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Wednesday, June 1, 1994

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 1, 1994

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

LAW OF THE SEA

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, straddling the 200 nautical mile limit there is a fish stock which is of great importance to the existence and well-being of many coastal communities in Atlantic Canada.

Designed to avoid crisis in the fisheries, the law of the sea affirms the responsibility of all nations to co-operate in conserving and managing fish in the high seas. It is in the interests of Canadians that the Government of Canada ratify the law of the sea convention.

Canada should join the other 60 nations in the sustainable management of fish and bring destructive overfishing to an end. I call on the Government of Canada to ratify the law of the sea in 1994.

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[*Translation*]

DISABLED ATHLETES

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval-Centre): Mr. Speaker, National Access Awareness Week is an excellent opportunity to remind this House of the extraordinary performance of our disabled athletes at the last Winter Olympics for the disabled.

Unfortunately, their outstanding achievements did not receive the attention they deserved. In fact, the nine medals won by Canada were mentioned only in a 30-minute television presentation by CTV. That is hardly enough to acknowledge the courage and perseverance of these athletes, for whom life itself is an achievement.

The Summer Olympics will be held two years from now, and I am confident that the Minister of Canadian Heritage will demonstrate that, in Canada, integration of the disabled is a fact

and not merely wishful thinking, and urge the CBC to provide adequate television coverage of our disabled athletes at the next Summer Games.

In doing so, we will express the admiration and respect which their exceptional achievements deserve.

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[*English*]

BILLS C-33 AND C-34

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we had the introduction of Bills C-33 and C-34 which would ratify land claims and self-government agreements in Yukon. Last week we were told the government wished to have these bills introduced later in June with the understanding that MPs would have time to prepare properly.

These bills represent the culmination of 21 years of mostly behind closed doors work without the involvement of federal parliamentarians. Today, 24 hours after tabling, Parliament is being asked to debate these bills at second reading.

This is an obvious abuse of power. The Liberal red ink book speaks of the integrity of Parliament. Surely assimilating over nine inches of text overnight with a rushed departmental briefing this morning does not speak well for the integrity of Parliament or the interests of all Canadians. This action is a travesty of Parliament.

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VANCOUVER CANUCKS

Mrs. Anna Terrana (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to congratulate the 1993-94 NHL western conference champions, the Vancouver Canucks, for reaching the Stanley Cup finals for the second time in their history.

Coach Pat Quinn has done a remarkable job, as have the rest of the Vancouver organization and the players. In particular, goal tender "Captain" Kirk MacLean, Pavel "The Russian Rocket" Bure, and Captain Trevor Linden have shown great leadership and poise throughout the playoffs.

In getting to the finals, the Canucks upset their long time rivals, the Calgary Flames. They handily defeated the Dallas Stars and then beat the Toronto Maple Leafs. Last night they won their first game with the New York Rangers, the best team in the regular season.

S. O. 31

With their talent, hard work, determination and the support of all Canadians, I know they will meet the challenge and ultimately succeed in keeping Lord Stanley's cup here in Canada.

On behalf of all Canadians, I would like again to wish the Vancouver Canucks, the players and the organization who play—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Waterloo.

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NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House of the Prime Minister's appointment this morning of Dr. Art Carty as president of the National Research Council.

Dr. Carty is a highly appropriate choice for this position. He has nearly 30 years experience as a professor and researcher at the University of Waterloo since 1967. His experience and leadership in the domestic and international scientific community are a fitting match with Canada's foremost research facility, the National Research Council.

Dr. Carty has been a director on various boards and has been a consultant to companies. Dr. Carty is therefore a model of the type of co-operation between the private sector and academia the government wants to promote.

Dr. Carty's appointment demonstrates the government's commitment to applied research which serves as one of the pillars of Canada's economic strategy in the new economy.

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SHOW OFF EAST HANTS

Mr. John Murphy (Annapolis Valley—Hants): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my congratulations to the organizers and those who participated in Show Off East Hants. It was a two-day trade fair which was recently held in Lantz in my riding of Annapolis Valley—Hants.

