last November was supposed to give the government an opportunity to propose a new vision. However, what can we say about this Speech from the Throne, which is supposed to reflect the spirit and the policies of a self-proclaimed new government? A closer look at the throne speech shows that it is silent on many issues of primary importance to Canadians in their daily lives. There is nothing about what used to be called unemployment insurance and is now called employment insurance, even though everybody agrees that the EI plan and its management are nothing but highway robbery.

There is nothing in the throne speech to look at the integrity of the plan and to see to it that those who pay into the EI fund—whether they are young people, women or seasonal workers—are eligible for benefits.

There is nothing either for the workers affected by the crisis in the softwood lumber industry, for whom the Prime Minister is taking the trouble of travelling to the United States to try to improve their situation. The throne speech contains no vision with regard to solving the softwood lumber crisis in Canada, which is affecting various regions of Quebec particularly hard.

● (1325)

There is nothing for the farmers of Canada and Quebec with regard to the sad situation of the mad cow. In terms of these three priorities—employment insurance, softwood lumber and the mad cow crisis—there is nothing, no vision for the future, no partial or short-term solution to improve the lot of the people.

Neither is there anything to recognize the existence of the Quebec nation, even though this government took pains to prorogue the House and have a throne speech. While the new Prime Minister thinks he needs to establish partnerships with Quebec, closer collaboration with Quebec, there is nothing to recognize our identity as a collectivity and as Quebecers in this Speech from the Throne. Of course, some nations have been recognized, and we are happy about that. Still there is no mention of the nation of Quebec, although there is a consensus in Quebec that it does exist.

There is nothing about the existence of the fiscal imbalance, which sees the provinces and Quebec losing \$50 million a week. With those millions of dollars, Quebec would be able to provide essential care and services in health and education. There is nothing about that in the throne speech.

There is nothing about current issues. The issue of same sex marriage, in principle, could have been covered in the throne speech. But no, it was decided to send a fourth question to the Supreme Court, as if the government did not want to grant any importance to this matter, nor launch any great debates just before the election.

*Government Orders*

The government could have avoided presenting this motion to reinstate bills by not proroguing the House and continuing consideration of these bills, some of which were before the Senate. It most certainly could have avoided this motion to reinstate three bills: Bill C-17, an act to amend certain Acts of Canada, and to enact measures for implementing the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, in order to enhance public safety; Bill C-13, the Assisted Human Reproduction Act; and finally, the infamous Bill C-49, which the government wants to see passed as quickly as possible in order to call an election quickly.

If that is not a partisan tactic, I do not know what it is. Let us not forget that the election process and the electoral boundaries readjustment process are not supposed to be partisan in Canada. That piece of legislation was supposed to come into effect on August 26, 2004. Bringing forward the effective date of a bill which, in principle, is supposed to be non-partisan is making the process a bit too partisan.

And what about Bill C-13? It deals with assisted reproduction and related research. Its main purpose is to protect the health and safety of our citizens who are using assisted reproduction technologies to start a family, and to ban unacceptable activities like human cloning.

As we know, Bill C-13 is currently before the Senate. I must remind the House that the Bloc Québécois is against this bill although we support the principle behind it.

• (1330)

What would we have liked to do with Bill C-13, that this motion would reinstate? We would have liked to split it. We believe that Bill C-13 is an example of blatant interference in areas under provincial jurisdiction.

We are, of course, against some unacceptable technologies, especially human cloning; that is very clear in our mind. However, by setting up the assisted human production agency of Canada, the government is clearly interfering in provincial areas of jurisdiction.

At least a dozen acts passed by the National Assembly of Quebec are not in sync with Bill C-13. Sovereignists and Bloc members are not the only ones believing that this bill interferes in our jurisdictions. The new health minister in Quebec, Mr. Philippe Couillard, clearly said that he considers this bill as an encroachment on Quebec's jurisdiction and, on October 7, he added:

We have sent a clear message to the federal government that we are very concerned about certain aspects of the bill, which we see as a clear encroachment on provincial jurisdictions.

This statement was made by Quebec's minister of health, not a member of the Parti Québécois, the Bloc Québécois, nor a sovereignist. It is a statement by a Liberal minister in Quebec City, a federalist, who is judging a situation and assessing federal legislation, Canadian legislation.

If the government had been more generous and more logical, in order to respect the jurisdictions and establish this cooperation and partnership the new Prime Minister wishes to establish in Quebec, it could have given us an opportunity to split this bill. We could have voted in favour of it, based on its principle alone. The government could also have avoided encroaching on provincial jurisdictions.

Since I have two minutes left, I will come back to Bill C-49, an act respecting the effective date of the representation order of 2003. While the electoral process and representation orders have to be initiated in accordance with the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, it was always believed this entailed the implementation of the new electoral boundaries order, scheduled to take effect on August 26, 2004. It was set out in the order. There is a degree of independence in the electoral process that has been established.

Today, the government is going against this principle of independence and non-partisanship, which was agreed to by parliamentarians, whereby political parties and the government are not to interfere in this process.

What will the government achieve through Bill C-49? It will move up the effective date of the electoral boundaries legislation. This is totally unacceptable. It is a shameless intrusion in a process that has to be independent.

Today, I repeat that the government had a golden opportunity not to use such a motion and apply closure. It could very well not have prorogued the House in November, which would have prevented the need for putting forward this reinstatement motion, which, in our view, is totally unacceptable.

• (1335)

[English]

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Kelowna.

Earlier today, demonstrating the Prime Minister's truly heroic powers of restraint, the government forced closure on government business No. 2, the reinstatement of bills from the previous session. It took all of six days for the new Prime Minister to use the most blunt instruments in the parliamentary arsenal. Closure and time allocation are not standard procedures of the House. They should be our last resort, not our first response.

This chamber was designed as a place to debate the nation's business for all Canadians, a place to discuss current events and public policy. When we limit that debate, we undermine the institution of Parliament and the purposes for which it stands.

For this reason alone, closure and time allocation should not be used just at the whim of the government House leader. They must be exceptions to the rule, not the rule itself. In seeking closure, the government has shown that it will continue to conduct itself as it has for the past 10 years.

In his long career the Prime Minister has personally supported the use of time allocation on 75 different occasions and the use of closure on 10 others. Say what we may, at least he is consistent, I will say that for him.

*Government Orders*

There is another great irony about the motion for closure the House passed this morning. The purpose of that motion was to limit debate on a motion that would itself limit the debate on bills before the House. By limiting the debate on government business No. 2, the government has limited debate on a series of bills on a wide range of important issues. This motion is one which deserves significant debate. Its only function is to bring back from the dead legislation of the Chrétien government. Its only purpose is to turn back the clock and continue the work the Prime Minister began as minister of finance and the member for LaSalle—Émard.

There are those, perhaps even the Prime Minister himself, who would have us believe that we are in the midst of a new era. They would tell us that there is a new government with a new vision and a new agenda. They would stand here in this great place and say that what has just passed is passed. Yet many of those who would say this and undoubtedly much more, stood today to resurrect the legislation of the last session. Their new vision looks strangely like the old vision.

I think all members of the House will recall the election campaign run by the Prime Minister and his predecessor. I think we all recall with some fondness the television commercial in which Prime Minister Chrétien walked arm in arm with his then minister of finance, our current Prime Minister.

Their joint exploits go back much further. My colleagues will certainly recall that it was the current Prime Minister who was the principal architect of the Liberal red book in 1993. He was then named the second most powerful person in cabinet and was instrumental in putting that policy in place.

When the Sea King replacement was cancelled, this Prime Minister was there. When the funding for health care was slashed, this Prime Minister was there. When the billion dollar boondoggle took place at HRDC, and we are going to hear a whole lot more about that, this Prime Minister was there. When the gun registry went over budget by about a billion dollars, this Prime Minister was there.

The Prime Minister is not just a product of the previous administration, he was the previous administration. He was and clearly remains a loyal servant of the Chrétien government. That record is his record.

● (1340)

With the Liberal legacy left lifeless, the Prime Minister is using every tool he has to bring it back. He is fighting to bring back—and I cannot believe this—a bill that would decriminalize marijuana and put our children at risk. I worked for many years with children to whom a man gave marijuana when they were in high school. I worked to take them out of the alleyway. I got them into the church in which I was working. I bought them hot dogs and pop. I told them not to fight with their moms and dads for money to pay that man in the alleyway, which is what they were doing. In the end, there were 23 children.

Just five years ago on Christmas eve my doorbell rang. A young gentleman standing at the door said, “Hi, Mrs. Wayne, do you remember me?” I said that he looked familiar and asked him if he was Tony. It was Tony. His mom and dad were out in the car. They

wanted Tony to thank me that night for taking him out of the alleyway. When I asked him what he was doing he told me he was a draftsman in Toronto and he said that if I had not taken him out of the alleyway, he would still be there, on cocaine.

I have done research in Berkeley University with regard to marijuana. We should not decriminalize marijuana. We should not tell young people it is all right to have five grams. We should not do any of that, because when we do, we are telling them it is all right to use it, and it is not all right to use it.

The Prime Minister is fighting to bring back a bill that would allow embryonic stem cell research. Once again let me say that we have discussed this. It is wrong.

He is fighting to bring back a bill that does not stop the threat of child pornography. I cannot believe we are doing that in Canada.

He is fighting to force changes to our riding boundaries so that he can call another early election. I want to say that we looked into this. There should not be an election until next fall. Those boundaries are not supposed to come into effect until August. Let me say to every member of the Liberal government that when this goes through, every Canadian will be looking at them and asking why they forced this through at this time. They will be saying, “What are the Liberals afraid of in the next election if they wait until the fall?”

In just over 10 years we will have had four elections: in 1993, 1997, 2000 and 2004. On average that is every two and a half years. Look at the cost of it to the taxpayers of this country. In the decade before the 1993 election, there were two elections, in 1984 and in 1988. There were four years between them. The only excuse for having so many elections in such a short period of time would be if we had a series of minority governments.

I am sharing my time with my colleague from Kelowna, Mr. Speaker, but I want to say that when I look at what is happening today, having been here since 1993, I am really shocked and disappointed. I, like many others, was looking for positive change. Positive change is not what we have received. It is not positive change. Bringing back and adopting these bills is not positive change. It is the same bloody thing all over again, which we have had to put up with since 1993. I do not see us doing anything positive for the people of Canada.

● (1345)

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wish I could say that I rise with pleasure to debate this motion but I cannot. It is true that I rise with anticipation, but I would far rather not be in this debate because I think it is the wrong subject to debate.

I noticed that the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River called this a procedural debate. He referred to some of the remarks that have been made in opposition to the motion as crocodile tears. He suggested that there were a lot of those in the House. I wonder sometimes whether there is an authenticity of belief on the other side of the House that would in fact commit those members to true democracy in the House. Crocodile tears are usually feigned sorrow about something, being sort of despondent about something sad that has happened but not really feeling that way.

*Government Orders*

The new Prime Minister, and I put the word “new” into quotation marks, has botched the very thing that he set out to do. I was thrilled when he said that he wanted to take care of the democratic deficit. The illusion was that the previous government had not been as democratic as it ought to have been in the House. The new Prime Minister was going to change all that. I thought, “Good for him”. I also thought that maybe a new wind was blowing. There was a wind blowing all right, but that wind was that he did not really believe in changing the democratic deficit.

One of the first things that happened very shortly after he took the reins as Prime Minister was the whipping into order of the voting pattern of all the members in his government. They had to vote the way he wanted them to vote on the gun registry to get more money into that fund.

There are two insults in that particular behaviour pattern. First, he denied the very thing that he said he was going to make a primary issue and, second, it was already known that an excessive amount of money had been poured into this registry, which really does not work.

We have to be very clear about something else. The motion we are debating today states that bills may be brought forward on the condition that a minister rises and says to the Speaker that they are in exactly the same form as they were at the time of prorogation. The minister has absolute and complete authority to decide which bills are brought forward. So what we have here is absolute power on the part of those people. The government is asking the House of Commons to bring all of those bills back, but the Prime Minister decides, through the minister, what bills will actually be brought forward. If there was ever a concentration of power in the Prime Minister's Office, that has to be it.

What we have here is a denial of the very thing that the new Prime Minister was talking about when he was vying for the leadership of the Liberal Party. He said there was too much concentration of power in the Prime Minister's Office. He said he would take some of that power and give it to some of the backbenchers. Lo and behold, one of the first acts in which he is involved is to take that power back into his office and make sure that everybody abides by the wishes that he is going to perpetrate on his members. That is some position to be in.

The new Prime Minister had the opportunity to create for the world and for Canadians an example of how democracy could really be made to work, how he could change the old tradition, and how he could make sure that backbenchers had a real voice. What did he do instead? He appointed a new leader of the House and one of the first things he did was to say that the government has three categories of votes: one-line, two-line and three-line votes. It does not matter whether it is called a one-line vote, a two-line vote, or a three-line vote if in the final analysis the issue becomes one of “the way I want you to vote is the way you shall vote”. That is an empty shell that he has perpetrated on us and on the people on that side of the House.

What I cannot figure out is how intelligent people who have earned the respect of some of their constituents in fact will go for this kind of stuff. They would not do it in their own households, but they will do it here. Why?

●(1350)

The Prime Minister said there was going to be a brand new government, with new bills and new ways of doing things, and guess what? Here we are, not yet at 10 days of sitting in the House, and the motion we are debating is to bring back not new legislation but legislation of the previous government.

What is new about the old? Old is old. I do not want to use the quote that Mr. Mulroney used some time ago about a particular ambassador. We will leave that to another day. Those reading *Quorum* today will find that it reveals only too accurately what I am referring to. Old is old. I think the House needs to recognize that.

Then we go to the Speech from the Throne. Here was an opportunity to really create something new. What did we find? Did we find a complete statement of how to reform the Senate? We had a complete statement of what we were going to do to make sure that that place would indeed become the place of elected people, that it would be equal and would represent the regions of this country. Did we see a word on reform of the Senate? No.

Did we find anything about the rights of victims of crimes perpetrated upon themselves or their families, victims who are suffering pain and the deprivation of the use of their property, victims who have had their property damaged? Was there any talk in the Speech from the Throne about recognizing their rights and giving them some rights at least equal to those of the criminals? No.

There was a golden opportunity to create a whole new vision for Canada. It did not happen.

One of the bills that is probably going to be brought forward—we do not know but we know that it could be—is the bill on the possibility of the decriminalization of marijuana. I know that there are a lot of people who have smoked marijuana, indeed, who have inhaled marijuana, and who say to this day that it was a wonderful thing to have been involved with. Does that make it true that it is a good thing to decriminalize marijuana?

The debate will rage for a long time, but ultimately we have to make a decision about what is right and what is wrong and we also need to decide how we want our society to live. What kinds of values do we want our young people to have? What kinds of habits should they form? Is marijuana an addictive kind of a drug? I think members will discover that indeed it is, but there are other drugs that are also addictive and that perhaps are even worse and more debilitating, drugs that destroy the body and the brain more effectively than does marijuana. To suggest that these things are totally and completely unrelated is false.

However, one thing that is true in this whole gamut of the consumption of drugs is this business that Canada does not have a national drug strategy. Was there any kind of statement in the Speech from the Throne to give some direction to the people of Canada, to our educators, to our parents, to our young people, as to what constitutes a good life and what constitutes the use of those kinds of medicines and things of entertainment that are useful, rather than the imbibing of drugs?

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Virtually every member of the House knows, and if they do not know they ought to, that one of the greatest beneficiaries of the drug trade is organized crime. Do we really want this Parliament to be known as the one that created laws which made it easier for organized crime to have a stronger foothold in our society? I do not think so.

We come to another area, and that is the definition of marriage. Instead of coming to grips with this highly controversial issue, what did the Minister of Justice do? Another question has been referred to the Supreme Court of Canada.

That raises another question. I talked earlier about the democratic deficit, but there is something else going on here. We have a Prime Minister who would give backbenchers more authority, more power and more activity to do the things that matter. By implication, I suppose, although we have not heard him say it, I would draw the conclusion that the Prime Minister actually would like to think that Parliament is making the laws of this land and is indeed determining the direction that legislation should take in this country.

• (1355)

What is the one thing the Prime Minister does in terms of the definition of marriage? We have three reference questions, which were referred to the court by the previous minister of justice, and now a fourth question has been referred to that particular court. It kind of begs the question: Does the Prime Minister really want Parliament to make the laws of this land or is he giving increasing power to the Supreme Court and other judges by telling them that they will be the ones to tell us how the law should go, and that when they have vetted it properly then we will pass the legislation.

The question becomes: Who is really in charge here? Is it Parliament that decides what will happen or is it the courts that will decide what happens?

That raises the immediate next question. During the run up to the leadership of the Prime Minister, he gave clear indication that he would create some kind of mechanism to permit the vetting of possible candidates who should be considered for appointment to the judiciary. What did he do? Shortly after he became the leader and appointed his new cabinet, the Minister of Justice made it very clear that they were not quite ready to do that. They were not quite sure whether a mechanism would ever be put together so that the vetting of candidates for appointment to the judiciary would take place. Where is the sincerity in all of this?

He goes on. The appointment of a new ethics commissioner will take place. Yes, a new ethics commissioner. Indeed, we are going to have an independent ethics commissioner. The one word that has changed here is commissioner. It used to be an ethics counsellor. It probably means the person will be paid more money.

How would the new commissioner actually work? We know that particular commissioner will be appointed by the Prime Minister and report to Parliament. However, who decides what will really happen? I think that becomes the issue here. That may be different ethics but what is new about it? Nothing is new about this at all. We want to be sure that we recognize not only the new ethics in terms of that appointment, but also the new Challenger jets; \$100 million.

Mr. Speaker, you are giving me the signal that I should stop talking but we should talk for a long time about this. This is not a new government.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member has had a generous allotment of time for his 10 minutes and I am sure he will want to continue the debate later but at this time it is my duty to interrupt him.

\* \* \*

**AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT**

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Auditor General of Canada for the year 2003.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

[*English*]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, according to Statistics Canada's report "Human Activity in the Environment", released in 2003, Canada's 1,300 glaciers have lost between 25% and 75% of their mass since 1850.

Glacial stream flow, which peaks in the summer months, provides moisture during dry times, an essential role for the ecological and economic functioning of the prairie provinces.

Along the eastern slope of the Rockies, glacier cover is decreasing rapidly and total cover is now close to its lowest level in 10,000 years. Most of this reduction has taken place over the last 50 years, resulting in a decrease in glacial stream flow during the summer.

These statistics tell us that we have to take strong action in reducing carbon dioxide emissions, otherwise we can expect more droughts, forest fires and negative economic consequences for prairie farmers and western Canadians.

I urge the government to give this excellent report by Statistics Canada attention and priority for policy development.

\* \* \*

• (1400)

**DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT**

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister of Canada says that he is going to cure what he calls a democratic deficit. He tells us that he is going to give a voice to his Liberal backbenchers and allow them to vote on behalf of the wishes, desires and direction of their constituents.

Kootenay—Columbia residents know that as their member of Parliament for three terms I have constantly worked to represent their views in this chamber. I have been encouraged and directed by our party policy to give my constituents a voice. I am free to vote according to the wishes of the constituents of Kootenay—Columbia.

Let us contrast that with the Liberals. Last Wednesday the Prime Minister made a big deal about free votes for the Liberal backbenchers. Less than 24 hours later he flipped again and said no free vote on the gun registry. The appearance of the Prime Minister's promise is like a puff of gun smoke. Now we see it, now we don't.

The Prime Minister has extinguished the freedom of Liberal backbenchers and their ability to truly represent their constituents. So much for the PM's cure for the democratic deficit.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

#### PREBUDGET CONSULTATIONS

**Mr. Gilbert Barrette (Témiscamingue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Monday February 9, we had the honour of welcoming to my riding the honourable Minister of State for Financial Institutions, and some of his team.

A round table of prebudget discussions was organized, and about a dozen regional spokespersons took part.

My sincere thanks to the minister for taking the trouble to come and hear what the local people had to say. He listened with a receptive and open mind.

I also wish to extend particular thanks to the participants, who were so quick to cooperate in this venture and so interested in it. Thanks to the quality and appropriateness of their comments, the meeting was an unqualified success.

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#### SENATOR MARCEL PRUD'HOMME

**Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Senator Prud'homme is one of the most senior members of this Parliament and a former Liberal member of the House of Commons, elected nine times in a row by those whom he still terms "my people". Some may hate him, some adore him, but all respect him.

Having been the Liberal member for a Quebec riding such as Saint-Denis for 30 years has given him a depth of experience, the experience of a man who is totally connected with the people.

Right from the time he was first elected on February 10, 1964, he quickly became a speaker in demand all over Canada. For the 10 years that he has been in the other place, he has been regularly able to stir up that upper chamber with his well thought out and often provocative arguments.

Forty uninterrupted years in political life. Good for you, Senator Marcel Prud'homme.

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#### CLAUDE RYAN

**Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Claude Ryan is one of those major figures in our contemporary history who leave a deep imprint, both in Quebec and across Canada.

I entered politics at the Quebec national assembly because the Quebec Liberal Party had gained extraordinary momentum and

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vitality under Mr. Ryan's leadership. His strong belief in individual rights and his call for a Quebec that would include everyone galvanized in a remarkable way the enthusiasm and energy of Quebecers from all regions and all origins.

Having served under his leadership, both as an opposition member and as a colleague in the cabinet of the Bourassa government, I was able to get a firsthand look at his unique intellectual rigour and at his exceptional power of thinking and reflection.

[*English*]

Claude Ryan was a towering figure who, through his writings, his leadership of the no forces in the 1980 referendum and the inspiration of his integrity and formidable intellect, will leave an enduring historical legacy. We salute his memory.

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#### HEALTH

**Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when the government was elected in 1993, Delta, a community of 100,000 people, had a fully operational community hospital with 65 acute care beds.

Today the Delta hospital has no acute care beds at all. All patients with acute care needs must be loaded back into ambulances and driven to a hospital with available acute care beds. Often there is nowhere to send them.

The closure of acute care beds in the Delta hospital followed the unilateral cuts to hospital funding instituted by the Prime Minister when he was finance minister. His attack on medical care has put the Delta hospital and community hospitals like it across the country on life support.

Every Canadian living outside the largest urban areas have been adversely affected by the Prime Minister's cuts to their community hospital and the medical services they provide.

When will the Prime Minister fully reinstate the hospital funding that he took away so that the Delta hospital and community hospitals like it throughout the country can reopen their acute care beds?

\* \* \*

● (1405)

#### WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

**Mr. Tony Tirabassi (Niagara Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to 15 outstanding women entrepreneurs in the Niagara region who were honoured at a dinner in my riding of Niagara Centre on January 29.

The women honourees were Suzanne Rochon Burnett, Helen Durley, Rose Smith, Elena Turrone, Stella Blanchard, Rita Talosi, Cindy Cameron, Yvette Ward, Nora Reid, Julia Kamula, Debbie Zimmerman, Heather Fazulo, Donna Moody, Robin Davidson and Pamela Minns. All of these women have dedicated their time, effort and expertise in order to make their communities better places in which to live.

It was a pleasure for me to be part of this event that recognized the contributions that they have made and will continue to make in the future.

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I congratulate all of them. I also wish to thank all the members of the Welland/Pelham Liberal Ladies Association for organizing this event.

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[*Translation*]

#### CULTURAL HERITAGE

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this morning the Auditor General tabled a very disturbing report on the state of our Canadian heritage, which includes buildings, archives and publications.

According to the Auditor General, there are three main reasons that explain this situation, namely the existing protection system, the weakness of the control mechanisms and the combined effect of a decrease in the money spent on protection and of an increase in heritage assets.

In the case of heritage buildings, several historic sites are in a poor state and may become closed to the public. As for our archives, the problem is the negligence of the departments, because they fail to give to the National Archives instructions that would allow them to protect documents that are of historic value. As for publications, the Auditor General pointed out that the National Library does not meet the physical standards relating to space, temperature and humidity to ensure the protection of its collections.

The fact is that this is a federal responsibility. Why then does this government find the time and money to interfere in provincial jurisdictions, while jeopardizing the heritage of Canadians and Quebecers?

\* \* \*

#### SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

**Mr. Claude Duplain (Portneuf, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to reiterate the pride I felt in presenting my constituents with a throne speech that truly recognizes the priorities of the people of Portneuf.

More precisely, I am convinced that such measures as establishing a new partnership with municipalities, with a GST rebate, will enable them to better meet the needs of the people of Portneuf.

Since a large part of Portneuf is located in a rural area, I am very happy that the throne speech commits our government to defining a renewed and modern direction for economic and rural development.

I cannot help but support the commitments made regarding increased efforts to reduce the delays in health care, clean up contaminated sites such as Shannon, create new, good-quality day care spaces, modernize the student loan programs and create the position of independent ethics commissioner.

Finally, I am particularly pleased with the Prime Minister's determination to improve the role of members of Parliament through democratic reform. That will enable me to defend the interests of the people of Portneuf and make their voices heard in the Parliament of Canada.

[*English*]

#### SENIORS

**Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, across Canada there are many cases of seniors abuse. This must stop.

Society's cowards take advantage of seniors' trusting nature, frail health and often lonely circumstances.

The government, in conjunction with its provincial counterparts, has failed to protect our elderly citizens. There must be more of an effort to root out those who abuse seniors. Too often they operate knowing their victims are too scared to speak up.

We must increase penalties for those who target the elderly. Bullies just do not hurt school children.

We must as a society send the government a message that our older generations need better protection.

Canada's seniors have built the nation we have today. We are indebted to them. Let us ensure they can live out their lives in the safe and friendly Canada they worked so hard for and put an end to seniors abuse.

\* \* \*

#### NICHOLAS GOLDSCHMIDT

**Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Nicholas Goldschmidt, an extraordinary musical impresario and cultural entrepreneur who died in Toronto at the age of 95.

Niki, and anybody who knew him for more than 10 minutes called him Niki, was a conductor, an administrator, a teacher, a baritone and a pianist.

He came to Canada in the mid-1940s to become the first director of the Royal Conservatory Opera School which later became the Canadian Opera Company. He also met and married his wife, Shelagh Fraser, who has continued over these many years to be his greatest supporter and helpmate.

After going to the Edinburgh Festival in 1948, he asked why we could not do it in Canada, and he did, again and again. He founded the Vancouver festival. He founded the Guelph Spring Festival. He founded choirs and international choral celebrations, including the Bach international piano competition and Festival Canada at the National Arts Centre. Even last November he put on a month-long Benjamin Britten festival. He was planning festivals well into the future.

*Oral Questions*

●(1410)

**AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT**

**Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, once again the Auditor General has highlighted the Liberal government's gross mismanagement of taxpayer dollars. It is mismanagement that started with the finance minister turned Prime Minister and it has continued year after year: \$100 million for Challengers without a tender and without parliamentary approval; programs within the same department funding the same project and somehow not knowing it.

The Auditor General has noted eight different funding programs costing millions within INAC to fund economic development unsuccessfully.

Liberal government imposed third party management contracts costing first nations up to \$320,000 a year are handed out without a tendering process and without the involvement of the first nations.

INAC squandered first nations resources without any regard for band members. The government has let first nations take the fall for being short of funds when in reality in many cases it is the Liberal government's handling of the funds that is the problem.

Numerous first nations communities are like Barriere, a community of 400 first nation residents crammed into 60 tiny homes, two-thirds of which are totally unfit for human habitation. Living conditions and poverty will never improve as long as the government fails to recognize it is the problem.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HAITI**

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Haiti, the pearl of the Antilles, has seen the political, social and economic unrest that has plagued it for decades take a new turn for the worse. It is on the verge of collapse. The correspondent for the *Journal de Montréal* in Haiti wrote:

The insurrection that broke out in Gonaïves has flared up again. The uprising has left at least 40 dead since Thursday.

The UN's World Food Programme has stopped making deliveries, which hundreds of thousands of Haitians rely on for survival, plunging Haiti into a humanitarian crisis.

The troubles began in Gonaïves where Aristide's Cannibal Army turned against the president when the latter was blamed for the death of one of the army's leaders. The violence spread, with clashes between armed pro- and anti-Aristide gangs.

The Group of 184 and civil society, which have been calling for free and democratic elections and respect for human rights, have distanced themselves from this violence, but continue to call for the removal of President Aristide. Yesterday, the president said, "If not 5 years, then 10 years".

The UN, France, Canada, and the OAS have insisted in vain on an end to the confrontations. The nation of dashed hopes needs guarantees.

[English]

**MANITOBA WINTER SPECIAL OLYMPICS**

**Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, February 7 St. John's-Ravenscourt School was host to the Manitoba Winter Special Olympics where 147 athletes participated in sports such as curling, snowshoeing, skiing, snowboarding, and for the first time, figure skating.

Supported by 60 coaches and a host of volunteers, families and caregivers, these athletes were models of good sportsmanship, commitment to excellence and a passion to be the best that they can be in their respective sports.

