



House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 133

NUMBER 073

1st SESSION

35th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Friday, May 27, 1994

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 27, 1994

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL LIBRARY ACT

Hon. Herb Gray (for the Minister of Canadian Heritage) moved that Bill C-26, an Act to amend the National Library Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce a proposal for several amendments to the National Library Act. These amendments will enhance the effectiveness of legal deposit provisions for the collection and preservation of publications that are part of our Canadian heritage.

I would like to start with a brief presentation on the problems arising from the existing legislation and the purpose of the proposed amendments.

(1005)

Basically, the legal deposit provisions oblige publishers to deposit copies of all new publications with the National Library of Canada. The purpose of these provisions is to constitute a complete collection of Canadian publications.

Under the legal deposit provisions of the National Library Act, publishers residing in Canada are required to send the National Library, free of charge, two copies of every new publication. As a safety precaution, the National Library places one of the copies in a preservation collection, to be kept there for future generations. The library places the second copy in a reference collection for consultation by universities, researchers, public servants and the general public. Users may consult the collection at the National Library or through the Canadian interlibrary loan network.

However, the act contains a provision whereby publishers need deposit only one copy if the retail value of the publication

exceeds \$50. This provision, which has not been changed since 1969, and this has created a problem.

In 1969, very few new publications sold for more than \$50. This means that the National Library received two copies of practically all new publications. However, in recent years, the publishing market has changed considerably, and today, many publications cost more than \$50. As a result, the number of cases in which the library receives only one copy is increasing steadily.

However, in order to continue to preserve our publications and offer services, and thus fulfil its twofold mandate, the National Library still needs two copies of each publication, so that it is obliged to purchase the second copy it does not receive under existing deposit provisions.

[*English*]

The amendments being proposed would eliminate completely from the act the exemption for second copies based on retail value. In its place is introduced in the book deposit regulations, which are made pursuant to the act, new and more limited exemption criteria that would still permit the deposit of just one copy, but only in instances where the deposit of the second copy would in fact represent a significant financial burden to the publisher.

The book deposit regulations are being revised and will be ready for implementation when the bill is proclaimed. The regulations would permit publishers of limited edition publications, such as livres d'artistes, to deposit only one copy with the National Library.

In an effort to encourage compliance with legal deposit provisions we are proposing the removal of the specific fine of \$150 for non-compliance as is stipulated in the current act and replacing it with a provision stating that non-compliance is an offence punishable on summary conviction, rather than continuing to build into the act a precise sum that needs to be updated periodically. The maximum fine of \$150 in the current act has not been an effective deterrent for non-complying publishers because often the value of new publications is significantly greater than the maximum fine of \$150.

I feel that the proposed penalty provisions would allow the courts to determine the appropriate penalty, as well as to impose a more substantial fine if it were warranted. The act would however explicitly exclude the possibility of imprisonment being imposed as a punishment or for default of payment of a fine.

Government Orders

I would like to point out that non-compliance with legal deposit is already a criminal offence punishable on summary conviction. The specific reference to a maximum penalty is being deleted in order to permit the imposition of a fine up to a maximum imposed under the Criminal Code.

(1010)

In order to ensure the deposit of federal government publications with the National Library of Canada, we are proposing an amendment to the act that would specify an obligation on the part of the government to deposit with the National Library all federal government publications. Although the deposit of government publications is currently provided for through administrative policy, there is no clear legislative authority for the policy.

There have been consultations with English and French language publishers representing key sectors of the publishing industry such as major trade publishers, text book publishers, magazine publishers, small presses, specialist publishers, microfilm publishers, and publishers of livres d'artistes. They have indicated the proposed amendments together with the regulations will not impose any significant financial burden on publishers.

During consultations, particular attention was paid to Quebec publishers because Quebec has its own system of legal deposit. This means that Quebec publishers must deposit copies with the National Library of Canada as well as la Bibliothèque nationale du Québec. Quebec publishers who were consulted understood and supported the proposed amendments.

[*Translation*]

Furthermore, the Quebec Department of Culture and the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec were consulted and had no objections to the proposed amendments.

[*English*]

The proposed amendments will make the legal deposit provisions in the act much more effective as an instrument to support the mandate of the National Library. They will ensure the comprehensive collection of our published heritage to support the research and information needs of Canadians today, as well as the future. It is a collection which is an invaluable source of information on Canada's culture and our national identity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-26 entitled an Act to amend the National Library Act proposes to update the provisions in the legislation governing the legal deposit of books with the National Library of Canada.

Consultations with several groups affected by the legislation have led us to conclude that overall, publishers are almost unanimous in recognizing the validity of the legal deposit process.

Furthermore, almost all praised the positive relationship that generally exists between publishers and the National Library of Canada. Finally, all of them acknowledged that a country must take the necessary measures to safeguard its collective memory.

Legal deposit is an important tool, one that ensures the preservation of Canada's heritage and ensures that taxpayers have access to it. Under the current act, a Canadian publisher must send a copy of any book published to the National Library, when the retail value of the book exceeds \$50. The National Library of Canada may acquire, at its own discretion, a second copy using money from its purchase fund.

According to our sources, the National Library would have to spend roughly \$700,000 each year to acquire second copies of books. Like most government agencies and Crown corporations, the National Library of Canada must operate on a tight budget and it no longer has the financial means to purchase second copies.

As for the crux of the matter, this bill would require publishers to deposit with the National Library two copies of any book published in Canada, regardless of the retail value of the book. Obviously, in this context, "book" is taken in the broad sense of the word. In the current act, a book is defined as follows: "library matter of every kind, nature and description and includes any document, paper, record, tape or other thing published by a publisher, on or in which information is written, recorded, stored or reproduced".

The second amendment concerns the fines that apply when the legislation is contravened. The bill proposes to increase the maximum fine payable from \$150 to \$25,000, in the case of a corporation, and to \$2,000, in the case of an individual.

(1015)

The office of the critic for National Heritage consulted a number of publishers and I would like to share with you today some of the comments that were made as part of this consultation process.

The government could take the suggestions they made and concerns they expressed at that time into consideration in making the related regulations. Incidentally, I deplore that these regulations could not be tabled at the same time as the bill. They are crucial, in the case of art books among others, but I will come back to that later.

The publishers whom the office of the hon. member for Rimouski—Témiscouata spoke to pointed out of course, as I indicated earlier, the need to be involved in the creation of a collective memory. They also described the statutory requirement under Bill C-26 to deposit two copies of a book instead of one, no matter what the retail price is, as an additional financial

burden on the publishing industry. I repeat: “an additional financial burden on the industry”.

Furthermore, this requirement will be particularly demanding on Quebec publishers who already send two copies of their books to the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec and will now have to send two copies of all their publications, whatever their retail value, to the National Library of Canada. The hon. secretary of state referred earlier to consultations between the two libraries. The government’s attention should be called to this duplication.

Based on the information provided to us in a departmental briefing session, the National Library of Canada is planning to save \$400,000 in so doing. The government is transferring this financial burden onto an industry it is already depriving of substantial revenues through cuts in other programs.

The government could have been more imaginative and looked for an approach that would have allowed publishers to be compensated for the new requirement to deposit two copies of all their publications with the National Library of Canada. The government could have considered, for example, giving them a tax credit equal to the retail price of publications sent to the National Library of Canada. This would have covered the losses incurred by publishers as a result of this bill.

I stress that it is never too late to do some good and that the Minister of Canadian Heritage can still review this measure and have it implemented in the best interest of the industry he claims to be protecting.

One word about art books. These books can be sold for thousands of dollars. I have been informed that their average sales price is \$2,000 in Quebec. The number of copies printed is therefore limited. Some of them require the co-operation of master binders, poets and lithographers and are so elaborate that they are referred to as luxury books. For these craftsmen, the legislation is costly, and I hope that the Canadian regulations will take this reality into account.

When the Quebec government reviewed the legal deposit legislation, it chose to restrict the two-copy deposit requirement to books whose total value does not exceed \$250. Publishers of books worth more than \$5,000 are not required to deposit them at the Quebec national library. That is why we are very disappointed that the regulations accompanying this bill have not been tabled today, thus preventing us from assessing, with full knowledge of the facts, the true extent of this bill.

Microfilm producers are particularly concerned. Production costs of microfilms, weeklies and dailies are high and buyers are few. I have been told that a micropublisher sells two or three copies of his work and that the National Library of Canada used to buy microfilms. From now on, micropublishers will have to

Government Orders

provide two free copies of their work for the National Library of Canada and another two copies for the Quebec library.

(1020)

When one sells one copy of a microfilm and gives two away, it is understandable that the Canadian microfilm society denounces Bill C-26 as a disaster.

In its May 20 letter to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the society wrote: “We want micropublishers to be totally exempted from the legal deposit requirement. Without such an exemption, we will be forced to completely stop microfilming weeklies and dailies and selling the resulting reels of positive prints.”

As you can see, this observation and this appeal are very, very serious. Since the regulations are unknown, I would hope that the minister will note the micropublishers’ concerns, especially since the heritage minister is well placed to know because the Canadian Microfilm Corporation is now doing very important heritage work. This corporation is the one that microfilms the *Courrier de Laval*; the first eleven years of that paper were not microfilmed and were lost in a fire. Without appropriate regulations, all of the *Courrier de Laval* and our weeklies will disappear from our collective cultural memory because they will not be microfilmed.

On another topic, the government could also have taken the opportunity to combine in one place the documents to be filled in for legal deposit. In the consultations undertaken by the office of the member for Rimouski—Témiscouata, it was mentioned more than once that what irritates publishers is not so much legal deposit in itself but having to complete various forms for legal deposit in Quebec and in Canada and additional forms for copyright and publication notices, to name only these. So I leave this suggestion for the minister to work on and remind him that if he acts on it, he will have the co-operation of the industry, which is fed up with bureaucratic red tape.

I cannot conclude these few remarks without mentioning duplication.

As you probably know, in 1967, Quebec passed a law governing the legal deposit of all Quebec works, and rightly so, since culture is essential and is what defines us.

It seems obvious to me that the federal government should seek to conclude an agreement with the Government of Quebec to turn over to the Quebec National Library the management of all documents collected by the National Library of Canada under the legal deposit provisions. This would be a good way to manage public funds.

Furthermore, such an agreement could include transferring to Quebec everything from Quebec that the National Library of Canada has acquired over the years. By investing \$2.5 million to buy documents in Canada, the federal government is appropriating archives that were made in Quebec and bringing them to Ottawa. I think it is logical for these documentary materials,

Government Orders

which will be used mainly by Quebecers, to stay in Quebec so that they are available in French.

I think that such simple measures would help taxpayers regain confidence in their institutions and show that we take taxpayers' interests to heart and organize for maximum efficiency.

[English]

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-26, an act to amend the National Library Act.

This piece of legislation appears to be a housekeeping bill that makes the legal deposit provisions of the act accurately reflect the contemporary costs of texts produced today.

This debate demonstrates the willingness of my party to work with the government to implement legislation that has a positive impact on expenditure reduction. I want to state that again, expenditure reduction, because I will be addressing that particular aspect as I discuss the passage of this bill in my text today.

(1025)

It has always been the mandate of this side of the House to oppose government legislation for valid reasons justified by the commitment that we made to our constituents for responsible financial management. However, at the same time we also provide constructive alternatives for the government as we present our arguments. This bill is an example of a case where we can support the government and the proposed changes to the legislation.

My office has spoken with the president of the Association of Canadian Publishers. According to that conversation there do not appear to be any concerns with this bill other than a minor cost to publishers which they have indicated presents them with little concern.

Publishers are currently able to deduct from their taxes the wholesale costs of the books which they are required to submit to the National Library.

Our previous speaker mentioned a tax credit at the retail level. This is just to reiterate that there already is an opportunity for a tax deduction of the wholesale costs. In effect, the only cost to be borne by the publisher is the opportunity cost of the sale of the book. This means that the cost to the publisher is the revenue it fails to receive on the books that it submits.

I support the intent of this bill. It addresses in effect three outdated facets of the legal deposit provisions of the National Library Act, all of which were in need of bringing into contemporary terms.

First, the government has recently been in the practice of submitting two copies of all of its publications. Bill C-26 now makes it a legislated requirement to do so. What is being done here is simply formalizing an already followed informal practice.

Second, individuals and corporations are fined under the act if they do not comply with the legal deposit provision requiring them to submit copies of their publication to the library. The fines were originally listed in the act at \$150 for individuals and \$2,000 for corporations should they fail to submit.

In many instances, and this has been pointed out previously, it was cheaper not to submit and pay the fine than it was to submit. In such instances clearly the fines were not effective deterrents. Bill C-26 recognizes this failure of the act and has now tied penalties to the Criminal Code summary convictions.

This is a good idea for two reasons. It increases the fines making them effective deterrents. As well, the Criminal Code is regularly updated whereas the act is not. Therefore this will have the effect of addressing the issue of fines more readily and as needed.

Third, prior to this bill a publisher was required to submit to the library only one copy of a book if the book was worth more than \$50. However, given inflation most books currently cost close to that amount in any event. This bill would require publishers to submit two copies regardless of worth except when such a submission would cause an undue financial burden.

The only potential problem with the bill is the vague discussion of undue financial burden. I too express my concern that the regulations were not tabled with this bill. I would hope that when we get to committee there will further and very specific discussion.

The bill proposes to replace subsection 13(4) of the act which refers to non-compliance with any provision of the section or the regulations. The specification as to what constitutes undue financial burden will be included in the regulations and clearly understood when this bill is discussed at committee.

It is important to acknowledge that publishers which publish extremely limited editions and works of art not be required to submit two copies of the publication. The regulations must protect against causing unreasonable financial burden to the publishers.

Speaking of financial burden, at the departmental briefing on this bill it was made quite clear that by making these changes to the legal deposit provision, the National Library would not have to spend as much on acquiring copies of books. The director general of corporate policy and planning for the National Library stated that should Bill C-26 be passed the National Library could spend between \$300,000 and \$350,000 less on acquisitions next year. It is difficult, in fact inexcusable, not to support a measure that could save taxpayers' dollars.

Government Orders

(1030)

Given that the library expects this bill to save it some \$300,000 I will be recommending to the Canadian heritage standing committee that the government decrease the appropriations for the National Library by the amount this bill is expected to save and I would strongly urge the government to support this recommendation.

We have a tremendous opportunity to set a precedent here by passing a bill recognizing that it affects next year's appropriations. However, if the appropriations for the National Library are not decreased by this amount then this bill will have the effect of giving it a \$300,000 increase.

The Minister of Finance has been asking for constructive ways to trim his budget. Here is a great opportunity to cut \$300,000 from the budget of the National Library. Most important, such a cut would have absolutely no effect on the performance of the library.

While we are discussing how this bill could pay taxpayer dollars we should examine the mandate of the library, for such an investigation leads us to the conclusion that there are also other ways to save money with the National Library.

In these times of fiscal restraint we should revisit the wisdom of having both a National Archives and a National Library. It is quite possible that the mandates of these facilities overlap to some extent and that the removal of such duplication of services would streamline their efficiency and save this government even more money.

I can assure the government that this kind of proactive legislation would meet with hearty approval from my side of the House.

While I recognize that the changes Bill C-26 makes are necessary—

Mr. Szabo: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

With all due respect to the hon. member, she has made liberal references to this side of the House and how it feels. I would like to bring to the attention of the Chair and to the hon. member that this side of the House does indeed include 26 members of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I do not really believe that is a point of order, but I am sure the hon. member for Calgary Southeast could be more specific.

Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast) Mr. Speaker, everyone knows my party and everybody knows which party represents the government in the House. I really feel that was a rather innocuous comment to make and I am not going to address it further.

While I recognize that the changes Bill C-26 makes are necessary I am mystified why the Minister of Canadian Heritage is not tabling other substantive legislation. This is a housekeeping bill. We were informed that his department was going to be implementing phase II of the copyright legislation. However, there seems to be some lack of clarity as to which department will be bringing this legislation forward. Regardless of which department tables this legislation, its importance should bring it to the House sooner rather than later.

As well, the Minister for Canadian Heritage has stated that he is in favour of partially privatizing the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Canadians are anxiously awaiting legislation that reflects these comments from the minister. As well, the minister has stated that the only reason he has not filled the vacancies on the boards of directors of his department's cultural organization is that he is awaiting a report recommending changes to the size, structure and appointment process for these boards.

This is the kind of legislation for which the Reform Party on this particular side of the House is waiting. We are anxiously awaiting legislation that reflects recommendations in that report and that starts to address some of the concerns that the Canadian taxpayers in this country are waiting for.

(1035)

Therefore, the safe passage of Bill C-26 through the House as well as the areas just mentioned demand immediate action by the Ministry of Canadian Heritage. I strongly urge the government to act, thereby identifying other opportunities in the department that will save money.

Rest assured my side of the House, the Reform Party, will be there to help usher through the House any cost saving legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I think you will find unanimous consent to dispose of this bill in committee of the whole this day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The House has heard the terms from the parliamentary secretary. Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and, by unanimous consent, the House went into committee thereon, Mr. Kilger in the chair.)

Government Orders

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Order. House in Committee of the Whole on Bill C-26, an Act to amend the National Library Act.

[English]

Shall clause 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Clause agreed to.)

On Clause 2:

[Translation]

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Chairman, I do not know if appropriate attention was given earlier to the Official Opposition's answer, but I want to point out the financial burden which will be imposed on the cultural world because of this double deposit requirement.

The secretary of state said that discussions had taken place between the National Library of Canada and the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec. Therefore, I want to ask her if the issue of double deposit, both in terms of books and related money, has been discussed and if the upcoming regulations will take that additional economic burden into account.

This is my first question. With your authorization, Mr. Speaker, I will raise other issues as well. I would like to hear the secretary of state on this.

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Chairman, from what I heard, there has been a great deal of consultation with the Quebec minister of culture, and I think that the regulations will accommodate everyone, while also reflecting the interests of all concerned. I say this based on what I was told.