(1405)

The trade fair drew 3,500 people from throughout the riding and other parts of the province. People came to see over 100 local businesses show off their first class products and services.

The bringing together of these local businesses to achieve a common goal provides an important link between economic development and job creation. All participants should be proud of their efforts in promoting East Hants as an excellent place to do business.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating those who added to the overwhelming success of Show Off East Hants.

[Translation]

QUEBEC'S CREDIT RATING

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, it is now public knowledge. Moody's, the U.S. bond rating agency, judged yesterday that Quebec's economy was sound and confirmed the province's credit rating.

This is a far cry from the apocalyptic scenario described by the Prime Minister, who is trying to scare Quebecers by claiming that the economy is suffering as a result of the political instability caused by the Bloc Québécois. Mr. Speaker, the real cause of instability in Canada is the Liberal government's failure to cope with the deficit and unemployment.

While Quebec's credit rating has been maintained, Ontario's rating has gone down, and Canada's rating is being reassessed. If Quebecers want economic growth on a sound and stable basis, they must opt for sovereignty, not for maintaining ties with a weak and irresponsible government.

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[English]

D-DAY

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, 50 years ago on the first day of June there was frenetic activity in England. Final preparations were being made to launch the largest military force ever embarked on, for at dawn on Tuesday, June 6, 1944 D-Day, the invasion of Nazi occupied France, would commence. In May 1945 victory in Europe would be declared and freedom returned to the continent.

In commemorating the longest day we pay tribute to the thousands of our military killed or wounded in battle and the hundreds of thousands of Canadian families who sacrificed here at home during the war.

It is also appropriate that we consider how the course of history can be affected for the better by people and nations determined to fight evil.

Just prior to that war there was some wavering of resolve and failed attempts at appeasement. In the end, it was only through determined effort that freedom and democracy triumphed.

History teaches us that it is not easy to stand up to tyranny. We salute those who did.

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RIDEAU CANAL

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): Mr. Speaker, on May 22 I had the pleasure of assisting at the opening of the Rideau Canal for another season.

S. O. 31

Completed in 1832 to give access to the Great Lakes from the nation's capital, the canal today offers 202 kilometres of clear, pristine waters through a total of 47 locks. Hundreds of pleasure craft annually move leisurely along through the canal and pages and pages of Canada's history.

As the holiday season starts in Canada in a few weeks I encourage Canadian boaters who are looking for a relaxing holiday to try travelling the Rideau this summer. It is not a fast way to get to Kingston from the capital, but it is one which will take them through a beautiful part of Canada and one they will always remember.

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ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Royal Canadian Legion members voted against allowing turbaned Sikh veterans and Jewish veterans to enter legion halls. I applaud the resignation of Dominion Command Chairman Robert Ford over the issue.

Turbans are not hats; they are very important religious symbols of the Sikh faith. Sikh soldiers fought and died wearing their turbans. Therefore Sikh veterans and Jewish veterans should be allowed equal access to Canadian legion halls to honour their fallen comrades.

Yesterday was a sad day for religious tolerance and racial understanding in Canada.

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NATIONAL ACCESS AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. David Iftody (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, this week marks the seventh anniversary of National Access Awareness Week in Canada.

It is important as legislators in the House to be aware of the needs of the disabled community. When planning community events we must support the establishments that are accessible so that handicapped people can be included.

Inclusion is what National Access Awareness Week is all about: from the ramps to Braille, to traffic lights that alert the blind, to the sign language interpreter who covers question period on the parliamentary channel. We must as legislators always be responsible and aware of the needs and concerns of those who have special requirements, for without those tools we shut out a significant part of our citizenry.

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(1410)

[Translation]

THE LATE REINE JOHNSON

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Reine Johnson passed away yesterday in Montreal. As the wife of one Quebec premier and the mother of two

others, she was the heart and soul of a family that has made a major contribution to politics. Widowed in 1968 upon the death, while in office, of Premier Daniel Johnson Sr., she saw admirably to the education of her two daughters, Diane and Marie, and her two sons, Pierre-Marc and Daniel to whom she passed on the torch of public commitment.