It is important to note the involvement of the 20 law enforcement agencies in Manitoba which provide human and financial resources to the Special Olympics of Manitoba. Since 1988 they have raised \$1.5 million for the Special Olympics, over one-half of it raised by the RCMP in Manitoba. Members of all agencies were present as volunteers for the athletes, teams and the competitions, or in uniform for the opening ceremonies.

Congratulations to everyone involved.

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**LUMBER INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since 1960 the Canadian Lumber Standards Accreditation Board has enforced the lumber grading system in Canada. The board is made up of representatives of the lumber industry, consumer organizations, the federal and provincial governments. The board supervises 98% of Canadian lumber production, including that destined for export.

However, unlike its American counterpart, the Canadian board is not recognized by the government to supervise heat-treated lumber standards. Instead, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has recently set up a costly separate process that is forcing the Canadian industry to conduct separate inventory controls.

It boggles the mind that the government would choose to burden the Canadian lumber industry with another level of bureaucracy during this tough time for the industry.

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**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

●(1415)

[English]

**AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT**

**Mr. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is definitely not a good day to be a Liberal. I quote the Auditor General:

—the federal government ran the Sponsorship Program in a way that showed little regard for Parliament, the Financial Administration Act, contracting rules and regulations, transparency, and value for money.

What an indictment. Did the Prime Minister think he was really going to get away with this?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the situation described by the Auditor General is unacceptable. Canadians deserve better and it is for that reason that the government has acted swiftly.

It is for this reason that the government has appointed a commission of inquiry. It is for this reason that the government has asked the public accounts committee be established immediately and that it meet as early as possible, including this afternoon. It is for this reason that the government has appointed a special counsel to recover the funds. We are acting now.

**Mr. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister loves to sweep issues like this aside. Does he not know that there are not enough judges in this country to go after the allegations that are made in the Auditor General's report?

Why did the Prime Minister stay silent when long ago he could have just said, "Stop it. This isn't right"?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that when money is allocated by a cabinet, by a minister of finance, or by a president of the treasury board, that in fact it is allocated on the basis that certain rules, very clear rules will be followed.

The problem is that those rules were not followed. This is at the heart of the Auditor General's report. It is for that reason that the government wants to get to the bottom of exactly what happened. That is why we called for a commission of inquiry.

**Mr. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one week into the Prime Minister's tenure and we have a scandal unheard of in Canadian history. That is the legacy of this man. The Prime Minister knew about the scandal yet he said nothing and he did nothing.

Why did he choose to be silent instead of speaking up?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the very first thing this government did on taking office was to cancel the sponsorship program. We did not wait a day. We did not wait five minutes. We acted. We acted today immediately upon the tabling of the report.

Therefore I ask the opposition, will it cooperate with the public accounts committee? Will it meet this afternoon?

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knew there was a problem and he continued to sign the cheques.

All through the sponsorship program he was vice-chair of the Treasury Board. The Treasury Board expressed grave concerns about the sponsorship program, yet the Prime Minister chose to do nothing about it. Why is that?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is, take a look at the way government works, or he may never have the opportunity. The fact is the rules are established.

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

**The Speaker:** Order. We have to be able to hear the questions and the answers. The Prime Minister has the floor. The member for Lakeland will not be able to ask a supplementary if he cannot hear the answer. The Prime Minister has the floor.

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the problem described by the Auditor General is that the rules were broken. People did not know that rules were broken, but when the government became aware of that, let me simply point out and let me congratulate the current Minister of Finance, the former minister of public works, who on becoming the minister of public works took immediate action and is rewarded for it in very favourable comments in the Auditor General's report.

• (1420)

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is trying to blame the other guy, but he is every bit as responsible as Alfonso Gagliano. The Prime Minister was vice-chair of the Treasury Board. As finance minister he signed every cheque written by Alfonso Gagliano. Why does he not simply take responsibility for his role in this corrupt affair?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Minister of Finance does not sign cheques. The member should get it straight.

More important, the President of the Treasury Board is putting in place a comprehensive plan to ensure that this kind of thing can never happen again. He will be speaking about it either in the House today or later on.

I look to the opposition members and ask them to cooperate with the government to put in place the kinds of measures so Canadians will know that in fact their money deserves the respect that we believe it does.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today some disturbing facts were revealed by the Auditor General, facts raised some months ago by the Bloc Québécois and the opposition parties, and refuted by this government and ministers in the former government who are still in cabinet, including the Prime Minister. Today we are being told that a commission of inquiry, under a judge appointed by the government, has been established. If this body is to have the necessary credibility, it must be neutral.

This is what I am asking the Prime Minister. Is he going to create a commission of inquiry along the lines of the one headed by Lord Hutton in Great Britain, or one along the lines of the Cliche commission in Quebec some 25 years ago, with commission members approved by the parties in opposition?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the commission will have all of the powers allocated to it under the legislation governing public inquiries. Justice John Gomery of the Quebec Superior Court has been appointed. I do not think we ought to start attacking the integrity of the courts or that of a judge. It is very clear; this is a commission of inquiry for the purpose of proving the facts beyond any doubt.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in no way am I casting any aspersions on the integrity of the judge; rather I have some serious questions about that of the Prime Minister.

*Oral Questions*

I would ask him this. Will he try to sweep the question under the rug, or will he agree to assure us that this commission of inquiry will not interrupt its proceedings during the next election, that it will get started promptly and, if need be, hold hearings even during the period leading up to the election? That is what I would like to know.

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the judge heading the commission was appointed today. We want to see the inquiry start as soon as possible. We do not want any delays. This commission will, once it starts its inquiry, carry it to completion, with no interruption.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois has just asked the Prime Minister to ensure that the members of the commission, aside from the chair, are approved by all the opposition parties in this House, since the government is involved in the scandal right up to its neck. This is not a huge request. We would like to have objective commissioners.

Yes or no, will the opposition be asked to approve the appointment of an objective commissioner who is not linked to this government that is so deeply involved in the sponsorship scandal?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite is having a little trouble understanding how things work. This is a judicial commission. There is one judge, who has just been appointed: Justice John Gomery of the Quebec Superior Court. He is the commission.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister says we do not know how things work, it is clear from watching them that they do know how things work. For five years now, they have known how things work. Now, when the Prime Minister wants the public's sympathy, he tries to slough off his responsibilities with respect to Alfonso Gagliano.

I am asking the Prime Minister this. Can he assure me that the inquiry will target all his colleagues who contacted Alfonso Gagliano when he was responsible for the program in which the Prime Minister, when he was finance minister, invested \$50 million per year for 5 years?

•(1425)

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the goal of the commission is to get to the bottom of things, to ask all the questions that should be asked, and to find all the answers.

Nevertheless, at the same time, there is the public accounts committee. Is the Bloc Québécois going to participate? Is it going to cooperate? Does the Bloc intend to shoulder its own responsibilities during meetings of the parliamentary committee?

[*English*]

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this might be a bad day to be a Liberal, but it is a sad day for Canadian politics all around. They wonder why people get cynical. The reason is that the Liberals spend more time figuring out how to funnel money to their friends than they do working on the environment, on poverty, on smog, name it. If they paid as much attention to the real problems of this country, we would have an entirely different country.

Does the Prime Minister really expect us to believe that he did not know this was going on?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the way the rules of government work is, the rules are established. Money is allocated. One assumes that the rules are being followed. As soon as we discovered that the rules were not being followed, the current Minister of Finance, the former minister of public works, immediately took action. Then on the 12th of December, we cancelled the program, and today, with the report being tabled, we have come out with the most far-reaching program to find out what has happened and to find out what we must do in the future to ensure that it never happens again.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is singing on his former colleagues now, but he was part of the gang that did this, and the Canadian people are not going to let him get away with this.

The Prime Minister says that he knows a little about how government works. That is probably true, but he also knows how the Liberal Party works. In fact he was able to know the Liberal Party so much that he could take over the leadership without anybody else having a chance. This was a Liberal Party operation. This was not a government operation. Does he really expect us to believe that he did not know what his own—

**The Speaker:** The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of great disappointment for everyone on this side of the House and over there. This is a matter of great disappointment to those who served in the government. It is our intention now to get to the root of it. It is not our intention to cast aspersions on people without facts. We are going to deal with the facts. That is why we have asked for a royal commission.

On top of that, under the aegis of his fellow Winnipegger, we are going to ensure it never happens again. I hope the hon. member will cooperate with the government as we put in place the structures to ensure that this never happens again.

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says that he knew nothing about all this, but he was the minister of finance, he was the vice-chair of the Treasury Board and he was a senior minister from Quebec.

We are talking here about money laundering and corruption at the highest level. We cannot blame this on somebody else because the rules were not followed. It is the government's job to see that the rules are followed.

Therefore, will the Prime Minister accept the responsibility for this corruption and money laundering which has made every Canadian embarrassed?

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking the Auditor General for this report. The Auditor General and her staff have done an incredibly detailed and careful piece of work pointing at some serious problems that have been discussed in the House many times.

The hon. member who raises this question and I have had more than one conversation on how we fix these problems. What we are setting about to do, and what I am asking the hon. gentleman to join us in, is putting in place the solutions to this problem.

*Oral Questions*

•(1430)

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, part of answer is finding out who is to blame, and one question in the Auditor General's report that remains unanswered is who authorized the cheques, because million dollar cheques were written illegally based on a phone conversation or just on the back of an envelope; we do not know what.

Will the Prime Minister admit that the trail likely leads right into the Prime Minister's office, because this was at the highest level?

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the reason for putting in place an independent judicial inquiry is to answer exactly those questions in a manner completely independent from the government. To turn this inquiry into a star chamber is the wrong way to get to those answers.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister was finance minister, he provided the funding for the sponsorship program. Then as vice-chair of the Treasury Board, he rubber stamped all that spending. The fact is that after that he drew the shades on one of the worst spending scandals the public has ever seen in this country.

If we could not trust him to speak up then, how can we trust him now?

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that upon being sworn in, the Prime Minister cancelled the program. The fact is that the Prime Minister instructed this President of the Treasury Board to put in place the mechanisms to maximize transparency, accountability, fiscal responsibility, things that the House should be involved in solving.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after the Liberals got caught, they cancelled the program. I acknowledge that, but it is too little too late.

My question is about leadership. Why is the Prime Minister not showing leadership? Why does he run away from his responsibilities? If he knew about this, why did he not speak up? Where is the leadership?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, casting aspersions on someone's integrity in the House as a result of an inability to deal with the issue is no answer at all.

The problem the member of Parliament ought to recognize is that, first of all, the former minister of public works dealt with this as soon as the government understood the nature of the issue. Second, as soon as we formed the government, we cancelled the program. And today, as soon as the report was tabled, we came up with a comprehensive plan to deal with it. We have dealt with it, and we dealt with it as soon as we were able to.

[Translation]

**Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, given that Jean Chrétien always ended up hiding behind Howard Wilson, the ethics counsellor, to whitewash the ministers involved in the sponsorship scandal, will the Prime Minister admit that a public inquiry worth its salt should necessarily cover the decisions made by Howard Wilson?

[English]

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have a judicial independent commission of inquiry set up to look into this whole issue to find out who did what, where the money went and what can be done to ensure that it never happens again. The public accounts committee, representing members of all parties in the House, is being asked to look into this immediately and to come back with urgent results.

[Translation]

**Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the last defence used by Jean Chrétien to save the skin of the ministers involved in the sponsorship scandal was the opinion of Howard Wilson, his ethics counsellor.

Will the Prime Minister agree that the mandate of the commission of inquiry will cover the decisions of the ethics counsellor, who provided a shield for the ministers involved, the same shield the current Prime Minister is using to protect himself?

[English]

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is the House will be reconsidering legislation to create the office of an independent ethics commissioner reporting to Parliament, who will deal with all these issues.

•(1435)

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, every time we asked the current Minister of Industry, who at the time of the sponsorship program was the President of the Treasury Board, about compliance with the rules, she rose in her place and swore that all the Treasury Board rules had been followed. Yet today, the Auditor General is quite clear. All the rules of the Treasury Board and of Parliament had been flouted.

Will the Prime Minister admit that his current industry minister tried to cover up the misappropriation of funds from the sponsorship program by directly misleading the House?

[English]

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Treasury Board rules were respected when the program was put in place. There are guidelines and policies in place that simply were not followed. The reality is that no matter how good the rules are, if people choose to break them, they can do so. This is the very problem the Auditor General has identified in this report, and one of the problems on which she has asked us to work.

I invite other members to work with us on trying to seek solutions to this.

*Oral Questions*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, every time we asked the former President of the Treasury Board, she told us all the rules had been followed, but this is simply not true.

In playing the role of someone who enforces the rules, and claiming that all the transactions were done properly, the President of the Treasury Board was an accessory to the system the Auditor General has uncovered.

Will the Prime Minister admit that his industry minister should not only be the subject of a public inquiry, but should step down from her position immediately since the evidence against her is so overwhelming?

[*English*]

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I encourage the hon. member to read the Auditor General's report more carefully. What she pointed out was that after her last review, action was undertaken by the previous president of the Treasury Board and the previous minister responsible for public works and government services, and that they put in place a comprehensive regime that was beginning to work. Nonetheless, when we came into office, there was a feeling that the program was simply so tainted that it was time to get rid of it and start over again.

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today's report proves that this Prime Minister was the senior most minister in the most corrupt Canadian government in living memory. He says that this is unacceptable. What is unacceptable is that he was responsible for tax dollars of Canadians and did nothing.

Did he, as finance minister and vice-chair of Treasury Board, ask a single question about this program? Did he raise a single doubt? Did he inquire about how this money was being spent, or did he just bury his head in the sand because he did not want to know about the corruption with the Liberal Party in Quebec?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have already said both inside and outside the House that the situation described by the Auditor General is unacceptable. It is intolerable. I believe very strongly that Canadians deserve much better, and this government intends to provide them with that.

What is not going to help this debate nor the search for solutions is the kind of verbal abuse we are now hearing from the opposition, the kinds of things that were said about the current Minister of Industry who I am prepared to stand up in the House and defend anytime. She was a tremendous president of the Treasury Board.

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if this scandal happened in a private corporation, the CFO would be fired summarily. This Prime Minister was the CFO for nine years. This happened under his watch.

He talks about the democratic deficit. Does he not understand that an essential part of the democratic deficit is that people in this place no longer take ministerial responsibility for what happens on their watch?

When will he change that? Why will he not take responsibility for his incompetence in allowing this scandal to go on under his nose?

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying in politics that when one cannot attack the policy, one attacks the person. What the opposition is trying to do is tie themselves in knots trying to change what this Prime Minister has done. The fact is he got rid of the program. The fact is he ordered an absolutely wide open public inquiry so we could get to the bottom of it. That is what this Prime Minister has done.

• (1440)

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a hastily called conference on the eve of this breaking in the House of Commons is again an attempt by this Prime Minister to avoid responsibility.

When is the Prime Minister going to take responsibility for the fact that on his watch millions of taxpayer dollars were pillaged by the man who was supposed to protect them? Why could he not at least have spared the House of Commons and his own party the humiliation of calling the minister back from Denmark now, and spared us and the taxpayers the cost of paying this disgraced diplomat's salary?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a hastily called conference? Let us take a look at it.

Within five minutes of the Auditor General's report being tabled in the House, the government acted. That is not hasty. That is decisive action by a government which is determined to get to the bottom of this and is going to do it.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is anything but decisive. He was aware and the government was aware, since November, of a \$250 million scandalous, spurious spending program with incompetent practices, accountability lacking, and partisan folly with public funding. All of this is scathing condemnation from the Auditor General.

The Prime Minister has the audacity to say that he did not know. He did not know as the chief financial officer for the country. Was he incompetent, was he in denial, or was he in a trance?

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I am sure the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough is well aware of the prohibition on the use of props in the House and would not want to repeat that part of the performance.

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure that opposition members are looking forward to the opportunity to reading the Auditor General's report carefully, wherein they will find a chronology of events starting in 2000 when the internal audit at public works and government services actually identified this problem.

### Oral Questions

Within six months, the branch responsible was closed down. Within another year, the rules were completely changed. Commissions were stopped. New rules for sponsorship and advertising contracts were given and the course was set for a new program.

**Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Chief Government Whip and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

The Auditor General's report was tabled in the House less than an hour ago. We all agree that this report is very important to parliamentarians and Canadians.

According to our practice, the Auditor General's report is carefully considered by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts which reports back to the House with its findings.

Would the Chief Government Whip tell us whether this committee has been reconstructed so that it may begin its study of the Auditor General's report?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank my colleagues for their consent yesterday in approving the membership of the public accounts committee.

The government would like the committee to meet as soon as possible. We on this side and in that corner of the House are prepared to give our consent for the committee to meet as early as possible, even this afternoon, should it so wish.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is making a big deal about an independent inquiry to be paid for by Canadian taxpayers, even though we are talking about a scandal that saw public funds plowed back to the Liberal Party in Quebec.

What share of this independent public inquiry will be paid for by the Liberal Party?

•(1445)

**The Speaker:** I am not sure that question has much to do with the administration of the Government of Canada.

It may have something to do with the administration of the Liberal Party, but not of the Government of Canada.

Perhaps in her supplementary the member might make her question more relevant to the practices of our question period.

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### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, let me go back to the Prime Minister's opening comments in the House today. It is funny, is it not, that the Prime Minister seems very clear when he is very caught.

We know that Maher Arar was caught. So was Juliet O'Neil. The government claimed the RCMP Public Complaints Commission could handle that even though the Auditor General said that she knew in November that the commission had no power to investigate.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister, does he think this is why folks ask if we are a police state?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure of the exact import of the hon. member's question. If she is suggesting that the public complaints commission of the RCMP does not have the power to carry out investigations into criminal matters, that is simply not accurate.

What the Auditor General perhaps was referring to was the fact that the RCMP, since September 11, has enhanced powers in relation to national security. In fact, the Prime Minister has acknowledged the fact that as of December 12 we want to look at a new or additional oversight mechanism to ensure that the public's rights are protected.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what strikes us today is that the Prime Minister is not yet prepared to shoulder his responsibilities in this shocking scandal, which so disgusts the taxpayers of this country.

Why did the Prime Minister fund this program to begin with, and why today, with all that we now know, does he not shoulder his responsibilities in this scandal which so disgusts the Canadian taxpayers?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there were certain sums of money allocated for a program. That program was one with very clear, very well targeted, and very public objectives.

The problem is that the rules were not followed. That is the main thrust of the Auditor General's report, and where the problem lies.

As soon as the government became aware of this, the former minister of public works took action. And as soon as we took over, on December 12, we took action by cancelling the sponsorship program, followed today by submitting to the Canadian public a comprehensive plan of action.

[English]

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one thing is clear and the Prime Minister is right that the Auditor General made it clear that the purpose of the program was crystal clear. It was to channel taxpayer dollars into corrupt acts by the Liberal Party of Canada. That is what is totally disgusting about this scandal.

One of two things is true about this scandal. Either the Prime Minister had no idea what was going on with hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars, or he did know, in which case he has a lot of questions to answer.

Which is the truth? Did the Prime Minister know? If he did know, does he not owe Canadians a huge apology? If he did not know, how can Canadians trust the Prime Minister with their money when he had no idea what happened to hundreds of millions of their dollars?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the public did know what was going on in this program in the year 2000 when an internal audit at public works and government services disclosed the mishandling of public funds through this program.

The program was closed down and referrals were made to the Auditor General. That is how she became first involved in this case. Referrals were made by the government to the RCMP. Further referrals were made to the Auditor General, leading to the report today.

The program has been closed down as a first order of business. Now we have one of the most comprehensive, pivotal points in public administration in this country about to be disclosed through the processes of this government.

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**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the new Prime Minister continues to pretend that he was an invisible man for the past decade. It was a cabinet decision to purchase two new Challenger jets untended at the end of a fiscal year in an undebated extravagant spending orgy.

In 1984 John Turner had an option. Well, in 2002 this Liberal Prime Minister, as the former finance minister, had an option too. He could have said that this was wrong.

Why did the Prime Minister okay the purchase of these unnecessary aircraft?

• (1450)

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it has come to my knowledge that the normal cabinet processes for the approval of this purchase were not followed.

In fact, the decision was made outside of those processes and I found out, as did a number of others, that the decision to buy had been made outside of the normal process at the end of the year.

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we know that. What we do not know is, why the Prime Minister, when he was finance minister, did not speak up then?

Our military continues to fly 44 year old Hercules, 40 year old Sea Kings and 24 year old Auroras. However, not this Prime Minister. As former finance minister he ensured that he would be flying in the lap of luxury with the very latest technology protecting him.

What is so special about this Prime Minister that he feels he needs the best while the men and women who serve our country continue to fly in worn out antiques?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I made it very clear on becoming Prime Minister that Canadian troops would not be asked to serve abroad or in fact serve in this country unless they were provided with the finest of equipment and that we would protect our military personnel. I stand behind that.

I am very proud to be the Prime Minister who authorized the acquisition of a new helicopter.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, even the police are involved in the sponsorship scandal. They were involved in the sponsorship game, defying all the administrative rules that were in place.

Because the RCMP was involved to that extent, does the Prime Minister understand and agree that the police will not be very helpful in supporting the commission of inquiry into the sponsorship scandal? Does he understand that?

[*English*]

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of things people need to understand here.

As I have been informed by the RCMP, separate divisions were involved in this matter. Those carrying on the criminal investigations had absolutely no part in the request for dollars to help celebrate the 125th anniversary of the RCMP.

More important, I have been informed by the commissioner that he sought an independent legal opinion from a retired judge to investigate the very matter that the hon. member puts in question. That eminent jurist has provided an opinion, as I understand it, that indicates there is no conflict in the RCMP—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we would be only too pleased to acknowledge the credibility of the RCMP, but the RCMP was part of the problem, part of the system.

Does the Prime Minister understand that the RCMP has no credibility whatsoever for investigating the government and the Liberal Party of Canada? They were working hand in hand.

[*English*]

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the hon. member is aware, criminal prosecutions are within the jurisdiction of provincial attorneys general. In fact, the attorney general of Quebec has been informed of the matter surrounding the RCMP.

Any final decisions in relation to concerns around conflict will be dealt with by the attorney general of Quebec or any other provincial attorney general who might be implicated.

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**AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT**

**Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister fancies himself a master of detail. Yet he expects us to believe that he knew nothing about what was going on in this massive government overspending.

He uses the words “intolerable” and “unacceptable”, and tells us that those responsible will be held to account, but is it not time that the Prime Minister held himself to account?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the Prime Minister identified when he came into office was the need to work to enhance transparency in government. It is something the Auditor General has written about repeatedly. It is something to which we are committed.

I would invite the hon. member to work with us in putting those rules in place.

**Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is the custodian of the rules. When every rule in the book is broken, he is the man in charge.

Is it not time that the Prime Minister stood on his feet and accepted the responsibility, as former finance minister and minister responsible for the Treasury Board, that is vice-chairman of the Treasury Board, for some of those actions? When does this fall at his doorstep?

• (1455)

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, opposition members seem to forget the fact, which I am sure was given to their notice, that in 2000 the internal audit which exposed this problem was reported on the public works and government services website.

Let us remember again that the first two actions of our new Prime Minister were to cancel the sponsorship program completely and to approve the purchase of the maritime helicopters.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HAITI**

**Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The crisis in Haiti is still persisting and is even getting worse every day. Some 40 people have been killed over the past few days, and a dozen cities are plagued by this incredible violence.

What does the Government of Canada intend to do, along with other countries such as France and the United States, to restore a degree of stability, or even give a ray of hope to the Haitian people?

**Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that the situation in Haiti is of great concern.

This morning, I discussed it with Secretary of State Powell. We are working with the United States. The Prime Minister is in contact with the leaders of CARICOM regarding the situation in Haiti. We are implementing measures taken by CARICOM. We are working with the Francophonie, the United States, the OAS and CARICOM to put an end to violence in Haiti and to have a political dialogue. This is the only way to solve the problems in that country. We are very active and we will continue to be.

[English]

**AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT**

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister has stated, "I was a member of cabinet. And the whole essence of cabinet is that you accept responsibility for what the government does..."

This Prime Minister's five year silence on the sponsorship program has cost Canadian taxpayers \$250 million. Why did this Prime Minister continue to give his seal of approval every time he signed those cheques?

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, to repeat, this problem was exposed in an internal audit in 2000. Within a year, the branch was closed down. The rules of sponsorship were totally changed. Finally, the sponsorship program itself was cancelled. This has been alive for over two years. Steps have been taken progressively, step by step, and we now have the most resolute action that we can possibly imagine, exactly in line with the recommendations of the Auditor General: independent, in-depth examination, urgently needed, and that is what is happening.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister is the Sergeant Schultz of Canadian politics: he sees nothing, he hears nothing, he does nothing, but he is aware of everything. He was the second most powerful minister in Quebec. Indeed, he was the second most powerful minister in all of the country. The Prime Minister could have spoken up but he did not. Why did he remain silent?

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the people who acted were the ministers responsible at the time. First, the branch that handled these commission contracts was closed down. Commissions were stopped. The branch was closed. Eventually the rules were changed for advertising and sponsorship to do away with commission operations. New rules were put in place. Finally, we now have questions still outstanding from the Auditor General and we are taking steps to find out the truth.

[Translation]

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General talks about sources of funds that were kept secret and she condemns the production of false invoices to support the transfer of funds between crown corporations such as VIA Rail, Canada Post, the BDC, Communication Canada and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, whose managers are all former ministers or prominent Liberals.

Will the Prime Minister admit that all the crown corporations involved in the sponsorship scandal are, and this is some coincidence, managed by prominent Liberals who are part of the government's exclusive circle of friends?

•(1500)

[English]

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General indeed questions a number of the activities by the crown corporations, which is why I instructed the Secretary to the Treasury Board to write to the crowns today and ask them to review their audit procedures while we get ready to undertake a complete review of crown governance.

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#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it has come to my attention that a number of fishers in Atlantic Canada, mainly from Newfoundland and Labrador, have been denied access to employment insurance, and it has taken some time to address their issue.

Could the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development inform the House as to the status of these cases?

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that we have a resolution of yet another issue. At question, of course, was the eligibility of said workers under the EI rules. The appeal was launched to the Minister of National Revenue. The determination was that they are indeed EI eligible. My department will immediately implement the consequences of that. They are eligible and payments will begin immediately.

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#### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government is imposing special tax-free zones in Canadian cities. The urban reserve scheme means that Indians pay no federal taxes and their businesses are exempt from property taxes and enforcement of municipal bylaws. Urban reserves undermine the principle of equality and divide our community along racial lines.

Why is this government imposing segregationist and racist policies that prevent Indians from being full and equal participants in society?

**Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, those comments are utter nonsense.

Our objective is to ensure that our aboriginal communities and aboriginal Canadians have an opportunity to develop economically, to share in the wealth of this country, and to share in the benefits of this country. That is our objective. Those are the goals we reach for. Those are the actions we are taking.

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#### PRESENCE IN GALLERY

**The Speaker:** I wish to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Philip Brown, Minister of Tourism for Prince Edward Island.

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

#### Privilege

**The Speaker:** The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for St. John's West.

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#### PRIVILEGE

##### AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. Just about a week ago, the government tabled in the House the report of the Special Committee on the Modernization and Improvement of the Procedures of the House of Commons. I will quote from that document, which was approved by the House. It states:

It is important that more ministerial statements and announcements regarding legislation be made in the House of Commons. In particular, topical developments, or foreseeable policy decisions, should be made first—or, at least, concurrently—in the chamber. Ministers, and their departments, need to be encouraged to make use of the forum provided by the House of Commons. Not only will this enhance the pre-eminence of Parliament, but it will also reiterate the legislative underpinning for governmental decisions.

At 2 p.m. today, the Prime Minister stood outside the chamber telling the media of his response to the Auditor General's report. Only three inches of oak separated the Prime Minister and the chamber, a chamber where the representatives of Canadians sit assembled. The Prime Minister has shown gross contempt by his failure to come before the House with a full statement of what must be one of the most serious financial debacles in the history of the country.

The Prime Minister talks a lot about the democratic deficit, and of course as I mentioned, tabled this just last week, but he only talks to the Liberal caucus. It would be interesting to ask what he told his caucus that he did not tell the House—and of course the media—but he refuses to talk to the representatives of the people of Canada in Parliament assembled. This is a gross contempt and the House should have an opportunity to censure it.

•(1505)

**Hon. Roger Gallaway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member talks about gross contempt and in doing so relies upon general statements of principle, which are not Standing Orders or precepts of the House. They are simply general statements of intention.

Now, today the Prime Minister was outside this place. There were many members of the press there. Responding to that is somehow construed to be gross contempt. What is being said is that the Prime Minister is somehow constrained by the opposition in terms of speaking to the press outside of this place.

I submit, with all due respect, that in fact this is just simply a political point that he is attempting to make in the House of Commons. It has nothing to do with contempt and it has nothing to do with rules of procedure of the House.

**The Speaker:** I do not think I need to hear more on this point. The hon. member for St. John's West has raised a point suggesting that because the Prime Minister made a statement outside the House rather than in the chamber, it somehow constitutes a contempt.