(1040)

Mr. Leroux: Mr. Chairman, I do not know if the same problem exists in other provinces but, in the specific case of the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec and the National Library of Canada, will the parliamentary secretary provide a precise answer to the hon. member for Rimouski—Témiscouata regarding the issue of double book depositing in two libraries, which also involves a double deposit of money? Will the Secretary of State provide a clear answer regarding this issue?

Ms. Guarnieri: Mr. Chairman, based on what I was told, Quebec publishers were consulted. They clearly understood what we were proposing and they supported the suggested amendments.

Mr. Leroux: Mr. Chairman, my colleague is right, they supported the amendments, but with one qualification. It relates to the regulations which have not been tabled along with the bill. They drew the attention of our critic to the fact that they will

have a double financial burden. The parliamentary secretary is right, they support the bill, but they want to know what will be done regarding the double legal deposit. Did you think of the burden for the industry?

Ms. Guarnieri: Mr. Chairman, I believe that the regulations will satisfy Quebec as well as the other provinces. Quebec has its own legislation, but I believe that the minister did everything he could to satisfy Quebec in this regard.

Mr. Leroux: Mr. Chairman, I thank my colleague for her remarks, but what we have in mind particularly are the limited editions, the art books. You know very well that some artists produce major works as limited editions. The legal deposits could then exceed the sales. You should consider this. What we suggest is that the regulations provide for a tax credit.

My last question deals with another problem created by having two levels requiring the same thing. We asked whether it was possible to consider a single-window proposition, since Quebec already has its library.

[English]

Ms. Guarnieri: Mr. Chairman, from what I understand, widespread consultations with both English and French language publishers representing key sectors within the publishing industry including, as the hon. member mentioned the livres d'artistes, indicate that the proposed amendments that we are suggesting today will not impose any significant financial burden.

The member's fears may be alleviated when the regulations are presented. I know the minister has given an undertaking that the proposed amendments will certainly assist and enhance the publishing industry's interests rather than impede them in any way.

[Translation]

Mr. Leroux: Mr. Chairman, I thank my colleague for telling me that our fears will be alleviated.

(1045)

In conclusion, I will say that I raised the issue of micropublishing and of the problems facing microfilm publishers. This is another very specific example of a very limited production. These publishers mentioned that their sales were very low and that the National Library of Canada was one of their customers. Under such circumstances, I would like their very specific concerns to be taken into account.

Ms. Guarnieri: I want to reassure the member that we will look into the matter.

[English]

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert): Mr. Chairman, I have a question on subsection 13(4) of the act and the replacement of the \$150 fine. In the case of corporations it is being increased to \$25,000 if they do not send two books to the National Library.

Government Orders

The Reform Party has indicated over many months its position on young offenders, but it seems the government takes far more seriously a book publisher that does not send two books to the National Library than young offenders who roam our streets and commit crimes. The government has a draconian attitude when it comes to increasing fines to \$25,000 in the case of sending two books to the National Library.

The speaker for the Reform Party mentioned that these books were now to be delivered free to the National Library and that there would be a savings of about \$300,000 to \$350,000 to the government. If it is a case of trying to raise some money, I am sure \$25,000 fines to a few book publishers would raise that amount of money and more.

An hon. member: And reduce the debt.

Mr. Williams: They are suggesting that they want to reduce the debt. If they want business to hand them something for free and wield one mighty big stick worth \$25,000 over its head to do so, it sends the wrong message to business. We want businesses to create jobs in the country. They are already handing \$350,000 to government through the bill. I would suggest it should rethink the size of the fine it intends to impose.

Ms. Guarnieri: Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that proceedings were initiated in only one case which actually went to court.

I am a bit confused by what the hon. member is suggesting because the amendments we are proposing are meant to assist publishers. They do have provisions for recourse. I am pretty confident judges will take into consideration any financial burden we are asking these people to undertake.

The National Library of Canada, we have estimated, will have savings of over \$1 million over the next five years with the proposed legislation. Does the hon. member not feel that we will be assisting Canadians by making sure they have a National Library that is the pride of the country?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I am not suggesting the fact that the National Library gets two editions of every book published is not in the national interest. The point I was trying to make was that these books are being donated, not freely but by legislation. They are being donated by the book publishers of the country to the National Library and we are turning around and increasing the fine.

The parliamentary secretary already admitted there was only one particular case. Why are we increasing the fine from \$150 to \$25,000? We have heard about inflation but this is ridiculous.

(1050)

This stick it is now going to hold over businesses if they do not send two books to the National Library is far too draconian. Therefore it should be scaled back if the government would like the co-operation of businesses to achieve its particular agenda.

Ms. Guarnieri: Mr. Chairman, the reason we have undertaken this specific initiative arises from the fact that when the act was first proposed in 1969 it became quickly obsolete as books exceeded the value of \$50 or the fine of \$150. We want to make sure that we do not have to revisit the issue every second week.

I am sure the hon. member will concede that there are matters of pressing importance. I have every confidence that the act will be interpreted in the spirit it is meant rather than in the exaggerated case suggested by the hon. member.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, if the parliamentary secretary is suggesting that the fines should be increased an exorbitant amount to take care of inflation over the next unknown number of years as the finance minister tries to keep his books balanced and inflation may get away on us, who knows when we will be back revisiting this point?

As I mentioned earlier I hope the government will apply the same attitude as it introduces other legislation, for example the Young Offenders Act, to ensure that fines and punishments will be equally severe to take care of it for the next number of years. Then we can be assured that we will not have to worry about crime on our streets as well as book publishers sending books to the National Library.

Ms. Guarnieri: Mr. Chairman, I thank the hon. member for his editorial, but I am not sure it really furthers the debate today. My understanding is that the provisions are being supported by his party. In the spirit of co-operation perhaps we can proceed.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Chairman, I reiterate that indeed the Reform Party supports the legislation in spirit. Given the concerns expressed by my colleague in the Reform Party, I would like to add that it is imperative assurances be given in the regulations that this will not cause significant or undue financial burden for the book publishing industry.

I have heard that term several times today from the hon. parliamentary secretary without many specifics. There is an expectation that when we go to committee we will be accepting on good faith the regulations that will go forward because we have supported the legislation in principle. However, if it is at all possible, the parliamentary secretary should be somewhat more specific when she makes the statement "undue financial burden" that indeed there will not be undue financial burden on our book publishing industry.

It is unfortunate the regulations were not tabled or at least addressed a little more fully in the debate this morning.

S. O. 31

Ms. Guarnieri: Mr. Chairman, I can assure the hon. member it is not our intention to cause undue hardship on the publishing industry. As I mentioned earlier, we have had widespread consultations with all major principals in the publishing industry and to date none have expressed undue concern.

Most people see this initiative as a positive step rather than a regressive one.

(Clause agreed to.)

(Clause 3 agreed to.)

(Title agreed to.)

(Bill reported, concurred in, and, by unanimous consent, read the third time and passed.)

* * *

(1055)

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR ACT

Hon. Allan Rock (for the Minister of Human Resources Development) moved that Bill C-30, an act to amend the Department of Labour Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-30, an act to amend the Department of Labour Act, proposes to reduce to 50 years the age at which fish plant workers affected by the Atlantic groundfish crisis may be entitled to income assistance payments under the Atlantic groundfish strategy.

When the government announced the Atlantic groundfish strategy last month the Minister of Human Resources Development and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans stressed the importance of listening to Atlantic Canadians and their concerns.

We listened while developing the strategy. We will continue to listen to ensure that its evolution is focused, cost effective and meets the needs of those for whom it was designed.

The massive adjustment being faced by many people formerly involved in the groundfish industry demands a relevant, fair and flexible response from government that recognizes the specific situations of those most affected by sweeping changes to the industry.

A particular concern expressed by many Atlantic Canadians was the situation involving older fishermen and older fish plant workers who have made a significant contribution to an industry in decline and whose chances for new employment are in many cases not good.

The Atlantic groundfish strategy therefore includes as a vital component an older worker adjustment program for fishermen under the responsibility of fisheries and oceans and a similar program for fish plant workers under the responsibility of human resources development which I will be addressing today.

Like the other components of the strategy the emphasis is on pragmatic—

The Speaker: The hon. member will have the floor as soon as we resume debate.

It being 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 30(5) the House will now proceed to the consideration of Statements by Members pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ODAWA POW WOW

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiak): The Odawa Pow Wow starts today and continues through tomorrow and Sunday. This major event takes place at the Nepean Tent and Trailer Park. It is an experience not to be missed.

This year's pow wow, the 18th annual, promises to be one of the biggest ever. Four hundred singers and dancers from all over Canada and the United States are gathering. Over 60 vendors and crafts people are displaying their wares, including fine art, jewellery and clothing. Traditional Indian food is being served: corn soup, wild rice, bannock and buffalo.

The pow wow is a great celebration of joy and pride in Indian culture and tradition, a renewal and a strengthening of the spirit. It is an opportunity to renew acquaintances and to make new friends.

I encourage all members of the House, local residents and visitors to the national capital region to join the celebration. Come and share the spirit.

* * *

[Translation]

TRIBUTE TO FERNAND DAOUST

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa): Mr. Speaker, Fernand Daoust, that great Quebec labour leader, resigned as president of the FTQ, Quebec's largest labour congress, last December. He was the secretary general for 20 years and had been president for the past three years.

In February 1994, he became president of the board of directors of the FTQ solidarity fund.

Mr. Daoust is known for having redefined the ties of solidarity between Quebec and Canadian labour movements. In fact, the CLC convention held recently in Toronto ratified a landmark agreement under which the CLC acknowledged the FTQ as an autonomous entity.

Fernand Daoust, who always fought for social justice and the Quebec cause, made a profound impact on Quebec's recent history through his commitment and dedication and deserves our admiration and gratitude. Tomorrow, more than 1,000

S. O. 31

members of the labour movement and people from all walks of life will pay tribute to Fernand Daoust.

Fernand, thank you for your tremendous contribution to Quebec society!

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE BOARD

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast): Mr. Speaker, since taking over the job the immigration minister has boasted about his new process for hiring Immigration and Refugee Board members. However, it is time that the boasting stopped and accountability began.

Since this minister began making appointments, the acceptance rate for refugee claimants has skyrocketed. The definition of refugee has been expanded well beyond anything the United Nations intended. Canadians are all too clearly seeing the pattern of the IRB when it comes to overturning deportations.

The minister of immigration has heard the calls from across the country that the refugee board represent a real cross-section of Canadians. Instead, the minister has stacked his board with immigration lawyers and refugee advocates. It is time for a public scrutiny of the minister's appointments.

I call on the minister to have all prospective appointees screened before the standing committee on immigration. If there is a bias, let us get rid of it; if there is an agenda, let us expose it.

Canadians want a real balance and that means balancing the needs of migrants against the need for integrity of our borders. Let us start by ensuring that the right people guard the gates.

* * *

CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute and congratulate an organization known as Canadian Parents for French, which is holding its eighth annual festival national de l'art oratoire in Ottawa this weekend.

Over the past few months over 55,000 students from all across Canada have been taking part in French language public speaking competitions across the country. The festival is the culmination of these events.

This weekend we will see representatives from all 10 provinces, including the territories, showcase their winning speeches, speeches delivered in a language other than their first language, that is, in French.

[Translation]

It is a great pleasure for me to salute this organization and the young people who have been involved in these competitions from the very beginning and will come here from all our provinces and territories.

This is an important event. I am delighted to see that so many young people in Canada want to learn French, and I challenge hon. members to do likewise.

* * *

[English]

THE FAMILY

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington): Mr. Speaker, this year Canadians along with all members of the United Nations celebrate the International Year of the Family.

The family has undergone tremendous changes since the days following World War II. Attempts to define what is now the traditional family would be most difficult.

(1105)

The changes the family unit have endured have made it all that more important. All of us have been affected by changes to the family. An aging population, dual income families, women in the workforce and divorce have forced us all to look at families in a different light.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the families of members of Parliament. Our absence away from home, the challenges and demands of our position and the pressures of office all take a toll on our families. They share the responsibility of our public service. We as parliamentarians owe them a debt of gratitude for their service and dedication to the work we do and this should never be forgotten.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Benoît Serré (Timiskaming—French River): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to condemn the assumptions of the members of the Reform Party that bilingualism is not working in Canada and costs too much.

By challenging the Official Languages Act, the Reform Party is doing as much to destroy this country as the Bloc québécois. Their intolerance towards French-speaking Canadians merely fires the zeal of the separatists.

As a Franco-Ontarian member of Parliament, I think the comments made by the Reform Party are an insult to Francophones in this country. French Canadians outside Quebec play a vital role in the economic and social development of our country.

S. O. 31

I am very proud to be a bilingual Canadian, and I intend to stand up for the principles of the Official Languages Act.

* * *

QUEBEC'S RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

Mr. Bernard St-Laurent (Manicouagan): Mr. Speaker, once again yesterday, we saw how the federalist refrain is sung differently on the two sides of the Ottawa River. While the Prime Minister of Canada is denying the right of Quebecers to determine which country they wish to belong to, Daniel Johnson is acknowledging Quebec's right to self-determination.

Cautiously embracing the position of Mr. Jacques Parizeau, the Leader of the Opposition in the Quebec National Assembly, Premier Johnson stated that the first ones who must acknowledge Quebec sovereignty and independence are Quebecers themselves.

Mr. Johnson was merely repeating what all of Quebec's political leaders have been saying since the Quiet Revolution, namely that Quebecers are free to make their own choices. That is something on which all of Quebec agrees, Mr. Speaker.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, I recently was sent a letter by Mr. Jones of Chatham, Ontario who writes in part:

I am writing to say how glad I am that at least one member is willing to condemn the planned Theme Park in Shawinigan as just what it really is, blatant patronage.

Mr. Chrétien does not seem to get the message. The real reason the Conservatives were kicked out was because of patronage, appointments to the Senate, old buddies rewarded for life at our expense, and on and on. It appears to be just more of the same with Chrétien.

I guess we should consider ourselves lucky—

The Speaker: It would be better if we did not name members by name. Of course legitimate statements in the House are accepted and thus far I would rule that this statement could be controversial, but it is a statement. I would ask the hon. member not to mention any other member by name.

Mr. Hermanson: Mr. Speaker, I was quoting from Mr. Jones. Anyway, his letter goes on to say:

I have to wonder why money is spent on consultants if you just go ahead and do it anyway. The difference is that it is not their money but taxpayers' money and there is no limit to that.

Thank you for speaking up about this.

Here is one Canadian who is fed up with the successive governments that squander his hard earned tax money. Mr. Jones

and all those like him can take some comfort in the fact that there is now a party in the House that understands—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Yukon.

* * *

YUKON

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, after 21 years of negotiations, the Yukon land claim and self-government legislation is now completed. This historic piece of legislation, the product of successive governments, including the current Liberal government and the vision of the Yukon First Nations is a tangible example of true representative democracy.

The Council for Yukon Indians, the Yukon Chamber of Mines, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, all parties in the Yukon legislature, l'Association franco-yukonnaise, the Yukon Federation of Labour and many other non-governmental organizations support this legislation.

Clearly, the will of the Yukon people has spoken and that will says that self-government and land claims can work in the Yukon. Self-government is the key to the Yukon's future self-sufficiency, as is land claims. That is something all Yukoners can work toward in the spirit of co-operation, goodwill and mutual respect.

(1110)

I call on all parties in this House to support the will of the Yukon people and to support the Yukon land claims and self-government legislation.

* * *

OSTEOPOROSIS

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, osteoporosis affects 2.5 million Canadians, making their bones so fragile and brittle that they break very easily. It causes severe pain, disability, deformity, and even death.

I first learned about osteoporosis from the late Mrs. Lindy Fraser. When Lindy was 80 years old she decided to educate women about osteoporosis and the importance of exercise in its treatment and prevention. She made a video which I will never forget where she lay on her bed lifting her thin little legs in the air and saying: "See, I can do it. So can you".

Now 80-year old Eleanor Mills is leading her "Bony Express" on a trek across the country to bring attention to osteoporosis. This weekend our capital will be hosting one segment of this walk.

I would like to wish the "Bony Express", in the name of Lindy Fraser and all who are at risk of osteoporosis, the best of luck in its endeavour to help Canadians understand and fight this disease.

S. O. 31

EMPRESS OF IRELAND

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, this Sunday marks the 80th anniversary of the tragic sinking of the *Empress of Ireland*, Canada's little known version of the *Titanic* disaster which still ranks as the worst maritime accident in Canadian history. On May 29, 1914 the *Empress of Ireland* was en route from Quebec City when she ran into thick fog and collided with another ship at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River.

Over 1,000 passengers and crew suddenly lost their lives as the ship went down in less than 14 minutes. Many more would have perished in the icy waters if not for the heroic efforts of the ship's surgeon, Dr. James Grant. In the absence of medical supplies or proper facilities, Dr. Grant treated his fellow survivors and restored calm in the midst of the crisis.

Let us not overlook this important event in Canadian history. May we remember all those aboard the *Empress of Ireland*.

* * *

YOUTH VIOLENCE

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre): Mr. Speaker, it is with regret that I must rise today and report to the House what my family and I experienced last Monday, Victoria Day.

Following the traditional fireworks presentation at Ontario Place, our car and those around it, and sidewalk vendors were assaulted by what can only be described as a mad mob of uncontrollable teenagers showing no respect for, or fear of the law.

These teenagers beat their fists on cars, stole merchandise from street vendors and overturned not one but three hot dog carts. Who were these people? Where did they come from and where did they go? These are all questions I cannot answer.

What I do know is that this type of rash, mindless violence has made many of my constituents and Canadians demand a tougher stance on crime, particularly youth crime. I must urge the Minister of Justice to move quickly in bringing forward his amendments to the Young Offenders Act and to the criminal justice system. He must do whatever is necessary to prevent this type of action from occurring again and thus make our streets safer for us and our children.

* * *

HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to advise the House that May has been proclaimed as Huntington's Disease Awareness Month by the Huntington Society of Canada.

Huntington's disease is an inherited neurological disorder. The symptoms include uncontrollable jerking movements, unsteady gait and slurred speech. Because of these symptoms persons with Huntington's disease are often mistakenly thought to be intoxicated.