On the death of this great lady whom I had the honour of meeting, how can we not have a moment's thought for the spouses of those who enter the political arena. Every day, they play a vitally important role behind the scenes. They share the trials and experience the harsh blows of political battles, but very rarely do they get the credit they deserve.

Speaking personally and on behalf of the members of the Bloc Québécois, I want to extend my heartfelt condolences to the current Premier of Quebec, Mr. Daniel Johnson, to my friend Pierre-Marc, and to their sisters, Diane and Marie.

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[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

Mrs. Sharon Hayes (Port Moody—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, this morning's news carried reports of the Royal Canadian Legion rejecting the proposal to allow turbans. Of the several commentaries I have heard, most condemn this action and once again we hear divisive accusations being hurled by each side.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration I have spent many days now listening to the varying opinions of experts and non-experts alike. What is our mandate as we review the Citizenship Act? Indeed, what is the mandate of every Canadian citizen as they identify with Canada?

The strength of our country lies in the agreement of all citizens to come together. That is, we ask no citizen to forsake their cultural inheritance but that each accept and give equal value to the cultural freedom of others.

The legion controversy is two sided. No matter what their cultural or religious background, all Canadians should be confident that their values are respected by others.

In this month of the 50th anniversary of the supremely noble sacrifice by many Canadians, let us recognize the freedom to identify and maintain our respective traditions.

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[Translation]

THE LATE REINE JOHNSON

Mr. Martin Cauchon (Outremont): Mr. Speaker, with great regret I mention the passing of Reine Gagné-Johnson, who died yesterday after a long illness. Her contribution to political life is important, since she was the wife of a Quebec Premier and the mother of two Quebec Premiers, including the present one, the Hon. Daniel Johnson. We remember her as a lady of great dignity.

Oral Questions

On behalf of my colleagues and myself, I would like to offer her whole family, her many friends and all the people of Quebec our sincere condolences.

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[English]

FRENCH LANGUAGE MEDIA

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, the sleazy tactics of the separatist element in the Quebec media have been exposed.

Mme Ginette Johnson, chair of the French language section of the Kingston, Frontenac–Lennox and Addington County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, was contacted by media outlets concerning the French language secondary school in Kingston. She indicated to the media: “I told them I felt this was not a language issue. After that they were not interested in talking to me”.

There are separatists in the French language media in our country who have aligned themselves with the Bloc Quebecois in an effort to poison relations between Canada’s two largest linguistic groups.

[Translation]

Mrs. Johnson also let the office of the Leader of the Opposition know her position when she was called earlier this week.

[English]

The situation in Kingston is clearly a controversy over planning between the city council and the school board. It is not a dispute about language rights but the right to establish a French school in our community.

The attempts by some elements of the media to suggest otherwise are dishonest. The use of this material by the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues is deceitful.

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound): Mr. Speaker, on May 16, 1994 someone said: “An effective criminal justice system, one that holds people accountable for harmful conduct, simply cannot be sustained under conditions where there are boundless excuses for violent behaviour and no moral authority for the state to punish. If people know that they are not going to be held accountable because of myriad excuses, how will our society be able to influence behaviour and provide incentives to follow the law? How can we teach future generations right from wrong if the idea of criminal responsibility is riddled with exceptions and our governing institutions and courts lack the moral self-confidence? A society that does not hold someone

accountable for harmful behaviour can be viewed as condoning—or even worse, endorsing—such conduct”.

(1415)

These words were not spoken by a Reformer but by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

Would the Minister of Justice please take note.

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SCOUT AND GUIDE PARADE

Mr. John Bryden (Hamilton—Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, I have a riddle for you. What city has the longest annual parade in North America, if not the world? Mr. Speaker, your share of my minute is up. The answer is Hamilton in my riding.