*Government Orders*

The hon. member for St. John's West must know from his own experience that he is unlikely to sway the Chair on this point, because on March 18 last year I gave a ruling on a similar point raised by him when he suggested that a statement by the then prime minister made outside the House appeared to contradict the budget statements made by the Minister of Finance in the House. I indicated that statements made outside the House were not the responsibility of the Chair.

I quoted for him at that time, and I will quote again for the House today, Marleau and Montpetit, at page 379:

A Minister is under no obligation to make a statement in the House. The decision of a Minister to make an announcement outside of the House instead of making a statement in the House during Routine Proceedings has been raised as a question of privilege, but the Chair has consistently found there to be no grounds to support a claim that any privilege has been breached.

The hon. member St. John's West heard it then and he is hearing it again today, so I am afraid he does not have a question of privilege. He may have a legitimate ground for complaint and argument concerning the document he referred to in his question of privilege that was tabled the other day, but I note that the document has not been adopted as policy by the House. There has been no change in the Standing Orders and no change in the requirement that is before the Speaker that obliges a minister or the Prime Minister as a minister to make any statement in the House.

Accordingly, I can find that there is no question of privilege despite the unique argument that he has of course brought forward, similar to the one he advanced in March 2003 on which I previously ruled. I know he agreed with the Speaker's ruling then, so I assume he does today.

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**POINTS OF ORDER**

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

**Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, earlier in question period the Prime Minister, or maybe it was one of the other members, asked if we would convene the public accounts committee immediately. Certainly the official opposition has no objection to that. We are ready, able and willing to meet as early as 3:30 today for the purpose of electing the chair of that committee.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, you will recall that during question period, in response to a question from the member for Hamilton Mountain, I did say that the government would give consent for the committee to meet as early as this afternoon. If the proposal from the hon. member is that the committee be convened for 3:30 this afternoon, we on this side and in that corner of the House consent to that.

• (1510)

**The Speaker:** It is very nice that this can be arranged on the floor but of course it is not, strictly speaking, necessary. I know the two whips will want to consult with the other whips and see what they can arrange. However they do not need the blessing of the Chair in respect of that. I am more than happy to give it for what it is worth but it is not required.

**Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was not aware that there was going

to be a motion moved yesterday setting up this new committee of public accounts. I know, through oversights on the government's side, I was not included on the membership of the committee of public accounts, an oversight because I am one of the few Liberals who was on public accounts when the Groupaction affair occurred and, of course I have intimate knowledge of the background of the case that is going before public accounts.

Therefore I would seek the unanimous consent of the House to be added to the committee as a member of standing.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, the membership of the committee was established by unanimous consent of the House yesterday. If the member wishes to have his name stand as a supplementary member to the committee, then we would be delighted to accommodate him, but for the time being, once the committee membership has been struck, unanimous consent must be obtained from all party whips in order to change the make-up of that committee, which we do not have at this moment.

**Mr. John Bryden:** Mr. Speaker, what I would point out to the House is that I am seeking the unanimous consent of the House and what I am asking does not require the unanimous consent of the whips. I am asking simply to be a member of a committee doing important work of the House and I would have thought that the unanimous consent of the House would permit me to have standing on the committee. It is not good enough to be a supplementary member.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** The chief opposition whip and the chief government whip have indicated that they wish to have the committee meet this afternoon at 3:30. I am advised by the Clerk that in fact the consent of the House would be required to waive the 48 hour notice for calling the committee together.

Does the House give its consent to waive that notice?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**REINSTATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BILLS**

The House resumed consideration of the motion, of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

**Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on this issue today particularly because we have heard a lot in the House about taking action on various issues. It is regrettable that opposition members talk about taking action but are not prepared to do anything.

*Government Orders*

When it comes to the reinstatement of government bills, there is a time honoured tradition in the House and in Great Britain with regard to reinstatement. I do not hear any alternatives from that side of the House. If we do not reinstate these bills, what does the opposition propose?

We have debated, examined and reviewed a number of bills that are at various stages. We are asking, as the government, to reinstate them so we may continue in the public interest. The public interest is not served by the delay tactics of the opposition. The public interest is not served by the opposition pretending concern about the state of the issues, whether they are environmental or public safety issues or whether it is about democratic reform.

At the same time those members do not want to act because they would rather play politics. They would rather not look at the fact that since 1970, 1972 and 1986, it has occurred in the House. Maybe the opposition has a lot more time on its hands than we on this side of the House have but when something is examined and reviewed it is brought back to the current state in which it was left in order to proceed. I assume that part of the objective would be to hopefully complete the legislation and move forward. That would be in the public interest.

The public interest is not served by delay and it is not served by politicking or continuous chatter. It is only served when we take action and move forward on legislation in which all of us have been involved.

All of us have been involved in the various bills that are now being asked to be reinstated before the House. Unfortunately we have members across the way who are suggesting that we do not need to do this but they offer no alternative. It is very easy to criticize but, unfortunately, they are not prepared to act.

One of the things that we have talked about is that we have tabled a new action plan for democratic reform. However apparently it only is supposed to work on this side of the House and not on that side. We on this side of the House want free votes but I have never seen, in all the years I have been here, free votes on that side. On that side they always vote together. Why? It is because their objective is to defeat the government.

They are not interested in true reform. If they were interested in true reform they would loosen their own whips and allow the kind of votes that need to take place.

However, that is one of the reforms that has been tabled in the House. We hear a lot of rhetoric from that side but we have not seen any action.

What is the process of government? Bills are introduced in the House and once they pass second reading they go to committee. Many of the standing committees have reviewed legislation. Ministers and parliamentary secretaries have appeared before those committees. Members have debated the issues. Canadians are saying that they want to see certain legislation go through but the people on the other side would rather delay.

I find it incomprehensible to understand why they would want to delay legislation that is extremely important for Canadians, such as animal cruelty? Why would they want to delay that bill? More than

one member in the House has received calls on the issue of animal cruelty, on Bill C-10B. No, we would rather have this whole thing start from scratch, because that is the only alternative. It is utter nonsense to suggest that we review something we have already reviewed.

As a former teacher, I do not think it is very productive to do that. Some teachers might want someone to write lines on the board 100 times but that is not very productive. I would rather use the time more effectively. I am sure there are colleagues on the other side who would like to be more effective than simply rewriting what we have already done.

● (1515)

I know some of my colleagues across the way work very cooperatively when it comes to getting bills through the House and making sure we deal with the information but we have some who would rather delay. Why do they want to delay? It is because they have no other suggestions and no alternatives. They want to start from square one.

The particular motion before the House is to restore the role of parliamentarians. It is for parliamentarians to examine legislation carefully. This is not a time limit where we are going to suddenly say that the bill has to be passed tomorrow. However we cannot deal with the legislation if we cannot move forward. At the moment we cannot move forward because some members have said that they do not want any action whatsoever.

They cannot have it both ways. They cannot say on the one hand that they want the House of Commons to be effective, to move forward and to have democratic reform when on the other hand they would rather stay pat and not do anything. I do not know what we would be doing but according to them they want nothing done.

The interests of Canadians are not being served by simply doing nothing. The public interest is only served when we are working and when we are working effectively on legislation that we have been dealing with.

What is the issue? The issue from our side is that we want to reinstate legislation, something that has been done many times in the past, as I have said, namely the bills that were examined before Parliament was prorogued in November. This is very simple and it has been done many times before.

I am sure there are bills that members on the other side of the House are concerned about. Whether they support them or not, I think they need to be debated and they need to have a public hearing but this cannot be done if we simply freeze everything and say that we are not going to do everything because we would rather debate procedure, rather than debate the real issues.

We cannot get royal assent on a bill if we cannot get it back on the Order Paper and it dies. We do not want it to die. The Canadian public wants bills to be adopted and they cannot be adopted if we are going to reinvent the wheel, which seems to be the approach.

We will not start at zero. We will not give the same speeches or go through the same witnesses. We will not go through the same examination. It has been done and, I am sure, very thoroughly by the standing committees responsible for various pieces of legislation.

*Government Orders*

It is clear that because the committees will be established that in this case we will not be very productive if there are some bills that have been sitting around because of amendments that have not been dealt with that Canadians are saying let us move forward on, and yet we are more concerned in some quarters in the House with dealing with the issue of whether or not the government should be able to bring in closure. In fact, in Great Britain closure is automatic on every bill.

I hear about democracy. Some of the people on the other side really send me when they talk about democracy, when in fact they use the most anti-democratic means possible to hold up legislation. They say that they support free votes but do not ask them to apply free votes. Some members in certain quarters over there do not practice what in fact they preach. It is a bit hypocritical to suggest otherwise.

Of course none of this has escaped notice on this side of the House that parliamentarians are interested in getting work done. If at the end of the day a committee decides not to pass legislation, that is the will of the committee, but a committee cannot act if it is not constituted and it cannot be constituted unless we move forward. That is what we are prepared to do on this side of the House.

I think we all have much better things to do. Unfortunately, today we are taking up the entire day talking about whether we should reinstate bills. This is a waste of the taxpayer dollars. People on that side of the House, particularly those in the Conservative Party, always talk about whether money is well used. I think it is a misuse of taxpayer dollars to talk about whether we should move forward on legislation that has already been before parliamentarians. I would certainly commend the fact that we move forward as expeditiously as possible.

As the House knows, this proposal would allow ministers, within 30 days after the start of the session and after the motion is adopted, to apply to the Speaker for permission to reinstate bills from the previous session. That, in fact, is what we are trying to do.

As members know, when the last session ended we brought forward a motion to simply say that we wanted to reinstate bills, as was done before, and that we would do it in a way that would not come as any surprise to my colleagues, either on this side or the other side of the House.

• (1520)

However it is not new. Perhaps some of the members on the other side were asleep, but it clearly has been a procedure that has been done many times. It was done in 1970, 1972, 1986 and 1991. In fact it is something that is there and it gives us the opportunity to deal with very legitimate legislation. Even in October 1999, the House adopted a similar motion to the one before us today.

Clearly the proposed motion is similar to the Standing Orders that allow private members' bills to be reintroduced following prorogation. I know dealing with the issues of private members is of concern to members on this side of the House and I am sure to my colleagues on the other side of the House.

What we are dealing with today is nothing new. It is nothing radical. It is nothing surprising. It is simply trying to get the business

of the nation moving forward, and we cannot do that with the delaying tactics from the other side.

We need to get on with it. We need to ensure that legislation moves forward. As to what the result will be, that is up to the committee and ultimately to the House. However, we cannot do it if we cannot start immediately.

There has been derogatory comments made on the other side, for example, on Bill C-49 which sees the enhancement of the democratic character of our nation by having new boundaries. Clearly, some of the members on the other side would rather us have boundaries which reflect population changes which have not been seen in 10 years.

I come from a riding that is the second or third largest in Canada by population; close to 200,000. I think it reflects the fact that in a fast growing community, such as mine, need to have these changes. It may be all right for some members on the other side, but the reality is that we want to be up to date.

We believe these changes are important and Canadians have said they are important. If we are to have a census and we do not take action on what the census has told us, why have a census? If we are to truly represent British Columbia, which will get two new seats, or Alberta with two seats or Ontario with three seats, we have to be much more responsive. As I say, we will simply respond to what the census has told us.

Bill C-34 deals with an independent ethics commissioner reporting to the House of Commons. Who could argue against that? Again, this is something Canadians have said they want to see. It is something we said we are prepared to act on quickly. Yet every day we hear the other side complaining about why the ethics counsellor is not reporting directly to Parliament. We have a bill that will do just that and the opposition members are still complaining.

I do not understand for the life of me how they think they can have it both ways. Either they want an ethics commissioner who is independent, who reports to the House and they are prepared to vote on it and move forward, or they are not. They cannot simply say one thing and do another, although some of them obviously have Ph.Ds in that regard because they have mastered this to such a degree that they say one thing and do another.

As the former parliamentary secretary to the finance minister, I remember that. On one day members of the opposition would say that we should spend \$2 billion. The next day they would say that we would have to cut \$3 billion. Only Harry Houdini could probably do that. However, the reality is that we had to balance the books on this side and we could not take, and thank goodness we did not take, the advice of some of my colleagues on the other side.

There is the issue of public safety. We have the public safety act of 2002 and amendments to the Criminal Code. Some of our friends in the Conservative Party continually talk about the Criminal Code. Who could argue against protecting children and other vulnerable groups of people, which is the public safety act? Apparently some members can because they do not want this legislation to go forward.

To me the protection of children is paramount. Why we would even waste any time wanting to debate whether that bill should go forward? It is disgraceful to suggest that the protection of children should take second place to the procedural wrangling of the opposition. It makes absolutely no sense to me.

The Westbank First Nation self-government act is another example. Again, that has been debated and discussed, and the opposition would rather drag its feet.

We want to ensure clean water, a good environment and a strong health care system, issues that really need to be debated in the House. They need to be debated in committee. Unfortunately, the opposition is more interested in procedural wrangling.

• (1525)

I would suggest that the time has come to move forward. The time has come to put people first and to put the workings of this Parliament ahead of the politics across the way. If the members opposite do not support the legislation, fine. However, unless we have the debate on that legislation, we will be unable to do the business of the nation. We cannot do the business of the nation under the current situation.

As I said before, even Great Britain, which of course we model ourselves after, has closure. The opposition uses the word closure as if somehow it is a dirty word. That is done for every bill in England. The parliamentarians have a discussion on one day, then they move on. Here, we talk about different issues. Sometimes a long discussion is good. Unfortunately, the group on the other side is only interested in dragging its feet. It is not interested in dealing with the nation's business. Whether it is cruelty to animals, or protection of children, other than concern, these are hardly issues which I would think there would be much to say about. Let us put those things first and move forward.

Unfortunately, we continue to have to do this once in a while, and it is regrettable. However, we do not have the support of our colleagues on the other side because they play politics. I know they are obviously concerned about other things, but we are not afraid on this side of the House to talk about the issues. We are not afraid on this side of the House to deal with the issues. We are not afraid on this side of the House to let the chips fall where they may. However, we cannot do it if we are going to spend hours and hours wrangling over whether we can move forward with legislation, which every member in this House has been involved in, whether it has been examining or discussing it in the committee.

Let us move forward and let us get on with the business of the nation.

### *Government Orders*

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, I think you would find unanimous consent of the House to adopt the following motion:

That notwithstanding Standing Order 106(1), the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be permitted to meet on February 10, 2004, at 4 p.m. for the purposes of Standing Order 106(2).

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Is there unanimous consent to move the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

### REINSTATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

The House resumed consideration of the motion, of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank you for recognizing me at this point. For the people who are watching us and for those who will read this some day, I would like to read again into the record the motion before us:

That, during the first thirty sitting days of the present session of Parliament, whenever a minister of the Crown, when proposing a motion for first reading of a public bill, states that the said bill is in the same form as a government bill in the previous session, if the Speaker is satisfied that the said bill is in the same form as the House of Commons had agreed to at prorogation, notwithstanding Standing Order 71, the said bill shall be deemed in the current session to have been considered and approved at all stages completed at the time of the prorogation of the previous session.

I would like to briefly come back to some of the comments made by the hon. member for Oak Ridges. He said among other things, "Public interest is not served by the delay—". I wrote down exactly what he said. He added that we should not be wasting time, going back to the drawing board or reinventing the wheel, because "everything has been done".

*Government Orders*

We do not wholly recognize the right to consider that everything has been done. It was done by the old government. Now we have had a new one announced to us. We find ourselves faced with a new government that is serving up to us as leftovers what the old one served up to us as something modern. It is pretty strange that no one has figured that out. And we are being accused of being idiots because we do not want to go along with this government scam which wants to reinstate all the old bills while pretending to be something new.

Let us look at the reality properly. Who is making us lose public interest? Who is wasting government funds? Who has held up passage of bills, held up the royal assent on bills? Who indeed? I know you cannot answer my question, Mr. Speaker, but if you could you would know the answer, considering how often you are present for the debates in this House.

The government over there is responsible for this decision. It is the one responsible for the delays. It is the one holding things up. It is the one asking us to start all over again. Since it is a bit embarrassed at making us waste our time, it is asking its friends to agree to act as if we had not prorogued last November 12 and to continue where we left off, as if it were still November 12.

In the motion, you will note one thing has been forgotten: private members bills. Some of those had got to committee and we had voted on them. But no, the private members bills start all over again from scratch. It would have just been far too democratic to include them as well, to save us the waste of time of starting all over.

At 5:30 p.m. we will start the first hour of debate on a bill that has already been debated. We will also debate one of my bills, Friday afternoon at 1:30. I have already debated it and I will ask my assistant to print out for me the first speech I gave, and I will just reread it in the House. I will not make a different speech, because the bill is the same. I have not changed my mind about it since, and I am going to read it verbatim. That is what I call wasting people's time. It is really a total waste of time.

• (1535)

If Parliament had not been prorogued when the member for LaSalle—Émard became the new Prime Minister on December 12, he could have convened Parliament on January 12. He could have done so on December 15 and we could have been back in session. The then Prime Minister could have carried on until the new one took office, as is normal practice. We could have continued sitting, since the new government simply wanted to take up where the old one had left.

What was the reason for that charade of a prorogation on November 12 and for the recess until February 2? The Liberals now want to make up for lost time because they cannot wait for an election to be called. They have known for a long time that the legislation would not take effect until August. They just wanted to change that to April 1 in order to be free to call an early election.

Given the marvellous report the Auditor General just tabled, an April election would be an excellent thing. It will still be fresh in people's minds how corrupt this government was. Since the new government is a clone of the previous one, people will remember and vote accordingly in April, sending the Liberals back to the

opposition benches to be treated as they have treated the opposition. For ten years now, they have been arrogant with us and have spoken to us as if we were morons and only them were right. They will not even listen to reason.

The member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot is frustrated. He rose in the House and said, "Mr. Speaker, I have experience. I was a member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and I am really knowledgeable about this issue we are about to review". He is talking about the Auditor General's report. He is very familiar with such reports. When Groupaction was involved in little scandals which have now been confirmed, he was sitting on the committee.

He said, "Mr. Speaker, I suggest you seek unanimous consent. I would like to put my skills at the service of the committee". Who is stopping him from doing so? The government is stopping him, because that member speaks his mind. He is an efficient member.

Once again, we have a Prime Minister who is talking about having more democracy in committees, provided that committee members are puppets, people who keep their mouth shut. Committees are for puppets. Competent members do not sit on committees.

When a member requests the unanimous consent of the House to sit on a committee, he gets a clear no. Mr. Speaker, consent was refused. This competent member will not sit on the committee. Who is wasting our time? The Liberal Party, this bogus new government, is wasting our time.

What does the government want to reinstate? A lot of bills. Last Fall, there was much division in the Liberal Party. Mr. Chrétien wanted to stay as Prime Minister until February, but he had to leave before that. He could not take any more cheap shots and stabs in the back. There was no room left for more stabs. He was thoroughly thrashed, and he had to leave early. That is what he did. He left earlier than he had planned.

That caught the new Prime Minister by surprise. He did not think he would have to face the music this soon. He was surprised, because his initial plan was this, "Chrétien will leave in February, I will have three or four weeks to form my government and prepare a budget. I will recall the House, table a budget, and call an election".

• (1540)

The calculations were foiled. Now we have a Prime Minister who had to come back to this House earlier than planned, with the Auditor General's report today to boot. It is a total and utter disaster because they have to apply closure. They tell us that, if we have more to say, then we have until 8 p.m., but we cannot go much later than 8 p.m. because their television shows come on at that time. There is a good serial drama at 8 p.m.

**An hon. member:** *Les Bougon?*

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay:** No, *Les Bougon* comes on tomorrow. Tonight it's *Le Bleu du ciel*, written by Victor-Lévy Beaulieu from my riding. It is a very good drama. I recommend it to anyone listening, it is worth watching.

*Government Orders*

We will be allowed to speak until 8 p.m. because the government wants to introduce legislation such as Bill C-49, among others. We wasted so much time in November that the Senate had to stop before they were finished with Bill C-49 and Bill C-53. These bills will probably have other numbers because we are now in the third session. Numbers will change, but not the objective.

The new Prime Minister, with his outdated mentality, made promises. He wants to be elected, so he made promises. He promised western Canada four more representatives, two for Alberta and two for British Columbia. This requires changing the legislation. The electoral boundaries that were not to come into effect until August, have to come into effect in April if he wants to have these new ridings to keep his promise and hold an election in the spring.

He thinks that with four ridings he will be able to defeat the Conservatives in the West. It seems to me that he has miscalculated. It will take him more than four to get a majority in western Canada. I hope, for the people watching CPAC in the west, that the translation is very good and that they realize there is no guarantee in electing the new Prime Minister because he is even more outdated than the last one. That says a lot. If we did not want the other one before, why would we take this one now?

With 177 members, the Liberal Party is so weak that they cannot believe they can win in the next election and set up a solid cabinet. They are challenging several of their own members, telling the older ones that it is time for them to go. Several members are being challenged. We know what is happening to my friend, the hon. member for Hamilton-East. The Prime Minister might have a little surprise on March 6. He is pushing aside some of his members, telling them, "You have to leave your seats, we need a clean slate, new blood, because I do not think we can form a good cabinet with you along". That is the message he seems to be sending out.

It is not very pleasant to have your own party tell you that your time has run out. As for some of the parties, members and future candidates who think that some parties, including my own, no longer have a purpose here, they too might be in for a surprise in Quebec. We know very well some of the people who will be running in the next election and I fear that the riding of Outremont might get shortchanged.

Nobody will be surprised to see the Bloc Québécois vote against this bill to bring forward the effective date of the new electoral boundaries. That bill would be a great disservice to Quebecers. The people in Quebec will not be better served by this bill.

For instance, the riding of my hon. colleague from Manicouagan will keep its name, but, under the new boundaries, it will encompass an area 58 times the size of Prince Edward Island, which has four MPs and four senators. He would represent a riding 58 times the size of Prince Edward Island.

• (1545)

In my riding, there are exactly 225 kilometres between the city of Rimouski and the farthest village of Saint-Athanase, located in a rural area, with no major highways to get there. The roads are in rough shape because there is not enough money to repair them. Depending on which side you are coming from, roads covering the last 30 kilometres are not always paved.

The hon. member for Oak Ridges told us that he is kept very busy, because his riding has close to 200,000 constituents. I would point out to him that it is easier to serve 200,000 constituents living within 10 blocks of each other, but it is not as easy to serve 71,000 or 96,000 constituents scattered throughout a vast area. I am aware, Mr. Speaker, that your riding is fairly large, as are those of several members. It is not easier to serve fewer constituents, because you often have to travel long distances.

As you might have realized, we are not very supportive of this bill, especially since, with seven new ridings, the political weight of Quebec will be reduced compared to the rest of Canada. If you look at the ratios, 75 out of 301 and 75 out of 308, the shift is obvious.

My hon. colleague told the House he used to be a teacher. In his history classes, he must have learned that politicians play politics. He accused us of playing politics. There are 301 of us here and playing politics is the only thing we do. He himself plays politics all day long. That is the only thing he does, but with the blinders he is wearing, he thinks he has a monopoly on the truth.

I know many people, on our side, who believe they do not have all the answers all the time. We are prepared to listen to intelligent comments, but nothing that would insult human intelligence. This is simply an insult to human intelligence.

It is rather important for the people to realize that those who are wasting time and delaying the process here are not in the opposition but rather on the government side.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dennis Mills (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying through you to the member for Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis that as long as she is present in the House of Commons, Quebec's voice will never be diluted. As I reflect back over the last 16 years I have served in this chamber, one of my special joys has been meeting members from different parties for whom I feel great admiration for the work they do. The member is one of the special contributors to helping this place be a better place.

On the point of the motion, I humbly disagree with my colleague from the Bloc Québécois. It is important that we let Canadians know what we are trying to achieve. It is an easy thing to pick and choose the bills that we are trying to reintroduce to the House in this motion.

I heard one of the members from the new Conservative Party this morning put a big focus on Bill C-38, the marijuana bill. This is not about reintroducing just the marijuana bill. There are a number of bills on this motion that we are trying to reintroduce.

*Government Orders*

We should tell Canadians the reason we are trying to reintroduce these bills that lapsed in the last session is we want to pick up where we left off, especially with those bills on which we probably have a consensus, such as: Bill C-10B, cruelty to animals, which I will come back to in a minute; Bill C-17, public safety; Bill C-18, an act respecting Canadian citizenship; Bill C-20, protection of children; Bill C-26, the railway safety act; Bill C-33, international transfer of persons found guilty of criminal offences; Bill C-43, the Fisheries Act; Bill C-52, the Radiocommunication Act; and Bill C-56, an act to amend the Patent Act and the Food and Drugs Act. There are many more like these bills.

If we are going to be candid with the Canadian public who are listening to this debate today, we have to let them know that it has been a convention for hundreds of years that in a new session the government has up to 30 days to introduce bills that died on the Order Paper when the previous session ended. This is a convention that has long been practised. It does not mean that when these bills come back we will vote on them all at once. Members will have a chance to say yea or nay on each individual bill.

The idea of delaying this has an adverse effect on citizens in every riding of the country. Some of those bills touch every riding in the country. A case could be made on the electoral boundaries. We all know what that is about. That is an attempt to delay the election. I personally would not have any problem if we delayed the election for a while, but the reality is that we will have a chance to vote yea or nay on all of these bills when they come back. I do not think this delay tactic serves the opposition party well.

I want to talk about a very specific bill on the Order Paper that has concern in my riding and has had national attention in the last couple of weeks. It is Bill C-10B, cruelty to animals.

● (1550)

As hon. members may know, Withrow Park is in my riding. It is a fairly large park. It certainly would not be large by the standards of the member for Rimouski, but in my little community in downtown Toronto, Withrow Park is a major park and is probably about 10 to 15 acres big. About two weeks ago someone put poison in the park where people walk their dogs and from time to time let the dogs off the leash. The one that hit national media was T-Bone, a King Charles spaniel. He was quite well known.

In my constituency there are over 10,000 pet owners. Those pets are sources of comfort and have special relationships with many of the seniors and families in my riding. The attachment, the love and the affection for these animals is in many respects similar to that of parents with children. The notion that someone would drop poison is overwhelming. In fact the poison is not even available in Canada; it can only be obtained by licence in the United States.

It is that kind of insensitivity with which a bill like Bill C-10 deals. The notion that this House would work at delaying reintroducing a bill like that is not in my mind a constructive way to go.

I am hoping that through the motion that is on the floor today we can create some new consensus so that we can move forward on getting these bills back on track.

A lot of people would feel pretty anxious if an election was upon us and we let a lot of these bills die before the election. When we came back, I believe we would have to go through the entire process again. What is that process? Probably a lot of Canadians do not realize that hours and hours go into getting a bill to this stage. Witnesses come to the various committees of the House of Commons and give members of Parliament from all parties expert advice on designing the bills.

In the manufacture, preparation and formulation of a piece of legislation in the House, we do not just snap our fingers and a bill is put together by the legislative branch. Bills are built after receiving hundreds of hours of input from citizens across Canada. Some of them use their own money to come here to give expert testimony. The House of Commons committee system funds some of them to come here. The notion that we would just scrap all of that work is most disrespectful to the work of all of those witnesses we have heard with respect to the 40 or 50 bills that we are trying to put back on the Order Paper.

I would appeal to the leadership of the Conservative Party and the leadership of the NDP. The NDP should take a strong stand on this because I know there are bills here on which the NDP has had a strong influence. Those members should stand and say they support the government in moving these bills forward.

● (1555)

There are bills that affect every region of our country, such as the administration and accountability of Indian bands. Look at all the great work that went into putting that bill together. Look at all the travel time from every region of the country, especially the long distances from the north. Look at the ethics bill. How could the opposition not want us to proceed on the ethics bill? There is also the whole area of the Food and Drugs Act.

These are bills that affect the health of the citizens of every riding in the country. The notion that there would be opposition to bringing these bills back and passing them is counterproductive. It is part of the reason that people lose trust in this place, because stalling just for the sake of stalling I do not think serves anyone very well.

● (1600)

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is certainly my pleasure to speak to the motion and to highlight a few of the reasons for our opposition to what the government now takes as daily routine, to use closure and shut down debate on pretty much any topic.

*Government Orders*

Having listened to question period today, I can understand why the government may want to talk about some other things and not talk about the issues with which Canadians are concerned. The people in my riding would like us to talk about some quite different issues than what the government has its emphasis on and I will talk about some of those.

Let me first deal with the closure motion and talk about it specifically. On May 2, 2000 during a discussion of the rules curtailing debate at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, the former clerk of the House of Commons, Robert Marleau, responded to a question regarding the Speaker's authority to protect the minority in the event of an abuse. The former clerk said:

It exists intrinsically in the role of the speakership... all the time, where there can be tyranny on either side. It could be the tyranny of the majority or the tyranny of the minority.

At a subsequent meeting on May 4, the former clerk suggested that with motions of time allocation or closure the Speaker is less likely to intervene. There is a reference to this on page 570 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. However, the clerk stopped short of suggesting that the Speaker would never intervene. He used an extreme example that if the government time allocated every bill at every stage, the Speaker might intervene.