The Huntington Society of Canada is a national network of volunteers and health professionals. They work together to provide public information, to find a cure and treatment for Huntington's disease, and to improve the quality of life for people with the disease and their families.

I encourage members of the House and indeed all Canadians to be sensitive to the needs of those who suffer from disabilities caused by Huntington's disease and to support the work of the Huntington Society of Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE—FRANÇAISE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the media reported the angry words of some Liberal members who were outraged at the fact that the Leader of the Official Opposition had agreed to attend the convention of the Association canadienne—française de l'Ontario.

I am surprised by these reactions since the association also invited seven members of the Liberal cabinet, including the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, to participate. However, not one of the ministers in question had the courage to accept the invitation.

(1115)

Furthermore, the members who criticized the most harshly of all the presence of my leader at this convention, namely the members for Ottawa—Vanier and for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, have still not confirmed if they plan to attend.

In view of the absenteeism of federal Liberal representatives, one has to wonder really who is being courageous and who is being chicken.

The Speaker: These are rather strong words.

* * *

[English]

THE PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday the Prime Minister refused to answer a serious question about the fate of aboriginal people in a sovereign Quebec.

The Prime Minister called it hypothetical, saying: "If my grandmother had wheels, I would have been a bus. I do not like if, if, if". Yesterday in Calgary in responding to concerns about separation the Prime Minister told the crowd: "If we provide the people of Alberta, if we provide the people of Quebec, if we

Oral Questions

provide the people of Canada with good solid work in government—”

I suggest the people of Canada do not like hypothetical answers any better than the Prime Minister enjoys hypothetical questions. Rather than wondering whether he might be a bus, the Prime Minister should be more concerned that he might have missed the bus.

* * *

GUN CONTROL

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, the debate over gun control in this country continues to heat up. There has been a lot of speculation lately over what exactly the government might be planning and there are some misconceptions.

Some have said that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice have draconian measures in mind. They fear the government might want to penalize hunters, sportsmen and other law abiding gun owners.

Putting people out of business is not the Liberal approach. The Liberal approach is a balanced one. It is the only way fair and just improvements can be found. Without a doubt gun control is an issue which divides Canadians but misunderstanding only adds fuel to the fire.

We need a rational debate and a sense of mutual trust. We need to strike a balance that ensures fairness for gun owners and at the same time increases gun safety for all Canadian citizens.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC NATIVES

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, the turpitude of the chairman of the Bloc Québécois's policy committee, Daniel Turp, simply must be pointed out. Today, Mr. Turp formally denied the statements he has been making for years on the Quebec natives' right to self-determination.

A press release from the Bloc tells us a lot with the following words: “Mr. Turp will make no further comment”.

The Bloc is blocking the Bloquiste who was trying to tell us the truth. Imagine if they ever had “real power”, it is the people who would be blocked!

The Speaker: I am glad that we are now moving on to question period.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

NATIONAL FORUM ON HEALTH

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister. Quebec's health minister has strongly denounced the federal government's decision to ignore the provinces by refusing to invite them to participate in the National Forum on Health, which will study all health care issues, in particular the financing of health care. Need I remind you that the Constitution recognizes health as an area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction?

How does the Acting Prime Minister justify the government's decision to not directly involve the provinces in the National Forum on Health and what is his answer to the Quebec health minister who asked him: “How can health care reform be contemplated without the participation of the provinces which are responsible for delivering the services?”

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the federal government maintains very close consultations with the provinces on the terms of reference and the membership of the National Forum on Health.

(1120)

I want to add that the proposed forum will not be a decision-making body; its only mandate will be to advise the government. I think we will be able to make decisions on the forum in close consultation with the provinces. It is not our intention to exclude them from our consultations.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, since the acting Prime Minister is talking about consultations, I would like to know whether he endorses the position given by a source from the federal Cabinet, namely that the provinces were not invited because the federal government sees them as nothing more than an interest group, just like physicians', nurses' or consumers' associations. Are the provinces put on the same footing as these associations?

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the provinces have a very important role in the field of health which is recognized by the federal government. That is why there has been and continues to be very close consultation with the provincial governments on the terms of reference and the membership of the forum on health which the federal government is committed to create.

We certainly have in mind to continue these consultations both on the terms of reference and on the membership of the national forum on health. We should also bear in mind that it is not intended that this forum be a decision making body. If there are decisions to be made at the federal-provincial level there is an ongoing committee of federal and provincial health ministers for that purpose.

Instead, the purpose of this forum is to look at medium and long term concerns with respect to our national health programs and systems and to give advice to both federal and provincial governments on how we can deal with these problems.

I do not see why this in itself is a problem for the Bloc Quebecois. Surely the Bloc, as is the case with all other Canadians, wants to maintain and improve our health system. I do not know why as a result it is asking these questions.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, first of all, for your information, the Quebec health minister is not a member of the Bloc Quebecois. She is a Liberal minister, a member of a federalist party, and she denounces the federal government. As usual, we hear two different tunes as federalists in Quebec and Ottawa have different interpretations of federalism although they both belong to a Liberal party. It is not only the Bloc Quebecois.

Can the decision not to directly involve the provinces in this debate not be explained by the federal government's refusal to hold a public debate with the provinces on the eventual reduction of health-care transfer payments planned by his colleague from Finance?

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I wish to repeat that it is the federal government's intention to work with the provinces in having a better and stronger health care system for Canadians. That is why the federal government is consulting with the provinces both on the terms of reference and on the membership for the national forum on health care. No members have as yet been appointed to the forum. Before this is done there will be further consultation with the provinces on membership.

As I have said before, the purpose of the forum is to give advice to federal and provincial governments on strengthening our health care system. That is the way we are going to proceed. Our objective is not to weaken the system but to make it better. That is why we think that the Bloc, as is the case for all the parties in this House, should be supporting the federal government in its efforts to create the system, and I am not referring to provincial members but to the Bloc, instead of asking questions

Oral Questions

which suggest that the Bloc does not have the same commitment as the Liberal government to having a better health care system for all Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Health unequivocally indicated in this House that she refused to assume her responsibilities in the area of public health as far as Canadians infected with the hepatitis C virus through blood transfusions are concerned. An estimated 5,000 individuals were infected without their knowledge and now pose a threat to others.

Does the Acting Prime Minister agree with the absolutely absurd and irresponsible remarks made by the Minister of Health who merely suggests that people see their doctor and refuses to take action to identify those who were infected?

(1125)

[English]

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian blood supply is widely recognized as one of the safest in the world. It must be understood, however, that blood transfusions like other medical procedures cannot be entirely without risk. Hepatitis C infection is a case in point. It has long been understood to be a possible result of blood transfusions.

In spite of progress to reduce its occurrence by means of improved donor selection and the introduction of a screening test, infection happens infrequently. The testing of donors for hepatitis C beginning in 1990 has dramatically reduced the rate of transmission of this virus through blood transfusions.

The Ministry of Health encourages anyone worried about hepatitis C to discuss their concerns directly with their physician or, in the absence of their physician, directly with the Ministry of Health.

[Translation]

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead): Mr. Speaker, I would have liked the Acting Prime Minister to give his opinion on this and I will direct my supplemental to him. This is a crucial issue, in fact a vital one.

Does the Acting Prime Minister not recognize that the Liberal government is making the same mistake it made in the early eighties when the AIDS epidemic broke out and that it is being careless about the threat posed by hepatitis C, since those infected can transmit the virus to others if they are not warned?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): In the absence of the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the hon. member that good health is almost analogous with Liberal philosophy. If you look at the history of health legislation in the country you have to look to the Liberal Party.

The member is concerned and he is addressing his concerns legitimately in the House. The Minister of Health has been working diligently in answering questions daily about this important and serious problem. I think she is doing a heck of a job.

* * *

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, over the past several months Canadians have told Reform members that any proposal to amend the Young Offenders Act must include the following three changes: That the age parameters be reduced from the current 12 to 17 years to a proposed 10 to 15 years; that repeat serious young offenders be automatically transferred to adult court and that the public has the right to know the identities of those involved in criminal activities in their communities.

My question is for the Minister of Justice. Yesterday the minister assured the House that the Liberal caucus is unified on the need to amend the Young Offenders Act. Can the minister today assure the House that the Liberal government is unified with Canadians and will introduce these three specific amendments?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the government too has been listening to Canadians about the Young Offenders Act. Indeed, when we arrived in Ottawa in November consultation with Canadians, launched by the last government, was under way. We extended that consultation until mid-January. We received hundreds of submissions from interested individuals and groups across the country, all of which we have taken carefully into account.

We discussed the issues involving the act with the provincial and territorial ministers of justice and attorneys general in late March. We have also engaged in broad consultation outside the parameters of those meetings.

I can assure my hon. friend and the House that the changes we will introduce will reflect those consultations and will address the needed changes in the Young Offenders Act.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the minister has been receiving information. My concern remains that the proposed legislation

may not live up to the expectations of Canadians. Members of the Reform Party have repeatedly demanded that these three specific suggestions outlined in my initial question be adopted.

Can the Minister of Justice tell the House if these three specific changes to the Young Offenders Act will be included in his proposal?

(1130)

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the hon. member that in the course of our campaign for office last fall and in statements that I have made since the election we have made it clear that we believe the maximum punishment for the crimes of serious violence should be increased. We have said there is a need for greater sharing of information about those convicted of violent crime who are young offenders where community safety is at stake. We have also made reference to a variety of other changes which will be reflected in the bill we will introduce within the coming weeks in this House.

We have also made it clear that some of the more fundamental questions about the statute will be the subject of study by the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. At the same time as we introduce a bill for immediate changes we will ask the committee, for example, to look at broader questions such as the age application of the act. It will come back to us after consulting with knowledgeable people on those issues.

Some of the items the hon. member has mentioned will be covered in the statute that we are going to introduce to change the act in the short term and many other important questions will be addressed by the standing committee in its longer term analysis.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, I think my concerns are being verified with the suggestion that perhaps age will not be dealt with promptly and that is of course a major concern of Canadians.

The minister has said that he has received correspondence, and we know that he has a paper called "Toward Safer Communities". The minister has invited public submissions on judicial reform in this effort.

I would invite the minister to table these letters before the House so that all members can review the suggestions that Canadians have offered to the Minister of Justice. Would he table these responses?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to provide the hon. member or any other member of the House with copies of suggestions I have received about the Young Offenders Act.

I can warn the hon. member that I have received quite a few suggestions for changes to the Young Offenders Act. Last month my office received 12,000 letters from Canadians and many of

Oral Questions

them dealt with this issue. I would be happy to share those letters with the hon. member or any other member of this House.

* * *

[Translation]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. André Caron (Jonquière): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs.

After trees were cut in the Oka pine grove, the Kanésatake band council yesterday authorized removing the pavement from a private road leading to the golf course, in order to expand the Indian cemetery. The Mayor of Oka called this action a provocation.

Does the Minister of Indian Affairs, who is the guardian of the Mohawks' rights, intend to intervene directly with the Kanésatake band council to convince it to stop the work and to follow through the negotiation process which he just set up and entrusted to Michel Robert?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

In the past four or five weeks, I had several meetings with Christos Sirros, the official in charge for the Province of Quebec, with people who want to sell their homes south of highway 344, with the Chief of Kanésatake and with my Cabinet colleagues.

[English]

We have been working diligently to calm the situation and I think we have. Moreover, on the property south of 344, which had been raised several times by hon. members opposite—

[Translation]

—a decision was made. The federal government will buy the houses south of highway 344.

[English]

I am sure he will be happy with that. We have looked at the grievances of the people in the area. We think they are legitimate. They should not be responsible for the drop in value of their houses. It was not their doing. We have authorized the federal negotiator to proceed in an orderly fashion to negotiate with them at pre-Oka prices, to negotiate with Kanésatake on most of the issues and we are hoping to bring the matter under control and calm the matter. I am sure that is what all members want, to bring the matters under control in a reasonable manner.

[Translation]

Mr. André Caron (Jonquière): Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us exactly and directly what measures he has specifically taken to stop the cutting of trees in the pine grove and the work on the golf course road?

(1135)

[English]

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I was running out of time. I am glad you asked me that.

We are working with the peacemakers in the other two First Nations to come in and give a hand. We are working with the RCMP and with the Sûreté, but mostly we are working with the people of Kanésatake. It serves no useful purpose to do these inflammatory things.

Oka served no purpose at all that helped the people. I am going to do my best and my officials will do their best, so will our negotiator and mediator, to convince the people of Kanésatake that is not the way to proceed.

If they want to help the people, the leadership there has to be more calm in the situation. We are making progress and I hope to report in the next couple of weeks.

The Speaker: Just a simple reminder. It has been a long week. All questions and answers should be directed to the Speaker.

* * *

CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Yesterday we questioned the government on both the accountability and the effectiveness of CIDA. Contrary to what the parliamentary secretary has told us, the Auditor General did not praise CIDA with a glowing report as was suggested.

The Auditor General exposed serious deficiencies in CIDA; for example, a poor managerial system, a lack of focus, conflicting objectives, not to mention a lack of accountability. Will the minister now make a commitment that CIDA will become responsible to Parliament through real legislation?

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that question.

As I mentioned yesterday, although maybe I did not make it too clear, CIDA is responsible to Parliament and very accountable through the annual estimates. The committee on foreign affairs and international trade can call the appropriate ministers before it. We can question the ministers and the bureaucracy of CIDA through the estimates.

I mentioned yesterday that the Auditor General's office did audit three CIDA projects in three Asian countries. It chose three countries because it thought they would reflect the rest of the countries.

Oral Questions

In its report it had some severe criticisms of CIDA, et cetera, but what I want to stress is when the Auditor General and the director of CIDA appeared before the accounts committee and the foreign affairs committee, the Auditor General praised CIDA for how quickly it acted to the recommendations of the Auditor General.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, we appreciate that response but I still think it comes down to legal accountability to the House.

It is one thing to say that the accounts are there, but I think all of us realize how difficult it is to really look at those and to really analyse those as to the costs.

Can the minister commit to making a legal accountability directly to the House?

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how more authoritarian one can make an accountability than through Parliament which is elected by the people of Canada. That is the ultimate accountability.

I welcome the hon. member's intervention. He and I are on the foreign affairs committee and, as he knows, we are doing an in depth foreign policy review. I hope he will raise that in committee again—he has already—so that the committee can take that under consideration when it is making its report to the government.

* * *

[Translation]

SALES TAX

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Last May 12, the opposition asked the Minister of Finance if he could confirm whether negotiations were under way with provincial governments to combine provincial sales taxes and the GST into a single national sales tax. The minister replied, and I quote: "The answer is no".

Yet, we recently learned from the Canadian Press that a task force of federal and provincial officials was set up last March to try to establish a single national sales tax.

(1140)

Does the minister not realize that he misled Quebecers and Canadians by stating that no negotiations were under way with provincial governments to create a single tax, when in fact a federal-provincial task force has been looking at the issue since last March?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Develop-

ment—Quebec): Not at all, Mr. Speaker. First, we have always said clearly that we believe, like the vast majority of consumers and businesspeople, that harmonizing federal and provincial sales taxes was desirable.

I am sure the hon. member realizes that discussions are always taking place between federal and provincial officials. There are many issues and we certainly have to get ready for the report of the GST committee, on which the hon. member sat. I certainly hope that my officials and those working for the other ministers of Finance are getting ready for that report!

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, if provincial sales taxes and the GST were replaced with a single tax, do the federal government and the Minister of Finance realize that they would be encroaching on Quebec's jurisdiction and directly interfering with its fiscal autonomy?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, again I say not at all, and the hon. member knows it full well since he worked rather hard on that issue. What we are trying to do is to give consumers and businesspeople across Canada, including Quebec, what they want.

By setting up an harmonized tax we are certainly not invading an area of provincial jurisdiction. This is merely an administrative agreement between two levels of government to better serve Canadians.

* * *

[English]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

On May 5 the minister stated: "The next legislation that will be before the House dealing with aboriginal people will clearly show that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms will apply".

Last week at the Liberal convention here in Ottawa the justice minister said: "Individual rights of natives under self-government need not be guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms".

Will the minister of Indian affairs affirm that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms will apply to any legislation regarding aboriginal people?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the Minister of Justice said last week. I know that the Minister of Justice did say in the House to a question a week or so ago that the charter of rights should apply, and in the supplementary said clearly the charter of rights will apply.

Oral Questions

The legislation that will be tabled will not specifically mention the charter of rights but will be pursuant to the Constitution of Canada which encompasses the charter of rights and the charter of rights will apply.

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

Many Canadians would judge that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms perhaps goes to the very heart of what being a Canadian is and why Canada is such a desirable place to live. If we would allow different versions of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms for different groups of Canadians we would perhaps destroy what it means to really be a Canadian.

Will the minister of Indian affairs state that the same charter will apply to all Canadians?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is talking to the wrong minister. I agree with him entirely. There is one charter. There are certain basic rights that are common to most people and cherished by most people. I cherish them and I am sure the hon. member does, as he has so stated. I agree with him.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA'S FRENCH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes complained about the federal government's indifferent attitude and asked the government to do what it is supposed to do. A tall order, Mr. Speaker!

So far, the Minister of Canadian Heritage has responded rather contemptuously by dismissing the executive of the Federation as a bunch of malcontents.

My question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. Considering the ravages of assimilation and the widening income gap between francophones and anglophones, would the Acting Prime Minister agree that instead of attacking francophones who invited the leader of the opposition to explain his position, his government should concentrate on implementing a comprehensive policy for the development of Canada's French-speaking community, as requested by the Federation?

(1145)

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, we are focusing our efforts on keeping this country together, and that is the best way to prevent the assimilation of francophones in this country wherever they happen to be.

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, as it pursues this objective, does the government intend to act on a request from the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes to create a central agency responsible for imple-

menting a comprehensive policy for the French-speaking community? Yes or no? People are waiting for an answer.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, we already have a central agency. We have the federal government which stands up for the rights of all Canadians everywhere in this country, not like the Bloc québécois.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Don Valley North): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Canada is beginning to see some improvement in its economy due to the promises of the government. Canadians are still worried, however, about reports of uncertainty in the financial markets and concerned over the highly unacceptable unemployment rate.