Last Saturday it hosted its 56th annual scout and guide parade: 9,500 children and leaders took part, 230 guiding groups, 220 scouting groups, cubs, scouts, brownies, sparks and beavers. It took two and a half hours to pass the reviewing stand, a colourful procession of boys and girls as far as the eye could see.

This event, unique to Hamilton, was inspirational. I wish all my fellow MPs could have been there to witness it with me. It would serve to remind us all that our duty to Canada is to its future, to its children.

The Speaker: I might tell the hon. member I knew the answer.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

NATIONAL FORUM ON HEALTH

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Criticized by the provinces that refuse to be excluded from the National Forum on Health considering that they are the ones primarily responsible for health-care organization, the Prime Minister confirmed yesterday that the National Forum on Health would be postponed. This postponement, which comes on the heels of the delay in social program reform, was explained by the fact the Prime Minister wished to examine the situation of the provinces.

As chairman of the National Forum on Health, will the Prime Minister commit to seeking the direct participation of the provinces, as equal partners of the federal government, as requested by Quebec and New Brunswick among others?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this is a national forum in which we want stakeholders to participate in order to determine what exactly the long term goals are for the people of Canada in the area of health. We are presently consulting with the provinces, but we do not want this forum to turn into a federal-provincial squabble. There is a health ministers’ meeting scheduled, to deal with day-to-day

problems. We do want the provinces to participate, but above all, we want all other stakeholders who want to make their views known to participate in the forum. This conference must not be confused with the meeting of federal and provincial health ministers, who get together on a regular basis.

Five provinces made recommendations in anticipation of their participation. The Minister of Health said she had approved some of these proposals. The provinces then submitted more proposals, which we are currently examining. But the fact remains that this process cannot replace the health ministers' meeting.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, are we to understand that the federal government is refusing to clearly authorize the formal and direct participation of the provinces in the forum to avoid having to debate publicly with them the consequences of its decision to withdraw from free, accessible and universal health care?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker, because there is a clear and unequivocal commitment on the part of this government to free and universal health care across the country. More and more—and even the provinces recognize this—Canadians want this health system which is the envy of the Americans and others to be maintained.

We spend 9 per cent of our gross national product on health care, as compared to 14 per cent in the United States. We want to make sure that the objectives of this system, which has been working well but has developed a number of problems like any other system after a few years of operation, are maintained in the interest of all Canadians.

(1420)

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, how can the leader of the government try to make himself look good by imposing national standards on the provinces, while his government is reducing its contribution to health care, which puts the provinces in an impossible situation?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we did not reduce our funding at all. No cuts in transfers to the provinces were made in the Minister of Health's budget.

The position which we put forward during the election campaign and the Minister of Finance adopted in his budget is that we are going to maintain transfer payments at the level they were when we came to power.

Oral Questions

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot): Mr. Speaker, we learned this morning that the Liberal government is thinking not of eliminating the GST as it promised but of replacing it with another GST that would be even more complex than the first one, an odious, hidden tax that goes directly against the provinces' fiscal autonomy.

My question is for the Minister of Finance: Does he confirm his government's intention to implement a GST that would be even worse than the first one and that could apply to currently tax-free products such as food, health care and medicine, which amounts to a systematic attack against the sick and the poorest?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is on the finance committee which is drafting the report. We eagerly await this report, as I have always said.

I have no intention of commenting or anything until I have had a chance to read it.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot): Mr. Speaker, I refer to an article in this morning's newspaper and I ask the Minister of Finance whether he intends to promote a systematic attack against the provinces' fiscal autonomy, as well as a hidden tax that would be easier for his government to increase in a deceitful, odious and hypocritical way at consumers' expense.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of commenting on newspaper articles, but we will certainly comment after reading the official report of the finance committee. If the finance critic is the author or the source of the article in *La Presse*, he should be the one commenting.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Earlier this week the Prime Minister acknowledged that increasing uncertainty caused by the debate over Quebec sovereignty was hurting the Canadian economy. At the same time the study released by the C. D. Howe Institute points to growing uncertainty about the government's ability to hit its deficit targets, which also hurts the economy.