My interpretation of what the clerk said is that there exists a limit to what a majority government can do with respect to closure and time allocation. The clerk used the extreme example in his response because he knows it is not up to him to establish this limit.

If we were to consider the current Prime Minister in the context of the former prime minister, Jean Chrétien, a prime minister who was not known to be progressive in the democratic deficit file, we see the shocking excess, an excess the Speaker should take note of, an excess that should give the Speaker reason to disallow notice and look the other way when the motion for closure is moved. On only his sixth day in the House of Commons, the current Prime Minister has given notice of closure on debate to reinstate bills from his predecessor, Jean Chrétien.

So much for that new vision. So much for that new parliamentary reform. So much for the parliamentary deficit. We have a Prime Minister who does not even know where he wants to go. He simply wants to bring back a bunch of bills from the previous government. There is no new hope there for Canadians. There is no new government dealing with the issues that the people on the streets are talking about.

Mr. Chrétien was flexible in comparison. It was five months before he could bring himself to move time allocation on debate in the House. His first full-fledged closure motion did not come until he had been at 24 Sussex for a year and a half. Add to that excess the excess of the sheer number of motions moved by the government calls for an intervention from the Speaker. The 75 time allocation motions and 10 closure motions total 85 motions.

It used to be that calling one closure motion in a term might well have brought down the government. Canadians wonder why the government does not let debate go on. If debate does not happen in the House, where is it supposed to happen? The government has demonstrated by its actions 85 times that it has shut down debate.

The current Prime Minister, six days into being in the House, has shut down debate. That is not democracy and leads people out there to ask what we are running here. Are we running a dictatorship where the PMO runs the show and where the Prime Minister is afraid to allow debate in the House?

•(1605)

The third excess to be considered by the Speaker is the fact that through the reinstatement motion the Prime Minister is recycling Chrétien legislation from the previous session. There is nothing new and nothing of his own. How can Canadians know where he wants to go when he simply recycles all of the legislation from the previous administration?

The Speaker has already ruled on that point. I suppose the Speaker's ruling confirms that the government is actually the old, tired government of Jean Chrétien. Otherwise, how could this procedure today even be possible?

I think the Speaker should reconsider this point in view of the fact that the debate on the motion is being closed off. If it is procedurally correct, it certainly is not morally correct. Our ability as the opposition to solicit public support for this point of view is being hampered. We simply do not have the time. We have only been here six days and we are already shutting down debate.

The naval aid bill of 1913 represented the first time in Canadian parliamentary history that closure was ever used. The proposed legislation was introduced by the Conservative government of Robert Borden and, if adopted, would have authorized a cash donation of \$35 million to Great Britain for the construction of the Dreadnought class warships for the navy.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier strongly opposed the bill. The Liberals filibustered throughout second reading and committee of the whole. At one point in committee of the whole they kept the House virtually in continuous session for as long as two weeks. The House sat from 3 p.m. on Monday, March 3 until Saturday at midnight, and then again from 3 p.m. on Monday, March 10 to Saturday late in the evening. The naval bill was eventually defeated in the Liberal dominated Senate. The good old days when government actually allowed debate.

Closure was used again to close off the famous pipeline debate in 1956. Debate on the omnibus energy security act of 1982 was made famous because the opposition caused the bells to ring from 4:20 p.m. on Tuesday, March 2 until 2:28 p.m. on Wednesday, March 17, at which point Bill C-94 was dropped from the agenda as a result of an agreement having been reached to split the bill into eight smaller bills. There was the GST filibuster organized by the Liberal Party in the House which turned the Senate into a real sideshow.

*Government Orders*

The point is to allow debate and filibusters to occur in the House. I would refer to the story of Kyoto and the dilemma that I was faced with as the chief environment critic. I had just watched the Grey Cup game and I saw a \$250,000 ad for Kyoto during the game. I then knew that \$23 million was to be spent advertising Kyoto in the next six weeks. I said to myself as the chief critic for the environment, "How will I get our position out on Kyoto? How will that be possible?"

On the plane ride back that Sunday night, I decided that maybe there was a way and that maybe I would talk in the House for a while. Talking to our leader the next morning and then to the Speaker, I found that there was a rule that allowed that to happen. If a member was the first speaker after the minister who proposed the bill, there was unlimited time to talk about the issue.

There were certain rules pointed out to me by the Speaker: I could not stray from my area, I could not go off topic, I could not read the telephone book, I must not repeat myself, and I must stay on topic. That was a challenge. Members know how that worked out.

The point is that by being able to debate that in the House and being able to get that point of view out over that period of time, we ended up by Wednesday night of that same week being on the front page of every newspaper across the country, being on many talk shows and even going to Toronto to be on Mike Bullard.

•(1610)

By having that opportunity in the House to express our point of view, we were able to accomplish what we needed to because we did not have \$23 million to push a particular point of view as the government did. We can see the value then of having an open ability to speak in the House. I am sure that possibly the environment minister cannot see the value of that, but certainly many Canadians could and we were able to get our point of view across.

When a party uses closure and shuts down debate, that then ends discussion of the issues that Canadians should hear about and want to hear about. The government then shuts down any opportunity for debate. These debates are part of history. They are part of being opposition. They are part of what should go on in the House of Commons. They are part of that democratic deficit that obviously our new Prime Minister does not understand because if he did, he would not be using closure six days into his first session in Parliament. Obviously he does not mean what he says when he gets to that.

In 1988 Speaker Fraser said:

It is essential to our democratic system that controversial issues should be debated at reasonable length so that every reasonable opportunity shall be available to hear the arguments pro and con, and that reasonable delaying tactics should be permissible to enable opponents of a measure to enlist public support for their point of view.

We started debate on Friday and we were given a half a day yesterday. Is that a reasonable time? We are talking about a motion that has the potential to reinstate the entire agenda of the former Prime Minister, a Prime Minister who had obviously worn out his welcome, was not popular within his own party, and who was ousted from his position by the very person who is now Prime Minister.

This agenda is being advanced by using closure and shutting off debate and then using a whipped vote to make it happen. It is

unconscionable to let that sort of thing happen in a democracy. How can Liberals even say it is a democracy, when they use that sort of tactic for the 86th time?

How do we explain that to people back home when they ask, why do Liberals keep using closure? It is because they do not want debate. People believe that we are in a democracy where we can debate. Try to explain that one even to a grade five class that asks those questions when it is studying the Canadian Parliament.

I know the Speaker respects this institution and would want to protect it from abuses. In his first two weeks the Prime Minister has contributed more to the democratic deficit and has done it quicker than any other Prime Minister. He has denied a free vote on the funding of the gun registry and has allowed an undemocratic closure motion introduced at undemocratic speed to adopt an undemocratic motion, shattering an undemocratic closure record.

Before we allow such excess to become a precedent, the Speaker should intervene and rule the notice of closure out of order. The former clerk indicated that the Speaker can intervene in an extreme circumstance. This is such a circumstance, Mr. Speaker. Standing Order 57 was not intended to usurp the constitutional duty of the opposition. It was not intended to upset the important balance between the government and the opposition. This was the legacy of the former Prime Minister and it will now become the legacy of the new Prime Minister.

One must start asking questions because these are the questions that I know I will get asked at home when I return there on weekends. Constituents are going to ask, what does that closure really mean? It means that we bring back the agenda—some of it, the ones we choose—of the former Prime Minister. It means that we will have something to deal with in the House that suits the government.

•(1615)

It means that the government can cover up things like the Auditor General's report that we heard today. It means that it does not have to deal with issues like the throne speech where there is no mention of agriculture.

I have young farmers, husbands and wives, come before me in my office and say they are desperate, they do not know what to do, they are not able to pay their bills and this is destroying them. Having a 30 year old young fellow cry in one's office is not something that any of us should be put through.

We need to talk about that here. We need to talk about the solutions. All parties need to deal with issues like that. It is critical. It is literally career and life-threatening to many of these people, yet here we are reintroducing things that are not necessarily the key issues that people out on the street are talking about.

*Government Orders*

Today we have an Auditor General's report that says we had \$250 million funnelled away and used by Liberal hacks who supported the party. People then say that they have to send in their cheque at the end of April to the tax department. They are senior citizens who earn \$8,000 a year and can hardly buy groceries.

Students who are in university are saying that they worked all summer at three jobs, and guess what? They have a tax bill. My own daughter went to school, got a scholarship in Holland and received her Ph.D. there. She also got a tax bill from the Canadian government. Do members know how embarrassing that was for her, when she went to her professor and said she had to pay taxes on that scholarship? I sent the cheque for her because I was pretty shocked too.

The president of the university wrote to me and said that my daughter was one of the best students. That made me pretty proud, but he also said that as a member of Parliament, I should be disgraced that my government was sending a tax bill to a student who was going to school on a scholarship. We are taxing her. Why would she ever come back to this country? What about the brain drain? That is the kind of thing we should be talking about in the House. That is the kind of stuff we should be ending.

The Auditor General's report states that \$250 million just went out to patronage. Well, that \$250 million would go a long way to helping seniors who are earning \$8,000 a year and paying tax; to helping those students who are working their butts off all summer and are paying tax; to helping that single mom out there; and to helping that husband and wife who are trying to get their kids to go to hockey practice and dance lessons, and trying to make a living and hopefully taking a week's holiday somewhere. That is what Canadians want to talk about. The young farm family who is losing the farm because of BSE is the issue we need to talk about in the House.

The government thinks that it can simply hold a general review, a public inquiry. I have been here a long time now, 11 years, and I have been through the public inquiry routine before. I remind members of the Somalia report, the Krever report, and the APEC report. All of those were inquiries. Why did we have them? What did they accomplish? They accomplished having ministers over there say that they could not answer questions about it and could not debate it in the House because there was a public inquiry going on.

Then the inquiry goes on and on. Millions and millions of dollars are spent on those inquiries, and what is the end result? They are dropped. Think about the taxpayer sending in that cheque at the end of April for those millions more dollars that are going to be spent. That is what we should be talking about in the House.

The government should have its own agenda. It should not have to bring back the old one and it sure as hell should not have to use closure.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, during this debate and particularly yesterday, I listened intently and I especially re-read some statements made by some speakers, particularly on the government side.

I heard members, and particularly the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, repeatedly accusing the opposition, saying that it

was the opposition that was filibustering and causing the democratic deficit.

I have a lot of difficulty accepting that the government, which introduced the motion, blame the opposition. Indeed, this is worth mentioning. It is not the opposition that introduced the motion. It is the government that introduced this motion whose aim is, as members reminded the House, to bring back to the House bills that were dropped following prorogation last November.

It is not because of the opposition that the House of Commons was prorogued last November. It is not because of the opposition that we did not sit as planned in November, December and January. It is not because of the opposition, it is because of infighting within the governing party.

At one point, the situation had become intolerable for the former government. I should say for the former prime minister, because it is not the former government, since we are back again today with the same government in front of us. All that has changed in this government are a few titles and people who have been moved around, but this is still the same governing party and the same government.

It is because the feud between the former prime minister and the current Prime Minister had come to a point where government operations were paralyzed, and it was virtually impossible to legislate. This feud and the problems were so blatant that, at one point, someone made a decision and said, "We will prorogue the House. We have no other choice".

Of course, as my colleague from Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis said earlier, this bothered the current Prime Minister. It is causing him problems, and I hope it will cause him problems serious enough to get him to reflect further when it comes to the democratic deficit.

I want to come back to the issue of the democratic deficit. The last few months have been very telling. What happened was very significant. We have a man who decided to seek power, to replace the former prime minister and to prevent the government from operating for weeks, if not for months. That is what happened.

If only he had respected democracy, if only he had respected Parliament, if only he had respected the elected representatives of the people, things would have been different. Unfortunately, what happened is that an over-ambitious man prevented the government from operating.

Therefore, we have to remember that it was not the opposition who prorogued the House in November 2003, but the government and the party in office. That means, of course, that a greater number of bills died on the Order Paper. And now, the government wants to reinstate them as if nothing happened.

Unfortunately, that is not what happened. If they want to pretend that they form a new government, that they stand for change, then they cannot just bring back the bills of the previous government and of the previous Prime Minister as if nothing happened.

*Government Orders*

Something very serious happened. For instance, if the government really wanted to eliminate the democratic deficit, it would have reinstated some of the private members' bills. Let me give the House a very good example of a bill which was ignored at the very last minute by the government, when the House was prorogued. The bill directly affects eastern Quebec. It deals with the issue of lighthouses. I said it affected eastern Quebec, but I could also mention the Maritimes and all of Canada.

I was just reading something that was published, on this matter, back in November, not long after the House was prorogued. At the time, the House was considering a bill requiring the government to maintain its properties, including lighthouses.

• (1620)

This affects all Quebecers living along the St. Lawrence River, Quebec's maritime regions and the maritime provinces as a whole.

Right after the prorogation, I read a document from Radio-Canada Atlantique which clearly stated that, in Nova Scotia and elsewhere, up to 100 lighthouses that have been used until very recently to guide navigators could be lost because of the government's lack of commitment to meeting its obligations and maintaining the infrastructure.

The situation is the same in Quebec. We could talk about what is going on in Quebec and in British Columbia. This bill was introduced by a member following discussions in the Senate. The idea was to force the government to take its responsibilities and to maintain the infrastructure. This affected us directly. As I said earlier, this bill affects all of Quebec's maritime regions.

We could also talk about fisheries. The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, which was sitting, had decisions to take. The Coast Guard could be in trouble following all the cuts that were made. Fisheries and Oceans may very well cut 600 jobs in the next few months. The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans was sitting to consider all the issues concerning fisheries.

Unfortunately, and maybe taxpayers ignore this, as soon as the House is prorogued, committees stop sitting. Naturally, it takes some time after the House has resumed its business for the committees to start sitting again.

So, all this process that I would described as undemocratic, all this infighting within the Liberal Party went on and caused the prorogation of the House, which stopped sitting. In the meantime, all the issues before us were suspended until today.

Now, they blame us, saying that the opposition is undemocratic because it refuses to pass such a motion. That is unacceptable. I will never be able to accept that the opposition be blamed for doing its job. The governing party is to blame for everything that happened, on top of the House being prorogued.

There is also Bill C-49 concerning the revision of electoral boundaries. This is very important. In our region, we are faced with quite a problem. The member for Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis talked earlier about the size of her riding. We could mention the riding of Matapédia—Matane, which is just huge, but we could also mention the riding of Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok.

Let us not forget that, in recent history, 10 years ago, the Gaspé lost one riding. Now, we could lose another one. The government is not taking into account the huge size of the areas, particularly in the Gaspé, where the new riding will include some five regional county municipalities and a very large number of municipalities.

The riding of Matapédia—Matane, which is just next to that riding, is about the same size. Had it not been for the mergers, there would be some 60 municipalities over a very large area. From west to east, the riding is about 350 kilometres long. Constituents have a very hard time reaching their MP in such ridings.

As regards the democratic deficit, the government had a great opportunity to correct the situation by making exceptions and creating in all the so-called remote regions ridings that make sense.

Moreover, we were totally opposed to Bill C-49 because it did not take into account the historical aspect of the presence of Quebec MP's in the House of Commons.

• (1625)

I should point out that the government is adding new ridings, including in Alberta and British Columbia, which means that Quebec's representation will be proportionally reduced. We Bloc Québécois members had suggested that the number of federal seats allocated to Quebec be increased from 75 to 77, to maintain a fair and equitable proportion. This would probably have enabled us to have smaller ridings, particularly in my region, in which an MP would have been able to do a perfectly adequate job, and in which it would have been much easier for constituents to have access to their MP.

The notion of democratic deficit is critical. First of all—and luckily the situation has changed at the federal level, although more than 20 years after changes were made in Quebec—there is now an act dealing with the financing of political parties. This is the very foundation of a democratic system. That was a major problem in terms of the democratic deficit. In Quebec, we realized that almost 25 years ago.

The very basis of democracy is the financing of political parties by the citizens, the participation of the people in the life of political parties. Naturally, in the end, during an electoral campaign, the more people participate, the better it is for democracy.

Unfortunately, since the last election, we have realized that voter turnout at the federal level has been dropping constantly. That is a sure sign of a democratic deficit that must be rectified.

*Government Orders*

We will certainly not deal with that deficit by acting like the government has acted towards members of Parliament and all-party committees. Even within the government itself, the problem is serious. We have seen it in the past. We have seen that the whole machinery of government, all the mechanics of government, the cabinet and the executive itself were centralized and operating from the Prime Minister's office, and that all decisions were being made there.

If we want to do something about the democratic deficit, that is where we have to start. The system must be more open, people must be given access to information and must be allowed to participate in the work of all committees and in all decisions made in the House.

I think the other democratic deficit concerns the members' right to speak. Opposition members have one right, and that is the right to speak. It is crucial. We also have the right to stand for our fellow citizens and those who sent us here.

Government members are not allowed to criticize or to make proposals. They do not have any right in the public forum. They have to remain silent. Therefore, it is much more difficult for them to stand for their constituents.

The government wants to reinstate another bill. Let me digress for a moment. We have heard a lot about safety lately. The government wants to reinstate Bill C-17 on public safety. The Bloc Quebecois was against this bill, and we still are today.

But we should not forget that, while the House was prorogued, the Canadian and American governments exchanged letters on the infamous missile defence shield. Commitments were made while the House was not sitting.

Through the back door, the government is trying to come to an agreement with the American government on an eventual Canadian participation in the American missile defence shield. I think this is an extremely serious democratic deficit.

There should have been a debate in the House on the subject, since this is a major decision. It is a decision involving the commitment of funds which may, of course, not be allocated to service delivery, funds that will not be available to provide services to the public. And this puts democracy at risk. We should have had this major discussion here in the House. We should have had a very serious debate on the subject.

During the prorogation of the House, something else happened, which directly affects taxpayers, particularly Quebec taxpayers: the Canadian government's decision to take part in a study with the American army to widen the St. Lawrence Seaway. In this regard, it would have been essential to have a heated debate on the subject, because the widening of the seaway may cause major problems, such as environmental problems. Let us think of all the stirring of sediments at the bottom of the seaway. If you disturb something that has been covered by a good layer of sediments, you will find large quantities of contaminants that came from the Great Lakes. There have been problems in the past.

• (1630)

This could cause environmental problems, first of all. In fact, there are sediments on the bottom of the seaway now. If we start to

interfere with that thick layer of sediment, below it we will find contaminants that come from the Great Lakes, and very great quantities of them. We have had problems in the past. If all that shit—please excuse the word—were stirred up, it would obviously cause major environmental problems.

The second element regarding the enlarging of the St. Lawrence Seaway is shoreline erosion. If the seaway is enlarged, larger quantities of Great Lakes water will flow out, and there is a risk of provoking erosion problems all along the banks of the St. Lawrence. The problem already exists: imagine how much greater the erosion could become.

The third very important point regarding enlarging the St. Lawrence Seaway is an economic one. Why do they want to enlarge the seaway when, simply by setting up an intermodal transportation system based on the ports that already exist, it would be possible to ship freight easily to Detroit or the states concerned in the United States, since they seem to want to do this solely for the Americans and southern Ontario.

Once again, we in the Bloc Quebecois are not, at this time, in favour of entering into a process with the American army to enlarge the seaway. And yet, there is no debate in the House and on the government side, they are telling us about the democratic deficit. I think it is essential to hold a debate on this subject.

• (1635)

We could also be talking about Bill C-17. We can add another element to the concept of the democratic deficit. The Prime Minister was recently heard on the CBC talking about the \$46 or \$47 billion they have taken from the employment insurance fund. Of course, it is a virtual fund, but if you take money out of the fund and spend it all, you have stolen it, quite literally. It is very clear today that it is a completely virtual fund. Citizens, seasonal workers in particular, are being denied the help they need to live in decent conditions.

It must always be kept in mind, when referring to the employment insurance fund, that today not even 40% of workers have access to it. In terms of democracy, notwithstanding all that has been said on the subject, all the studies proving that it is totally unjust, the government kept on. The present Prime Minister, when finance minister, was the main one responsible for what happened to the EI fund.

We could also talk in terms of democratic deficit of all the services to the populations in regions such as mine, because of the fact that the electoral districts are very large. Given their immense size, the populations we represent are deprived of services.

*Government Orders*

Over the years since 1993, the federal government has become almost totally absent from our regions, abandoning the airports, no longer investing in the infrastructures that belong to it, among them the wharves at seaports. It has pretty well been the same thing for the entire railway system. In the region I come from, Canadian National is virtually absent and private companies are operating the railways today.

It is a democratic deficit when the entire population of my area pays as much in taxes as anyone else in the country and ought therefore to be entitled to about the same services, or so I believe.

Getting back to the motion before us, I was just referring to the ports. There was a private members bill on this, and it was abandoned. We could talk about all the other bills that fell by the wayside because of prorogation. As a result, today we find ourselves faced with a motion that is asking the opposition to say "Everything is forgotten. We start again from scratch".

That is not exactly what the motion is calling on us to do. In actual fact, it is asking us to accept having all the bills that were before the House come back in the form they were in before prorogation. We did not accept those bills. We did not have all the time or debating space to express our views. Today what they want is to simply cancel out everything that was done. This is totally unacceptable.

• (1640)

[English]

**Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House and today is no exception. We are talking about the reinstatement of legislation that resulted from the prorogation of the House back in November. It is interesting to go back to where the ball went into motion to where we are today.

The House was scheduled to take its adjournment for one week on November 8 prior to Remembrance Day and we were scheduled to return on November 18. The weekend after Remembrance Day was the Liberal leadership convention. Unlike the rest of us who occasionally take a weekend to elect a new leader then come back to work the following Monday, the new administration took a little over two months to return.

The previous House leader had indicated that the House would come back on January 12. Almost immediately the new leader of the Liberal Party said that the Liberals would not be ready at that time because there was a throne speech to write and work had to begin on a budget, et cetera. It was not December 12 nor was it January 12 when we came back. The House came back on February 2 to hear the Speech from the Throne.

The idea that this is a new government and that it is putting a new stamp on everything is difficult to reconcile. We are faced with, with closure today for the 80th something time, the reintroduction of legislation that technically died on the Order Paper, but is being revived and brought back without any changes. That is the problem the government has in its early going. It is trying to portray itself as something new and something different, but it keeps getting caught up in the same old situation.

One thing the new Prime Minister has talked about is the democratic deficit and his concern about it. He claims to want to engage parliamentarians in that. Not only do we see closure being

introduced here today to get these bills through, we also saw an example outside the House at two o'clock this afternoon. Rather than come into the House and explain to elected members of Parliament how the government would respond to the serious report of the Auditor General, which was made public earlier today, the Prime Minister chose to hold an impromptu scrum just outside the doors and deal with the media. He then came in here later to respond to questions from the acting leader of the official opposition and all opposition parties. We do not see very much new or exciting in all of this.

The member for Toronto—Danforth spoke earlier this afternoon. He looked in our direction and said that we should be concerned about this because there were some bills on the list of 28, which were before us in the reinstatement motion, that the New Democratic Party would want. I agree, there are some. However, as my colleague for Windsor—St. Clair said very eloquently yesterday, we are not prepared to abdicate our responsibility and give a blank cheque to the government to introduce the whole list.

I would have thought that a government that was interested in addressing the democratic deficit might have sat down with the House leaders to talk about which specific bills they might want addressed and those the government might want addressed. I agree with the tenor of other speakers who have preceded me in the debate. A lot of work has gone into legislation in terms of standing committees and the like. That would have been one way to address the matter of democratic deficit rather than have the government House leader say that this would be way it would be handled, and introduce the 28 bills. We are not sure, but some of bills have already been introduced and many others perhaps will not be introduced. We simply do not know. We are being asked to sign a blank cheque.

• (1645)

As a look at the 28 bills, the prize in all this undoubtedly is Bill C-49, the electoral boundaries bill, that would give the government the ability to move up the election after April 1.

As the House knows, under the rules when redistribution takes place there has to be a full year after the redistribution process is completed before a general election can be held. That would have put the election not earlier than the middle of August of this year. However, the Chief Electoral Officer wrote to the government last summer and said that if there were quick agreement on this by all parties and we put a bill through the legislature, his office could ensure that the country would be ready for a general election after April 1.

That legislation did not get through. It got through the House of Commons and it went to the Senate where it was one of about 18 bills that was left in the Senate. That was the largest number of bills not dealt with by the Senate since 1867, since the very first Senate was appointed.

*Government Orders*

I do not know whether that was a failure of the then House leader in the Senate or whether the senators simply were tired. Maybe the Liberal senators wanted to go to the convention in Toronto and did not want to come back to deal with them. Who knows. It is one of the great mysteries of the unelected Senate. That is why this party favours a thorough house cleaning in the way we deal with that. We need to abolish the unelected Senate and find a much better way to elect senators or have proportional representation. If we want to talk about the democratic deficit and the appointed Senate, that is not a very good beginning.

That is the situation. We have difficulty with the government wanting to portray itself as being brand new, but seemingly unable to escape its past. The Liberals want to portray themselves as a government seeking a first mandate when really I think Canadians see them as a government about to embark on wanting a fourth mandate, from their first election back in 1993.

Several people ahead of me have spoken about the situation in rural Canada. I want to speak for a few moments about that as well. In the throne speech, which was delivered on Monday of last week, it stated:

The Government is dedicated to Canada's farm economy and to taking the steps necessary to safeguard access to international markets and to ensure that farmers are not left to bear alone the consequences of circumstances beyond their control.

On Friday Canadians heard the horrific report about realized net farm income in 2003 and that it was a negative amount of money, \$13 million, the lowest ever recorded since the country began keeping records back in the 1920s, and certainly lower than what we saw during the depression. If we subtracted what federal, provincial and territorial governments have put into assisting farmers over the last year, the negative is almost \$5 billion. It is absolutely incredible.

• (1650)

As the president of the National Farmers Union, Stewart Wells, said, "This is the most spectacular and damaging market failure in the history of Canadian agriculture". A large part of that was caused by the one cow that was affected in Alberta on May 20. Just when we thought we would get out of that and the U.S. market would reopen to live cattle, probably about this time, then we had the Christmas eve disaster where the cow in Washington State was identified. Quickly thereafter we found out that it had a Canadian connection to it.

BSE is a large part of it but not all of it. We have had drought. We have had low commodity prices. These are the sorts of things that people in my area want to talk about. They would much rather be talking about what the government is going to do and how it will go forward to address the issue.

As the member for Red Deer said very well a few moments ago, this is a crisis of incredible proportions and most people are hanging on by the skin of their teeth. There is a real fear that if this drags on much longer, many of the small producers, cow-calf operators, backgrounders and the like, will not be able to continue to exist with the prices falling to the levels that they have sunk to.

As the NFU notes, the government over the last couple of decades has taken away hog marketing agencies. In the 1990s it cut the Crow

benefit, which was extremely important. Farmers in western Canada recognize the loss of that more with every passing day.

The government has ended the two price wheat system, deregulated grain handling and transportation, presided over the destruction of many co-operatives and tied its own hands with trade and investment agreements. At the same time, the transnational corporations have merged to the point where only a handful are left controlling each and every link in the agrifood chain.

These corporate and government policies collectively have pushed family farms and farmers to the edge of the cliff. It appears, by the numbers we saw last week, that in 2003 many of the farmers simply fell over that cliff. In fact, the numbers are so bad that the government, which normally does a two year forecast, its Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food is not able or prepared to come out with numbers now. Of course up until May 20, although we had the drought and low grain prices, we did not have BSE. I think the last half of 2003 would have been very bad compared to the first half, so we can imagine as we go forward into a new calendar year how much worse it is going to be.

As we heard last week in the so-called take note debate on BSE, I do not think anyone realistically expects our borders to reopen until after the November presidential election in the United States.

As a young farmer from the Mossbank area told me on the phone last night, as difficult as this was for him to say, he felt that the time had come for us to consider whether we should be closing our borders to American cattle coming north on the eastern seaboard if they are not prepared to take our animals. He tells me that the boxed beef, which has been allowed since the end of August of last year, has slowed to a trickle as the Americans deal with their exporting countries that have closed their borders as a result of the Washington State case.

We, the government, all of us, have an obligation to do one of two things. Either we have to subsidize or support our farmers, although they are not looking for subsidies except to continue to keep their operations alive, or we need to perhaps close the border to the American industry and start shipping cattle from western Canada into Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada. We could move cattle and begin to firm up some prices in the process.

• (1655)

It is good that the Prime Minister spoke with the president about the BSE issue, and about softwood, but it is extremely important that we deal with the BSE issue because farmers are on the edge in terms of knowing where to go.

The big news today of course is the report of the Auditor General. I want to read into the record something that was said in 1993:

Nine years of Conservative government have brought our political process into disrepute. A Liberal government will restore public trust and confidence in government.

*Government Orders*

That quote is from "Creating Opportunity: The Liberal Plan for Canada". It goes on to state:

If government is to play a positive role in society, as it must, honesty and integrity in our political institutions must be restored.

A Liberal government will take a series of initiatives to restore confidence in the institutions of government. Open government will be the watchword of the Liberal program.