Would the Minister of Finance tell us what steps the government is taking to improve prospects for Canadians?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member not only on his question and his tremendous interest in this matter but on his analysis of the reasons.

I simply point out that the member's position is shared by many others. Today the Conference Board of Canada released a report stating that Canada's economy would outperform all other G-7 members over the next two years.

[Translation]

The Conference Board's report is similar in this respect to a report by the International Monetary Fund which recently said that as far as growth and productivity are concerned, Canada will rank ahead of all G-7 countries.

[English]

I must say the member demonstrates as well how much he is a true Liberal when he raises the issue of unemployment. The government is dedicated to creating jobs for Canadians. That is why the 115,000 jobs we created are so important. Our social program reform and the rollback in UI premiums—

The Speaker: These are difficult questions we are getting today.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. John Cummins (Delta): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. It was good to see the minister on TV this morning talking tough in Washington about American overfishing of Canadian salmon on the west coast.

Oral Questions

Could the minister explain why this tough talk to the Americans has not been matched with a commitment to tough enforcement of Canada's conservation regulations on the west coast?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, the question of the hon. member allows us all to appreciate the work being done in Washington by the minister who is attempting to get Pacific salmon negotiations back on track after many months of American stalling.

With respect to conservation measures on the west coast they are at a very substantial level. There has been no decrease of any material amount. If the member wishes to be more precise in his very broad and sweeping statement—I do not think it is a question—the minister or myself would be happy to try to answer it. However I would like to have the actual information on which he is basing his question.

(1150)

Mr. John Cummins (Delta): Mr. Speaker, there have been severe reductions in the government's commitment to aerial surveillance on the west coast, to the coastal patrolmen's service, and to DFO's enforcement budget.

When will the government accept its responsibility for enforcement and put it at the head of DFO's list of priorities?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, with respect to DFO conservation officers, the number of fisheries officers has been erroneously reported as being cut down to 85 by a colleague of the hon. member. In fact there are 153.

These fisheries officers are now specializing in enforcement, while previously they did a great number of other tasks with respect to habitat protection, stock assessment and other such matters. Thirty-three positions have been switched specifically to stock assessments, habitat protection and other such things, while 153 positions remain as enforcement and are specializing in enforcement. There has been no change whatsoever in overall numbers.

Perhaps he and his colleague, the member from Esquimalt who seems to believe the numbers have gone down to 85, would like to check further to find out how in fact they made their error, because in fact errors they have made.

* * *

[Translation]

EH-101 HELICOPTER CONTRACT

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House, the Minister of Industry stated that only the prime contractors associated with the EH-101 helicop-

ter contract would be compensated. As everyone knows, the government has yet to provide any compensation.

Does the Minister of Industry realize that, aside from the prime contractors involved, several other companies had made commitments under this contract and that they, along with the prime contractors, have yet to be compensated for the cancellation of this deal? Is the minister aware of this situation?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry): Regrettably, Mr. Speaker, the previous government made a bad decision when it agreed to negotiate contracts to purchase the helicopters. In keeping with the promises we made during the election campaign and with our conviction that this course of action was best for Canada, this government had no choice but to cancel these contracts.

[English]

The people of Canada voted for us, understanding that we were going to cancel the contracts. It is unfortunate that some will lose as a result of that. In the final analysis this decision was made for the right reasons and done on the basis of the support of the people of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve): Mr. Speaker, only with your indulgence could the minister not answer my question. Perhaps he will redeem himself by answering my supplementary question.

How can the Minister of Industry justify awarding compensation only to prime contractors, for the most part foreign companies, when right here in Canada and in Quebec, many sub-contractors do not have sufficient funds to convert to civilian production? How does he explain this?

[English]

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, if members would ask questions that deserved answers they would get answers.

The point is simply that there are contractual relations the Government of Canada entered into with contracting parties. That is simple. Those contracts are being resolved now through a process of negotiation and discussion. The Prime Minister made very clear that there would be no compensation beyond that provided for in contracts.

We are interested in protecting in this matter the interest of the taxpayers of Canada. They are the people who sent us here. That is what we should be doing.

* * *

HEALTH

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the very busy Minister of Health.

Every day ambulance workers and firefighters risk their lives for Canadians. They also risk exposure to infectious diseases

Oral Questions

from the people they rescue. When this happens they want to be notified so that they and their families can seek quick treatment.

A workshop was set up to establish a process to give emergency workers this vital information but now the minister's department says the workshop will not be going ahead, even though all stakeholders have agreed that things could be worked out quickly. My question is why.

The Speaker: And don't say because.

(1155)

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I am getting to enjoy health better than aboriginal affairs.

I have just been advised that it has not been cancelled. It has been postponed. I hope that advice is accurate.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, my question is still why, but perhaps to help the Minister of Health I could advise her we have learned that the real reason the meeting has been cancelled is pressure from interest groups.

Could the Minister of Health tell the House why she is not willing or someone is not willing to move vigorously to protect the lives and health of emergency workers and their families?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, this is even fresher than the last information. I am advised it has been postponed because there has not been agreement on the agenda. It is going to take place once the agenda is agreed on.

I am sure that will satisfy the hon. member's question. I will bring it to the attention of the Minister of Health when she returns.

* * *

AIR SAFETY

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport. It has to do with the sudden and totally unexpected absence from work of air traffic controllers at the Winnipeg International Airport located in my riding.

Apparently as many as 38 air traffic controllers called in sick en masse this morning, leaving behind a small staff to serve an area all the way from Thunder Bay, Ontario, to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

What is the government doing to assure the safety of air travellers in that area?

Mr. Joe Fontana (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. I take this opportunity on behalf of the Minister of Transport to assure the House and, more important, the travelling public that the systems are in

place to handle all air traffic completely safely. It may be slower but it will be safe.

I also advise that the transport management is in contact with CATCA which will be meeting with the union tomorrow morning. The union is trying to be helpful in getting the controllers back to work.

I should also point out to the House that the severity of such unwarranted job action must be looked into, in the fullest extent of the collective agreement.

* * *

[Translation]

CREDIT CARDS

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, over the past 12 years, retail stores have ignored the recommendations made by three separate parliamentary committees regarding credit card user fees and continue to charge interest rates as high as 28.8 per cent on the outstanding balance of their card statements.

Does the Minister of Industry intend to act swiftly to protect the interests of consumers in the face of this unacceptable practice on the part of retail stores, which is leaving some consumers in a state of chronic indebtedness?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. member for his question because this is a very important issue. Actually, interest rates on credit cards in the retail sector are governed by provincial regulations. This is nevertheless an important issue which I have discussed, in writing, with the president of the Retail Council of Canada. It is very important that we find a way to bring down the interest rates on retail store credit cards as well as those issued by banks.

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, since a conspiracy seems to exist among retail stores to maintain similarly outrageous interest rates on their credit cards, does the minister intend to hold an inquiry to determine whether these practices constitute an offence under section 45 of the Competition Act concerning anticompetitive practices?

[English]

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, I should draw to the attention of the hon. member the fact that a private member's bill on this matter is before the House. I think it is coming up for debate shortly and I am sure he will want to participate in that debate.

(1200)

On the matter of the level of the rates and whether there is action to be considered by the director of investigations and research under the Competition Act, this is a matter on which I would be prepared to seek the advice of the director. If there are facts that warrant an investigation, I am sure he will take that appropriate action and we will be pleased to advise the member accordingly.

*Routine Proceedings***AMATEUR SPORT**

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage who is responsible for amateur sport.

Recently the minister received a report on the funding of amateur sport which recommended the elimination of funding for 19 different sports. The minister acknowledged that having received the report, he was not prepared to make any further decisions until the report was examined. Then yesterday, the minister announced that two of the 19 sports so identified for funding cuts, biathlon and freestyle skiing, would not have their funding cut.

Can the minister inform the House what specific criteria were used to decide which sports would have their funding maintained and which would have it cut?

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage): The hon. member is aware that the minister is currently reviewing the Best report, which is far from government policy.

The minister did make assurances that all sports will be given due consideration. The hon. member may wish to wait until the comprehensive review is done before issuing further criticisms of the announcement.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to hear there is certainly an intended review by all parliamentarians.

Will the minister table the report in the House and then refer it to the standing committee? Then there can be a very thorough and public review of that report in order to find out the specific criteria that were in place for those funding cuts.

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, I will certainly be happy to relay the member's request to the minister.

Perhaps it should be the Reform's sport to race to conclusions without the ball.

* * *

*[Translation]***ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE-FRANÇAISE DE L'ONTARIO**

Mr. Gaston Pélouquin (Brome—Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister. This week, we were told that neither the Prime Minister nor any other member of the Cabinet thought it would be a good idea to accept the

invitation extended by the Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario and attend its annual convention.

How can the Acting Prime Minister explain the fact that Cabinet members decided to decline this invitation?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, we believe that this organization is a very important one indeed. I do not have any detailed answer to give you about the timetable of the various ministers and the possibility that they may be able to attend that convention, but I will look into this matter, because this organization is very important to us, and I speak both as a minister and a member from Ontario.

* * *

*[English]***POINTS OF ORDER**

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, earlier in question period when the hon. member for Don Valley North asked a question of his finance minister in such glowing terms, I need a ruling. The question was so flagrantly biased in a way I need to know—

The Speaker: Questions that are put forward by all members in my view are legitimate questions. I know that all members are seeking information during question period. Of course that question was in order.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

(1205)

*[English]***SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A), 1994-95**

A message from His Excellency the Governor General transmitting supplementary estimates (A) for the financial year ending March 31, 1995, was presented by the Minister of Finance and read by the Speaker to the House.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 23rd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in this report later this day.

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the second report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development regarding the main estimates for 1994–95 under human resources development. The committee has considered the estimates and reports them without amendment.

* * *

[Translation]

EXCISE TAX ACT

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec) moved for leave to introduce Bill C–32, an Act to amend the Excise Tax Act, the Excise Act, and the Income Tax Act.

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

* * *

[English]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West) moved for leave to introduce Bill C–252, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act (review of nomination papers).

He said: Mr. Speaker, section 82.1 of the Canada Elections Act requires that each person seeking election have their nomination papers signed by 100 electors resident in the riding in which they seek to be elected.

In the last federal election in Scarborough West there were eight people on the ballot. Four of those people at least had not complied with section 82.1 and had not in fact had their nomination papers signed by 100 electors resident in the riding of Scarborough West. There was absolutely no mechanism to deal with this flagrant abuse of the Canada Elections Act.

Accordingly I have proposed this bill which would amend the Canada Elections Act. It would allow an elector of an electoral district to request the review of a nomination paper when the elector has reasonable grounds to believe that one or more persons who signed the nomination paper are not qualified electors resident in the electoral district. A nomination paper that had not been signed by the required number of electors resident in the electoral district provided for by the Canada Elections Act would be declared invalid.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

(1210)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell) moved for leave to introduce Bill C–253, an act to amend the Criminal Code (abortion).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill is really a conscience bill. It is designed to protect health care workers who wish not to participate in the procuring of abortions. It makes it an offence for anyone to attempt to dismiss these people from their jobs if they refuse to do so on moral or religious grounds.

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

* * *

[Translation]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A), 1994–95

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 81(5) and 81(6), I move:

That the forecasts contained in the Supplementary Estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1995, tabled today, be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, votes 1(a), 5(a), 10(a), and 35(a).

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, with leave from the House, I move that the 23rd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which was tabled in the House today, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

CANADA POST

Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I am pleased and honoured to present a petition signed by a number of tenants in the Flynn Gardens apartment building at 48 St. Paul Street, Lindsay, Ontario. The apartment building is classified as a seniors and handicapped building.

Routine Proceedings

The petition calls upon Parliament to consider locating a mailbox in the vicinity of 48 St. Paul Street for the convenience of the residents of the building and the surrounding residential district. I fail to understand the role of Canada Post in not providing the opportunity for people to be able to mail a letter with some convenience. I fully support this petition.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, these petitioners in my riding are no doubt joined by thousands of Canadians throughout the land who want the CRTC to regulate excessive abuse on radio, television and other media. They believe the use of foul language, significant violence or explicit sex is not necessary in order to entertain or to inform.

[*Translation*]

Abuse in the media often goes against parents' values, and that is why they are asking that it be controlled.

[*English*]

ETHANOL

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Essex—Kent): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to stand today pursuant to Standing Order 36 to present a petition on ethanol. In my riding many people are very concerned about the direction our government is going with regard to the ethanol industry. Certainly Kent and Essex counties are areas that do need a boost.

We realize that ethanol will create a very stable agriculture industry in our country. Realizing all of the environmental positives ethanol will bring, I humbly ask the government to exercise its ability to present the exemption on excise taxes on fuel and forgo that tax for the next 10 years so that this industry may become strong and survive well in this country.

(1215)

EUTHANASIA

Mr. John Cummins (Delta): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and honoured to rise today to present a petition from some of my constituents. I fully support this petition which reads, in part: "We, your humble petitioners, therefore pray that Parliament not repeal or amend section 241 of the Criminal Code in any way and to uphold the Supreme Court of Canada decision of September 30, 1993 to disallow assisted suicide, euthanasia.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, I have some petitions here dealing with Canada's having enacted legislation providing for the two official languages.

The petitioners call for a referendum of the people binding upon Parliament to accept or to reject two official languages.

As their member of Parliament, I am duty bound to present this petition to the House. It is signed by people from Pembroke, Eganville, Renfrew, Victoria, British Columbia.

[*Translation*]

RAIL LINES

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition which was handed to me by residents of the Gaspé Peninsula during public hearings held by Rural Dignity. The petitioners are asking for a moratorium on the abandonment of rail lines as well as public hearings on this issue.

[*English*]

RU486

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure, on behalf of some of my constituents, to present two petitions to the House.

The first petition deals with the drug RU486 which has been used in the abortion of human children at an early stage of development.

Their concern is that the administration of RU486 has caused the death of at least one woman to date and has caused serious health problems in other clinical trials in France, and that the only proven use of RU486 is in the abortion of young human beings.

Therefore, they petition the House to withhold the approval of RU486 and prevent the marketing and testing of this drug.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is also from some of my constituents. It is with regard to section 745 of the Criminal Code of Canada whereby convicted murderers sentenced to life imprisonment without chance of parole for 25 years are now able to apply after 15 years, and whereas they feel that the murder of a Canadian citizen is a most reprehensible crime, they request that Parliament repeal section 745.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, it is my duty to present the following petition, pursuant to Standing Order 36, which has been duly certified by the clerk of petitions.

Constituents in Lambton—Middlesex and the surrounding area pray and call upon Parliament not to extend the spousal privileges and benefits to same sex relationships which society accords to heterosexual couples.

ETHANOL

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to present a second petition, pursuant to Standing Order 36, which has been duly certified by the clerk of petitions.

Constituents in Lambton—Middlesex and area humbly pray and call upon Parliament to maintain the present exemption on the excise portion of ethanol for a decade, allowing for a strong and self-sufficient ethanol industry in Canada.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions. The first petition is signed by well over 700 residents of Scarborough and the surrounding areas of metropolitan Toronto. It deals with the increase in violent crimes in Canada and also with the Young Offenders Act.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to amend the Criminal Code of Canada and the Young Offenders Act to provide heavier penalties for those convicted of violent crime.

I am pleased to note that our government is going to be moving precisely in that vein in June of this year.

(1220)

ASSISTED SUICIDE AND EUTHANASIA

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is also from residents of my riding and surrounding areas and it prays that Parliament ensure that the present provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada prohibiting assisted suicide be enforced vigorously and that Parliament make no changes in the law which would sanction or allow the aiding or abetting of suicide or active or passive euthanasia.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is also signed by people in Scarborough. It calls upon Parliament not to amend the human rights code, the Canadian Human Rights Act or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in any way which would tend to indicate societal approval of same sex relationships or of homosexuality, including amending the human rights code to include in the prohibited grounds of discrimination the undefined phrase "sexual orientation".

SERIAL KILLER BOARD GAMES

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from citizens in my riding asking the government to place a ban on serial killer board games.

The people who design these games must indeed be sick. Here is a description, it is very short, on one game: "This game comes with a body bag, 25 babies and four serial killer figures". The

Government Orders

object of the game is to commit murder and the person who has the highest body count in the body bags is the winner.

The game is not in the best interest of children; indeed it is not in the best interest of the community or the nation. The petitioners are asking that the government ban serial killer board games in Canada immediately.

ASSISTED SUICIDE AND EUTHANASIA

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, it is my duty to table a petition in the House today dealing with doctor assisted suicides. These 33 petitioners are in favour of doctor assisted suicides. Therefore, these petitioners request that Parliament change the existing law to enable doctors to direct an act of euthanasia without fear of prosecution.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Shall all questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-30, an act to amend the Department of Labour Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying earlier, like the other components of the strategy, the emphasis is on pragmatic, meaningful measures to target the real needs of those affected by change and the needs of the region as a whole at a time of unprecedented transition.

The Atlantic groundfish strategy is, in fact, the opposite of the band-aid approach that has characterized the previous responses to the economic crisis in Atlantic Canada. The strategy represents instead a long term investment in communities deeply affected by circumstances beyond their control.

It is also an investment in people, including those older workers who have invested and contributed so much for so long to the groundfish industry.

As members are aware, the Atlantic groundfish strategy has two primary objectives, to re-establish a rationalized, restructured fishery, and to serve as a catalyst for diversified economic growth outside the fishery.

Government Orders

As such, the strategy offers a wide range of programs and options specifically tailored to individual career and employment requirements.

These options include training activities such as literacy training, community based adult basic education, university study programs and entrepreneurial training.

(1225)

Green projects that connect environment enhancement with meaningful skill development in an emerging industry.

Employment incentives to encourage participants to find and accept jobs.

Self-employment assistance to stimulate business start-ups outside the traditional fishery and support entrepreneurship training.

A community opportunities pool allowing individuals to develop and contribute to community based projects and initiatives where they live.

Portable wage subsidies to allow non-fishery employers to hire people and provide on the job training.