The C. D. Howe study says the government would have to make further spending reductions of \$7.2 billion just to restore confidence in its current deficit projections.

Oral Questions

Does the minister accept the C. D. Howe study analysis and is he actively searching for an additional \$7.2 billion in spending cuts?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, the study referred to by the leader of the Reform Party was one of four articles in a document that by and large was very good.

The objectives set out in the article by Mr. Richards are certainly objectives we share.

Unfortunately when Mr. Richards did his study he did not take into account the measures that we did in the February 22 budget and as a result his study is based on a set of numbers which are no longer valid.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Finance.

Two big sources of uncertainty are driving interest rates up, undermining confidence in the dollar and shaking investor confidence. One is uncertainty about excessive deficits. The other is uncertainty about Quebec.

(1425)

The Prime Minister says that little can be done in the short term to control uncertainty over Quebec, but surely more can be done to control uncertainty over the deficit. It is the controllable factor.

Does the finance minister agree that the growing uncertainty over Quebec now gives him an added reason for coming to his colleagues and coming to the House and demanding stronger action on the deficit and the debt? Is he prepared to do so?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, I have made it very clear, as has the Prime Minister, that as a government we take our deficit targets very seriously. We are prepared to take whatever action is required in order to hit them. That is the commitment of the Prime Minister; it is the commitment of the government and it is a commitment on which the House can rely.

What adds to the uncertainty is the fact that over the last 10 years governments have not hit their targets. We think it is very important that a government hits its targets, and we are going to hit our target.

I certainly share the view of the leader of the Reform Party that the country's excessive indebtedness weighs heavily on it and is a cause of some uncertainty. I also share the view of the Prime Minister that the irresponsible statements made by certain members of the Bloc Québécois and the leader of the Parti Québécois are doing a great deal to damage our ability to create jobs.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, we do not disagree with the fact that one of the government's problems is created by the uncertainty generated by the sovereignist option. I suggest that one of the government's bigger problems—

An hon. member: The separatist option.

Mr. Manning: One of the government's bigger problems, Mr. Speaker, is that it does not really have a strong mandate from the public to cut the deficit to the extent that it should be cut. The government did not seek that mandate in the 1993 election. It downplayed the seriousness of the deficit and now it is paying the price.

Do not the growing uncertainty and the need to address it more seriously give the minister an additional basis now to go out and rally public support for deficit fighting? In other words, is there not now an opportunity to go out and get the public support he did not get during the election to tackle the deficit in a new way?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, we certainly have a mandate to clean up the nation's finances. The Prime Minister made it very clear throughout the election campaign that our interim goal was a deficit target of 3 per cent of GDP within three years and that our ultimate goal was to eliminate it. That is what we said to the Canadian people and that is what we are going to do.

At the same time we also made it very clear, unlike the Reform Party, that we understood the economy is complex and there are many ways to approach the objectives. Cutting government expenditures is not the only way. Nor is it a way that will do it on its own.

What must be done if we are going to eliminate the deficit is to put Canadians back to work, and that is what we are going to do.

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[Translation]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, regarding the situation in Kanesatake, the minister of Indian affairs indicated that he had no intention of paying the three million dollars asked by chief Jerry Peltier as a precondition to negotiating. It appears that, instead, the minister is about to acquire some land from the Oka municipality which he will then give to allow for the expansion of the cemetery.

Will the minister confirm that the government is about to acquire that land from the Oka municipality, and can he tell us how much it will cost?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, my director general has been negotiating directly with the village. It is in the range of around \$200,000.

I am glad the member asked me this question because I think this is part and parcel of the negotiations.

(1430)

As of now, the Mohawk Council of Kanesatake has issued a press release saying the Mohawk cemetery expansion is suspended at Ottawa's request. I am very pleased that the Mohawks have suspended their clearing operation at the cemetery as an indication of their good will of negotiating.

Again, as I have said, we do not create a crisis. Our party is committed to recognizing a problem, going in, dividing it up into its components and solving those components. This is good news for me.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is also for the minister of Indian affairs.