We have a long way to go to live up to those lofty expectations. The findings from the Auditor General, findings that have been available, by the way, to the government since November, even though they were just made public today, indicate that the Liberals hid the objectives of the sponsorship program from Parliament. The Auditor General was unable to find answers to key questions. The report goes on and on.

Those are the kinds of things that Canadians want Parliament to deal with. They do not necessarily want to go back and grapple with many of the bills from the past.

As I look at what the government is doing and how it is going about doing it, it seems to me that it is very much like the dog that caught the car, and now that he caught it he is not sure what to do with it. It is similar to Robert Redford in *The Candidate*: What do I do now? I think this is the question and these are the problems that the government will have as we head into March and, undoubtedly, the election in April, thanks to the proposed changes that will come back as a result of the reinstatement of bills.

**Mr. Paul Harold Macklin (Northumberland, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to have the opportunity to rise in the House today and address the motion to reinstate government bills.

I know there is a tendency to wander when we have the opportunity to address matters of this nature, especially when it is not in the interests, in particular, of the opposition to do so, and today is no exception.

Clearly, though, I think the Canadian public expects us to take seriously the matter before the House because a lot of time, effort and energy has been invested in the bills that the government wishes to reinstate in the House.

I think each and every one of us, if we were to look back at the history of the reinstatement process, would see that this process goes back some 30-plus years and, in fact, has precedent in this process where we have received unanimous consent in the previous times for reinstating bills that were advanced in the House in pre-prorogation periods.

The United Kingdom also carries on with a similar process. This process is quite normal and it should be respected in the House at this time.

We have come here with an obligation to serve the country and advance the cause and interests of this just society. I think that as we do so we need to take the time to properly address issues of this nature and go forward.

In this particular case it is clear that there are a number of bills that the government would like to bring forward. In particular, I would refer at this time to Bill C-20. I know that bill, which was brought forward in the House before, is part of a reform package to improve the protection of our children and other vulnerable persons. It

responds to the commitments that were made in the 2002 Speech from the Throne. Quite frankly, I think these commitments continue today in the interest of advancing those protections.

We want to protect our children from exploitation in all of its forms. We want to reform the Criminal Code to increase penalties for abuse and neglect, and to provide more sensitive treatment for children who take part in justice proceedings as victims or as witnesses.

Bill C-20, as introduced in the previous session, is very important. These proposals build on some of the recent measures, that is measures that we had brought in before, in the interest of increasing the protection for children from sexual exploitation.

The previous reforms that we brought in included some criminal law reforms that created new offences to target criminals who use the Internet to lure and exploit children, or who transmit, make available, export or intentionally access child pornography.

The government has been consistent in its desire to better protect children. With the advent of new technologies, this has been a constant challenge for the law to stay up to and maintain the protection that we believe our children need.

Since the new technologies, including the Internet, are increasingly making the sexual exploitation of children a borderless crime, the government is also working closely with the international community in developing a strategy to include measures that will improve international co-operation, information sharing and techniques that will advance the prevention, health and public awareness, cooperation with the private sector and outreach to other countries with respect to issues of this nature.

We need to advance stronger child pornography provisions and Bill C-20, I submit, would certainly do that. The fact that the opposition is stalling today in order to stop the process of bringing forward this bill is somewhat distressing to those of us who seriously believe there is an opportunity to advance the protection of our children.

• (1700)

The existing defences for child pornography would, under this new bill, be reduced to a single defence of public good. A person would be found guilty of a child pornography offence when the material or act in question does not serve that public good, or where the risk of harm outweighs any public good that it would otherwise serve.

The proposed reforms would also expand the existing definition of written child pornography to include material that is created for a sexual purpose and predominantly describes prohibited sexual activity with children. The current definition of child pornography only applies to material that advocates or counsels prohibited sexual activity with children. This is something that is important. It is meaningful and it should be advanced as quickly as possible in the House.

*Government Orders*

One other area in Bill C-20, which could be brought forward through the process of this motion, deals with the new category of sexual exploitation. The provision would provide new protection to young persons between 14 and 18 years of age. Under this proposed reform, courts would have to consider whether a relationship is exploitive, based upon its nature and circumstances, including any difference of age, the evolution of the relationship and the degree of control or influence exercised over the young person.

This new category focuses the court's determination on the conduct or behaviour of the accused rather than on the consent of the young person to sexual activity, again a very important advance that we believe ought to be brought forward as quickly as possible.

When we look at sentencing within the bill, we see that it proposes tougher sentencing provisions. Under the government's reform proposals, the penalties for offences that harm children would be increased. The maximum penalty for sexual exploitation, for example, would double from five years to ten. The maximum penalty for abandonment of a child or failure to provide the necessities of life to a child would more than double from two to five years. The abuse of a child in the commission of any Criminal Code offence would also have to be considered as an aggravating factor by the court and could result in a tougher sentence.

Clearly, members can see that these are very important points that need to be advanced for the protection of our children and other vulnerable persons. It is very important that we continue to bring forward these ideas, which I believe are important for the future of our children in this country.

There are other things that would also be met by allowing the reintroduction of Bill C-20. For example, when we talk about children and other vulnerable persons as witnesses within our courts, several reforms contained within the bill would help ensure that when they are participating in the criminal justice system, it would be less traumatic for them than it would otherwise be. First of all, it is very traumatic for someone to have gone through an experience of this nature, and it is even worse when they have to relive it in a courtroom setting. It is very important that we make provisions so that it is as easy and as least intimidating as possible. I think that although every time one enters a courtroom there is an element of intimidation, we should certainly try to minimize that for those who would be witnesses.

The current Criminal Code provisions would be expanded to allow all witnesses under age 18 to benefit from testimonial aids in any criminal proceeding, not just those involving sexual or other specified offences. These aids would include providing testimony from behind a screen or by closed circuit television, or having a support person accompany the young witness.

Current provisions generally require the Crown to establish the need for a testimonial aid. Given the potential trauma of the courtroom experience for young witnesses, the proposed reforms in Bill C-20 acknowledge the need for the aid. For all testimonial aids, the judge retains the discretion to deny the aid or protection where its use would interfere with the proper administration of justice. In addition, the facilities to permit the use of a screen or closed circuit TV must be available in the courtroom before the judge can permit their use.

●(1705)

Fundamental rights for the accused are fully respected under the proposed amendments. For example, the reforms would also allow children under 14 to give their evidence when they are able to understand and respond to questions. A competency hearing, which is currently mandatory, would no longer be required.

These are very important advances that would be very helpful in the administration of justice and are being held up by the failure of the House to approve the motion for reinstatement.

There are other areas, too, where in fact we talk about voyeurism. I think most of us are aware that with electronic advances today, voyeurism is becoming more and more of a problem. The latest evolution seems to be in the cellphone camera. It seems to be the latest intervention that is causing additional concern about voyeurism. I see that now notices are actually being posted at various establishments like the YMCA, for example, to the effect that one no longer can take a cellphone into a dressing room because of that particular characteristic of these more modern phones.

So it is something that is extremely important, this concept of voyeurism and making it an offence, and we have to deal with it. Bill C-20 is a bill that attempts to do this, and I believe it would do so in an appropriate manner. The rapid technological changes and developments of these years of course have brought many benefits to our society, but they raise all sorts of implications for such basic matters as our privacy. Web cameras, for example, which can transmit live images over the Internet, have raised concerns about their potential abuse, notably, of course, the secret viewing or recording of people for sexual purposes or where the viewing of a recording involves a serious breach of privacy.

The proposed offences listed in Bill C-20 would make it a crime in three specific cases to deliberately and secretly observe or record another person in circumstances where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists: first, when the observation or recording is done for a sexual purpose; second, when the person observed or recorded is in a place where one is reasonably expected to be in a state of nudity or engaged in sexual activity; and third, when the person observed is in a state of nudity or engaged in sexual activity and the purpose is to observe or record a person in such state of activity.

Distributing material knowing that it was produced through an offence of voyeurism would also be a crime. The maximum penalty for all voyeurism offences would be five years in prison. The copies for sale or distribution of a recording obtained through the commission of a voyeurism offence would be subject to seizure and forfeiture. The courts could also order the deletion of voyeuristic material from a computer system.

*Government Orders*

As members can see, these reforms clearly are quite important. The steps that we have taken so far to bring forward Bill C-20 in the previous pre-prorogation session, in fact, were very important and I think they were very positive steps in this regard. I think Canadians are concerned. They want solutions to these issues. That we are bringing forward solutions is extremely important. The fact that these solutions are being slowed up by this process of failure to cooperate and to work with the government in terms of bringing forward the existing bills that the government would like to reintroduce on this motion quite frankly is very troubling to me.

The time has come for the House to engage in the business that we were sent here to engage in and that is to advance the cause of the protection of our citizens. In this particular case, by reinstating Bill C-20 we would be advancing the cause of children and other vulnerable persons. It is extraordinarily important. I find that this process of delay for no reasoned purpose is very ineffective. Quite frankly, I think the Canadian people can see through this masquerade and they want us to proceed.

● (1710)

Accordingly, I would ask that the House support the reinstatement motion, bring it forward as soon as possible and have it pass in the House.

**Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again we are talking about the Government of Canada reinstating bills lost in the last Parliament when the House was prorogued.

This morning was an example of how dedicated the Prime Minister is to the democratic deficit and the reforming and democratizing of this House. He rammed through closure after having been here in the House as Prime Minister for only six days. This is the earliest closure motion ever introduced in the history of this place, so he is not committed to democratizing Parliament and he is not committed to the democratic deficit, that is, doing something about it. This morning was a perfect example.

What is this reinstatement motion all about? It is really all about a rush to an election, an early election.

Let us remember the history of the Prime Minister. He was an ordinary backbench member of Parliament last summer who was caught up in the leadership race. Most of us assumed that he would replace the former prime minister and in fact become the Prime Minister of Canada, but he was thinking very strategically in terms of how long he would have to stand in the House, day in and day out, and answer questions put to him by the opposition.

In other words, he did not want to be put under close scrutiny by the House of Commons so he asked the Chief Electoral Officer whether or not he could speed up the redistribution process and in fact change the election act so that he could be ready. In other words, the Prime Minister, the member for LaSalle—Émard at the time, asked the Chief Electoral Officer if he could be ready by April 1 in terms of redistribution. The Chief Electoral Officer said of course he could.

That is what Bill C-49 does: it speeds up the redistribution process so that in fact the Prime Minister of Canada can call an election as early as April 1, versus August 25 when those new boundaries

would have automatically kicked in. Basically, the Liberals changed the electoral act. This is one of the bills that is caught up in this reinstatement package. The government wants that bill more than any other bill, but it just so happens to be one of the 28 bills it wants reinstated.

If we think about it, I can understand why the Prime Minister does not want to be in the House of Commons. He is doing everything to bury some of these issues that are haunting the government. I have a list here, but I will just go through some of them.

One of the first things the present Prime Minister did was to have the Government of Canada expand the reference to the Supreme Court on same sex marriages, which of course will delay any Supreme Court decision by many months, possibly a year, because obviously he knows the same sex marriage issue creates a lot of problems on the government side, on his side of the House. That is an easy way to sweep that one under the carpet. He effectively did that.

In the Maher Arar case, he has asked for a public inquiry. Obviously, once he asks for a public inquiry, which he has, it basically shuts down debate on that issue in the House of Commons. In other words, we can no longer question the government on that.

Then, of course, there is the biggest one of all. This is more personal than anything else: Canada Steamship Lines. Until the Prime Minister gave it to his sons, which would not be an arm's length transaction, until he gave it free and clear to his sons, he was the sole owner of Canada Steamship Lines. One of the questions that our members put to the Prime Minister was the question of how many contracts CSL, the Prime Minister's own company, got from the Government of Canada. The answer from the Prime Minister came back: \$137,000.

● (1715)

We persisted and we wanted more. We knew that figure was not accurate. Finally last week the government coughed up what it believed to be the right answer but we are not sure. We found out that the number was not \$137,000 that the Prime Minister's shipping company received from the Government of Canada. The number was \$161 million. How could one miscalculate by over \$160 million? Only a Liberal could do that and get away with it.

The Prime Minister has effectively buried this one as well. He has asked the Auditor General to investigate those numbers and find out what the real number is.

Our leader suggested that he pick up the telephone and call his two sons who now own the company outright and ask them what that figure would be. Canada Steamship Lines brags, and I think it does have bragging rights because it has very modern, up to date, good computer systems and with one press of a button on that computer system they could tell us today what that number is. The Auditor General does not need to spend months to come up with that number. That is another one that the Prime Minister is trying to duck because the figure is embarrassing and it is going to cost the government popular support.

*Government Orders*

It is interesting. The Prime Minister was asked when did he realize that figure was wrong. In other words why the figure of \$137,000, Prime Minister? He should have known that it would be more than that. When did he know that it was more than that? He said, "It was a number of months ago, but I was sort of tied up in a leadership race so I didn't say anything about it". Is it not conceivable that the outcome of that Liberal leadership race might have been different if card-carrying Liberals had known that this man, the Prime Minister of Canada, had received \$161 million in contracts from the Government of Canada? He tried to cover that up until the leadership race was over.

If I were Mr. Rock sitting down in New York in a new job, I would be a little annoyed by that, as would be the member for Hamilton East who was a contestant in that leadership race. He had an unfair advantage and he took advantage of it because he did not want the truth to come out. He has effectively buried that one.

Now the burying job of all burying jobs came about today when the Auditor General reported on the sponsorship program. By the way, that is the sponsorship program where the Government of Canada wasted, it basically threw a way \$250 million of taxpayers' money on work that was never performed or work that was given to the government's political cronies with no accounting mechanisms in place.

We asked the Prime Minister about this one today. In fact the question was put to him by reporters before he came to the chamber, which is the insult of all insults to this chamber. He should have been here explaining to the House what he knew about the sponsorship program. One of the journalists was clever enough to ask, "Prime Minister, how could the Government of Canada spend that kind of money and you not know about it?" He said, "You know, that kind of detail kind of gets lost in government".

Everyone says that the Prime Minister is a policy wonk. He fancies himself as being a master at detail. How could that escape the attention of, today's Prime Minister, the former finance minister and also vice-chair of the Treasury Board when he in fact is the man that determines what programs get funded and which ones do not? That \$250 million is still a lot of change.

This is intolerable when that kind of government money is basically wasted and those kinds of contracts are given out without close scrutiny. The Prime Minister today said, "Those responsible will be held to account". He is only talking about the bureaucracy. He is not talking about his own Liberal cronies who are sitting right there supporting him through the thick of all of this and who sat with him in cabinet when they allowed these decisions to be made.

• (1720)

If there is anyone to be recalled or held to account, it should be the Prime Minister of Canada. There is no way that he did not know what was going on with those sponsorship programs.

The insult of all insults in terms of intelligence and what the Prime Minister expects us and the Canadian public to believe is that this was happening in his home city of Montreal. That is where most of the contracts were given out. His old friend Mr. Gagliano is obviously the fall guy. I guess he was the man who orchestrated it. He will be back in Ottawa, I guess. He is coming back under protest

obviously. It will certainly be interesting to hear what he has to say about this when he rats on the Prime Minister and what the Prime Minister and his people knew at the cabinet table with regard to this boondoggle of all boondoggles. There is no end to it.

One other point the Auditor General brought out today was the hurry up purchase of two Challenger jets. That only cost the Government of Canada \$100 million. The interesting thing about that is the minister of defence and his staff said that we did not need them because the current fleet of Challenger jets are operating at something like 99.1% efficiency and dependability. That is almost better than your car, Mr. Speaker. When the Prime Minister of Canada wants to get on one of those jets and take off, 99 times out of 100 there will not be one single problem with those jets.

The government made that decision. That decision was made when the present Prime Minister was vice-chair of the Treasury Board and finance minister. Within 24 hours that decision to purchase \$100 million in jets was made and the Government of Canada, according to its own sources, did not need them. The government simply wanted it done. Worst of all, it was not a contracted bid. It was a sole source bid. The bid went to the government's friends again and to no one else.

This is what the motion to reinstate bills is all about. Simply put, the Prime Minister does not want to be around the House to talk about all the things that are going to come back to haunt him and his government. The Prime Minister does not want to take any responsibility for his own actions as finance minister, as vice-chair of the Treasury Board and even as Prime Minister today, because the buck stops at his desk now.

It is hard to believe that the Prime Minister of Canada could stand in his place and pretend that he had no idea of what was going on, none. In fact, about a week ago there was that public forum, and I am sure the Prime Minister is thanking CBC for the free advertising. During that public policy forum or encounter with the Prime Minister last week, a question was put to the Prime Minister by a woman who I believe was from western Canada. She asked, "Prime Minister, why did you not do something about that?" Believe it or not, he stood in his place and said, "Only when I became Prime Minister of Canada did I really have my hands on the levers of power that I could actually get the right answers".

There would not be one member of Parliament even on the government side that would believe that. As an individual member of Parliament, just about every one of us on this side has spoken to or written to the Auditor General when we have seen something wrong. When something stinks, we have the power to do something about it. What does the Prime Minister of Canada do? He simply covers his tracks and pretends it was not happening.

**An hon. member:** See no evil, hear no evil.

**Mr. Greg Thompson:** See no evil, hear no evil and so on.

That again is the reason the Prime Minister wants the legislation passed. He wants to get out of this place. He does not like the scrutiny of question period. He has no tolerance for that.

*Private Members' Business*

● (1725)

Basically, the Prime Minister wants an early election and if he gets his way on this, think about it. If this does pass and he does get the early election call, it means that the new Conservative Party of Canada will have just gone through a leadership race. We will have had exactly two weeks after selecting a new leader to come up with the party policies and platforms on which to run in an election campaign. There is nothing like leaving the opposition at a tremendous disadvantage. No prime minister in Canada has ever done that; prime ministers have always considered the other party.

There has to be a level of fairness in this place. I have asked the Prime Minister of Canada to rethink this and to allow us to debate again some of the measures in some of the bills that should not be automatically passed by the House.

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1730)

[English]

**SOFTWOOD LUMBER****Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government, in the context of the softwood lumber dispute with the United States, should: (a) negotiate an end to the United States' countervailing duty process by replacing this United States trade remedy with one which either focuses on net subsidies—taking into account tax-free bonds, sales tax abatements, property tax reductions, investment tax credits and energy co-generation agreements—which are available in the United States at the state and local government levels, or that focuses exclusively on whether or not policies in Canada and elsewhere are anti-competitive in nature; and (b) that, in addition to the foregoing, the government should launch negotiations with the United States' government with a view to eliminating tax competition, in particular manufacturing subsidies, which is ongoing between Canada and the United States.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for the long, rambling motion, but the rules of the House say it has to be in one sentence, so I tried to be as creative as I could be.

I am very pleased to speak to my motion today. Motion No. 397 is motivated by an extreme frustration with the U.S. countervailing duty process, particularly in the context of the continuing softwood lumber dispute. The motion also arises from my conviction that there is a certain hypocrisy and irrationality associated with the current U.S. countervailing duty process and my conviction that there must be a better way.

The sad irony is that the current softwood lumber tariff of 27% has caused sawmills in Canada to increase their production in an effort to lower unit costs. This has resulted in an oversupply situation and lower prices for everyone.

For almost 25 years softwood lumber producers in the United States have sought action by the U.S. government to restrict trade in softwood lumber from Canada. It seems to me that this dispute has less to do with subsidies and more to do with market share. I do not

accept the notion that Canada's softwood lumber industry is subsidized.

Lumber I, as it is now affectionately referred to, was launched in 1982 and ended in 1983 with the U.S. Department of Commerce concluding that stumpage did not confer a countervailable subsidy. Lumber II began in 1986 and ended with a memorandum of understanding between Canada and the United States which provided for the levy of a 15% lumber export tax by Canada. This charge was eliminated for British Columbia and reduced in stages for Quebec from 15% to 3.1%. In 1991 Lumber III began, leading to a ruling by the U.S. Department of Commerce in 1992 that stumpage and log export restrictions were not countervailable subsidies.

[Translation]

In 1996, in the search for trade peace, Canada and the United States finalized an agreement on softwood lumber covering the five year period to March 31, 2001.

Essentially, this agreement called for managed trade in softwood lumber, limiting exports from Canada through quotas.

[English]

Here we are again in lumber IV, to which has been added an anti-dumping duty petition.

The reality is that should Canada succeed in its arguments, a new countervailing duty process could be launched the very next day producing lumber V and an unlimited number beyond that.

Naturally, elected officials on both sides of the border are concerned about forest industry competitiveness and jobs in their respective communities, and so we should be. I remember talking to a U.S. senator who said that there would be ways in which the U.S. government or state governments could help forest workers in the United States who had to change from logging and sawmilling to other types of industries. That has happened in Canada and in the United States. It happened in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, when it changed from commodity steel mills to information technology.

However we know who the big winners are in a continuing softwood lumber dispute; none other than the trade lawyers and lobbyists in Washington, D.C., in Vancouver and in Ottawa. Who are the losers? First time homebuyers in the United States lose out because the cost of a typical new home increases by some \$1,000 U.S. to \$1,500 U.S. Sawmilling communities in Canada suffer as a result of layoffs, mill closures and the uncertainty that surrounds these disputes. In addition, many jobs in urban Canada that are there because of jobs in the resource economy across Canada.

The most negative impact of these softwood lumber disputes, however, is, in my judgment, on Canada-U.S. relations. We consider ourselves good friends and neighbours with the U.S.A., but most Canadians view the softwood lumber process as unfair and biased in favour of the United States. How many times do we have to win the argument in front of an objective panel that we do not subsidize our lumber before the issue goes away? We want a fair process and we do not have one now.

Trade in lumber as well as other major trade irritants in areas such as agriculture, cloud our otherwise very positive relationship. As Canada's former ambassador to the U.S.A., Allan Gotlieb, noted recently:

While trade between [Canada and the United States] has now more than doubled thanks to the Free Trade Agreement and most of it is non-contentious, the number and seriousness of trade disputes has nevertheless remained high, the mode of settling them relatively primitive and the cost to the relationship substantial.

At the heart of this misunderstanding between Canada and the United States on softwood lumber are four major factors: First, the structural differences between the forestry industry in Canada and that in the U.S.A.; second, a certain hypocrisy perhaps on both sides on the role and nature of subsidies; three, different perspectives on the efficiency of markets; and four, flaws in the countervailing duty process, certainly from a Canadian perspective.

First, let us briefly look at the structural differences.

The U.S. forest industry derives the majority of its raw log material from private lands. In Canada the reverse is true in that most timber is held and managed on public lands.

• (1735)

[Translation]

Could more timber be auctioned under our system? Of course it could. What would the impact on timber prices be? We might very well find that timber prices will decrease for reasons I would be pleased to elaborate on. How would U.S. producers react if that happens? They will have achieved the exact opposite result from that which was intended. Another countervailing duty process will undoubtedly follow.

[English]

Let me turn now to the hypocrisy of subsidies. First, earlier I mentioned agricultural subsidies. Canada's grain and oilseed farmers are currently getting mauled as a result of escalating agricultural subsidies in the U.S.A. and Europe which amount to some \$350 billion U.S. each year. It would appear that there are some subsidies in the U.S.A. that our American friends believe are a good thing.

Second, a forest products company in Canada today can build a sawmill, a panel board mill or a pulp mill in the U.S.A. at a 20% to 30% discount when compared with the capital costs of a similar mill in Canada, even after taking into account our current exchange rate.

How can this be, one might well ask. The answer is very simple. It boils down to a whole array of incentives that are available at the state and local government level in the United States that are not available in Canada. These are incentives, or subsidies, like sales tax abatements, property tax reductions, tax free bonds, investment tax credits, cheap industrial land, favourable energy cogeneration agreements, and the list goes on.

### *Private Members' Business*

I know from experience, having worked in the forest sector and having travelled to states like Tennessee, Mississippi and Georgia, that they will offer the kitchen sink for someone to set up their plant there.

These packages are not limited to the forest products sector. A recently announced greenfield automotive plant in the state of Georgia attracted \$320 million in government assistance out of a total plant investment of \$750 million. This represents over 42% of the total plant investment in subsidies.

A December 2002 Industry Canada report highlights many other such examples: in 2002, a Ford plant in Ohio, 48% of its capital costs were subsidized at the state and local government level; in 2002 a Ford plant in Michigan, 20% of the plant investment was subsidized at the state and local government level; in 2002, a Hyundai plant in Alabama, 25% subsidized; in 2002, a Honda plant in Alabama, 21% subsidized. In 2001, a Toyota plant in Alabama was 13% subsidized; in 2000, a Ford plant in Michigan, 11% subsidized; in 2000, a GM plant in Michigan, 28% subsidized. The list goes on with over 20 other examples going back to 1980, with subsidies reaching, in one case in Alabama, 67% of the total plant investment. These are the people who are talking about our alleged subsidies in softwood lumber.

This harmful tax competition creates a rush to the bottom and should be the subject of a discussion between Canada and the United States. These practices should be phased out because government revenues are being eroded as different jurisdictions try to give away more than the other in the hope of attracting investment and jobs. This negotiation is what part (b) of Motion No. 397 calls for.

Under U.S. countervailing duty law, all that we can do in Canada is defend our system. The way the countervailing duty law is structured, we are not permitted the opportunity to highlight subsidies in the U.S.A. Besides, the U.S. administration in Washington argues that it has no control over states and local governments. Is that not convenient?

Now to the issue of the power of markets. We are told in Canada that our pricing system is artificial. We should let the markets decide by moving to a system under which a much greater volume of timber is subject to auction. On this point, let me be the devil's advocate for a moment.

While I am a great believer in the markets, was it not these very same markets that caused the high tech NASDAQ bubble to build and then burst not too long ago, primarily because stock prices in many cases bore no relationship to economic reality? Now we are being told that the market is going to determine the perfect price for softwood lumber or for logs in Canada.

*Private Members' Business*

Could it be that the prices bid for timber in states like Washington and Oregon are higher than they should be from the perspective of sound economics as a result of speculative pricing induced by environmental pressures, for example, large tracts of land being set aside to create habitat areas for endangered species like the spotted owl?

Could it be that Canada has a comparative advantage in softwood lumber? Heaven forbid. We have some of the most productive and efficient mills in the world, a resource of logs and energy second to none and a worldclass workforce. Would it be too much to ask our American neighbours, that while we may not be able to beat them in sectors like defence systems and IT, we might have an advantage over them in products like softwood lumber? Would that be too hard for them to grasp?

• (1740)

I would like to turn my attention briefly to the countervailing duty process. U.S. trade laws are skewed in favour of U.S. interests. This perhaps should not be surprising. Following the losses by the U.S. lumber producers in 1983 and again in 1992, I was told, on very good authority, that U.S. trade laws were tweaked to achieve a better result the next time around. So they are going to keep trying and trying.

As I said before, the countervailing duty process, as it relates to softwood lumber, is flawed in that only alleged subsidies in Canada come under the microscope, and do they ever come under the microscope. Boxloads are sent to the U.S. department of commerce. What about U.S. subsidies at the state and local government level, like the ones I spoke of earlier? Why should we only be permitted to defend our system and not take into account practices in the U.S.A., like the low cost sales by the U.S. forest service, by auction sales in the United States where the buyers have been let off the hook when they realize the price is not economic?

Are there alternatives to the current countervailing duty process? Yes, there are, but it will take political will, particularly from U.S. congressmen and women and U.S. senators.

Part (a) of Motion No. 397 calls upon our government to negotiate an end to the U.S. countervailing duty process. Members in the House and in the other place could assist with such an initiative.

For starters, the process could be changed such that a countervailing duty process could not be re-launched repeatedly. The principle of "three strikes and you're out" should become the norm.

More far-reaching solutions offer the greatest potential however.

First, concepts, like net subsidy, would allow a countervailing duty process to be launched if it was reasonably alleged that there was a net subsidy difference that exceeded a prescribed *de minimis*. With this approach, any applicable U.S. industry subsidies would be scrutinized also.

Second, the countervailing duty process could be scrapped altogether and all trade disputes examined from the sole perspective of competition policy. In other words, if price collusion, price fixing or cartel-like behaviour was involved they could launch their countervailing duty process.

A third approach would be to have all Canada-U.S.A. trade disputes automatically fast-tracked through an independent and objective agency, an organization like the International Joint Commission.

I believe that Canada and the United States need to work together along the lines suggested by former Ambassador Gotlieb, one that reflects today's realities and that respects our differences as well as our common interests and cultures, a bargain that covers important bilateral public policies like defence, border security, energy and trade.

I am confident we can leave behind many of the irritants and move forward positively with our neighbours to the south.

**Hon. John Harvard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thought I would offer a couple of questions to my hon. colleague who just gave his speech.

My first question to him would be this. Why would the United States of America be interested in negotiating such a net subsidy scheme?

My second question would be this. What kind of mechanism and who would be involved in the mechanism, in the calculation of determining any net subsidy?