Mobility assistance to provide relocation support for those who wish to find work outside their community.

Several adjustment programs for youth and of course older workers.

I now want to address more specifically Bill C-30, the proposed amendment to the Department of Labour Act. It is crucial to note that when we refer to older workers in the east coast fishery we are talking about those from 55 to 64 years of age. The Department of Labour Act already has the authority to make assistance payments to former employees between the ages of 55 and 64.

However, an amendment to the act is needed to include fish plant workers who will reach 55 within their Atlantic groundfish strategy eligibility period.

It is this amendment, Bill C-30, and the compassionate and pragmatic reasons supporting it that I wish to recommend to the House today.

The strategy was developed with input from all those affected by the change: the provinces, business, industry, unions, communities and, most important, those whose lives and livelihoods were so closely tied to a diminishing resource. Some of them will be part of a streamlined future fishery. Others will take up new opportunities in new fields.

However, for many fish plant older workers there is the real possibility of falling between the cracks at a critical time in their lives. That is why the Atlantic groundfish strategy includes special considerations for their circumstances.

The fact is that because of their long term commitment to the fisheries many older workers have no realistic prospect of

finding other work or learning and applying the new skills that a fast changing marketplace demands.

Although they are free to opt for the active training measures available under the Atlantic groundfish strategy, their background could limit the benefits to be gained from the participation in the strategy options and in the long run their chances of finding employment outside the fishery.

In the public hearings of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans many plant workers acknowledged this reality and asked about the possibility of establishing early retirement provisions starting at age 50.

This essentially is what the fish plant older worker adjustment program and the related amendment to the Department of Labour Act proposed; a realistic, compassionate, income maintenance option for these workers who have given so much for so long.

Under this program eligible fish plant workers who are between 50 years of age and 64 as of this May 15 may receive income supplement payments.

(1230)

The program would be administered jointly by human resources development and participating provinces that enter into agreements. The cost would be shared on a 70 per cent federal and 30 per cent provincial basis. Eligible workers will have 90 days after they are informed of their eligibility to opt from the fish plant older worker adjustment program. They will then receive income support until they reach the age of 65.

Income assistance payments will be calculated on the basis of 70 per cent NCARP unemployment insurance benefits averaged over the three best years of 1988 to 1993 with a monthly maximum of \$1,000. Until these benefits begin fish plant older workers entitled to TAGS will receive income support equivalent to their three year average UI NCARP rate less 6 per cent. The older worker adjustment program will be cost shared with the federal funding set at 70 per cent and participating provinces paying the remaining 30 per cent.

For older fish plant workers the maximum cost of this program to the federal government will be about \$60 million. We believe that 1,200 older fish plant workers in Quebec and the Atlantic region will participate in this program. About 75 per cent of those workers are in Newfoundland, 15 per cent in Nova Scotia and the rest in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Quebec.

Let me stress that participation in this program is voluntary. Fish plant older workers who want to benefit from the strategies, training and career planning initiatives can do so. The concept presented under the fish plant older worker adjustment program is one that our provincial partners and those personally affected recognize as having specific merit and relevance.

Government Orders

In the past and under previous governments of all stripes older worker readjustment policies rarely refer to early retirement because it was thought to perhaps encourage voluntary layoffs and create pressures for a universal and expensive rush to early retirement. However because of significant changes in social values and work patterns in recent years and yes, in the economy, more people are choosing to retire before they reach 65 years of age.

There can be no doubt that early retirement is an emerging human resources issue seen variously as a source to reduce unemployment, as a useful tool in industry restructuring or as a viable bridge to new lifestyle options. However we do not use the word voluntary for this program since fish plant older workers affected by the Atlantic groundfish crisis have not voluntarily chosen to leave their jobs. The fish plant older worker adjustment program addresses the fact that these workers were forced out of the labour force.

Precedents exist for the kind of initiative we are proposing today, for example, in Atlantic Canada. There is a plant worker adjustment program which already applies to workers aged between 50 and 64 years. The program assists older fish plant workers laid off as a result of fish stock declines in Atlantic Canada. It is now being terminated as it applies only to layoffs which occurred until December 31, 1993.

Other examples of income support programs for laid off older workers exist, including the northern cod early retirement program and the program for older worker adjustment. The northern cod early retirement program applies however to workers aged between 55 and 64. This program was created in 1992 to encourage a permanent reduction in the numbers of fishermen and plant workers laid off because of depletion of the cod fishery.

(1235)

There is also a program named program for older workers adjustment, POWA, which applies to workers aged 55 to 64 who were affected by major involuntary layoffs from all industrial sectors across Canada. The fish plant older worker adjustment program is a logical application of these initiatives. It is also a necessary response to a unique and urgent set of circumstances.

I spoke briefly about the kind of contribution fishers and plant workers made to the economic life of their communities. Now I want to say a few words about the way of life that their work supported and carried forward through the generations.

Many if not most of the people who need help now live in small communities where people count on one another in a very unique way. Their communities were sustained by a fishery resource that is no longer available to them. The real resource is the people and the people are still there.

The future is theirs to create, but we cannot ignore the present needs. The skills of the past may not be in demand but the courage, the resourcefulness and the determination of the people are still there. This program recognizes how important it is for the individuals involved to maintain self-sufficiency and dignity in the face of unprecedented adjustment and change in their livelihood and way of life.

As such, the government sees the proposed amendment to the Department of Labour Act as essential to fully recognizing the past contributions and future needs of these older workers. We have drawn on the knowledge and experience of many groups and individuals to produce this legislation and this strategy.

It is realistic. It is definitely comprehensive. It reflects the principles and beliefs of this government so it is a fair and compassionate approach. It is designed to meet the kind of emergency which Canadians have not faced since the days of the Great Depression so it is innovative and effective.

This strategy and its programs are based on sound research and wide ranging open discussions with the people who are working to meet this challenge. Those who looked at the report submitted by the task force on incomes and adjustment in the Atlantic fishery, commonly known as the Cashin report, know that serious people examined the situation and came up with some realistic ideas.

The strategy is the product of two months of consultation with fishery workers and their associations and unions as well as representatives from fishing communities and from the processing industry. We have had the benefit of speaking with officials from both federal and provincial departments with responsibilities in this area.

The measures we have brought together under the Atlantic groundfish strategy reflect that consultation. Premier Clyde Wells of Newfoundland is one of the provincial leaders who contributed to the development of this strategy and he welcomed the measures it proposed.

In addition, the fisheries minister of that province, Walter Carter, called it a reasonable package and in Nova Scotia fisheries minister Jim Barkhouse said he was pleased with the strategy. Union leaders have welcomed the approach the government has taken both in helping people and in planning the future of the fish resource.

In the red book and in the speech from the throne, the government clearly spelled out a commitment to fairness and compassion in introducing fishery adjustment measures. We reinforced this commitment a month ago in St. John's. Common sense and common decency demand that the pragmatic positive implications of this amendment receive speedy and unanimous endorsement from all members.

Government Orders

(1240)

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-30 reminds me of an old photograph found in the remains of a house which has burned down, because it is the reflection of the disastrous condition of the fish industry in Atlantic Canada, which is mainly due to the mismanagement of the fishery issue by the successive governments of the last 20, 25 or 30 years. It seems that we could not find a way to get scientists, fishermen and governments together to deal with this tragedy caused by the near extinction of some species.

One good thing about Bill C-30 is that it recognizes the fact that some people are in a difficult and unacceptable situation. We see workers who, at 50, 52, 53 or 55 years of age, have lost their jobs. These people had developed some expertise in their field. These were fish plant workers you could rely on, but they do not have the skills to find a job in some other line of work. I do not think you can ask them to relocate, because they often have lived all of their lives in the same community, where they have gone through some difficult times and witnessed the failure of the federal government involvement in the Atlantic Canada fishing industry.

I would like to remind members that, a few years back, we often heard, especially when the Conservatives were in office, about cuts to programs aimed at protecting certain species. I may recall that at the time there was an agreement under which administrative responsibility for the protection of species was delegated to the Government of Quebec, an agreement that was adopted in 1922. Under Mr. Trudeau's Liberal government, it was decided to withdraw this delegation—this was around the beginning of the eighties—and today we see the disastrous result. In Quebec and throughout the Maritimes, we have seen an industry collapse, an industry that is no longer able to provide work for the people in the communities which had made a living from the fisheries for years.

I often wonder what we are going to do about the industry in the future. It is all very well to come up with band-aid solutions, but there is a basic problem, a problem that will not go away and it is high time the government took the initiative. I think that along with the compassion reflected in this bill, which lets people go on living in their communities, we must find new ways to intervene so that our maritime communities can look to the future with greater confidence in the potential for their development.

I think there are a number of questions that should be asked about what the government intends to do about the fisheries in the future. What will the fisheries mean to us? Will the people who worked in the industry only be able to pass on their memories of days gone by? I am reminded of what happened in the seventies—and it seems we never learn from our mistakes—

when Forillon Park was created in the Gaspé. The government forgot that people had their homes there, and they even asked them to leave. Today, we realize that we could have called on these people to develop tourism in their area, making sure that they took an active part in it and earn some money that way.

(1245)

The measure is interesting, but we can wonder if it will be applied openly, giving the necessary support to people who have all kinds of initiatives, such as setting up community projects, or turning a small village or a town into a tourist attraction. I hope that they will not have to cut through the same red tape as others before them with similar projects.

For example, in my riding, some people applied to the independent workers assistance program. They were told that there was no money for that. They are on UI and since there is no money, new businesses cannot be allowed, and yet it would not cost anything more. Is this kind of treatment going to be applied to workers who will retire that way? I hope not.

There is another question one must ask. Will the agreements be signed on an individual basis or will it be a general agreement passed with provincial governments? Individuals should not have to face government bureaucracy alone. In their tragic situation, they must be treated humanely.

This bill brings the retirement age for fish plant workers down to 50. Do they not deserve a lot more? Let us have a minute of silence. It is like a death in the family. The parliamentary secretary said earlier that in areas like Atlantic Canada, the human resources were the main resource. I do agree, and it is probably the mistake we made in the past; we dissociated the human resources from their environment rich in other resources such as fish and forests. And because people wanted to catch fish, and mistakes were made in stock management, we are now in this desperate situation.

Should we not learn from our mistakes and strive for renewable development at the local level? I believe that there is a know-how to be found among the people who lived in those environments and know what it is to earn a difficult living, day after day, people who have also experienced seasonal work. If we do not take advantage of what these people can teach us, we will have missed the boat, we will not learn from the sad experience of these victims of our poor management of fish stocks. This bill is the result of the shortsightedness of past governments.

The situation in the fisheries is also preventing the next generation from learning the trade. People will be retiring thanks to a bill which will give them a minimum income, but we should use their knowledge to give young people the desire to fish, perhaps for species presently underused, and also to develop know-how in the processing of these new species in order to provide employment.

Government Orders

I believe that it is an acknowledgement that government intervention in the fisheries failed in Atlantic Canada and in Quebec.

(1250)

This bill is more or less an acknowledgement by the federal government that it did almost irreparable damage. We also realize that it is preferable that the people affected be allowed to retire rather than try to retrain them for work in other sectors, because it is too late.

I believe that the government should try, as much as possible, to humanize its action, particularly when dealing with the people targeted by the bill.

Bill C-30 is somewhat like reparations, something we do because we feel guilty for what we have done. I think we should see beyond that. In conclusion, I hope that people affected by this measure will enjoy to the maximum the years that lie ahead. I hope they will see in this situation an opportunity for a new start and will put their own professional experience to good use for the future development of their community.

I lived in the Gaspé Peninsula for a few years and I know that people in that region have good common sense, a quality which sometimes gets scarce the higher you rise in the bureaucratic machinery; I think we should listen to what they have to say in order to arrive at more acceptable solutions.

Allow me to make a parallel with the forestry workers. In the area of forest management, the situation is similar to that of fisheries ten years ago. We are beginning to feel the real threat of a shortage. Some workers in the forest management communities have presented various proposals for a restructuration of forest harvesting that would allow the resource to renew itself and would prevent a situation similar to that of the fisheries.

The government always finds a solution for people who are really at the end of their rope, who have nowhere else to turn to, and I hope it will do the same in this case and listen to the message being sent so that it will not have to pass the same kind of bill for the forestry workers in seven, eight, ten or twelve years from now because that would be absolutely absurd.

In his speech for the tabling of this bill, the parliamentary secretary praised the whole government action program for Atlantic fisheries. I think we should also seize this opportunity to see what could be done in other areas so that a situation like this one will never be repeated.

Other sectors of industry are facing somewhat the same situation. Workers who are 50, 52 or 55 years old and who have experience in a specific field cannot easily be slotted into other jobs. I hope that this example will serve to make the government more aware of the importance of treating other groups in this

manner and of being as attentive to their concerns as they were in this particular case.

There is no doubt that the government is less responsible for the situation that prevails in other industries. However, fishery is one sector for which the government has primary responsibility. Other players have always been asked to do their part and co-operate, but the guidelines have always come from the government. Moreover, it was the government that turned a deaf ear to the warnings that were repeatedly issued, either by the fishermen or by scientific groups, about the repercussions of actions taken in the fishery.

In conclusion, I hope that the workers who have lost their jobs will be able, as a result of this measure, to continue living in dignity, to weather the crisis and to ensure a bright future for their local community. I hope that governments will listen to their concerns and that they will be given the necessary means to get their communities back on track.

(1255)

[English]

Mr. John Cummins (Delta): Mr. Speaker, we oppose this bill not because we do not care but because we do not believe that it is as realistic or as compassionate as the government would have us believe. We suggest that the bill is defeatist, that it shows a lack of faith in people.

We believe that happy people are people who are productive and people who have some control over their own destiny, men and women who earn a living and provide for their families.

People do not want to be pushed aside and told: "Here is \$750 or \$1,000 a month. We understand you are only 50 years of age, but that's it. Your life is over. You can no longer provide for your family and in fact you cannot provide a positive example for the younger members of your family". We do not think that is what people want in any part of our country, let alone in Atlantic Canada.

We have a government which in the last election promised jobs and now all it has to offer is early retirement. The government estimates that there are 1,200 older fish plant workers who will participate in the early retirement program and that the cost will be \$6 million to the federal government. It claims that 75 per cent of the eligible older fish plant workers will be from Newfoundland.

It is okay to criticize what the government is doing but I think what is called for here are some suggestions on what we can do to make things better for these people. If I could I would like to share how I felt when I visited Newfoundland.

When you get off the plane there and make a purchase you are going to pay almost 20 per cent in sales tax and GST. If I were an entrepreneur and I arrived in Newfoundland and I had to pay almost 20 per cent sales tax, I would probably get back on the plane and head right back out of town. If I stayed around long enough to take a look at what the personal income taxes were I

Government Orders

would swim to get off the island. I think that is where the problem is here.

There is a problem wherein we have a province that is not economically attractive to entrepreneurs to establish businesses. What we need is more fundamental change in the economy to make it possible for the economy to grow.

What we do not need are more handouts. More handouts do nothing for people. They destroy people. They destroy their spirit and their will.

On this issue I am preparing a private member's bill which will make suggestions for cutting capital gains tax which I think will be very helpful in this regard.

Bill C-30 provides legislative authority for one part of the Atlantic groundfish strategy, the part to be delivered by human resources development. I assume the department believes it has authority for those other components of TAGS that it will be delivering.

Bill C-30 therefore responds to one of the recommendations of the Auditor General in his latest report with regard to the previous Atlantic groundfish package. The Auditor General stated this:

The government implemented a program for which in our view no clear and satisfactory authority existed. At no time did it go to Parliament to seek proper substantive authority for its actions. Parliament was denied thereby proper opportunity to review and debate the government's proposed program as part of the normal legislative process, to decide on its objectives and to approve expenditures to achieve those objectives.

The Auditor General went on to state:

The government should present to Parliament legislation that will provide a proper authority for this program and for any future programs of a similar nature.

The Minister of Human Resources Development is to be congratulated for the introduction of this bill as recommended by the Auditor General. But where is the rest of the bill? Does this bill really give Parliament the opportunity to debate the program's objectives? No, it merely attempts to patch TAGS into a pre-existing legislative authority.

Unfortunately this is not its greatest deficiency. Where is the legislative authority for those parts of TAGS that DFO is delivering?

(1300)

DFO will be attempting to retire fishermen, their licences, and to create industrial renewal boards. This part of the TAGS program is without legislative authority and I call on the government to bring in the remainder of the required legislative authority to cover it.

DFO officials tell me that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans intends to use the Atlantic Fisheries Restructuring Act as part of the authority. The Auditor General has already ruled that the Atlantic Fisheries Restructuring Act is an inappropriate legislative authority. That act, the Auditor General noted, was passed in the mid-eighties to permit the government to implement the Kirby commission's recommendations.

It is important to note that the Kirby report and the Atlantic Fisheries Restructuring Act were founded on the expectation of a doubling of the groundfish harvest. The Kirby report saw the problem of the fishery as one of finding ways to market the growing supply of fish, the oversupply, not the lack of supply.

TAGS expects to reduce the catch capacity by 50 per cent. The underlying assumptions of TAGS and the Atlantic Fisheries Restructuring Act are incompatible.

The Kirby report said that one of the bright spots in the fishery was the outlook for the harvest, that by 1987 the cod catch would be more than triple the 1976 harvest. The total groundfish catch will have more than doubled.

The act expanded the catch potential and the fish were caught. Now there are none. Let us have done with any talk of using the Atlantic Fisheries Restructuring Act to deliver any part of TAGS. I call on the government to bring in to the House a comprehensive bill that would outline its objectives and would give it the necessary authority to carry out the needed changes in the Atlantic groundfishery.

Dwindling stocks, caused in part by a failure to manage the fishery, created the need for TAGS. While the government is spending nearly \$2 billion on TAGS due to this failure to manage the fishery, it is not even maintaining existing surveillance and enforcement programs on the east coast.

No better case exemplifies the willingness to allow this important infrastructure to run down than the letting of the contract for the fisheries observers in the Scotia-Fundy region earlier this year. The government did not even follow its own tendering rules. The tender requirements were manipulated in order to give the contract to a company that had no experience with foreign vessels and the offshore fishery.