Could the minister tell us if he intends to give a favourable reply to the urgent request made by the Quebec government to participate in the negotiations, or will he conduct these negotiations alone and ignore the provincial government's wish?

[English]

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that the Quebec government be at the negotiating table with the Mohawks and the Government of Canada and with the very fine mediator and negotiator, both of whom are already working there.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Yesterday we received conflicting economic signals: interest rates are up; GDP growth is up. Does the minister agree that higher interest rates due to Quebec uncertainty threaten to choke any economic recovery? How does the minister intend to respond to this circumstance?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, the very strong numbers that the member mentions for the month of March occurred during a period of rising interest rates. At the same time, as the member knows, the recovery began when interest rates were in fact higher than they are at this stage.

I think it is very clear that the recovery in Canada is sufficiently well anchored that in most areas of the economy, certainly those that are creating jobs like goods production, the high interest rates have not yet begun to stifle the recovery.

In terms of the uncertainty that has been created by statements made by certain people who are pursuing an unpalatable political option, there is no doubt in my mind that those statements are destroying jobs.

I think that one should appeal to all political leaders to desist from the kinds of things that are taking food out of the mouths of Canadians.

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the minister's answer. It is very true there are statements that are affecting our economy and potential growth. This was supported by senior economists from Wood Gundy and Patty Croft as of yesterday's statement which was very clearly stated.

Higher interest rates are seen to be there because of the separatist discussion that is going on. It is threatening the government's 3 per cent deficit reduction targets. I believe that is happening.

Are the minister and the government prepared to bring about additional expenditure reductions for adjustments to the budget to meet their target and to assure us that they will?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the House, we are going to take whatever actions are required to hit those targets.

The credibility of the government's economic projections are very important if we are going to re-establish any kind of equilibrium in public markets. We are going to hit our targets and we will take the steps required to get there.

The Speaker: I remind my colleagues to always remember me in their statements and answers.

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(1435)

*[Translation]***KINGSTON'S FRANCOPHONES**

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata): Mr. Speaker, teachers at the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean who may be transferred to Kingston are very concerned about the quality of French language education their children will receive in Kingston. Today, *Le Devoir* reported what was said by their spokesman, and I quote: "It is like a third world country—the school's is housed in shacks without toilets or running water, and this has been going on for six years".

Oral Questions

My question is directed to the Minister of Canadian Heritage. How can the minister responsible for implementation of the Official Languages Act continue to tolerate the obstruction by Kingston's municipal council concerning the plans for building a real school for francophones in Kingston, when the minister has already approved the expenditure of over half a million dollars for the construction of a cultural centre attached to the school, right on the controversial Olan Mills site?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, this decision reflects the Canadian government's determination to support Kingston's francophones. There will be a school.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of National Defence. Does the minister still claim that Kingston is a showcase for bilingualism in Canada, and will he confirm that, so far, none of the teachers at the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean have agreed to sign a contract for their transfer to Kingston?

[English]

Hon. David Michael Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the hon. member is getting her information. We have been having some very fruitful discussions with the commanding officer at CMR who, as I have announced, will be going to Kingston, Brigadier General Emond, Mr. Carriere, who has been the principal at Collège militaire royal, and the members of the faculty about their transfer to Kingston.

I do not get the same sense of disquiet from those officials of our department at the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean or the professors that the hon. member has.

* * *

NATIONAL HEALTH CARE FORUM

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod): Mr. Speaker, Thursday the health minister was asked to give a more formal role to the provinces in the national health care forum. The answer was not likely. Tuesday the Prime Minister said that he was much more flexible.

My question is for the health minister. Can we have today's version?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to get *Hansard* and read the Prime Minister's answer. It is the same as mine.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod): Mr. Speaker, the provinces are the major players in health care. They deserve formal status. Will the minister give up her co-chair to allow the major stakeholders official status?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, let me remind the hon. member, as the Prime Minister stated earlier today, that the forum is not meant to take the place of the federal-provincial conference of ministers of health. The forum is meant to be a dialogue between different people in Canada, individuals, and it is meant to advise the Government of Canada.