• (1745)

**Mr. Roy Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, in answer to my colleague from the Winnipeg area, net subsidies is not a new concept. It has been around for some time. It has been on the table at Doha and during other rounds of trade talks. However, the member is right. The problem is getting the Americans to agree to it, which is why I think that if we were to try to deal with that one issue exclusively we would not make any progress. We have to deal with it comprehensively. We have to deal with it as part of a new deal with our American neighbours, where we would look at energy policy, at our border differences, at the issues as a result of 9/11, at our military capacities and at how we could work collaboratively with the Americans.

However, on its own, no, we have no chance. It has been on the table and the Americans have rejected it, which is why we need a new deal. We need to put it among a whole basket of issues with the Americans where perhaps we could be doing certain things better or they could be doing things better, one of those being alternatives to countervailing duties, the way the process is struck today.

However it will require the will of U.S. congressmen and women and senators, which is why more dialogue between people in this House and in the Senate with our colleagues in the United States is absolutely critical to breaking break down some of the barriers that are causing a lot of frustration and harm in our relationship.

*Private Members' Business*

**Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Motion No. 397 sponsored by the member for Etobicoke North. I know that he has done a lot of work in this area and has some background. It is a well-intentioned motion, but it is basically just tinkering at the edges and I will make the case why I believe that.

The member gave a pretty good analysis of the longstanding problem of softwood lumber disputes with the United States. He talked about the subsidy game and the need for the net subsidy analysis. It reminded me that we are not so innocent in Canada either.

The Liberal government has been involved in subsidies right up to its eyeballs. The current Prime Minister and the debate that has been going on over the last little while is partly because of that. His own private company, Canada Steamship Lines, has been getting money from Industry Canada. Companies like General Electric, Pratt & Whitney, and Bombardier receive hundreds of millions of dollars in subsidies every year from the government. I do not believe that is right.

The motions seeks to direct government to negotiate with the United States a net subsidy regime to replace the current American countervailing duty process. In addition, the motion calls on the government to seek an agreement with the U.S. to eliminate cross-border tax competition.

I know it is well intended, but it bothers me when a Liberal gets up and talks about seeking to eliminate tax competition. It worries me because it seems to me that what the government is trying to do is to get other countries to raise their taxes to the levels of ours so that we can have the same kind of basis. The pressure should be to lower taxes because competition is a good thing.

The preamble to the motion makes it clear that these are industry specific recommendations, namely to help a struggling Canadian softwood lumber industry. Currently, when Canada responds to a U.S. countervail action and the imposing duties to offset the so-called unfair subsidies at NAFTA and the WTO, American subsidies to American-like industries are not taken into account. The aim of this motion is to ensure that the whole picture would be considered by allowing Canada to balance our subsidies with those supplied by the country launching the trade action.

Theoretically, if both sets of subsidies were found to be roughly the same in value, there would be no countervailing duty imposed at the end of the investigation. That is what I believe my colleague intends. It should be noted that Canada has attempted to establish this net subsidy method for calculating potential countervailing duties before within the dispute settlement regimes at both the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement and Uruguay round. However, it failed. Canada is currently pursuing that at the World Trade Organization and suggested it at the Doha round.

On the surface the net subsidy approach seems to make sense and seems like a good idea. But if, as in the case of softwood lumber, the U.S. is taking Canadian provincial government policies into account, American subsidies, even at the municipal and state level of government, could also be calculated and put into context.

On the surface Motion No. 397 appears to be a positive step on the road to dismantling U.S. trade laws which I would argue is the only way to end the harassment of Canadian industries by U.S. competitors. I would suggest as well that the American trade law has been one long process of engaging us and costing us a considerable amount of money.

As long as the U.S. has the ability to use the U.S. trade law tools, which are currently available to it, a sustained period of peace is highly improbable. However, it seems to me that Motion No. 397 will not dismantle U.S. trade law but only make it more complicated. It seems to me that it would be better to dismantle trade law within the economic free trade zone of Canada, United States and Mexico.

We should focus on getting rid of the countervail trade law and the anti-dumping trade law altogether. I do not think there is a place for it. It does not happen within provincial governments and the federal government. It does not happen across Canada. It does not happen internally within the United States. It does not even happen within the European Union that has 15 member countries, soon to expand to 25. The reason it does not happen is that it is antiquated. It is used as harassment.

• (1750)

The devil, however, in the approach that my colleague has taken us, is in the details. For example, if the U.S. department of commerce investigative panel were required to measure like products to calculate and measure subsidies, the determinations regarding definitions, scope, inclusions and exclusions would all become critical. It would be a very complicated process. It would become more convoluted and time consuming than the one we already have.

The only way to achieve fundamental concessions from our southern neighbours would be to reopen NAFTA. However, we have to offer something as well. We cannot only go with our own shopping list and say this is what we want, and that we are not prepared to offer anything. We must offer up some major concessions as well.

Pursuing a net subsidy method at the World Trade Organization or at NAFTA may not fare any better than past attempts. It is fair to say that we have a better chance in our litigation process and I think it should run its course.

The Liberal government and the trade minister have been making comments suggesting that we should negotiate another big process similar to the supply managed products on milk and butter, a supply managed deal on trade. We had it once before and it did not work. He is suggesting we go back to it.

I say stay the course on litigation. The NAFTA panel will report here in March and I think it will be favourable to Canada. I do not understand at all why the member or the government would want to shortcut that process and bypass it.

*Private Members' Business*

I want to deal with one comment that my colleague made in his speech. He said that the markets cannot be trusted. That really bothers me. We have built economies in North America and in Europe based on a market approach. It says a lot about the Liberal approach to governing, which is to control and interfere with the free market.

I suggest that the markets can be trusted. Certainly, we have obligations to be the steward for our people in Canada and put rules around them. I think they should be minimal. I think Adam Smith would be rolling over in his grave today to hear the member for Etobicoke North talk about markets not being trusted.

I suggest that it is the artificial barriers that have been put in the way of the markets that have allowed the kind of harassment to happen by the U.S. lumber interests. Trade laws were introduced by Canada 100 years ago. They have not always been in our own interest. I would suggest that in an economic free trade zone, such as we have and would like to develop further between Canada, the United States and Mexico, that we should be putting away these tools from the past. We should let the market operate.

I believe, as does the member, that our softwood lumber industry can compete on the basis of production and kick their butt down there. I believe the same thing in agriculture. We must get away from the subsidy game and negotiate these trade rules at the World Trade Organization, but the market needs to be allowed to operate. If the market were free of subsidies and free of these kind of policies that are used for harassment, I believe that Canada would win hands down.

In respect to the dispute over softwood lumber, the Canadian government should stick to its guns, stay the course of NAFTA and stay the course at the World Trade Organization. I think it is working for us. Negotiating a deal or tinkering with the process before the binding NAFTA panel has had its final say would be irresponsible and be a great disservice to the Canadian industry.

While I appreciate the member's good intentions in this, I do not believe that that is the route we should go to try to resolve these problems. We should enter into a process where we try to negotiate away this redundant policy on trade law.

Let us examine the anti-dumping portion of it for a moment. I know we only basically talked about countervail. Anti-dumping means selling below the cost of production. What is wrong with that?

Let me use the cattle industry as an example. A feedlot operator buys cattle at about 1,000 pounds, or he does not buy them these days because things are not working, but traditionally he buys them at about 1,000 pounds. Say he paid \$1.25 per pound. He then puts those animals in the feedlot and puts on about 200 or 300 pounds weight gain. If the market moves against that individual and he sells them for \$1 a pound, that is the chance that he takes.

● (1755)

Technically he is selling below the cost of production. What is wrong with that? That is all part of the market. I think that this policy with anti-dumping and countervail is very redundant. Tinkering at the edges will not do it. We need to scrap it all together.

However, in order to do that I want to conclude by saying that it means that willing partners must negotiate this. Canada must come to the table and offer up some things that we have had as sacred cows for a long time that we should be willing to accept as a result of trade negotiations.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ)** Mr. Speaker, I would like to read the motion put forward by the hon. member, because it is made up of two parts which deserve to be considered as such. Motion M-397 reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government, in the context of the softwood lumber dispute with the United States, should: (a) negotiate an end to the United States' countervailing duty process by replacing this United States trade remedy with one which either focuses on net subsidies—taking into account tax-free bonds, sales tax abatements, property tax reductions, investment tax credits and energy co-generation agreements—which are available in the United States at the state and local government levels, or that focuses exclusively on whether or not policies in Canada and elsewhere are anti-competitive in nature; and (b) that, in addition to the foregoing, the government should launch negotiations with the United States government with a view to eliminating tax competition, in particular manufacturing subsidies, which is ongoing between Canada and the United States.

As the House can see, the motion is made up of two distinct parts. Part *a*, in which the government is asked to convince the United States to put an end to their countervailing duties by pointing out that the Americans themselves are funding the softwood lumber industry, deserves our attention. Everybody in this House would agree that the U.S. industry enjoys benefits that the Quebec and Canadian industry is denied.

For instance, forestry roads are built by private companies in Canada, but by the state and sometimes even the army in the United States. I could list other tax measures. For example, the U.S. softwood lumber industry enjoys tax holidays, jobs grant programs, shared capital cost programs.

We could also mention the clear cutting programs brought forward by the Bush administration to promote strip felling in an attempt to avoid forest fires, while our industry has to meet costly reforestation requirements.

By the way, I think it is important to mention that the sawmill industry benefits from several funding programs covering new investments in a number of New England states, particularly in Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire.

For example, there are programs that offer feasibility studies, tax holidays, employment tax credits and all sorts of other measures that are forms of subsidies. For that matter, the development agencies of these states frequently come to Canada and Quebec soliciting investments in their country.

It is clear that if we take into account all these factors, we can conclude that the countervailing duties imposed by Washington are unjustified and that we are totally right to challenge them. And, as you know, the challenge is based on WTO and NAFTA rules.

Confirming, as it were, the arguments raised by the member in the first part of this motion, the WTO as well the NAFTA secretariat concluded that not only was the American industry not suffering from Canadian imports, but that there was not even any threat that it would in the foreseeable future.

In fact, if both bodies—NAFTA particularly since, as you know, its decisions are enforceable in American law—maintain their position, the United States will have to withdraw its countervailing duties as well as its antidumping rights.

Until that happens, it would have been important to add to the motion the aid package that we have been demanding for close to two years, so that the industry can survive until the end of the legal proceedings.

It should be noted that neither of the two organizations I mentioned, the WTO and the NAFTA secretariat, recognizes the net subsidies mechanism, which consists in subtracting the subsidies of the exporting country from those of the importing country to determine countervailing duties. Let me remind this House that the United States opposed this mechanism. Nothing suggests that they are ready to support it at this time, especially since negotiations are at a standstill at the WTO and in the FTAA process.

We should keep in mind that the concept of net subsidies was examined during the Uruguay round but to no avail, because the United States and several other countries opposed it. Even if, at first glance, it seems attractive and logical, this approach is fraught with technical difficulties that would make its implementation problematic.

The subsidies granted upstream and the transfer of benefits to products downstream are a good example. Some examples are pork meat, live hog and corn. I could also have talked about international shipping, but that would have taken us away from our main focus.

• (1800)

From a political standpoint, I doubt that Canada can convince the United States that it should negotiate such an approach bilaterally because all the other countries together did not succeed in this respect during the last multilateral negotiations.

Although I agree with the previous speaker and the member that the motion stems from a good intention, I would be very surprised if such a motion were enough of a catalyst to influence the Americans or provoke any sort of reaction on the part of the American industry or the American administration.

As I said before, the important thing is that, meanwhile, the increasing value of the Canadian dollar as compared to the US dollar, and the continued imposition of punitive taxes on our exports—some 27.22 % on average—have become much more intolerable for our Canadian industry. Several of our producers are quickly approaching the breaking point because their financial burden is increasingly unbearable.

As I said, in the short term, what we need is a government program to help the producers, as we have been requesting since April 2001. This would take some of the load off the industry and help it survive until the conclusion of legal proceedings.

### *Private Members' Business*

It is also important to point out that this aid package, whose first phase was announced, and whose second phase we are still waiting for, may be a very important element in the power struggle between Canada and the United States to get the American industry and administration to negotiate a full return to free trade. It is important for industry and government to collaborate closely, not only in order to have a program that meets the needs of the industry, but also to be more able to use it as a lever in the current dispute.

As for the first part of the motion, it does show good intentions, but we think it is impractical and has no impact on the current conflict. In contrast, part (b) of the motion is completely unacceptable to us. It reads as follows:

—eliminating tax competition, in particular manufacturing subsidies, which is ongoing between Canada and the United States.

The intent is certainly interesting, but it is clear that in this case it would lead us to tax harmonization between Canada and the United States, especially in the context where the Bush administration has entered a tax reduction phase, to the point of endangering American public financing, and even the stability of international finance. It seems to me that Canada cannot embark upon this course of action.

Second, the Bloc Québécois is, naturally, extremely wary when it comes to mandating the federal government to harmonize taxation, which would also include provincial taxation. This seems to us to be extremely dangerous.

The third element I would like to discuss in relation to part (b) is that the motion presents even greater difficulties than net subsidies. We only need think of the overlap of taxes and the tax incentives of all kinds coming from all levels of government, especially in countries with a federal structure like Canada's—and this, by the way, is one of the reasons we want to get out—to imagine the obstacles to the feasibility of implementing the second part of the hon. member's motion.

Of course, this means giving up a great deal of sovereignty. I would like to remind members that the European Union just started its tax harmonization process. Imagine how different Canada and the United States are, and the various tax systems in the Canadian provinces and the American States.

In Quebec, the government is playing an important role that has allowed us to catch up remarkably well, even if we have not been able to close the gap between us and Ontario and the United States in particular. Still, we have made a lot of progress in the last 30 or 40 years. It has not been easy. We had to use tax incentives, particularly in the area of research and development. We also had help from major economic institutions of the government, like the Société générale de financement, the Caisse de dépôt and Investissements Québec. There were also tax incentives to the start businesses in designated areas to promote regional development. The Quebec government also supported the establishment of substantial venture capital reserves.

*Private Members' Business*

•(1805)

I have personally worked toward the establishment of one of those mediums, the Fondation venture capital, which is sponsored by the Confédération des syndicats nationaux and which operates like the FTQ solidarity fund. I would like to take this opportunity to remind all Quebecers in this RRSP contribution period that it is very important to invest in these venture capital funds to promote employment maintenance and development.

Such involvement of the state in the economy, during the quiet revolution, helped Quebec get out of its underdeveloped position and start catching up. Much remains to be done. We do not want to risk it all for the sake of tax harmonization.

For these reasons, I will vote against Motion M-397 and call upon my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois to vote against this motion while acknowledging once again that it was well intended, as far as part (a) is concerned. However, I believe that it is completely useless.

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Etobicoke North for bringing the subject and interests of softwood lumber to the House, although I wish today we had been talking about it in an emergency debate. The Speaker's ruling, which declined the request, was most unfortunate. I think this is one of the more serious issues facing especially the rural and regional parts of Canada.

I have a few concerns with the member's motion. There were media reports almost a month ago that the trade minister was going to enter into a quota deal with the Americans and that he was trying to encourage softwood lumber producers in the provinces to get in on this deal. We really do not know if he was doing that because the comments were through the media. The biggest problem Atlantic Canada has with that is it would be buried under any kind of a pan-Canadian solution when it came to the quota system.

British Columbia, for example, would argue that it would be entitled to 50% of that quota. That means the other 50% of the quota would go from Alberta to Newfoundland, and that would simply be unjustified. Instead of fighting with the United States, we would be fighting among provinces. That is something we would fundamentally oppose.

As well, the hon. member knows that close to 80% of all lumber cut in the maritime region is cut on private land. We have always been exempt under the Maritime accord when it comes to duties and tariffs, as compared other provinces, from Quebec to B.C. To lump us into a pan-Canadian solution would be very detrimental to the people of Atlantic Canada.

Diana Blenkhorn of the Maritime Lumber Bureau, which represents the lumber producing industry within the Maritime provinces, has been dead set against the initial quota deal. To achieve some sort of semblance of its industry and to get things moving, it would probably accept something which would entitle it to a lot more board feed into the United States. The danger of that is we would let the United States off the hook in terms of what we would do with the \$2 billion that have already been collected.

It is not often I agree with the Conservative Party, but we would agree that the government should exhaust all legal concerns prior to going forward with any kind of a deal.

This motion is a little premature because we need to exhaust every legal recourse that we have at our disposal. We met, and I am sure the member for Etobicoke North has met also, with various lumber producers and home building associations in the United States. They have been encouraging us to hold tight and be steadfast in our determination in order to beat the Americans, I guess, in their countervailing ways. We have also been encouraged to have further dialogue and ensure that all legal concerns are met. They believe and we on this side of the House believe as well that we would win those legal battles and legal challenges.

Instead of the Americans getting almost 48% or 52% of the moneys already collected, they would get nothing. It is not theirs. That money was paid by lumber producers for their intents and purposes, and they deserve to get that money back. A lot of these companies are counting on that money to come back to them.

This is not the first time we have been in a legal battle with the United States. If I am not mistaken, this has been ongoing for many years. Every time the Americans are unable to compete with us on an open market, free trade basis, they stand up on their hind legs and slap on duties or tariffs, and we know why. We know the political pressure in the United States is extremely strong. The pressure that states like Mississippi and Tennessee put on their senators in congress and on people everywhere is very strong.

The American association we met with the other day indicated that close to 100 congressmen and congresswomen were onside with Canada's efforts to stop this. We know that the price of lumber in the United States has gone up, which raises the price for homes, and the consumers in the United States are the losers on this one.

The government entered into free trade and NAFTA talks in the eighties and nineties. There were sets of rules and parameters on this one.

•(1810)

The fact is that the United States just cannot get up every time we beat it at something, because we have better quality, a better workforce, better production, a better product and a better price. Because the Americans do not like it, they will stand up and say, "Whoa. Back up the truck. We're going to put this huge tariff on the Canadian industry because we're getting pressure from our own lumber producers".

The big question, which I do not think can be answered by anyone, is this one. Will the United States government, even if these legal challenges go through in Canada's favour, do anything about it in an election year? That is a good question. Would the U.S. government have the honour to accept what WTO or NAFTA would say in the final legal resolution of this, give the money back to Canada, reopen those borders on a free trade basis the way they should be—at least that is what we were led to believe—and allow these industries and their forest communities to continue their practices?

*Private Members' Business*

At the same time, we also have to ensure that Canada deals very openly with the provinces, and not just with the premiers of the provinces or the heads of those industries, but with labour groups, which are being left out of the conversation.

Why should small town mayors, small town business associations, small town chambers of commerce and labour representatives be left out of this discussion? They are the ones who have the most to lose in all of this: the workers in the mill, the guys cutting down the trees, and the small companies throughout all of British Columbia and for that matter right across the country. The forest industry in my home province of Nova Scotia employs a tremendous amount of people. They are hurting right now. They do not know what the future is going to hold.

Over the years we have asked the government to do a few things. While the legal challenges are on, we are asking that the government assist these companies and assist the provinces in dealing with their workforce, at the same time knowing that if we win—and I am sure we will although I know it is a bit of a risk—all that money will come back to the federal government. At least it would show the workers, their families and the communities that the federal government is on side with them, that we know we are right and the United States is wrong. Doing anything else other than that I think would be a little premature on this one.

So although there are some good elements in the motion the hon. member has presented, at this time we will not be able to fully support it. To repeat, we believe that all legal recourse must be exhausted first and that clear, open and transparent discussions should also be invoked, not with the provinces alone but also with the companies and with the labour representatives.

Also, we know full well that we have many friends on our side in the United States, representing millions of Americans. We are not alone on this one. We think it is a small minority of various companies and states within the U.S. that is putting terrific pressure on the political system in order to keep this going and make it that much more hurtful for our industries in the process.

Again, though, what we really require in the House is not just an hour-long discussion on softwood lumber. I think we need an emergency debate on this, so that Canadians from coast to coast can actually hear the debate. We on this side of the House really do not know, except through the media half the time, what the government's approach to all of this is. What is the government doing as of today on the softwood lumber file?

The finance minister was in the United States the other day, we understand. What discussions took place regarding this file? I know there are many other trade issues that the finance minister possibly talked about, but why are we left in the dark? Why are Canadians not aware of what discussions are taking place right now? We are the representatives of the people. I have six mills in my riding. They constantly ask me what the government is doing. I have to go back and somehow try to get hold of someone within the departments and ask, "What is going on?" I get the same bureaucratic answer.

I would really like to be able to go back to my riding and go back to the mills, their workers and their families and say, "This is exactly

what the government is going to be doing". Right now I cannot do that. That information is lacking, at best.

I want to thank the House very much for this opportunity to speak on behalf of my party on this very important issue. I thank the hon. member for his intent in the motion, but at this time we cannot support it until all legal recourse is done and we can get back to the table to negotiate a proper trade deal with the United States when it comes to issues of softwood lumber.

● (1815)

**Hon. John Harvard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, may I suggest to my hon. colleague from Nova Scotia that if he wants to know something about what the government is doing on this particular file he might want to listen to my remarks for the next five or ten minutes.

I thank the House for the opportunity to talk about the softwood lumber dispute in response to Motion No. 397 brought forward by the hon. member for Etobicoke North. Before going straight to the substance of the motion, let me begin by briefly updating the House on the status of the dispute.

As members are aware, Canada continues to pursue a two track strategy to resolve the softwood lumber dispute: legal challenges and negotiations with the United States. On the legal front, Canadian governments and industry are challenging the U.S. actions before the World Trade Organization and under the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Canada is involved in six cases dealing with U.S. allegations of dumping, subsidy, and threat of injury to the U.S. domestic lumber industry. Three of these cases are before NAFTA and three are at the WTO. In addition to these legal challenges, Canada is currently in the midst of two administrative review processes before the U.S. Department of Commerce.

In all three NAFTA cases, the panels have remanded critical issues in the U.S. determinations back to the United States. At the WTO panel, reports on anti-dumping and threat of injury are to be published in March. These will show that the U.S. duties are not in compliance with WTO rules.

In addition to these legal cases, the Government of Canada has spared no effort in working toward a negotiated settlement that would provide a durable, long term resolution of the dispute. This long term solution would involve an interim border measure that could replace the U.S. duties, pending changes in provincial forest management practices.

On December 6, the United States put forward a proposal that calls for a tariff rate quota equivalent to 31.5% of the U.S. market. The proposal was presented to the Canadian industry and provinces for comment. Provinces were strongly of the view that this proposal did not give us a sufficiently clear path to free trade in softwood lumber.

*Private Members' Business*

On January 12, 2004, Canada presented its concerns with respect to the latest proposal to its American counterparts. We believe they now have a better understanding of our position.

We will continue to consult closely with provinces and industry on what would be required to achieve a negotiated solution. The litigation before NAFTA and WTO panels is ongoing and will be pursued aggressively until and unless we achieve a negotiated settlement.

Let me reiterate that Canada will continue to work with all those involved to find a long term solution that will get us to free trade and that will benefit both Canadians and Americans. We remain in regular and close consultation with industry and the provinces.

Let me turn to the motion at hand. The hon. member is proposing that Canada negotiate an end to the United States' countervailing duty by replacing this U.S. trade remedy with one which is either based on the concept of a net subsidy or that focuses exclusively on whether or not economic development and investment policies in Canada and elsewhere are anti-competitive in nature.

It is important to state at the outset that there are serious practical implementation concerns with a net subsidy approach given that the measure is not provided for in either the WTO or the NAFTA. The first major concern is that there are no internationally set guidelines as to how the net subsidy amount would be calculated.

The hon. member is correct in stating that a net subsidy approach could provide some degree of relief to Canadian softwood lumber exporters in the form of a lower countervailing duty rate on shipments to the United States. Of course, this is assuming that an investigation would find the countervailable subsidies are benefiting the United States softwood lumber industry, and that the subsidies to U.S. lumber producers would be deducted from the countervailing duties imposed on exports of Canadian softwood lumber.

• (1820)

However, one might ask if embarking on such a negotiation would result in resolving the issues and practices currently being disputed by Canada and the United States.

It would be unlikely that the United States would consider adopting an approach that would implicitly acknowledge that it is providing countervailable subsidies to its lumber sector and that potentially could lead to a reduction in the countervailing duty rate imposed on imports of Canadian softwood lumber.

It is important to recall that U.S. actions in this dispute have been driven in large part by U.S. industry concerns over the volume of Canadian softwood lumber imports and the resulting impact on U.S. lumber prices and the bottom line of U.S. forest product companies. The U.S. industry alleges unfair practices by provincial governments with respect to forest management programs generally and crown timber pricing in particular.

Another technical concern lies in determining which investigating authority would be responsible for conducting the investigation to establish the new subsidy rate. For example, would American investigating authorities be responsible for investigating the amount of subsidy present in its own domestic industry or would that responsibility lie with Canadian investigating authorities? There

would undoubtedly be diverging views as to how such an investigation should proceed.

All of this is not to say that we ignore U.S. practices. The Canadian government monitors the U.S. subsidies to its industry via the WTO's trade policy review mechanism, which is conducted, in the case of the U.S., every two years. Should the Canadian industry feel that it is being injured or threatened with material injury by measure of U.S. subsidy programs, then it is well within its rights to request that an investigation be launched.

The two track approach of litigation and negotiations taken thus far is the result of extensive consultation with the provinces and the industry. Changing our course of action at this time would simply result in delaying the eventual resolution to the dispute. Furthermore, our current approach is aimed at eliminating both the countervailing and anti-dumping duties imposed on Canadian softwood lumber imports. Unfortunately, the proposals presented in the motion only address countervailing duties.

The hon. member is also of the opinion that the government should, in the context of the current softwood lumber dispute, launch negotiations with the U.S. government with a view to eliminating tax competition, in particular, manufacturing subsidies between our two countries.

A competitive tax system is a key factor contributing to economic growth. The government has taken major steps in ensuring that Canada's tax system remains internationally competitive. The five year tax reduction plan has created a Canadian tax advantage for investment by reducing the general corporate income tax rate from 28% in 2000 to 21% in 2004. The 2003 budget builds on the Canadian tax advantage by phasing out the federal capital tax by 2008 and extending the 21% corporate income tax rate to the resource sector.

Taxation is also called upon as an instrument to implement a range of economic and social objectives. Differences between the tax systems of two countries, as are readily apparent between the U.S. and Canada, result from a myriad of factors that reflect fundamental policy choices made by each country. To enable countries to make those policy choices, a certain degree of flexibility must be retained in designing their tax policies.

To attempt to eliminate tax competition between Canada and the U.S. by harmonizing the tax system would involve negotiations on several complex issues. In particular, to meet the stated objective, harmonization would also have to be achieved at the sub-national level, adding further delays or further layers of complexity to such negotiations which are far beyond the scope of the current softwood lumber dispute.

Moreover, the motion also assumes that the U.S., for its part, would be prepared to revisit aspects of its own tax policy for purposes of achieving harmonized tax rules with Canada. In fact, it cannot be taken for granted that the U.S. would wish to cooperate in such negotiations since it is not readily conceivable that the U.S. would consider it to be in its best interests to impose constraints on its tax policy.

Notwithstanding, coordination and cooperation among countries to reduce tax related distortions is desirable to the extent these distortions are harmful for global economic growth and long term welfare.

In closing, the proposals identified in the motion, while useful and stimulating debate toward finding innovative ways to resolve this long-standing dispute, would broaden significantly the scope of the disputes.

●(1825)

All of our efforts to date have been with the goal of working toward a solution that will provide unrestricted access to the U.S. market for the Canadian softwood lumber industry. We will continue to pursue that goal.

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### REINSTATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

The House resumed consideration of the motion, of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

**Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with careful attention to the opposition on the motion before us. It seemed as if they were replaying question period and bringing out a litany of accusations, accusations of all types levelled at the Prime Minister.

I think it would be fair to ask the question that Canadians who are listening to us right now would ask us. They would ask what is our function here if it is not to legislate and to enact laws for the public good? Who would dispute that Canadians expect us to spend our time in Parliament productively and proactively, and to pass the laws necessary for improving the lives of Canadians right across the country?

The opposition is treating the motion to reinstate government bills as if it were an unusual, unfair and inappropriate measure, yet it has been a common practice in the House for well over 30 years. The same procedure has now been adopted by the House to apply to private members' bills. That was the wish of all members of the House. The same practice has been used for a long time by the Parliament that served as the model for ours, the House of Commons of the United Kingdom.

### Government Orders

We should make it clear exactly what the motion intends to do, what it will do and what it will not do. It will not in any form derogate from the powers of members to debate. It will not in any way prejudice any of the prerogatives of the members and of the House itself.

What the motion really seeks to do is to allow ministers to apply to the Speaker within the first 30 days of a new session to have bills that died on the Order Paper reinstated at the same stage they were at when the old session ended. It is then up to the Speaker to decide if a given bill is the same as the one that existed in the old session and if it is, the Speaker can, if he wants, order it to be reinstated.

Reinstatement will not apply automatically to all bills, but only to those bills that have reached committee stage, that is to say, bills that have undergone a significant amount of study and debate prior to prorogation.

Reinstatement will not be automatic. Obviously there will be situations in which a minister may decide not to request reinstatement, or where he or she may decide that it was best to reintroduce the bill from the very beginning, or perhaps not reintroduce it at all. This is the reason the motion allows for all these possibilities and it is up to the minister to decide if an application for reinstatement will be made.