The company has been allowed to use observers without the necessary experience. There has already been overfishing as a result. There have been published reports in sector 3-0 of vessels without observers catching undersized fish and dumping the unwanted fish at sea. There have been problems with Cuban vessels in the silver hake fisheries which by law must have observers on every vessel. The Cubans are fishing in Canadian waters without experienced observers on board.

Government Orders

This makes a mockery of TAGS. The improprieties in the letting of this observer contract are too numerous to list today, but I do want to comment on one further problem that came to my attention this morning.

Fisheries observers this morning told me that those fisheries observers who appeared before the standing committee only a few weeks ago have been blacklisted by the new observer contractor who has refused to hire them simply because they came to Ottawa and addressed the committee on the improprieties on the letting of this contract. If that were not bad enough, there is also an investigation under way into allegations against the chief of the fisheries observer program in Halifax as to his involvement in the letting of the observer contract.

The investigator was to have submitted his report today. The investigator told my office this morning that the investigation had been delayed for perhaps two weeks.

I call on the government to explain the status of this investigation into the chief of the observer program and to explain why DFO has delayed the completion and release of the investigator's report.

In his report the Auditor General noted two other items I think worth mentioning. He said that the government had difficulty in targeting payments only to those clearly affected by the moratorium. What he means in this regard, as I understand it, is first that it is very difficult to define who those plant workers are who were directly involved, and second many people who are not covered by this program were as well seriously affected by the decline in fish stocks.

(1305)

The other point that he makes, and I think again it is very appropriate, is that fewer people than expected were taking training that would lead to work outside the fishery or were taking up retirement options in response to the adjustment component of this program.

What we have to do is help people overcome the difficulties that have been forced on them by this program, not simply to give them a handout and say: "Here it is, take this, go away. We do not want to hear from you again". We must provide opportunity for people so that they can lead successful and happy lives.

We on this side of the House envision an east coast fishery that is viable, self-sufficient and sustainable. We believe that the fishery can and should be a cornerstone of a more diversified economy in Atlantic Canada. We are confident Atlantic Canadians can compete in a world economy.

The government would have Atlantic Canadians living dependent on government handouts and in a constant state of instability. It is the desire of Reform members to encourage the implementation of a comprehensive program of change which

would see the people of Atlantic Canada not only working but working in an environment that is both profitable and satisfying.

On the other hand the implementation of the government's plans will be to perpetuate the tragedy that is currently taking place in Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Fred Mifflin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise and speak on this bill, a bill that has great significance to me and to my riding, indeed my province and my section of Canada.

I had to redo the presentation that I prepared because I was assuming that this bill would get unanimous support in the House. I was surprised and I might even say disturbed to find that this bill does not have the support of the Reform Party. Perhaps if I had been here last week I would have known about this. I fail to see the logic of why it cannot accept this bill. Perhaps later during the debate today some hon. members from that party will be able to express to the people of Newfoundland and to Atlantic Canada why they do not find it in their hearts to support this bill.

I think it is a very important bill. It is important to the people of Newfoundland. It is important to those plant workers in this particular case who have been employed in the industry all their lives, generations, who have not been able to and are unlikely to find work with the devastation of the industry.

Rather than speak directly on the bill, perhaps with the idea of having the Reform Party revise its outlook on this, I would like to give some indication of the proportion of this tremendous catastrophe that has befallen us. I am not going to attribute blame. I am not going to talk about the politics. I am going to give the dimension of it.

I can appreciate that those outside the fishery would find it very difficult to understand what has befallen those people in Atlantic Canada through the loss of the groundfish. They know now the industry may not be allowed to rebound for a decade. The best scientific advice is five to seven years.

To understand the proportion of this catastrophe, in terms of the Cashin report it is called a famine of biblical proportions. I do not think that is an exaggeration.

The sea is to those who fish like land is to those who farm. Any farmers here or representatives of farmers would appreciate what that statement means. Fishing, like farming, is more than a job because the relationship of the fisher to the sea is more than economic. It is organic. It is a way of life. It is a community.

I come from a family which has been in the fishing industry for seven generations. My grandfather was in the business until he was 66. He was in it from the time he was a young man.

Government Orders

(1310)

There is a sense of belonging. There is a sense of accomplishment. There is a sense of community. There is a sense of past, present and future involved in this kind of organic relationship, in this case, to the sea and to the fishing industry. I cannot think of any more global terms or inextricably linked terms in which to put it.

Having said that, the devastation of the industry affects not just one industry towns. It is not a question of Catalina, Bonavista, Port Union, Melrose or a single town, it is a whole coastal area. In the cases I just talked about, it is the whole Bonavista peninsula. The plant in Port Union that employed 1,200 people supported 65 communities. That plant's closing down essentially means that most of the working population for men and women will not have jobs, not just in the three or four communities that are served by this plant but by 65 communities. I know that is hard to realize.

Again I would like to express the importance of the industry to Atlantic Canada. The parliamentary secretary said that in the case of this bill, 75 per cent of those affected are from Newfoundland. I want to concentrate on Newfoundland because that is the area I know the most about.

We have very few centres in Newfoundland that are not dependent on the fisheries. I will give the exceptions in case there is any doubt in anybody's mind. We have three pulp and paper towns, Corner Brook, Grand Falls and Stephenville. There is one mining town in Labrador City. There is one town that is based on hydroelectricity and that is Churchill Falls. There are a handful of very small farming communities. I have a few in my riding, I suppose the best known is Codroy. There are also several administrative and business centres like St. John's and Gander.

Almost all of the other 800 communities in the province depend entirely on the fisheries. Indirectly, even the administrative and the business centres that I talked about depend on the fisheries as they exist in large measure to provide services to the fishery dependent communities. The loss of groundfish fishery for a period of five to ten years can trigger the collapse of whole coastal areas, as I talked about earlier.

Let me be more specific and quote figures for those who may not be as familiar with this as some others in the House. Almost every fourth person in the goods producing sector in Newfoundland relied on the fishery—one in four. Regarding the plant worker, viewed from the manufacturing sector, every second person was engaged in fish processing, which is now virtually wiped out.

Let me talk to my colleagues from Ontario and perhaps from Quebec. If a calamity of similar magnitude befell Ontario's

manufacturing industry some 800,000 people would lose their jobs. In Newfoundland 16 per cent of the total workforce depends on the fishery for all of its income compared with 2.6 per cent in Ontario in manufacturing, auto industry.

If you compare 16 per cent in one province with 2.6 per cent related to the auto industry, putting this another way, the devastation of the fishery in Newfoundland has the same effect as five times closing down the automobile industry in Ontario.

You are from Ontario, Mr. Speaker. I do not have to tell you what that would mean. That is another indication of the kind of proportion that we are talking about.

Let me go back a few years, the year that I was elected, 1988. Harvesting and processing in the fishing industry provided employment income to about 48,000 people, which generated a total income of approximately \$700 million a year.

In 1994, 1995 and beyond much of this purchasing power, sustaining thousands of families in hundreds of communities along the coastal areas, will be severely reduced.

I have 260 communities in my riding. Everyone relates to the factors that I mentioned. As a result, the majority of these people and their families will suffer sustained income loss. I am just talking about the families and those who are directly affected.

(1315)

I want to talk now about the cumulative effect. What is the second, third or fourth order effect? The multiplier effect will reverberate through an already weak economy. The official unemployment rate hovers at about 25 per cent, but the unofficial rate is over 50 per cent. I do not have to tell many people in the House that this is the case.

People say to me that I have Hibernia in my riding. Hibernia cannot be viewed as a significant offset to the devastating problem in the fishery. It cannot absorb all the communities. It cannot absorb the unemployed. In many cases it cannot even cope with the training period, the training opportunities and the skills that are developed. It could cope with some, yes, but Hibernia at its height could not even cope. We are talking about 48,000 people.

If no compensation measures are taken, the large and small fishery dependent communities I talked about will face total economic and social collapse. There are other results as well: the compensation expenditures, the retail trade, and the financial viability. I have had people say to me that they appreciate my standing up for fisherpersons and plant workers but that there are construction workers and other people who do not have jobs. I appreciate that and try to do what I can for them as well.

Government Orders

The point of the matter is that if I do not support those in the fishing industry and the compensation is not there, the corner grocery stores will shut down and the butcher shops will shut down. I suppose eventually the schools will shut down because there will be no pupils to send; there will not be any people left.

This money does more than compensate those directly involved. It keeps stores going and all the second, third and fourth derivatives. It is not only that. If there is no compensation, government revenues will decline. There will be another effect which does not affect us directly in the House of Commons. As a Newfoundlander I concern myself with its provincial budget. In 1992-93, \$180 million was spent on social welfare in large part to look after people who had not been able to get compensation in the fishery or who had gone through their unemployment insurance related to the fishery and could not qualify.

In the budget of March 17, 1994 tabled by the Newfoundland government it was noted that 13.6 per cent of all expenditure in Newfoundland would be for social welfare. That is a sad note. It is even sadder to say that in this coming fiscal year there will be \$29 million more needed than the year before to look after social cases, those unfortunate people who have not been able to qualify. I could go on but I think I have made my point.

It was suggested that maybe governments of the past had made mistakes. I know they have made mistakes. Governments are not perfect but governments have responsibility for these kinds of disasters. The government certainly has responsibility now to help affected individuals adjust to the calamity of losing their livelihood and with no hope of it being replaced.

Plant workers who were 50 years of age as of last May 15 or would be 55 years of age over the course of TAGS, the Atlantic groundfish strategy program, very much apply in this case. It is the responsibility of the government to look after them. It has a responsibility toward fishery dependent communities to help them adjust. This is true throughout Atlantic Canada but particularly in those coastal regions primarily dependent on groundfish.

The southern and northern coasts of Trinity Bay, all of Bonavista Bay and in many cases the northern part of Conception Bay have been wiped out. I mentioned the Bonavista peninsula earlier.

There is a responsibility to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. They have a responsibility themselves because they are dramatically affected as a society. To adjust to the disaster or the economic and social consequences is a necessity. It is not something that is just desirable or could be done; it is something that should be done and has to be done.

(1320)

We cannot take conventional approaches to these kinds of adjustments. I agreed with something said on the other side a few moments ago, that some old methods of the past have not worked. I do not disagree with that.

In the summary of the report of the fisheries committee, particularly with respect to witnesses from Newfoundland on March 31, the chairman said that we would fail if we tried to be 100 per cent successful. I agree. We are not going to be 100 per cent successful.

I appeal to the Reform Party that is not going to support the bill that Bill C-30 is a measure of success which I do not think should be downgraded or denigrated. It should be viewed in the total package. It is one part of the package and I happen to think this part is successful.

The task is too great to be undertaken in the way things have been done in the past. The key to shaping the fishery of the future and dealing with appropriate adjustment programs will be involving the affected people through their own programs and through their own institutions: fishermen and industry organizations, co-operatives and community organizations. That was done in the Cashin report. That was done in the fisheries committee when it was reviewing this matter. That was done by the minister and his staff. That was done by the human resources minister in advance of the bill.

Sending in outsiders, however well intentioned, to sit fishery workers down in classrooms and tell them about the future in itself will not inspire confidence among those whose livelihoods have been destroyed. Unless governments in partnership with the industry and the people affected can shape a credible vision of hope, the coastal society of Atlantic Canada will be consumed by anxiety and despair. I do not believe there is one member of any party or an individual member of the House who would want that to happen.

I have spent most of my time putting the bill into perspective. I have relied on the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development to talk about the details of the bill. Bill C-30 is a very simple bill. It basically says that the minister may enter into an agreement referred to in a subsection of the Department of Labour Act to have the act apply to former employees who are less than 55 years of age. The condition is that former employees must be 50 years of age or more as of May 15 past. Significant to the debate is former employees of fish plants whose employment has been terminated by reason of a permanent reduction in the workforce at the plants because of a decline in fish stocks.

I say to those who do not support the bill that I have 57 processing plants in my riding. They will not look kindly on any member of the House who says that it is imperfect, that it is not totally the government's responsibility, that Newfoundlanders are being shortchanged and this is just adding to the situation, or for any other reason. Those who have run out of dollars to support their families and who are at an age when their prospects of finding work in a province where the unofficial unem-

Government Orders

ployment rate is close to 50 per cent would not take too kindly to that either.

I stand as a member of the House, as a spokesman for my party, to say that we appreciate the disastrous proportions of the calamity that has beset Newfoundland. Whose responsibility is it? I could spend the rest of the day attributing blame and I probably would not be right. I might feel a bit better, but it would not do much for those people who have been affected.

I am saying to all members in the House who do not support the bill to take the perspective I have given, to take into consideration the 1,200 people and their families directly affected by the bill, and to take into consideration the possibility of anxiety and difficulty of living, of getting up in the morning, supporting themselves and sending their kids to school. Many of the 50-year old plant workers have young children. I know them individually. A proportion of the 1,200 plant workers in the 57 plants in my riding will be watching the newscast on their televisions today and reading the *Evening Telegram* or their local papers. They will be very pleased that at second reading of the bill this member, this party and this government gave full and total support to a bill that I believe is one of the most important bills the House has ever seen.

(1325)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Mr. Speaker, I was very impressed by the passion displayed by the hon. member in his presentation and the quality of the arguments put forward, but I would have a brief comment to make.

I would have liked him to have displayed and to display the same passion on the UI entrance requirement issue. So, here is my question: if we are going to be this compassionate and supportive of plant workers confronted to the difficult situation of finding themselves jobless and unable to find a new job, how does he reconcile this position, these impassioned and perfectly justified remarks with the provisions concerning 50-year old workers?

How does he reconcile that with the changes made to the unemployment policy, changes which, as it is, will affect mainly the provinces he is particularly concerned for?

Let me give you an example. In the Magdalen Islands, last year, 43 per cent of UI recipients could barely meet the minimum 10-week requirement. With the proposed changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act, many of these people will be forced onto the welfare rolls.

I was wondering if the hon. member would not see fit to make on their behalf representations similar to those he has just made to his government regarding the increase in the number of weeks of work required to qualify for unemployment insurance and the reduction of the benefit period. Could he not put the same arguments to his government, and particularly to the Minister of Human Resources Development, to be realistic and show compassion for the workers affected because fish plant workers seldom manage to find work for more than 10 weeks?

Would the hon. member be prepared to make representations to the Minister of Human Resources Development to at least restore the status quo with respect to UI benefits and the length of the benefit period?

[*English*]

Mr. Mifflin: Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of sympathy for the point the hon. member raised. Many of us have been in the situation he has been in. I would imagine he comes from a part of Canada where unemployment is particularly high. He did not give the rate but I judge from what he said that it is high.

As a member of Parliament representing fishermen I have suffered the criticism—we all suffer criticism and nobody enjoys it—of supporting one group against another. That is certainly not the case at all. When the necessity was there I was supporting construction workers and other workers peripheral to the fishery. I refer to truckers and people who have stores that sell spare parts and maintain fishery vessels large and small. I could extend it to people in construction work who are not building piers and breakwaters because the requirement is not as great as it was.

The situation is not entirely the same. In this case a total industry was wiped out by an act of God or whatever. I really did not plan to attribute blame. It is not just the responsibility of the communities. Responsibility rests with communities, which means individuals. It rests with the provincial government. It rests with the federal government. This catastrophe or loss of work is so great that the effort required is not just a regional effort but is a national effort as well.

In my response to the member I say that the disastrous effect of a complete wipeout of an industry does not get the same response from government or individuals in other sectors who are not affected to such a large degree.

(1330)

If I were the member I would say that does not really do much for my workers. I appreciate that. I guess the points made by the Minister of Human Resources Development were that the resources are limited and the present system, it has been proven by a number of experts in the field, does not do anything to get people back to work, so the adjustments that have been planned, that have been programmed, are not similar to those that are being discussed in this particular bill.

Private Members' Business

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee.)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): It being 1.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

POSTAL SERVICES REVIEW ACT

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell) moved that Bill C-203, an Act to provide for the review of postal rates and services and to amend certain Acts in consequence thereof, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present this bill to the House of Commons today. This is not my first attempt; as you may know, I presented this same bill in the 34th Parliament, but unfortunately I was not lucky enough then in that my name was not drawn by lot, as is required for debating such an initiative.

I would like to take a few moments to give you the background of this bill. In June 1988, the minister who was then responsible for Canada Post announced the creation of the Postal Services Review Committee, PSRC, which I am proposing to the House today.

In August 1988, the government tabled a bill, C-149, to create the Postal Services Review Board. Unfortunately, when the 33rd Parliament was dissolved, the bill died on the Order Paper.

Meanwhile, in November 1989, the PSRC made public several recommendations, most of which were not acted on by the Conservative government of that time. In 1990, the Minister of Finance in his budget abolished the review committee.

At present, Canada Post must publish its new or amended regulations in the *Canada Gazette*, after which the interested parties have 60 days to make their comments to the minister responsible.

After the Board of the Corporation reviews the regulations, the proposal is sent to the Governor in Council, who in turn has 60 days to accept or reject it. If no decision is made within that time, the regulation is deemed to be accepted and approved.

Under clause 18 of the bill I am proposing to this House today, Canada Post would have to submit a copy of any proposed regulation to the board for review at least ten days before it is published in the *Canada Gazette*. The board would have 120 days to hold a public hearing into the merits of the proposed regulation. The public would be notified of the times and places of each hearing at least 30 days in advance so that they can submit their recommendations in writing to the board.

(1335)

The board would then publish its recommendations and comments in the *Canada Gazette* as soon as possible. The corporation would have 30 days to notify the board in writing whether or not it accepts the recommendations and, if not, to outline the reasons of its decision. This response would also be published in the *Canada Gazette*. The proposed regulation in its original form or, if amended as a result of the board's recommendations, in its amended form would then be submitted to the Governor in Council. If the Governor in Council has not approved or rejected the proposed regulation 30 days after receiving it, he shall be deemed to have approved it. It is similar in this regard to the current practice.