I repeat that we must not let intergovernmental squabbles deter us from the real work of the forum which is to enhance and protect the health of all Canadians in the 21st century.

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[Translation]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, Amnesty International yesterday condemned the Canadian government's attitude to human rights violations in China. Amnesty says: "Canada's public silence is interpreted by Chinese government officials as recognition that they were justified in crushing the democratic opposition in 1989". Arbitrary detentions and trials are thought to be the norm and cases of mistreatment and torture are regularly reported. In 1993 alone more than 1,400 prisoners were summarily executed.

(1440)

I ask the Prime Minister if we are to understand that, for the sake of commercial interests, Canada has chosen to close its eyes on the thousands of Chinese still languishing in jail, a few days from the sad fifth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this government's policy has always been clear: we deplore regimes that do not respect people's freedom.

We have told the Chinese government this at every opportunity. However, there is no international boycott of China. All countries in the world do business with China. We believe that the best way to open that society is to open it to the world. After trading extensively with Western countries, the Chinese themselves will recognize that Western values for the protection of human rights are the best. That is the best way to proceed, because if China is completely isolated and cut off, there will be more and more abuse.

We believe that the method used by this government of condemning those people for what they do but continuing to do business with them, as all countries in the world do, and to offer them North American, Canadian or European technology is the best way to bring them to accept western values. Completely isolating them is not the way to do it.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister. If, as the Prime Minister says, the government has not given up on human rights will the Prime Minister solemnly undertake to

publicly raise the issue of human rights violations when he goes to China in the fall?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, whenever I met representatives of the Chinese government, I always raised the problem. I did so in Seattle and I talked about it to the press then and I will do the same thing.

However, it is quite clear that the best solution for the western world is to open China to western values and in that way the Chinese will have no choice; as happened in the Soviet Union, when people became aware of what was happening in the west, the Berlin wall fell. The same thing will happen in China.

* * *

[English]

D-DAY

Mrs. Jane Stewart (Brant): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for International Financial Institutions.

As preparations for D-Day memorial services are under way many Canadians are taking the time to honour the over 5,000 Canadians who died at Normandy. This weekend different constituents of mine advised me that France, the United Kingdom and the United States have each minted several commemorative coins to honour those who fell in the battle and that these coins are available in Canada.

I would like to ask the secretary of state whether or not Canada has minted any coins and, if so, where Canadians may buy those coins.

Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions)): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the hon. member because it is of interest to a number of Canadians.

I am very pleased to report that the Royal Canadian Mint has three issues of commemorative coins available to Canadians that commemorate the D-Day operations. The first is a one dollar proof coin that has the War Memorial on the back. There is a six-medallion bronze set depicting various war scenes and a 14-carat gold quarter ounce coin entitled "The Home Front".

All these are available at the Royal Canadian Mint and at various coin collectors.

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NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

Last Friday the Minister of Indian Affairs answering on behalf of the health minister said that the national workshop on

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infectious disease notification had been postponed because there was no agreement on an agenda. There is much speculation that the workshop was postponed as a result of pressure from special interest groups.

I want to know two things. First, why was this workshop postponed? Second, when will it be rescheduled?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, let me repeat what was said last Friday.

The conference was postponed because there was no agreement on the agenda. We are continuing to work with the stakeholder groups to ensure that there is a conference and that it is held in a timely fashion, hopefully in the fall of this year.

(1445)

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, every day in the country emergency response personnel, paramedics, firefighters, nurses, and physicians run the risk of contracting contagious and infectious diseases.

The United States has already proceeded with a national protocol on the matter and the previous Parliament's standing committee on health made numerous recommendations on just such a policy.

Given these precedents, will the minister present a strategy to protect the health of emergency response personnel, and what will this strategy be?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, it is our intention always to work with the groups affected and concerned about these very serious issues. That is the reason we have asked that this conference go ahead so that we can hear its recommendations on how best to handle these very serious questions.