I mentioned earlier that the practice covered by the motion before us goes back more than 30 years. Indeed in 1970, 1972, 1974 and 1986 the House gave unanimous consent to motions to reinstate bills. It adopted a similar motion under a previous government in 1991. Similarly in 1977 and 1982 the House adopted amendments to the standing orders to carry over legislation to the next session. In the more recent past, in March 1996 to be precise, the House adopted a similar motion. As well, in October 1999 the House adopted a motion similar to the one before us today to allow it to carry on its work from a previous session.

●(1830)

Let us examine whether certain bills which are contemplated by the motion deserve to be reinstated or not. Can the opposition challenge the worth and necessity of the following bills?

There is the bill to create an independent ethics commissioner and Senate ethics officer. This is a measure that has been loudly clamoured for time and again by all opposition parties.

Another example is the bill dealing with the changes to the Patent Act and the Food and Drugs Act. The bill would make it easier for people in the developing world to get low cost pharmaceutical products to tackle malaria, HIV-AIDS and other epidemics. I ask members of the opposition if they are ready to challenge the necessity for a bill of this urgent nature to speed through the House as soon as it can. Should we put a bill of this urgent nature back into the system and reintroduce it from the beginning rather than pick it up where we left off before prorogation?

Another example is Bill C-49 which sought to speed up the implementation of new electoral boundaries so our constituencies would better reflect the social, cultural and demographic realities of a fast changing country, including additional ridings in places like B.C., Alberta and Ontario. This again is a measure the official opposition has clamoured for very loudly.

*Government Orders*

There are a number of other bills aimed at enhancing the security of our most vulnerable citizens.

Let me ask also, by insisting that we hold up these bills and reintroduce them from the very beginning of the parliamentary process, are we really helping the common good? Would it not be for the common good to speed the passage of these bills by reinstating them at the stage they were at when the last session of Parliament ended? The answer is obvious.

I started my political life in the opposition. I was in the opposition for nearly five years, so I know how it works. The opposition is there to probe, to criticize and to challenge the government at every facet of the government's day. That is what the opposition does and I think it is fair game that the opposition should do it.

At the same time, Canadians also have a right to hear the other side of every story. In this particular case Canadians who are listening to us should know that the other side of the story is that certain important bills such as the institution of an ethics commissioner responsible to Parliament and the special legal provision to accelerate getting pharmaceutical drugs to people with HIV-AIDS in developing countries, in Africa and elsewhere, are bills that need to be passed as soon as possible.

The irony is that these measures, especially that of the ethics commissioner, have been clamoured for the most loudly by the opposition who have been criticizing the ethics counsellor now responsible to the Prime Minister. When we want to institute it and we want to accelerate the passage of this bill through this motion, the opposition says no, that the motion is unfair, that it is a delaying tactic.

People will have to decide for themselves what is best, the delaying tactic of not moving the bills forward, or passing a motion that will reinstate bills which Canadians in all fairness would judge as appropriate, necessary and even urgent.

I leave the people who are listening to us to decide. I know they will decide that the motion is fair and that it is necessary to pass it as soon as possible.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on the motion on the reinstatement of government bills.

Finally, we are discussing the fact that, in November 2003, to the surprise of everyone, the government decided to suspend the deliberations of the House and to resume them in February, because there was a new Prime Minister of Canada and he would have new initiatives and new bills to present to us.

Today, the Liberals, and the member for Lac-Saint-Louis just did so, are asking why the opposition does not agree that all bills be reinstated immediately. Why does it not cooperate automatically to ensure that the bills that were discussed last fall can be revived, at the same stage that they were at, without any questions asked and by simply agreeing to this?

I would like to remind government members that they are the ones who suspended the deliberations of the House. They are the ones

who decided that all the bills that were on the Order Paper were no longer urgent enough to be debated. They decided to suspend the deliberations of the House.

This is true for the bill that would make it possible to provide drugs to southern countries, particularly for the treatment of AIDS. In this regard, the Bloc Québécois gave its support to deal with this bill as soon as possible so that people in developing countries could receive the services quickly. We will not oppose the reinstatement of this bill, of course.

However, the motion before us would also allow us to reinstate other bills, particularly one that is totally unacceptable to the Bloc Québécois, that is Bill C-49, whose purpose is to move up the effective date of the 2003 representation order.

To make this clear, it should be mentioned that the Election Act provides for the review of electoral boundaries after a number of years to reflect population movements. Ridings are redefined. Following the necessary consultations, non-partisan commissions determine the reallocation of boundaries. The new redistribution takes effect one year after these commissions have submitted their report.

Last fall, the Liberal government set aside the important principle of a non-partisan Election Act by asking that the effective date be April 1, 2004 instead of August 2004, as provided for in the Election Act.

Today, this is posing many problems. Since the government wants to move up the implementation date, we have problems with the fact that the bill is changing the names of some ridings and we also have problems with the enforcement of the new political party financing act. There is a lot of improvisation in all this as well and all that has negative consequences.

Why would we allow Bill C-49—and in this regard the amendment to the amendment presented by the Conservative Party of Canada is interesting—to be automatically reinstated when it is not at all in the interest of democracy in Quebec and in Canada and when it blatantly rejects the important principle of a non-partisan Election Act.

With the changes proposed in Bill C-49 being implemented at the beginning of April, the Prime minister will be able to call an election for early May, while the initial legislation would have given all political parties a whole year to get ready and would have given Canadian citizens the time to get to know what riding they will now belong to. It would be a much more reasonable period.

Today, when the government tells us that we have to reintroduce the bills at the stage they were before prorogation, it is the opposition's prerogative to object, particularly when we know that this will be detrimental to the quality of democracy, as can be seen with Bill C-49.

The Bloc Québécois denounces the flagrant absence of integrity on the part of the federal government in connection with this bill as it prepares to advance the Prime Minister's personal agenda.

Today, on this black day for the parliamentary process and for Canada since the beginning of its history, the Auditor General has unveiled a situation that is totally unacceptable.

*Government Orders*

● (1840)

Indeed, a government sponsorship program was used to divert funds to advertising agencies. The money was also used to carry out polls that only served political purposes.

We have yet to find a solution to this problem. On the other side, there are still a lot of members who were sitting here during all that time. We even have a Prime Minister who was finance minister at the time. We are not talking about just any department or just any member of Parliament, but rather about the second most senior cabinet member after the Prime Minister. He complacently told us, in a press conference, that he was not aware of the situation.

Today, we have a good reason not to want Bill C-49 to be reinstated at the stage it had reached at the time of prorogation. Where that bill is concerned, if there is one thing we must do in the months to come it is to take whatever time is needed to shed some light on this sponsorship fiasco.

It made a mockery of our democracy. We need to go to the bottom of the issue. For instance, are the advertising agencies who illegally pocketed the money not friends of the Liberal Party of Canada and did they not use some of the money to make contributions to that party?

It is a whole patronage scheme that was brought to light here. The auditor general said today that she has never seen such a thing before. We are faced with an extremely serious situation that needs to be dealt with.

As for Bill C-49, the Bloc Quebecois has yet another reason to turn it down. It would reduce Quebec's weight within the Canadian Confederation. Quebec is guaranteed at least 75 seats, but with the population movements that have occurred, we would end up with 75 seats out of 308. For the first time, less than 25% of the members would be representing Quebec in this House. This is totally unacceptable. It is certainly not what the Fathers of Confederation had in mind when they talked about Canada being a country with two founding nations.

Now, Quebec is becoming a minority, as we saw in the Speech from the Throne. The government is talking about the anglophones, the francophones and people of other origins, without any reference to the historical aspect, to the role that Quebec has played, which can be seen on the very coat of arms of Canada.

We do not believe that the government should be allowed to reinstate any bill at the same stage, as it intends to do with its motion. If it has bills that it absolutely wants to introduce, the government and the opposition parties should come to an agreement in the House on the list of bills to be reinstated.

There are bills on which a consensus could be reached. I talked earlier about the bill that will provide drugs, anti-HIV/AIDS drugs in particular, to African countries. I am sure, and I have seen this during debates in this House, that there is a general goodwill among all parties to ensure that this bill can be reinstated at the stage where it was before prorogation. There will be no problem in this regard.

I mentioned another bill, Bill C-49. Major difficulties should be expected in that case. There is also a set of other bills on which we should negotiate with the government to determine whether they

should be reinstated. For example, there is the assisted human reproduction bill and related research. We are in favour of the bill in principle, but there are jurisdictional problems.

During the whole debate on this issue, the Bloc Quebecois told the federal government that it had to reach a compromise that would allow Quebec to maintain its jurisdiction without any federal interference. Today, as we debate a bill or a motion to allow the reinstatement of certain bills, it would be only normal that we, as an opposition party, have the opportunity to say that, among these bills that the government wants to bring back, there are some that we do not think appropriate to reinstate. Let us find a compromise on a list of bills that should be reinstated. Then we will be able to reconsider the situation.

● (1845)

There is also the former Bill C-17, an act to amend certain Acts of Canada, and to enact measures for implementing the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, in order to enhance public safety. We are against this bill that would allow any air carrier or operator of an airline reservation system to divulge certain information about a person, such as their name, date of birth, ticket number, and itinerary.

Over the past few months, now that the panic resulting from the events of September 11, 2001 is subsiding, we have seen that in order to strike a balance between the protection of personal information and the thirst for information of security services, we must make sure there are enough watchdogs. In this regard, the bill does not introduce the elements we might have expected.

Today, a time allocation motion has been put forward. The government had months to decide on how to reinstate bills. It did not find a way to avoid a time allocation motion.

It is pretty bad when in the first few days back in the House a time allocation motion has to be used. This type of motion limits the right to speak of parliamentarians who were elected to represent the public in this House. The government should be judged on how many times it uses this kind of motion and for which bills.

In this case, it is completely unacceptable that at the beginning of the session this type of time allocation motion is already being imposed for bills that should be debated over the next few months.

A bill was introduced on electronic piracy. Again, there was consensus on most of the clauses in the bill. Thus, we would not be opposed in a debate. Yet, in the bills for which there is opposition, it is important to make sure that things are done properly and that we do not debate issues that were put on the back burner, simply because of a strategic decision made by the Liberal Party.

*Government Orders*

The government decided to prorogue the session in the middle of November. The main reason, as we have seen today, was that the Auditor General was to table her report in November. Because of the importance of the report that was to be presented, the government felt compelled to put off dealing with the problem until now. It tried to create a new era that would allow them to say that all this was the way the former government operated and that they were completely different. I do not think that Canadians will buy that.

The situation being condemned today has to do with the fact that the government in place since the last election is composed of all the Liberal members in the House and that several current ministers have been part of the cabinet for years.

We remember former Prime Minister Chrétien saying that this was a program aimed at national unity and that a few millions lost were not a big deal.

When a prime minister sends such a message and the members of the cabinet say nothing, that means they feel the same way. Nobody from the Liberal benches got up to say that the Prime Minister's statement made no sense.

As a matter of fact, the Auditor General had a scathing remark to that effect, saying that the end does not always justify any means. In this case, the end did not justify the means.

It is understandable that federalists would want to promote Canada's unity. Wanting to do so legally can be defended. However, nothing can justify the fact that funds were misappropriated, and for the benefit of their own party.

This was a flagrant misappropriation. We need to get to the bottom of this. This is another factor that has to be taken into consideration during the negotiations between the government party and the opposition.

If the government feels that some of its projects are important, we need to have guarantees. We will need something tangible if we are to debate the content of the Auditor General's report with some urgency, thereby ensuring that the commission of inquiry will be made up of people above suspicion.

● (1850)

In our opinion, we have not yet had any guarantees from the Prime Minister. He appears to be sitting on the fence on this issue, as he does on many others.

For the Bloc Québécois there are many reasons why the motion, as presented by the Liberal government, should be rejected. Interesting amendments have been submitted by the Conservative Party. It will be up to the people to decide whether the government acted responsibly in suspending the deliberations of the House in November 2003, and resuming them in February 2004, claiming that we should be able to continue with business as usual, because nothing special had happened during that interval.

The government must find out there is a price to be paid for this decision. If there were a difference between the former government and the new one, it should have been apparent in the way of going about things, and today's motion shows this is not the case. The new

Prime Minister made a promise to reform Parliament but today we are in exactly the same situation as we were in the past.

The bills they want to reinstate today are bills that had already been brought in under the former government of Mr. Chrétien. The main problem, in my opinion, is that democracy is being hijacked by using a non-partisan bill like the one to modify the Elections Act, to move up the date for calling an election.

Nevertheless, as of today, with what we have seen in the Auditor General's report, there may be reasons for the Prime Minister to reassess the situation. I am sure that most people in Quebec and in Canada are thinking this evening that we cannot give this party another mandate to govern this country, and that its members need some contemplative time in opposition. There is ample evidence that this government should not be re-elected.

There has not been enough change. There is nothing that indicates clearly that another way of doing things is coming. Almost all the actors who are here today were involved in this government in the past.

For all these reasons, we shall vote against the government's motion and ask once more that there be established a list of bills that truly deserve reinstatement before this House and on which the parties agree.

● (1855)

[English]

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from the Bloc who has laid out many of the reasons why his party has chosen not to support the motion. I hope to at least touch upon some of the reasons why we in the Conservative Party similarly will not support a motion which, for all intents and purposes, will shut down debate on a plethora of government bills that touch on a number of very important subject matters.

It is the principle behind the use of the closure motion that really leads us to the point of saying there is no way, it is absolutely impossible, that we could support what the government has done. In less than one calendar week the government has already invoked a closure motion to use the guillotine, to bring down the curtain on meaningful debate in the House of Commons on a number of bills.

The procedure the government is using to go about doing this is not uncommon. The speed with which the government has acted in this fashion in bringing about closure is a true signal as to how the Prime Minister and the government are going to treat the so-called democratic deficit that the Prime Minister has had a revelation on in discovering that a democratic deficit exists in the country.

*Government Orders*

I am amazed the Prime Minister has gone about one of the most remarkable historical conversions perhaps ever seen in this country's political history. Upon leaving the cabinet, he suddenly discovered after nine years, as part of the government, there was a democratic deficit in the country, that members of Parliament did not have enough power, that the backbench was suffering from an emasculation, that backbenchers were unable to participate in such a way that they could have input into decision making and that they were not empowered in the House of Commons or in committees. The people themselves, through members of Parliament, were therefore not being heard.

These were the grandiose words of the Prime Minister. This was the grand plan and he was going to address it by coming out with a democratic plan to address the deficit. Here we are. We fast forward to today's date and see the Prime Minister using the same ham-handed tactics of his predecessor, using closure to shut down debate in the House of Commons.

Let me quote the Prime Minister in December of 2002. He stated:

My position on parliamentary reform is that closure should be the exception, not the rule.

It took him six days to use this closure tactic. Today, in not less than a calendar week, the member for LaSalle—Émard, the Prime Minister, has come about with this crass political move to shut down debate in the House of Commons.

What element of this legislation is most important to the Prime Minister? What is the defining piece of legislation in this grouping? It is called the early election bill. It allows the Prime Minister to call an early election. Why? It is very much linked to the revelations that came from the Auditor General's report today.

It is no coincidence that on the very day the Auditor General's report comes out we see the government invoking closure. I know I am not to use props in the House, but it is no coincidence that on the cover page of this document is written November. The document was available to the government in October of 2003. It had it in its possession then. The Prime Minister had to be aware.

There has been speculation for months about the contents of the Auditor General's report. The government knew that this was a damning indictment of how these sponsorship programs and grants were being operated by the Department of Public Works and by other elements of the government. It knew that the last Auditor General's report similarly castigated the government for its activities and the way in which it was not accountable, the way in which it had been spending taxpayer money, the way in which in many cases criminal investigations were commenced into the dealings of the government and its departments, the way in which money had been funneled and the transgressions of various ministers and departments.

Sadly, this has been a recurring theme of the government of mismanagement, of corrupt practices, of faulty accounting, of the way in which the government has been spending the money and then losing track of that money, unable to account for it.

• (1900)

The report itself is riddled with examples. Some of the most troubling examples that I can point to involve the RCMP itself,

money that was allotted for the RCMP for various programs for its 125th anniversary and how that money was spent in an inappropriate way.

The difficulty I have with this, where the RCMP is in many ways implicated by the Auditor General's findings, is how can Canadians, how can our institution of Parliament turn to it and have it investigate some of these dalliances, some of this activity where it has been tainted. We are not talking about a small amount of money. We are talking about \$250 million that was touched upon by these sponsorships.

Let me be clear. What is happening in this motion, in this use of closure, is an attempt to stifle the debate, to shut it down, to sideline it, to distract, to detract away from the opposition's job to be diligent in asking questions.

We saw it in the House of Commons today. The Prime Minister said that he did not know what was happening. Imagine that. The minister of finance, who was also doubling as the vice-chair of the Treasury Board, the man who wrote the cheques, the man on the frontlines, the chief gate keeper, the man who was specifically tasked with safeguarding taxpayer money did not know this money was being spent in such an inappropriate way.

That is simply not acceptable. He was complicit or complacent about how these programs were operating. He had a responsibility, an obligation and a commitment to the Canadian people, which he is now shirking by suggesting he did not know.

As we saw today, simply announcing that there will be a commission to look into this, just as there will be a public inquiry to look into the Arar case, will in effect put these issues aside until after the election, again avoiding the accountability that is so sorely lacking in the government's record.

We have seen so much of this over the years, whether it be the ballooning and inflating costs of the gun registry, which again the Prime Minister, as finance minister, continued to fund. It went from \$2 million to \$200 million, to now over \$1 billion, and that department is still asking for more money. The government has resorted back to the same old saw that this is public protection, that this is all about public safety and gun control as opposed to the registry system. It is the nuances and the misinformation that comes from the government that is really an attempt to cover the tracks, to pull the wool over the eyes of Canadians as to what it is actually doing.

The Auditor General is tasked with an extremely important role, but so are we in the opposition. This information now has laid bare the government's actions, has laid bare the way in which it has misappropriated, misspent and misinformed Canadians about how that money was being doled out, not for well-intentioned purposes that were going to benefit Canadian society at large, not to cure cancer, not to help the ailing fishery, not to put money into the military or somehow bring about a general improvement in the state and the welfare of the country.

*Government Orders*

So much of this money went to Liberal friendly advertising firms. Therefore this omnipresent political element bears commentary. It is this partisan element that is all about perpetrating the government's hold on power and perpetrating the power that exists in the Prime Minister's Office.

This is what it all comes down to. The Prime Minister, whose predecessor had concentrated all that power, is now tasked with somehow devolving that. That should really be his task. That should really be the focus of addressing the democratic deficit.

I wish I could say that I have some confidence that will happen, even to be objective which is difficult for a partisan to be. It would be my hope that he would follow through on this commitment, but surely the six days that we have had in this Prime Minister's exposure in the House of Common in his new reign of power does little to bolster the confidence of Canadians or members of the House of Commons that this is truly his intent, that he will somehow devolve some of this power and truly empower the House of Commons, particularly when we see closure used, when we see efforts to sideline these important disclosures of evidence about what has taken place in government spending.

● (1905)

That very much undermines the spirit of addressing the democratic deficit. It makes the gulf even wider and brings about further cynicism; a greater degree of cynicism we have not seen in the country.

I do not know what it will take to get the attention of the government. This report goes even further than the previous report which talked about how Parliament was kept in the dark and every rule in the book was broken. This is worse. This is a more scathing report than the last one. There was time to do something about it.

To suggest that the Prime Minister acted quickly is an absolute falsehood. The Prime Minister reacted. He was not proactive in doing something about what the Auditor General had pointed out. If he were, a plan would have been laid out immediately upon returning. What we are seeing is a catch up and an attempt to wash this away.

If the Prime Minister wants to know who is responsible for this, he just has to look in the mirror. He does not need to look at some disgraced diplomat who is now being brought home and paraded in front of the cameras as the person responsible for all of this. He does bear some responsibility, but the Prime Minister himself, as finance minister, on Treasury Board, in cabinet, a Quebec minister, had to oversee much of what took place.

The closure motion is really a byline. It is really a subplot to the main issue here, the main issue being one of true accountability, of truth in government, of responsibility to the people of Canada. The Prime Minister promised change. We have seen no change and actually no indication of change. We have seen the same practices. The man himself voted 83 times in favour of the use of closure or time allocation during the life of his government.

Let me be very clear. This is not a new government. This is a government seeking a fourth mandate. It can change the paint on the ship of state and put the first mate at the wheel, but it is the same government. The Prime Minister was part and parcel of every

decision that was taken by the government. He stood on his hind legs today and said that he had ordered replacement helicopters. He cancelled the helicopters with a stroke of a pen over a decade ago. It was Prime Minister Chrétien at the time who uttered these famous words, "I'll take my pen. I will write, 'Zero helicopters'". It was the pen of the current Prime Minister.

The prime minister of the day made the promise to get rid of the GST and it was embraced by the finance minister, the member for LaSalle—Émard. Now he is in a position to do that. I am reminded by my colleague from New Brunswick that they were going to renegotiate free trade. That did not happen.

The Liberals were going to do Parliament and public life differently. I will give them that. They are doing it worse. They have lowered the bar of accountability. They have lowered the ethics. Members do not have to take this information just from me. They only need to listen to some of the senior civil servants and to the commentary that is coming out now. Former supporters of the Liberal government are appalled and aghast at what they have seen.

This is one issue that continues to trouble me. Young people in the country are becoming so turned off, so tuned out by what is happening in this place. This government has caused a whole generation of Canadians to feel disenfranchised and decoupled from the system. The lowest voter turnout in our country's history was during the last election.

What are we doing? What message is being sent today? We are rushing headlong into another election to catch the opposition perhaps in an unprepared state, or to somehow gloss over what is in these reports, or what has happened in terms of the way the government has conducted itself. Another good example that we have seen in terms of how the RCMP and the government operate has come to light.

● (1910)

Many of us recall the case of the BDC bank president who was called by the former prime minister, who was informed that there was a person in the prime minister's riding who wanted a loan. The BDC president was pressured into giving that loan. There were all sorts of terrible interventions and indiscretions and members of the prime minister's office being dispersed out to clean up and whitewash and sanitize files at the BDC office. All of this was discussed in a Quebec courtroom. Much of the commentary of the judge is absolutely heart-wrenching when we consider the interference and the level of government corruption.

Yet we see nothing; we see no accountability coming about. We saw the former president of the BDC have his home invaded by the police and have computers seized, a jackboot reaction by the RCMP, similar, I am quick to add, to the type of storm-trooping we saw into the home of Juliet O'Neill, an *Ottawa Citizen* reporter who was similarly targeted and intimidated.

It is shocking behaviour in a free and democratic country that we could have our state police, our national police force, being used as an instrument of intimidation. We need inquiries into such action. We need change. We need accountability.

*Government Orders*

We need a cleansing of government. It is like that old Greek story of the flushing out of the Augean stables, one of the Herculean tasks. That is what has to happen. It is not going to happen in a piecemeal approach of the Prime Minister trying to give out little, tiny changes and tweaking committees and allowing for the occasional free vote. We know that even that grandiose promise has gone by the wayside.

The government House leader now says there will be no free vote on the gun registration because that is going to be a matter of confidence. If that is the approach, then there will be no free votes, period. As far as confidence is concerned, the actions of the government has caused Canadians' confidence to be shattered.

I lament the fact that this government and this Prime Minister have not only missed an historic opportunity but have further ingrained cynicism and a sense of despondency and a sense of disgust and dismay when one looks at the actions, when one looks at this closure motion brought about in such haste. I know some of the members opposite who used to grace the benches of the opposition, but they were pulled in. They were promised something. They were given a little piece of cheese or something that would curry favour and bring them in.

This is a "rush to the election" tactic. There is no debate. There are no answers in question period. There is no accountability. I dare say there is fading hope that anything is going to come about from the government that will restore any of these important elements: mainly, accountability, a sense of responsibility, and a sense among the general public that Parliament is actually working in their favour and that when something happens there will be consequences.

I worked in the criminal justice system. When people were caught lying, breaking the law, or taking things that belonged to someone else, there was punishment. There were consequences. That seems to be what is missing. That seems to be one of the threads of continuity that runs through the Auditor General's report. No one felt they would be accountable, and they felt that if they were caught, nothing would happen.

In fact, in the case of the current ambassador to Denmark, he was rewarded for his indiscretions. He was actually given a posting in a foreign country. What did Denmark do to deserve that?

How on earth can anyone square the appointment of a person who is at the very core of this rot and corruption? How can anyone square his being given a posting? Even if the Prime Minister—taking him at his word—says he is bringing home this ambassador, this disgraced individual, if it had been known in November that he was standing accused of being so complicit in everything that happened, we could have saved the taxpayers at least the salary of this individual instead of leaving him to linger in Denmark and avoid this type of accountability. He now has to come home, face the music and face a parliamentary committee, and perhaps face a criminal investigation.

• (1915)

Again, this is the type of thing that shakes the very foundations of this place, this great bastion of democracy. The building blocks seem to be pretty shaky when we look at the actions of the Prime Minister today, when we look at his evasive attempts to tell Canadians he did not know. That is not good enough. The House leader as well has defended his actions. Members of Parliament got up and tried to

somehow suggest that this is just routine business. Nonsense. This is sliding very quickly farther and farther off the tracks.

We have an opportunity to actually restore some credibility to this place. I cannot remember the last time I saw a member of the government get up and actually say that in hindsight, with the benefit of this information, having now seen the bigger picture, maybe we should have done it differently.

Maybe we should have. I heard from some members before they got into cabinet that maybe we should re-examine the gun registry. The fact is that it has been inflated a thousand times more than we actually expected it to cost. It is somewhat like the example of the Prime Minister's original disclosure of how much money was received by the CSL company being in the range of \$137,000. Upon further examination, it went up to \$161 million.

Let me say that again: from \$137,000 to \$161 million. Is that just an accounting error? Are Canadians expected to believe that it was just an administrative error? Absolutely not. That to me smacks of some kind of ruse, a sad joke that is being perpetrated on Canadians. That is cold, hard cash that people work hard for every day, that they pay to the government, that is collected in taxes and that is being doled out to a millionaire.

Let us be clear. The Prime Minister was simultaneously the chief tax collector as minister of finance while he was the chief tax avoider in this country. That, to me, is irreconcilable. Yet the ruse continues. We know that the tax loopholes are still there, still open and still benefiting the Prime Minister's company and his family.

What do we do about it? Not only do we have to continue to press the government on its actions, but we in the Conservative Party of Canada have to pose an alternative. We have to show a better way. We have to earn the trust and the confidence of Canadians. We have to prove to them that we would do it better, that we would do it in a more accountable way, and that we have a plan that would work for Canada.

In this Parliament, since the House was prorogued in a peremptory way by the previous prime minister, we are very early seeing debate closed down in the same fashion by the current Prime Minister, but we remain committed to serving the country through this place, and I know you do as well, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

• (1920)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will agree with you that it is a rather unaccustomed thing, most unusual in fact, for us to be here at 7:20 p.m. Not that your company is not agreeable, or that of our colleagues, but I think our viewers need to understand what we are doing here.

*Government Orders*

If we are still here in the House of Commons at 7:20 p.m. it is because the government has done something that is in total disrespect of the opposition. This is a rather sad event, since we could have hoped, and might have expected, at a time when the Minister responsible for Democratic Reform and government House leader has released a document inviting our reflection on how to breathe new life into this Parliament, how to bring parliamentarians closer to their constituents, and how to renew the parliamentary process, that the government would be somewhat more respectful of the opposition.

What is the object of the debate we are engaged in this evening? It is a motion before the House inviting parliamentarians to reinstate all bills as they were before prorogation. Use of the term before prorogation invites us to understand that there is at least one paradox in the proposal submitted to us.

First of all, it is the present government that decided to send the members home. If we had continued with our work, as we had been sent here to do in September, we would normally have been here sitting in November and December. Thus we would have been able to pass a number of extremely worthwhile bills on which people had placed their expectations.

I am thinking for instance of the electoral reform, the marijuana issue, and the recognition of same sex partners. We might have expected to see the government introducing a bill to amend the Human Rights Act. I will come back to that point a little later.

However, instead of that, for reasons of blatant partisan politics, the government chose not to let parliamentarians sit. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, the atmosphere of democratic deficit in which we were steeped right from September on.

There were two camps. On the one side, a prime minister and MP for forty years in this House in the person of Mr. Jean Chrétien, leader of the government since 1993. On the other, a party leadership hopeful, the member for LaSalle—Émard, whose rapid ascension, and the way he became leader of the Liberal party will be judged by history.

Nevertheless, the fact is that the democratic deficit was real, so real that I hope all the members who are ministers will agree that it was an embarrassing situation to say the least. There was a government leader put into a minority position, exiled by his own colleagues. The fact is that Parliament did not sit in November and December.