All major service proposals from Canada Post would be treated the same way. The corporation would have to send the board a copy of its corporate plan at least 180 days before submitting it to the government. The board would have 120 days to review the proposal, including a 30-day public notice, hold hearings and send its recommendations to Canada Post.

Again, the public would be informed of the recommendations. The corporation would have to respond to the board within 30 days and the response would be made public. This response would be in line with the proposal that the corporation would attach to its corporate plan and would be forwarded to the minister to be approved by the government. It would then be up to government officials to make the final decision concerning the rate increase and other major changes to postal services. In other words, the government would keep its decision-making authority. However, we would have this quasi-regulatory process I am proposing today.

The main thing is that this process will be as open and public as possible. Canadians will be kept informed, they will have the opportunity to make comments, to know the recommendations made by the Board, as well as the response of Canada Post and the decision reached by the public authorities.

Besides the regular reviews of the postal rates and services, the Board will conduct other examinations at the request of the minister. In other words, the minister will have the authority to ask the Board to undertake additional reviews on any issue related to Canada Post. This way, the minister will be able to ask the Board to hold public hearings on any issue. In such a case, the Board would present its recommendations either to the minister or to the Canada Post Corporation.

Private Members' Business

[English]

The bill that I have produced today, Bill C-203, has its origins in a previous Parliament. It was designed to address a number of concerns related to Canadians that reflected the previous government's broader agenda.

We all know that government, the Tory government, cut many services to Canadians in the name of balancing the books, not just postal services but many other services as well; VIA Rail, the CBC, I could go on and on, but especially the post office and especially in rural Canada.

In essence the Conservative government thumbed its nose at Canadians, particularly rural Canadians, and slashed programs without considering the impact on the people of our country. What a change with the compassionate and caring government that we have now.

That environment at the time fostered resentment and suspicion among Canadians that they were being shut out of decisions affecting their daily lives. There was a strong perception that the former government and by extension federal institutions in general were not serving Canadians as they were intended to do but were ignoring their concerns.

(1340)

Even though this is a crown corporation and not a government department, Canada Post is the most visible federal government presence for many Canadians, especially in rural areas and small towns. Consequently the general dissatisfaction with the former government's method of operation caused people to question how the corporation serves them and whether their interests are being adequately considered in decisions about postal service.

I remember those awful decisions of years gone by when Canada Post decided in communities in my riding to shut down the post office.

[Translation]

That reminds me of something that happened in St. Albert, a community in my riding where the famous St. Albert cheese is made. This is a very dynamic, fast growing community with its three farm co-ops. So, obviously, no one could argue that St. Albert did not need postal services any more. However, the previous government decided to close the post office in that community. Why? Was it because it was not needed any more? No. Was it because the people did not need postal services any more? No. Was it because the post office was losing money? Absolutely not! It was closed because the postmaster had retired. Can you imagine making business decisions like that? Can you imagine closing down a plant because the manager retires? Fortunately, that government, and its attitude, were replaced by a more reasonable one.

For rural Canadians, the best day since the last election was when the minister responsible for Canada Post rose in this House to say that there would be no more post office closures in rural areas. That was an important day for my fellow citizens living in villages and small communities.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate again the minister responsible for Canada Post.

It is the lack of concern shown by the previous government regarding the needs of Canadians living in rural areas and, to some extent, in urban centres, which prompted MPs like me to table bills such as this one. The purpose of this legislation is to ensure accountability and services to Canadians in rural areas.

Mr. Laurin: It suits your own needs!

Mr. Boudria: The hon. member opposite is alluding to sovereignty again. I want to tell him that the day after he was sworn in, the Minister responsible for Canada Post made another important decision. He told Canada Post officials—and I am not blaming them, I am blaming the previous government—that from now on, the Canadian flag would fly over post offices. This had always been the case in the past and the tradition was reinstated. The only federal symbol in rural areas is again present, thanks to the minister who, on that day, fulfilled his responsibilities toward Canadians. He displayed that same sense of duty when he said that enough was enough and that no more rural post offices would be closed. From now on, the Canada Post Corporation will be there to serve Canadians. This is what I call leadership! This is the kind of decision Canadians expect from their government, and I congratulate the minister for taking those initiatives.

[English]

As we all know, Canadians resoundingly rejected the previous government's exclusive focus on the bottom line. Might I add they rejected pretty soundly the previous government, period. The fact that there are only two members bearing that party's affiliation in this House is testimony to that.

(1345)

The purpose of Bill C-203, as I said previously, is to enable the public to play an important role in the establishment of postal rates and the provision of postal services. It would put in place additional safeguards to give Canadians a greater voice in how Canada Post serves them and to avoid the possibility of unilateral and arbitrary decisions by Canada Post, decisions that were made in the past because of the lack of political leadership.

I remember asking questions of the minister responsible for Canada Post. Remember that word, responsible. When I would question the then member for Calgary Centre, Harvie Andre, who was the minister at the time he would say: "Don't ask us about Canada Post. It is a crown corporation. I'll not do anything". Those were the kinds of answers we were getting.

Private Members' Business

Those answers were not satisfactory for my constituents. Rural Canadians did not like those answers.

Is it a coincidence that in rural Ontario, actually all of Ontario, where the Conservatives shut down so many rural post offices that all MPs are Liberals, except one? Rural Ontarians and Ontarians in general understood that kind of Tory mindset and the lack of leadership they provided in that regard just was not the way. That is why they elected this government. That is why this government took those two very important decisions I brought to the Chair's attention only moments ago.

What are Canadians' expectations of their postal service?

First, they expect fair and reasonable rates for mail delivery. Canadians want some assurance that Canada Post will deal with them fairly, particularly when the price of a postage stamp increases or the price of other services increases. There may well be valid reasons for proposing a postal increase. Everyone knows that has to occur from time to time. Everyone recognizes that costs can go up and they do.

Canada Post must be financially self-sufficient whenever possible, but if a rate increase is proposed Canadians want an opportunity for input. They want to know that Canada Post has not unfairly taken advantage of its customers.

In fairness to the corporation I must point out that the rate increase for letter mail since January 1992 has been at a lower level than the cumulative increase for the consumer price index during that period. However that is not the only issue. Canadians want to know they can participate as I said previously.

Second, Canadians want to know that Canada Post is fulfilling its mandate to provide a vital service. Notice those words, a vital service.

As a member for rural Canada I know the postmaster is not just a person who gives you an envelope. The post office is the place where forms are picked up for old age pensions, passports and a whole number of other services. The post office is a meeting place where Canadians congregate. I do not apologize for that; I think that is wonderful.

The postmaster is a person who is by statute of Canada assigned specific responsibilities such as vouching for someone's passport. You do not do that by simply replacing the post office with a service somewhere in the corner of a drugstore. A postmaster has specific responsibilities and important ones, particularly in rural Canada. That is why I am glad this government has said that the post office is in rural Canada, it is not there temporarily, it is there to stay.

Canadians have clearly said they reject the previous government's single-minded focus on cutbacks.

(1350)

If changes to the post office are proposed, Canadians have the right to be consulted. They have the right to have their views considered seriously. We must ensure that the framework within which Canada Post operates provides Canadians the participation in decisions about the level and types of postal services available to them.

That is why I proposed this bill to the House today. I will say it again in closing, I am proud to see the things done so far by the minister responsible for Canada Post. I know everyone realizes we have only just begun and that more will be done in the weeks, months and years to come.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for his speech. I do not know whether he remembers, but we once met at the Saint-Clément post office, one of the post offices that was closed. I agree with the hon. member that the previous government lacked the most elementary respect for every aspect of rural development and for the vital role played by post offices in rural communities.

I agree with his objections to the policy of also making closures contingent on the age of the postmaster. I do not think the policy made much sense.

In any event, the moratorium ordered by the Liberal government was also mentioned by the Bloc québécois during the last election campaign, and in fact, we can say it probably came as a result of the will of the community and the leadership provided by people like members of Rural Dignity and the postmasters' association.

I think we have them to thank for this decision, and I believe that Quebecers and Canadians sent a very clear signal to the government that they rejected this somewhat ruthless policy.

Where the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and I differ is on the quality of the moratorium. The one we have now is full of holes. I will give you an example. The minister has refused to reconsider past mistakes. The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell talked earlier about the post office in St. Albert and I am talking about the post office in Saint-Clément.

The Liberals, who were then in the opposition, supported the reopening but, as soon as they were elected, they declared a moratorium. The Liberals now completely discard the possibility to examine those cases where real flaws have been identified, even the ones they denounced when they were in the opposition.

Private Members' Business

I have a short message to convey in this regard. The people of Saint-Clément are very patient. They take their time but they usually win and they have taken steps to have the post office reopened.

This will be an opportunity to see if the Liberal government, with this moratorium, really wants the communities to have their post office, because the will shown by the people of Saint-Clément will be supported by those of the area and—which will be very different from the last time—by the member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup who supports people of Saint-Clément, rather than the opposite.

The moratorium declared by the Liberals also has other flaws, for instance the fact there will be no post office closing in municipalities with less than two post offices. This may look fine, but I am witnessing in my own riding another situation rather absurd, I must say, where it has been decided that a part of the mail going to Rivière-du-Loup would be sorted in Rimouski, approximately 100 kilometres away.

So they do not close the post office in a municipality—the moratorium forbids it—but they dismantle it from within. It certainly does not look like the best solution.

I feel this is more like playing on words. They are not respecting the essence of the moratorium by doing things like that, but there again they launched a process which I hope will succeed in guaranteeing the future of the post office in Rivière-du-Loup and will, at the same time, contribute to the economic development of the region.

(1355)

As we said before, I think good common sense would dictate that the post office not be closed simply because the postmaster is reaching retirement age and that we do not, for no reasonable cause, send a postmaster to sort mail in a post office elsewhere when in fact there is work to be done sorting mail in his own municipality.

I believe the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell is very persistent since he is tabling the same bill again, but his government does not have the same kind of backbone. In fact, the government could have proposed such a bill; the Bloc Québécois would not have been opposed to the implementation of a regulation mechanism for the operations of the Canada Post Corporation. Provided that the system we set up is not too bureaucratic, I believe that, indeed, the action plan of an agency like Canada Post Corporation needs to be reviewed by the elected representatives of the people, because the objectives given to the corporation are not necessarily social, whereas government objectives could be.

I am glad that this bill has been introduced, but I am sorry that it is not a votable item, because there will be no real follow-up

on it. Moreover, it is not introduced by the government, and the government should be criticized on that score.

What we need in this area is a real policy, a comprehensive policy that would show that we want to behave differently from the Conservatives. If we had a system guaranteeing openness of actions and mandate, if we had a board of directors made up differently, for example with representatives of the regions of Quebec or Canada, Canada Post would be more likely to listen to the regions and to consider more than strict productivity.

I believe that the employees of Canada Post do their jobs. They do them well, but according to the mandates they receive. If the board of directors was made up of people concerned with rural development they would certainly act differently.

Also, and this is quite obvious, we really need to change the approach to human resource management. Do you know that presently, in the post office of a medium-size town, there is no postmaster? Someone is in charge of sorting, someone else is in charge of marketing, but there is no real boss. That means that within the same organisation someone is only concerned about costs whereas somebody else deals with sales. No small business managed that way would last more than a year. There is nobody to balance both sides of the operation and that puts us in a ludicrous situation.

Moreover, there is a long history of bitter labour disputes, and a great degree of openness is needed to create a different climate at the Post Office.

Everything remains to be done at the Canada Post Corporation. We must salute the efforts made by the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, and recognize the need for an adequate regulation process that would not be overly bureaucratic, but we must go further than that. It is now up to the government. It must give a clear message. We need more than a moratorium full of loopholes which allows the Canada Post Corporation to pursue its down-sizing process without regards for the needs of regional communities. The government must make its position known and state unequivocally that the Post Office, as well as VIA Rail and other transportation companies, are regional development tools.

It is only when we receive this kind of message from the government, through its minister, that we will be able to say that the mission has been accomplished. In the meantime, everything remains to be done.

(1400)

[English]

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to speak in this debate this afternoon. It is a concern of mine and has been for some time.

I join in the debate to support the concept of periodic reviews of Canada Post Corporation and its proposals to change the postal rates. I believe it is high time that Canada Post Corpo-

Private Members' Business

ration became answerable in some public way to somebody other than cabinet.

The postal service in Canada has been the subject of much debate and public displeasure for many years. In the late 1970s and early 1980s there was concern expressed over large deficits and accumulated debt in the post office. Then the solution seemed to be to set the post office up as a crown corporation. This was going to bring efficient management to the post office. In some ways it may have brought some form of efficient management but it was a management that did not care about the people of Canada.

The people of Canada depend on the post office, on mail delivery. This is a vast, mostly rural country where mail delivery to the door or to the mailbox at the end of a farm lane is taken as a given in Canadian society.

Not any more. We have superboxes for homeowners in new suburbs to walk to and we have post office closures by the hundreds in rural areas. This has already happened.

Many rural Canadians have been saddened by the closure of their rural post offices because in many of these small communities their local post office was a spot where one could meet and chat with neighbours and their local postmistress or postmaster. It served a real social purpose in the community as well as a postal service.

In Lake Errock, one of our small postal communities in my riding of Mission—Coquitlam, the residents have worked hard over the last two years trying to get Canada Post to recognize the rights and necessities of their part of rural Canada.

To Canada Post I suggest just looking at economics is not enough. The post office is set up to serve the people and it is hoped that the present government will be concerned about all Canadians and continue to recognize rural post offices.

The other problem faced by Canadians was the intermittent, or should we say the regular strikes or work stoppages by the postal workers. Who in the House can forget the regular nightly images on our television screens of the postal workers' union heads, Joe Davidson and later Jean-Claude Parrot, spelling out their ludicrous demands on behalf of their workers while we all suffered with mail delivery shut down?

I used to send out many Christmas cards and about that time I stopped sending out Christmas cards and I have not done so since.

I agree, the post office perhaps more than any other crown corporation needs a watchdog that can review price increases and internal matters to ensure that Canada Post is properly run and that taxpayers are at least in this instance getting their money's worth.

As I said, to this extent I agree with the thrust of Bill C-203. However, set up a new bureaucracy to monitor the post office, a new board supported by a secretariat, personnel and all the attendant trappings? Maybe when there was more money in the treasury and maybe when the public was less cynical about government appointments to tribunals such as this, but surely not now.

The previous government was infamous for the proliferation of boards and tribunals to which it would appoint its friends and supporters. The Canadian people voted last October to stop this kind of practice and we in the Reform Party respect the wishes of the Canadian people.

As I said earlier, the thrust of this bill is a good idea. Surely the types of things that the review board was going to do in this bill can be done by the government operations committee of the House of Commons.

Canada Post Corporation is within the mandate of that committee. The committee deals with the estimates of Canada Post Corporation and if the inquiries are structured properly this committee should be able to do the job of Bill C-203's review board.

I served for a short time on the government operations committee and it seemed to me at the time that after the estimates were reported back from the various departments which reported to this committee, this committee would have sufficient time at its disposal to deal with Canada Post Corporation.

My suggestion puts the responsibility for the post office operations where it belongs, in Parliament. It is the fundamental function of all of us here to serve the Canadian people. One way of serving them is to put the subject of mail processing and delivery in the hands of elected representatives.

(1405)

To be precise, Canada Post would at least 10 days before publishing a proposed regulation in *The Canada Gazette* send a copy to the clerk of the government operations committee for review. The committee would have 120 days within which to hold public hearings on the merits of the proposal and make recommendations to Canada Post. The committee's recommendations would be published in *The Canada Gazette* and the corporation would have 30 days to report to the committee in writing.

The recommendations of the committee and the response by Canada Post would be submitted to cabinet. If cabinet did not act within 30 days the regulation would come into force.

Again, when Canada Post wishes to make major changes in service these corporate plans would be submitted to the government operations committee for review. Surely that is one of its purposes.

Private Members' Business

Ultimately after a public hearing process the recommendations of the committee would be sent back to Canada Post and then the entire package submitted to the minister in charge of Canada Post for final approval.

With respect to rate increases, while the final decision would be up to the cabinet, a full public hearing process would have taken place on the subject and the rate increases again by the government operations committee. An important issue that the government operations committee in its review of the post office may wish to inquire into is whether, as alleged by the Canadian Courier Association, Canada Post is using the revenues gained because of its exclusive role as a mail courier to subsidize the purchase and operation of courier systems. Such an inquiry would be a good first step in establishing that the members of the House of Commons were serious about holding the Canada Post Corporation to account.

The Canadian Courier Association in a letter dated October 29, 1993 sent to all members of the 35th Parliament set out its concerns about Canada Post. It recited the findings of the Nielsen task force and the inquiry of Alan Marchment carried out in 1986 to support their case. I suppose it was the purchase of Purolator Courier that prompted this outrage by the Courier Canadian Association. Who can blame it? Canada Post used its unique position to subsidize its areas which compete with the private sector so Canada Post can charge less than the private sector.

As I said, this would be an ideal matter for the government operations committee to investigate.

In conclusion, while I support the thrust of Bill C-203, I do not support the means to accomplish the end. I would support amendments to the bill which would put the government operations committee as the review agency and would also support whatever changes would be necessary to the rules of this House to allow the government operations committee to perform this task.

[Translation]

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-203 was introduced to address the concerns of the Canadian public over postal service in Canada. It is a commendable effort on the part of the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

As we have heard, this bill is substantially the same as Bill C-207 which was introduced during the previous Parliament. Since that time and since the introduction of Bill C-203, considerable progress has been made following the implementation of government policies designed to meet the needs of Canadians while enabling the Canada Post Corporation to carry out its mandate.

[English]

In 1981 Canada Post Corporation was given a broad mandate that included achieving self-sufficiency while acting as a commercial arm's length crown corporation, becoming part of the business marketplace, and providing a federal presence in communities across Canada. Since then Canada Post has been taking measures to reach these objectives and has made considerable progress. It is imperative that Canada Post maintain its ability to fulfil its mandate.

Much progress has been made since Canada Post Corporation was created in 1981. At that time Canada Post faced economic uncertainty and was losing \$600 million yearly. Twelve years later Canada Post Corporation declared profits in the last four of the five fiscal years and has paid dividends to its shareholder, the Government of Canada.

By improving its efficiency, updating technology and improving labour relations Canada Post has managed a remarkable turnaround. Furthermore, its on time delivery of mail to Canadians has been under regular and open scrutiny through an independent consulting firm.

(1410)

Canada Post has moved forward and will continue to do so as a competitive, lean corporation that not only delivers mail on time 98 per cent of the time but delivers an important service to all Canadians.

[Translation]

The government supports the positive changes made by the Canada Post Corporation with a view to meeting the postal service needs of Canadian consumers and businesses. The moratorium on post office closures announced at the beginning of the year by the hon. minister responsible for the Canada Post Corporation is one of the best examples of positive change.

If you have ever visited or lived in a small town or rural community in Canada, you will understand the devastating impact of the closing of the post office on the community. The post office is the nerve centre of small communities in Canada and guarantees a federal presence and an important communication link with the rest of the country and with the world.

[English]

Since 1987 close to 1,500 federally operated post offices, almost one-third of all federal post offices in Canada, have enclosed or converted. The minister's announcement earlier this year put an end to the closures of post offices in rural areas and small towns across the country, an initiative introduced by the former government which turned a deaf ear to the loud and emotional outcry of Canadians who risked losing an important link to the rest of the nation.

The moratorium protects the majority of post offices across this country. As long as this government remains in power, 4,000 communities across the country are guaranteed the benefits of a Canada Post operated post office. Further, post offices located in large urban centres will not be closed without a public

Private Members' Business

consultation process conducted through the postal service customer councils.

This demonstrates the ongoing commitment by the Liberal Party in saying no to the policy of post office closures, a policy that seriously hindered Canada Post in carrying out its mandate to provide a federal presence in communities across Canada.

This brings me to the subject of exclusive privilege that has been granted to Canada Post. Some would argue that Canada Post's exclusive privilege for the delivery of letter mail gives it an unfair advantage and justifies the creation of a monitoring agency.

However, in today's environment the exclusive privilege is perhaps more accurately described as an exclusive responsibility. Only Canada Post has the responsibility to provide all Canadians throughout the country with postal services. Its competitors can pick and choose where they can operate profitably, ignoring Canadians in those regions of the country where small populations and great distances between communities would limit the return on investment or result in a loss.

[*Translation*]

The Liberal government believes that for all Canadians, postal service is a right, not merely a privilege. All Canadians must have access to affordable, reasonable postal service, regardless of where they live. This essential service is protected by exclusive privilege which ensures that small communities and rural regions, the backbone of our vast country, enjoy postal service at a reasonable cost.

The challenge of providing service to such a vast country is formidable indeed, Mr. Speaker. I support the principle of exclusive privilege because it allows for the continued existence of the necessary infrastructure to provide fair postal service to all people, regardless of where they live.

Since exclusive privilege affords the Canada Post Corporation a foreseeable income, the corporation can ensure universal access to postal service while maintaining its financial self-sufficiency. This policy is consistent with that followed by countless postal services around the world.

[*English*]

Furthermore, it should be taken into consideration that Canada Post does face increasing competition from the world of technology such as the electronic transfer of information. One-third of its business is in competition with couriers, bus companies, trucking companies, airlines and other such industries.

In this rapidly evolving environment, competition provides ample incentive for Canada Post to meet its customers' needs at an affordable cost.

(1415)

Other actions that continue to bring Canada Post closer to fulfilling its mandate include the establishment of a national control centre and the corporation's new in business to serve program. The national control centre is located in Ottawa and is linked to all individual centres across the country as well as to the dispatching system of airlines and the weather forecasting network. It constantly monitors mail movement 24 hours a day, seven days a week in a drive toward even more efficient mail delivery. It is the most sophisticated mail monitoring system in the world and has become a model for other postal administrations.

The national control centre is a great innovation that helps ensure Canadians receive a high level of postage service.

[*Translation*]

The future of the Canada Post Corporation looks brighter with a new approach to client services. The new watchword is "In Business to Serve." It is also the name of a new program. As I said earlier, Canada Post has to compete against a growing number of companies. While some technological improvements, like the National Control Centre, are helping Canada Post to keep its place on the market, a new marketing approach is also needed. With this new "In Business to Serve" Program, Canada Post will be able to meet the challenge by focusing on improved client services and recognizing the contribution of its employees and partners to this goal.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the real progress made by the Canada Post Corporation in order to meet the expectations of all Canadians.

By announcing a moratorium on the closure and conversion of post offices, the minister has already done a lot to address the issues raised by this bill. I am sure that the Canada Post Corporation will find the tools to provide Canadians with the postal services they need while remaining self-sufficient.

Mr. André Caron (Jonquière): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on a bill the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell introduced in order to impose some kind of regulation over the closure of rural post offices. In the last few years, under the previous Conservative government, many communities in Quebec, in Canada and in my own area had to fight to try to keep their post office. The people affected by those closures told us that this struck at the very life of their community.

Rural communities, of which I have a few in my riding and many in my area, are often built around the parish church, the school, and the post office. Those are the usual three institutions to be found in those communities. In many cases, they have already lost their school, some do not have a full time priest in their church any more and their post office has been closed

Private Members' Business

down. People in these communities are dismayed at the demise of communities on which their founders had put all their hope.

I am pleased to support the bill introduced by the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell because it provides some kind of parliamentary control over the closure of post offices. It is a fact that the Liberal government declared a moratorium on the closure of post offices in smaller communities, but a moratorium is no more than that. The minister who declared the moratorium can lift it just as easily. In view of the significance of an institution such as the post office in small communities, I think the Parliament of Canada should have some control over the potential closure of those offices.

(1420)

I went through an experience last week in my riding. It was not the closing of a post office, but of a school in the Saint-Jean-Eudes neighbourhood, in Jonquière. Saint-Jean-Eudes was once a municipality. After an amalgamation some time ago, it became a neighbourhood of the city of Jonquière. The people of Saint-Jean-Eudes had a city hall, a credit union, a post office and a school; they even had two schools.

Now, there is no city hall any more, no credit union, the post office is gone and they have been announced that their school will be closed.

When I visited these people last Sunday, I could see that they really had a feeling that a part of their community was going with their school. I was able to understand the feelings of the people of Saint-Clément, in Québec, and of St. Albert, in the riding of the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. These people have seen a part of themselves, have seen major institutions leave their community, and they are concerned.

I think it is important for the Parliament of Canada to make sure that justice be done for small communities, that they be given the necessary means to remain alive and well. Of course, the argument that they are being given is that their post office is too isolated, too expensive, not profitable and that cuts are necessary. It has been said in the case of some small communities, and it is now being said even for some regions.

For example, some say that the Lac-Saint-Jean or Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region is too far from metropolitan centres like Quebec City and Canada and that we will no longer be able to provide some of the services.

As a matter of fact, they are now thinking of abolishing the passenger service between Jonquière and Montreal because it is not cost-effective, and the distances involved are too great. And so they cut a number of services in my region under the pretext that we are a remote area and that we must understand how the market operates. When it is not cost-effective anymore, we must stop spending.

I think that people have good reason to resist arguments like those because the government's responsibility with regard to regions, small communities and people in need is still the same. The government must ensure that its services meet the special needs of regions, small communities and individuals. It does not mean that we must give out all kinds of grants and pour money down the drain, but I think that before closing some institutions, a post office, a school or some services in the regions, members of Parliament should really think twice. They must ask themselves if they must apply only the law of the market or if it would not be better to be more generous and to take some initiatives so that these institutions can survive and keep the wheels turning in our country.

Canada is not made up only of big cities which work well and are cost-effective. It consists of a great number of communities, on the North Shore, in southern Quebec, or what have you; all these communities make up our country. Before taking measures that would jeopardize communities built by our fathers and institutions established by our predecessors, I think the Parliament should think twice and do what it must do so that these institutions, towns and communities will be able to survive and expand.

I invite my colleagues to support the proposal of the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, since I think it seeks to maintain important things and to help Quebecers and Canadians live and be happy in their communities.

(1425)

[English]

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, today we are discussing the management and control of an entity which is neither fish nor fowl. In theory it is an independent crown, but because any real competition is legislatively prohibited there is little incentive to be cost effective or to provide service. Therefore, it is legitimate that the post office be subject to government oversight.

However, I do concur with the proposal of my hon. colleague, the member for Mission—Coquitlam, that this should be accomplished by the government operation's committee and not by a new, additional bureaucratic committee.

Canada Post has forgotten its basic mandate which is to provide a public service. For example, as we speak Canada Post has proposed to eliminate the special rates for inter-library loans on books and to replace them with standard parcel post rates.

Just to give the House an example of what this would mean to some of our small regional libraries in rural areas, a book which would now go out under the present rate of 53 cents per kilogram returned would have to be sent out at a cost of \$2.05 per kilo each way. We are looking at an enormous increase in rates, in fact an increase that is so great that it would effectively terminate inter-library loans in rural Canada. Another rural amenity is going to disappear if this is allowed to go forward.

Private Members' Business

I have calculated that for the regional library in my constituency at Swift Current, based on its current rates of loan, the costs would increase from a current rate of about \$14,000 to a rate of \$103,000 a year, almost \$90,000 which a small regional library obviously cannot come up with. If you do not want people in rural areas to have books then this is the way to go. Let Canada Post have its own way without any government oversight and raise these rates as it will.

It is time that we took a hard look at the way this organization operates. It says that it has to be lean and mean. Well it is mean but I do not know how lean it is because it does not have to really compete. Since it is a natural monopoly let us for heaven's sake exercise the function of a parliamentary democracy and let the government get a handle on these people.

It is an arrogant, pampered organization. It is time it was brought to heel, preferably by the government operation's committee.

Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not rise to support Bill C-203 presented by the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

The largest number of rural post office closures in Canada, as the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell well knows, happened in my riding of Victoria—Haliburton. That is a big number to have happen in one riding. I have seen enough of the senior citizens, handicapped and disadvantaged Canadians who are suffering for a very basic service, to receive and send mail. It seems so basic.

The postmaster of the little Britain community centre is a man of great spirit who has great sense of community. The post office in Bethany is in a gas station. Lindsay has a sub-post office in a drugstore. Minden and Fenelon Falls were on the chopping block.

When I went to Sunderland I could not read the sign for the post office, it was so dilapidated. It looked like they were waiting for the disaster to happen. Well, Mr. and Mrs. Postmaster, I would like you to get your signs painted. Tell the public that the government will not close any more rural post offices.

I would also be remiss if I did not mention that I presented a petition earlier today, which I fully support, allowing senior citizens in a large complex to mail a letter. Why Canada Post can send a truckload of mail to a large complex, drop it off, but not pick any up at the very same location is beyond belief.

I support this bill by the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. I look forward to the strengthening of rural Canada and the strengthening of the rural post office service.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Before closing off the debate I will give the mover of the motion no more than one minute if he wishes to wrap up, because this is not a votable item.

Mr. Boudria: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues who have spoken so eloquently on this bill. I am glad to see the attitude demonstrated particularly by the government in its wish to strengthen the postal system in rural Canada.

To those who wanted a parliamentary committee to review the continuing operation of the post office, I am not sure that every time we increase the postal rate by one cent or the price of parcel post that a parliamentary committee should have hearings across the country to review it. I would prefer that hon. members of the House deal with the substantive issues of our country and allow an agency such as the one I propose do the task of reviewing postal rates.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and a word of thanks to all my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 96(1) the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

Before adjourning the House I want to take a moment, colleagues. At this time of year many visitors come to Parliament Hill and large numbers of young people come to our capital.

Earlier today I was not able to seize the opportunity at the time because we were in a serious debate, but one such visitor was Erica Louise Corbett. She is none other than the young daughter of William "Bill" Corbett who sits at the table as a principal clerk. It was her day to shadow Dad as part of a school project. I regret I did not have the opportunity to recognize her. I understand she is still probably somewhere in the building shadowing Dad. I want to tell her I am sorry I did not have the opportunity to recognize her, but I wish her and Bill the best on her project.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): It being 2.32 p.m. this House stands adjourned until Monday next at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1). Have a good weekend.

(The House adjourned at 2.32 p.m.)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Friday, May 27, 1994

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

National Library Act

Bill C-26. Motion for second reading	4507
Mr. Gray	4507
Ms. Guarnieri	4507
Mr. Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)	4508
Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast)	4510
Motion for reference to committee of the whole	4511
(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and, by unanimous consent, the House went into committee thereon, Mr. Kilger in the chair.)	4511
(Clause agreed to.)	4512
On Clause 2	4512
Mr. Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)	4512
Ms. Guarnieri	4512
Mr. Williams	4512
Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast)	4513
(Clause agreed to.)	4514
(Clause 3 agreed to.)	4514
(Title agreed to.)	4514
(Bill reported, concurred in, and, by unanimous consent, read the third time and passed.)	4514

Department of Labour Act

Bill C-30. Motion for second reading	4514
Mr. Rock	4514
Mr. Bevilacqua	4514

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Odawa Pow Wow

Mr. Anawak	4514
------------------	------

Tribute to Fernand Daoust

Mr. Nunez 4514

Immigration and Refugee Board

Mr. Hanger 4515

Canadian Parents for French

Mr. Duhamel 4515

The Family

Mrs. Chamberlain 4515

Official Languages

Mr. Serré 4515

Quebec’s Right to Self-determination

Mr. St-Laurent 4516

Government Policy

Mr. Hermanson 4516

Yukon

Ms. McLaughlin 4516

Osteoporosis

Mrs. Catterall 4516

Empress of Ireland

Mr. Flis 4517

Youth Violence

Mr. Cannis 4517

Huntington’s Disease

Mr. Szabo 4517

Association canadienne–française de l’Ontario

Mr. Pomerleau 4517

The Prime Minister

Mr. Ringma 4517

Gun Control

Mr. Harvard 4518

Quebec Natives

Mr. Boudria 4518

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

National Forum on Health

Mr. Duceppe 4518

Mr. Gray 4518

Mr. Duceppe 4518

Mr. Gray 4518

Mr. Duceppe 4519

Mr. Gray 4519

Hepatitis C

Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead) 4519

Mr. Irwin 4519

Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead) 4519

Mr. Irwin 4520

Young Offenders Act

Mr. Hermanson 4520

Mr. Rock 4520

Mr. Hermanson 4520

Mr. Rock 4520

Mr. Hermanson 4520

Mr. Rock 4520

Indian Affairs

Mr. Caron	4521
Mr. Irwin	4521
Mr. Caron	4521
Mr. Irwin	4521

Canadian International Development Agency

Mr. Mills (Red Deer)	4521
Mr. Flis	4521
Mr. Mills (Red Deer)	4522
Mr. Flis	4522

Sales Tax

Mr. Brien	4522
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	4522
Mr. Brien	4522
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	4522

Indian Affairs

Mr. Chatters	4522
Mr. Irwin	4522
Mr. Chatters	4523
Mr. Irwin	4523

Canada's French-speaking Community

Mr. Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)	4523
Mr. Gray	4523
Mr. Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)	4523
Mr. Gray	4523

The Economy

Mr. Assadourian	4523
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	4523

Fisheries

Mr. Cummins	4523
-------------------	------

Mr. Anderson	4523
Mr. Cummins	4523
Mr. Anderson	4524

EH-101 Helicopter Contract

Mr. Ménard	4524
Mr. Manley	4524
Mr. Ménard	4524
Mr. Manley	4524

Health

Mrs. Ablonczy	4524
Mr. Irwin	4525
Mrs. Ablonczy	4525
Mr. Irwin	4525

Air Safety

Mr. Harvard	4525
Mr. Fontana	4525

Credit Cards

Mr. Laurin	4525
Mr. Manley	4525
Mr. Laurin	4525
Mr. Manley	4525

Amateur Sport

Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast)	4526
Ms. Guarnieri	4526
Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast)	4526
Ms. Guarnieri	4526

Association canadienne-française de l’Ontario

Mr. Péloquin	4526
Mr. Gray	4526

Points of Order

Comments during Question Period

Mr. Silye	4526
-----------------	------

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Supplementary Estimates (A), 1994–95

Committees of the House

Procedure and House Affairs

Mr. Milliken 4526

Human Resources Development

Mr. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso) 4527

Excise Tax Act

Bill C–32. Motions for introduction and first reading deemed adopted 4527

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) 4527

Canada Elections Act

Bill C–252. Motions for introduction and first reading deemed adopted 4527

Mr. Wappel 4527

Criminal Code

Bill C–253. Motions for introduction and first reading deemed adopted 4527

Mr. Boudria 4527

Supplementary Estimates (A), 1994–95

Reference to Standing Committee

Motion 4527

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) 4527

(Motion agreed to.) 4527

Committees of the House

Procedure and House Affairs

Twenty-third Report. Motion for concurrence. 4527

Mr. Milliken 4527

(Motion agreed to.) 4527

Petitions

Canada Post

Mr. O'Reilly 4527

Communications

Mr. Duhamel 4528

Ethanol

Mr. Pickard 4528

Euthanasia

Mr. Cummins 4528

Official Languages

Mr. Hopkins 4528

Rail Lines

Mr. Crête 4528

RU486

Mr. Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville) 4528

Criminal Code

Mr. Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville) 4528

Human Rights

Mrs. Ur 4528

Ethanol

Mrs. Ur 4529

Criminal Justice

Mr. Wappel 4529

Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia

Mr. Wappel 4529

Human Rights

Mr. Wappel 4529

Serial Killer Board Games

Mr. Jordan 4529

Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia

Mr. Johnston 4529

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Milliken 4529

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Department of Labour Act

Bill C-30. Consideration resumed of motion for second reading 4529

Mr. Bevilacqua 4529

Mr. Crête 4532

Mr. Cummins 4533

Mr. Mifflin 4535

Mr. Crête 4538

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee.) 4539

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Postal Services Review Act

Bill C-203. Motion for second reading 4539

Mr. Boudria 4539

Mr. Crête 4541

Mrs. Jennings 4542

Mr. Duhamel 4544

Mr. Caron 4545

Mr. Morrison 4546

Mr. O'Reilly 4547