And today, we have more of the same, with a chorus of scandal. The Auditor General, an officer of the House by extension, has released a report that reminds us of the common thread that ties the words corruption, nepotism, favouritism and partisan politics together, and unfortunately, it is the Liberal Party. Today the government wants us to get back to business in the same place where it earlier prevented us from sitting.

Do you think this is democratic? The opposition members, it is agreed, have a role to play in a democracy. The government is facing an experienced opposition. The Bloc Québécois has always been extremely responsible in fulfilling its duties. We hope that when the government wants to introduce bills, it will do so with respect for the opposition and that it will present them for first reading and second

reading, send them to committee for examination, and then proceed to third reading.

● (1925)

There are bills for which we are prepared to cooperate with diligence and speed. I am referring to the whole issue of drugs for Africa. The government chose to call this bill the Jean Chrétien bill. The lack of partisanship makes us realize that the former member for Shawinigan did a good thing. I understand that all parliamentarians wish to pass this bill.

Of course, that does not mean there will not be amendments. My friend, the former parliamentary secretary, whom I hold in great respect, knows, as a former surgeon, how important drugs are in the lives of our fellow citizens. He has spent years in relatively good health. He could use a little more exercise, he has put on a bit of weight, but for the most part he is in good health and we are glad.

The former prime minister and member for Shawinigan introduced in this House legislation that will make drugs, possibly in a generic version, available to third world countries, and not just African countries. The schedule in the bill shows that drugs could be available in Latin America, Africa, of course, but also in all the developing countries.

This is something we had to do. Without an accord, WTO rules would not allow generic drugs to be available if patents existed. The bill corrects this situation. Of course some agencies are worried about the issue of the right of first refusal. I am thinking of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, a largely federally funded agency that started in the early days of the epidemic. It is a very well informed agency that has always given this House and parliamentarians extremely good advice.

However, the fact remains that witnesses could have their say before the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, but in its general composition, the bill is good. We are happy to adopt it. We are happy to pass it quickly.

Nevertheless, this is not the case for all bills. The Bloc Québécois has serious concerns about the legislation on terrorism and public safety. Why? Because we are sons of freedom and we are not prepared to follow the U.S.

Let me tell you about the American model. The Americans have passed anti-terrorism legislation called the Patriot Act. This raises some serious concerns about potential violation of civil liberties. I think that members of this House are not prepared to follow in the Americans' footsteps.

Unfortunately, under the public safety bill, the anti-terrorism bill, civil liberties could be threatened, personal and identifiable information could be transferred to the RCMP where it is not warranted, ministers could make interim orders and parts of the Canadian and Quebec territory could unfortunately be subjected to excessive control.

*Government Orders*

Under the circumstances, it would be better to reintroduce the bill at first reading and let the opposition parties speak their minds.

● (1930)

The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is not a bad person. She is well educated, has a PhD and used to teach law.

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

**[TRADUCTION]**

**M. Réal Ménard:** Le député veut-il écouter la traduction? Je vous en prie, asseyez-vous. Je m'excuse, je ne peux pas m'interrompre, mais le député peut prendre un siège.

**[TRANSLATION]**

Mr. Speaker, I am addressing my comments to you, in accordance with our Standing Orders. You know how important civil liberties are in a democracy, and we are not prepared to grant excessive powers to the RCMP. We believe that the anti-terrorism bill, the public safety bill, goes too far and we are not ready to follow the lead of the government.

The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is usually a very reasonable woman, notwithstanding the work she has done on the young offenders issue and her reference to the Supreme Court. Of course, there have been abuses.

I would never be able to forgive the current Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness—who, as we know, was the Minister of Justice and who is said to be very close to the current Prime Minister—or forget her actions regarding the Young Offenders Act. I should point out that Michel Bellehumeur, the former member for Berthier—Montcalm, who was appointed to the bench and is currently a judge in the criminal division of the Court of Quebec, had tabled 2,997 amendments to the Young Offenders Act. Of course, everyone knows about his legal expertise. Still. What a man, what a great parliamentarian. The spirit of Mr. Bellehumeur is still very present in this House.

However, the minister was particularly narrow-minded and stubborn. She refused to listen to Quebec as a whole and to all the stakeholders in the area of civil justice.

**Hon. Anne McLellan:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Réal Ménard:** If the minister wants to debate the issue with me I will be pleased to give her some time. However, I must say that this is an indelible mark on her record. She refused to listen to the stakeholders in the area of justice. She decided that a 14 year old child would be deemed—

**Hon. Anne McLellan:** That is not true.

**Mr. Réal Ménard:** I feel that the minister is angry. However, the truth must be said in this House. The minister can be emotional all she wants, no one will prevent me from saying that the government made a mistake when it decided that a 14-year-old child would be considered an adult in court because of the young offenders bill. Let us think about that.

All stakeholders in Quebec have condemned the absolutely detrimental nature of this bill. Without Michel Bellehumeur, to

whom we must continue to pay tribute in the House, the government would have acted like a steamroller, without showing any sensitivity toward Quebec.

I had to remind the House of this fact. This leads me to another issue involving the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness when she was health minister. Today, I must point out something about the reproductive technologies legislation. I do not know if she has looked into this issue. Her record is not brilliant, but she is an endearing person.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the current Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is an endearing person, but sometimes, she does not listen. Every time she did not listen to the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, she found herself in a situation where she violated Quebec's rights.

I will talk about the legislation on reproductive technologies. There was a consensus in Quebec. You know how spineless the Charest government is when it comes to defending Quebec's interests. Yet, even the current health minister in the Charest government, Mr. Couillard, condemned this bill. Do you know why? Because it contradicted 14 acts that were passed by the national assembly, including the Civil Code. If there is something that makes Quebec a distinct society, it is the Civil Code.

● (1935)

Nevertheless, when she was health minister, the current Minister of Public Safety proposed a bill that was not acceptable to the National Assembly. She wanted to legalize surrogacy while the Civil Code did not recognize it.

I have to mention certain facts. I know that it is difficult. Remember Jean-Paul Sartre, the philosopher, who said that words were loaded guns. Sometimes truth has to be stronger than partisan considerations.

Unfortunately, the then health minister introduced a bill that, once again, was adopted unanimously. Since there is not much that happens on the Hill that I do not know about, I have learned that since the other place did not completely dispose of this bill before prorogation, it could be reintroduced.

In January 2003, with its usual wisdom and clear-sightedness, the Bloc Québécois proposed that the bill be split in two so that parliamentarians could vote on prohibitions. There was unanimity in the House. Nobody wanted to live in a society that would authorize cloning.

There was some fifteen prohibited practices in this bill. Remember that in January 2003, the Raelians were in the news, and we did not know if they had succeeded in cloning humans.

I see the minister is sighing, but I encourage him to keep calm and to recognize objectively that the facts I am bringing before the House are totally verifiable. If the minister of the day had accepted that the bill be divided into two bills, that is with one on the banned practices, and one dealing with the Canadian agency with responsibility for regulating reproductive technologies, we would have voted against the latter.

*Government Orders*

We are very much aware that there was a royal commission. Moreover the wife of the former Prime Minister and member for Calgary was a member of that commission, which recommended putting an end to this legislative vacuum.

Since 1993, the present government, here is the dramatic point, the present Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness greatly contributed to this, wanted to do some nation building with health. This is a government that, when the public system was put in place, was paying 50¢ of every dollar spent on health and reduced it to 14¢, thereby creating a common front made up of all the first ministers, regardless of political stripe, NDP, Conservative, Liberal.

At the interprovincial level, we have seen the provinces rise above partisanship and join forces to urge the federal government to restore the transfer payments to their 1993-94 level. Unfortunately, at this point in time, the federal contribution to health is still at 14 cents for every dollar.

At the end of my speech, if the minister wishes to reply, we will ask for unanimous consent. However, I will repeat that, at this point in time, only 14 cents on every dollar invested come from the federal government, which is putting a lot of pressure, as you can imagine, on provincial health systems.

There have been seven provincial public inquiries. In Quebec, we had the Clair Commission. All of these commissions came to the same conclusion, that the problems the provinces have with the health care system are directly linked to the federal government withdrawal from health.

Unfortunately, I have to tell the truth and remind the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness that she stood by, while she was health minister, and let the situation deteriorate. It is quite sad. I say so much to my chagrin, because it is not in my nature to be partisan.

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

**Mr. Réal Ménard:** The minister has some good qualities. I do not want anyone in this House to think that she does not have any good qualities. For instance, she is even-tempered. She is always very polite and takes the time to say hello. However, this remarkable woman has chosen to focus her energy as a politician on “nation building”, and that is something we just cannot agree on.

● (1940)

I was told that, when she was a university professor, her exams were tough, but she had a great sense of fair play, which is a credit to her.

That being said, I do hope members realize that if the bill on assisted human reproduction comes back to this House, we will not be able to support it. That would be out of the question.

I would ask for unanimous consent to give five minutes for the minister to comment on what I have just said.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

[English]

**Hon. Roger Gallaway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have been here for many hours listening with great interest to the debate. In some way it is a verbal creation of a Rorschach test. It has been very free ranging and that is good. It has covered a broad spectrum of items which is always interesting. It is sometimes difficult to discern, because we are in fact debating a motion. The order paper as I understand it refers to the subamendment of the member for Yellowhead.

I have heard a number of interesting assertions and observations which I find quite astounding. For example, I heard on several occasions that the Prime Minister prorogues the House; the Prime Minister wakes up one day and on a whim prorogues the House, it is over, it is done. That shows the fundamental lack of comprehension—I will be charitable—in terms of the shape of our system, the shape of our Constitution and the operations of the House.

Let us understand firstly that the Prime Minister cannot prorogue the House. In fact, the Prime Minister does not prorogue the House but it is the Governor General herself who prorogues the House. She makes a decision as to whether it is prorogued.

I know there are a number of doubting Conservatives on this point. I do not mean to be biblical or theological about this, but there are a number of people who are doubtful of this, as if the Governor General is without any powers or without any discretion. They say, “Show us a time when this has not happened”, but the fact of the matter is there are many times when a prorogation has been denied, many, many times, but of course members are not aware of those because that is a decision of the Governor General.

I am very glad that members opposite are listening closely. I hope they will learn something from this. When the Governor General refuses a dissolution, there is no public record of it. The only public record of prorogation is when it is granted by the Governor General. Let us understand that that is using the royal prerogative powers.

We are talking about a number of motions, amendments and subamendments which have been tabled. If we go back to the beginning of our parliamentary system, it was not intended to be constrained by rules. It was to be a very freewheeling place. About 400 years ago the whole principle of three readings of bills was created. That a bill should be read three times in a particular sequence paying special attention to it at each level was created to add order to the affairs of the state and to give Parliament a forum that was constant, was predictable and which worked.

If we proceed even more forward in history, there were many devices or procedures of Parliament which were added to give this place efficiency, to give it order, and to allow for public scrutiny of the operations here. Those, if we come forward far enough, were eventually codified because at another time they were simply the precedents or the conventions of the operations of Parliament. When they were codified they became what in modern day language are called the standing orders of this place.

The standing orders have evolved over time. They have been created to give efficiency to this place, to give a format to this place and to ensure that everybody understands what the rules are.

*Government Orders*

●(1945)

Indeed, we have a parliamentary committee which deals with the standing orders and is charged with examining them on an ongoing basis. We have rules which allow for the amendment of standing orders. After prorogation the standing orders can be examined and changed. That involves the members of all parties. It is not the exclusive purview or jurisdiction of the governing party; it is in fact an all party exercise.

Let us turn our minds to what we are debating tonight. The debate is on a subamendment, that the amendment be amended. It would delete certain legislation from the main motion, which is the government motion. In fact, the subamendment would delete Bill C-49, an act respecting the effective date of the representation order of 2003. I think in the popular press it is referred to as the redistribution bill.

It is an amazing revelation that the party opposite would want to delete that bill because that party at one time not that many months ago was unequivocally in favour of it. Those members loved it. One could say that they were separate and apart at that time. They were a house divided at that time, but now they have gone into this new union and what they were in favour of at that time, miraculously they are opposed to it today. I think it is living proof that one can assume two positions at the same time.

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

**Hon. Roger Gallaway:** I can hear members making comments about that. They are objecting to that observation, that the new party opposite has assumed two opposing positions in a very short period of months.

The bill passed this House and was sent to the other place just before prorogation. Bill C-49, as it was then known, passed this place literally unopposed. There was agreement across the House and among parties, but because of certain events outside the House, they are now opposed to something that just a few months ago they were endorsing.

That is an amazing revelation which I think should be brought to light, that an amendment to an amendment is itself a contradiction in terms.

There is an amendment to the main motion of the government that was also tabled by the party opposite. There is the main motion of the government which says to let us get on with the business of the country and let us get the House of Commons back to the affairs of the country.

It may very well be that members opposite would not like some of this legislation and I can understand that. In fact, I have already observed that legislation they did like they no longer like. Therefore, there may be legislation that they do not like today that they will like in the future. I cannot rule out that possibility.

What it all means is very simple, that members of the opposition are not interested in getting on with a real debate about legislation. They want to get into a debate about the procedures of this House.

I have heard members opposite decrying the fact that this reinstatement motion is before us. Let us go back to the standing

orders, the rules of the House. Again, I will say that the standing orders were not intended to be a constraint on this place. The standing orders were in fact intended to give some order to this place, to make it efficient, because we want to do business in a good and timely fashion.

●(1950)

The end result is that as of 30 years ago or thereabouts we have our present standing order with respect to reinstatement. Reinstatement is the recognition that after prorogation bills that were before the House can return to the House in the same form and at the same stage as they were at when the prorogation was granted by the Governor General. The reason is that some 30 years ago there was a recognition that government was becoming more complex, that the affairs of the House were becoming more important and that we would not want to lose legislation that had passed second reading and committee stage.

We all know that committees invest a lot of time and a lot of resources in the whole study of a bill and if that is lost, much is lost in terms of progress of legislation and more important, in the agenda of a government or in the agenda of the country. To let that slide away could mean a loss of perhaps years in terms of very essential and important legislation that must be dealt with.

We have heard reference tonight to Bill C-13 which is commonly called the reproductive technologies bill. We are in a situation where if I were to follow the logic and succumb to the subamendment, or the amendment to the government motion, it would be lost. It would be gone. What would happen is that, I would dare say, thousands of hours of members' time, hundreds of hours of committee time and dozens and dozens of hours of House time, would be lost. We would go back to the beginning. It may be that we would have to reinvest all that time again to get back to a point and then beyond to pass that bill. That could be many months, if not a year away.

This would mean that a very quickly evolving area of life sciences, if I could call them that, would be lost. It would all be lost. We would be living in that domain which would be unregulated. Yet we are told by members opposite that they are quite willing to allow this very vital, integral and fundamental part of science, an area of great concern to many Canadians and to scientific research and development in this country, to slip away. They are quite willing to risk living in an environment that is unregulated. They are quite willing to play the game of the subamendment.

I go back to my original premise. Let us remember that the standing orders were created to give order and efficiency to this place, but what we are seeing now is a gamesmanship around this.

Certainly for every rule there is someone out there who is going to find an exception. What we are looking at now is the exception, the exception being that there is a subamendment and an amendment to the main motion. We are not debating one motion. We are debating an endless number of amendments and subamendments.

*Government Orders*

Clearly there is an unforeseeable number of subamendments which could be brought forward. It means that this is all tied up in process and not in substance. It means that members opposite can in fact shut down the affairs of this place, shut down the affairs of government, shut down the House of Commons simply by using a device, a device that is without meaning in terms of the substance, the substantive words of what they have laid down in the subamendment and in the amendment.

● (1955)

What the opposition is saying is that they do not care, they are not interested and that it is of no concern to them whether the government gets up and operating. They just want to continue to bring forward amendments and subamendments, and there are an infinite and indeterminate number of amendments they could bring forward. It is of no concern to them that we are now descending, if this is allowed to continue, into a form of deadlock. If we continue with this procedural wrangling, the government, which was elected to govern, will have no agenda. We will all become subservient to the agenda of procedural wrangling.

The standing orders are here for a reason. What the opposition members are railing against they had every opportunity to address on a number of occasions in the past. This is a form of posturing by using extraordinary devices, quite legal and quite proper in terms of our understanding of this place, but because they are using that there is also a procedural response available to us on this side, and we are moving on that procedural device simply because it is allowed and because as the government we must continue with the business of this place.

To be opposed to the government doing business is something I am certain anyone in the gallery or anyone watching this on public television would have a great deal of difficulty comprehending. Why would opposition members want to engage in days and days of debate about things that are meaningless, debates that are strictly contrived around procedure and around their view of what is right and proper.

Mr. Speaker, let me say to you, that what is right and proper is already laid down in the standing orders of this place. I know that the member opposite from Saint John would want to know that her predecessor friends, when her government was here from 1984-93, they had the opportunity to deal with that and they did not. We have had all kinds of opportunity but we are unaware that this has ever been raised in the place where it could be dealt with, which would be in a committee of the House that is charged to deal with it.

However, no. They like to suffer. I wish it were in silence but it is not in silence. They wish to suffer on the opposite side. Much cackling is occurring and a lot of monologue is going on over there but in the end it is meaningless. The vote that is about to take place will give to this place the kind of order that I am certain the members opposite want. After all, they belong to the party that espouses a law and order philosophy. We are simply following the law and order of the House of Commons as contained in the standing orders.

The end result is that we will be having a vote this evening which will bring to an end and lay to rest the misery that has been inflicted procedurally on this House by members opposite.

● (2000)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 8:02 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motions now before the House.

The question is on the subamendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the subamendment?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the subamendment will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

● (2030)

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

*(Division No. 3)*

## YEAS

## Members

Ablonczy	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bailey	Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Benoit	Bergeron
Bigras	Breitkreuz
Cadman	Cardin
Casey	Casson
Chatters	Crête
Cummins	Dalphond-Guiral
Day	Desrochers
Doyle	Duceppe
Duncan	Elley
Fitzpatrick	Forseath
Gagnon (Québec)	Gagnon (Champlain)
Gallant	Gaudet
Grey	Guay
Guimond	Hanger
Hearn	Hill (Macleod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Jaffer
Johnston	Keddy (South Shore)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Marceau
Mayfield	McNally
Ménard	Merrifield
Mills (Red Deer)	Moore
Pallister	Paquette
Penson	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Rajotte
Rocheleau	Roy
Sauvageau	Schmidt
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	St-Hilaire
Strahl	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tremblay	Wayne
Williams	Yelich — 70

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## NAYS

## Members

Adams  
Allard  
Assadourian  
Bagnell  
Barnes (London West)  
Bélanger  
Bennett  
Binet  
Blondin-Andrew  
Boudria  
Brisson  
Bulte  
Caccia  
Caplan  
Castonguay  
Cauchon  
Charbonneau  
Comartin  
Cotler  
Cuzner  
DeVillers  
Dromisky  
Duplain  
Efford  
Eyking  
Folco  
Frulla  
Gallaway  
Godin  
Graham  
Harvard  
Hubbard  
Jackson  
Jobin  
Karetak-Lindell  
Keys  
Knutson  
Laliberte  
Lastewka  
Lee  
Lincoln  
MacAulay  
Malhi  
Marcil  
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)  
Masse  
McCormick  
McKay (Scarborough East)  
McTeague  
Mitchell  
Myers  
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)  
Owen  
Pagtakhan  
Patry  
Peschisolido  
Pettigrew  
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)  
Price  
Proulx  
Redman  
Regan  
Robinson  
Savoy  
Scott  
Shepherd  
Speller  
St-Julien  
Steckle  
Stoffer  
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)  
Tonks  
Ur  
Vanclief  
Wappel  
Whelan

Alcock  
Anderson (Victoria)  
Augustine  
Bakopanos  
Barrette  
Bellemare  
Bevilacqua  
Blaikie  
Bonin  
Bradshaw  
Bryden  
Byrne  
Calder  
Carroll  
Catterall  
Chamberlain  
Coderre  
Comuzzi  
Cullen  
Davies  
Discepola  
Drouin  
Easter  
Eggleton  
Farrah  
Fontana  
Fry  
Godfrey  
Goodale  
Guarnieri  
Harvey  
Ianno  
Jennings  
Jordan  
Karygiannis  
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)  
Kraft Sloan  
Lancôt  
LeBlanc  
Leung  
Longfield  
Macklin  
Maloney  
Marleau  
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
McCallum  
McGuire  
McLellan  
Minna  
Murphy  
Neville  
O'Reilly  
Pacetti  
Paradis  
Peric  
Peterson  
Phinney  
Pillitteri  
Proctor  
Provenzano  
Reed (Halton)  
Robillard  
Saada  
Scherrer  
Sgro  
Simard  
St-Jacques  
St. Denis  
Stewart  
Thibault (West Nova)  
Tirabassi  
Torsney  
Valeri  
Volpe  
Wasylycia-Leis  
Wilfert— 152

## PAIRED

## Members

Asselin  
Bourgeois  
Copps  
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)  
Girard-Bujold  
Mahoney  
Plamondon

Bertrand  
Brown  
Fournier  
Gauthier  
Grose  
Parrish  
Pratt— 14

**The Speaker:** I declare the subamendment lost.

The question is on the amendment.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, I think you would find unanimous consent that the members who voted on the previous motion be recorded as having voted on the motion now before the House, with the Liberal members voting nay, except those who indicate otherwise.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dale Johnston:** Mr. Speaker, Conservative members will vote in support of the motion. I would like to include the member for North Vancouver.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois will vote against this motion.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP will vote against this motion. I would like the hon. member for Churchill to be included.

[*English*]

**Hon. Paul Bonwick:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you would include my vote with the government's on the vote just taken.

● (2035)

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

(*Division No. 4*)

## YEAS

## Members

Ablonczy  
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)  
Breitkreuz  
Casey  
Chatters  
Day  
Duncan  
Fitzpatrick  
Gallant  
Hanger  
Hill (MacLeod)  
Jaffer  
Keddy (South Shore)  
Lunn (Saanic—Gulf Islands)  
Mayfield  
Merrifield  
Moore  
Penson  
Schmidt  
Solberg

Bailey  
Benoit  
Cadman  
Casson  
Cummins  
Doyle  
Elley  
Forseth  
Grey  
Heam  
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)  
Johnston  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)  
McNally  
Mills (Red Deer)  
Pallister  
Rajotte  
Skelton  
Sorenson

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Strahl  
Wayne  
Williams

Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)  
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Yelich — 46

Scherrer  
Sgro  
Simard  
St-Hilaire  
St-Julien  
Steckle  
Stoffler  
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)  
Tonks  
Tremblay  
Valeri  
Volpe  
Wasylycia-Leis  
Wilfert — 179

Scott  
Shepherd  
Speller  
St-Jacques  
St. Denis  
Stewart  
Thibault (West Nova)  
Tirabassi  
Torsney  
Ur  
Vanclief  
Wappel  
Whelan

**NAYS**

## Members

Adams  
Allard  
Assadourian  
Bachand (Saint-Jean)  
Bakopanos  
Barrette  
Bellemare  
Bergeron  
Bigras  
Blaikie  
Bonin  
Boudria  
Brisson  
Bulte  
Caccia  
Caplan  
Carroll  
Catterall  
Chamberlain  
Coderre  
Comuzzi  
Crête  
Cuzner  
Davies  
Desrochers  
Discepolo  
Drouin  
Duplain  
Efford  
Eyking  
Folco  
Frulla  
Gagnon (Québec)  
Galloway  
Godfrey  
Goodale  
Guarnieri  
Guimond  
Harvey  
Ianno  
Jennings  
Jordan  
Karygiannis  
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)  
Kraft Sloan  
Laliberte  
Lanciot  
LeBlanc  
Leung  
Longfield  
Macklin  
Maloney  
Marcil  
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)  
Masse  
McCormick  
McKay (Scarborough East)  
McTeague  
Minna  
Murphy  
Neville  
O'Reilly  
Pacetti  
Paquette  
Patry  
Perron  
Peterson  
Phinney  
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)  
Price  
Proulx  
Redman  
Regan  
Robinson  
Roy  
Sauvageau

Alcock  
Anderson (Victoria)  
Augustine  
Bagnell  
Barnes (London West)  
Bélanger  
Bennett  
Bevilacqua  
Binet  
Blondin-Andrew  
Bonwick  
Bradshaw  
Bryden  
Byrne  
Calder  
Cardin  
Castonguay  
Cauchon  
Charbonneau  
Comartin  
Cotler  
Cullen  
Dalphond-Guiral  
Desjarlais  
DeVillers  
Dromisky  
Duceppe  
Easter  
Eggleton  
Farrah  
Fontana  
Fry  
Gagnon (Champlain)  
Gaudet  
Godin  
Graham  
Guay  
Harvard  
Hubbard  
Jackson  
Jobin  
Karetak-Lindell  
Keyes  
Knutson  
Laframboise  
Lalonde  
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Lee  
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MacAulay  
Malhi  
Marceau  
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Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
McCallum  
McGuire  
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Mitchell  
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Pillitteri  
Proctor  
Provenzano  
Reed (Halton)  
Robillard  
Rocheleau  
Saada  
Savoy

**PAIRED**

## Members

Asselin  
Bourgeois  
Copps  
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)  
Girard-Bujold  
Mahoney  
Plamondon

Bertrand  
Brown  
Fournier  
Gauthier  
Grose  
Parrish  
Pratt — 14

**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment lost.

[*Translation*]

The next question is on the main motion.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, I believe you would find that there is unanimous consent that members who have voted on the previous motion be recorded as having voted on the motion now before the House, the Liberal members voting yea, except those who indicate otherwise.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dale Johnston:** Mr. Speaker, Conservative members present in the House will vote in opposition to this motion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois will vote against this motion.

[*English*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP will vote no on this motion.

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

(*Division No. 5*)

**YEAS**

## Members

Adams  
Allard  
Assadourian  
Bagnell  
Barnes (London West)  
Bélanger  
Bennett  
Binet  
Bonin  
Boudria  
Brisson  
Bulte  
Caccia

Alcock  
Anderson (Victoria)  
Augustine  
Bakopanos  
Barrette  
Bellemare  
Bevilacqua  
Blondin-Andrew  
Bonwick  
Bradshaw  
Bryden  
Byrne  
Calder

Caplan  
Castonguay  
Cauchon  
Charbonneau  
Comuzzi  
Cullen  
DeVillers  
Dromisky  
Duplain  
Efford  
Eyking  
Folco  
Frulla  
Galloway  
Goodale  
Guarnieri  
Harvey  
Ianno  
Jennings  
Jordan  
Karygiannis  
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)  
Kraft Sloan  
Lancôt  
LeBlanc  
Leung  
Longfield  
Macklin  
Maloney  
Marleau  
McCallum  
McGuire  
McLellan  
Minna  
Murphy  
Neville  
O'Reilly  
Pacetti  
Paradis  
Peric  
Peterson  
Phinney  
Pillitteri  
Proulx  
Redman  
Regan  
Saada  
Scherrer  
Sgro  
Simard  
St-Jacques  
St. Denis  
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Fontana  
Fry  
Godfrey  
Graham  
Harvard  
Hubbard  
Jackson  
Jobin  
Karetak-Lindell  
Keyes  
Knutson  
Laliberte  
Lastewka  
Lee  
Lincoln  
MacAulay  
Malhi  
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Martin (LaSalle—Émard)  
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McKay (Scarborough East)  
McTeague  
Mitchell  
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Provenzano  
Reed (Halton)  
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Savoy  
Scott  
Shepherd  
Speller  
St-Julien  
Steckle  
Thibault (West Nova)  
Tirabassi  
Torsney  
Valeri  
Volpe  
Whelan

## NAYS

Members

Bachand (Saint-Jean)

Ablończy

## Government Orders

Bailey  
Benoit  
Bigras  
Breitkreuz  
Cardin  
Casson  
Comartin  
Cummins  
Davies  
Desjarlais  
Doyle  
Duncan  
Fitzpatrick  
Gagnon (Québec)  
Gallant  
Godin  
Guay  
Hanger  
Hill (Macleod)  
Jaffer  
Keddy (South Shore)  
Laframboise  
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)  
Marceau  
Masse  
McNally  
Merrifield  
Moore  
Paquette  
Perron  
Proctor  
Robinson  
Roy  
Schmidt  
Solberg  
St-Hilaire  
Strahl  
Tremblay  
Wayne  
Williams

Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)  
Bergeron  
Blaikie  
Cadman  
Casey  
Chatters  
Crête  
Dalphond-Guiral  
Day  
Desrochers  
Duceppe  
Elley  
Forseth  
Gagnon (Champlain)  
Gaudet  
Grey  
Guimond  
Heam  
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)  
Johnston  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Lalonde  
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)  
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
Mayfield  
Ménard  
Mills (Red Deer)  
Pallister  
Penson  
Picard (Drummond)  
Rajotte  
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Skelton  
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Stoffer  
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Wasylcia-Leis  
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Yelich— 82

## PAIRED

Members

Asselin  
Bourgeois  
Copps  
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)  
Girard-Bujold  
Mahoney  
Plamondon

Bertrand  
Brown  
Fournier  
Gauthier  
Grose  
Parrish  
Pratt— 14

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

[Translation]

It being 8:37 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:37 p.m.)



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