Meanwhile work does go on. There are guidelines. There are policies on how to act in these particular circumstances.

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[Translation]

REFUGEES

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Recently, we learned that the Montreal refugee assistance committee had lodged an international complaint against Canada concerning the improper deportation to Zaire of a young pregnant woman who was given a sedative without her consent and this, in violation of sections 219 and 265 of the Criminal Code of Canada as well as Section 11 of the Quebec Civil Code.

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The minister had ample time since the question was put to him to make the necessary inquiries. My question is as follows: Does he still maintain that medication was given to only 12 people before they were deported, while his own senior officials admit to 20 such incidents?

[English]

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. It is very crucial to keep in mind that no immigration officials administer or are permitted to administer medical assistance or prescribe any medicine for those who are being removed or deported.

The only individuals who are permitted to do that, to recommend it, and to implement it are medical practitioners.

In the particular case of the woman the member raises, it was a medical practitioner and for medical reasons that administered medical attention, not immigration officials.

Second, at the time that this issue came to the fore approximately 9,000 individuals were removed from Canada last year.

I asked my officials to give me an approximate number very quickly so that I could respond to the member and the officials told me that 12 of the 9,000 individuals who were removed necessitated some medical attention on the advice and recommendation of medical practitioners and not immigration officials.

[Translation]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa): Mr. Speaker, our information differs. Considering how serious this issue is and since the minister has admitted that 12 people received such treatment, will the minister commit to holding an independent inquiry, as required under international agreements, to shed light on possibly illegal behaviour on the part of immigration officers?

[English]

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, no, I am not going to have an inquiry for something that this member throws very loosely across the floor. If he has information that anyone has perpetrated illegal acts then he has the duty and the obligation as a member of Parliament to provide me with that information.

Second, under no circumstances does any medical application get administered to any individual routinely for removals. When I put in perspective the 9,000 who were removed, approximately 12 last year received some medical application. It was on the recommendation of doctors for individuals who for the most part were on medicine or had an ailment or a disease of some sort in order to take precautions during the flight.

(1450)

In addition, the member also failed to say that a Canadian nurse accompanied the woman from Zaire in order to make sure her ailment would not aggravate the situation.

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CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the solicitor general.

Yesterday a colleague of mine asked about prisoners in federal institutions receiving various forms of social assistance and he was told that the solicitor general was looking into it.

We have looked into it and discovered that not only are the prisoners receiving OAS and CPP payments but they are receiving GST rebates even though they do not meet the qualifications of the Income Tax Act.

Will the Solicitor General act immediately to rectify this outrageous situation?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member will give me the names of the people he says are receiving GST rebates I will take it up immediately with the Minister of National Revenue.

As I said yesterday with respect to the matter of elderly inmates receiving CPP and old age pensions, I am looking into that as part of my review of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to see how this can be dealt with in an appropriate way.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear some of that.

I would like to suggest that if it is up the opposition to supply all this valuable information to those who are supposed to be doing the job, let me know. I am up for hire. I will supply those names. I do have them and we will supply them.

I would like to ask the solicitor general to be just a little more specific and tell Canadians exactly when hard pressed Canadian taxpayers will be able to expect some relief and when prisoners will stop receiving GST payments.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I have to check into the facts of the situation with the Minister of National Revenue and I will do that very promptly. I appreciate the hon. member's offer to help but I do not want to put him in a conflict of interest situation.

*Oral Questions***UREA FORMALDEHYDE FOAM**

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

In the 1970s many homeowners insulated their homes with urea formaldehyde foam or UFFI. In the 1980s it was alleged that UFFI caused health problems. After a lengthy court battle no health problems were proven. Although CMHC and other lenders now make no distinction between homes with or without UFFI fear still lingers.

Would the minister consider a public information program to correct the misconception about UFFI?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Unfortunately I cannot give a specific answer as the matter is presently before the courts.

As he alluded to in his question, the matter did receive some adjudication in the early 1980s. However, there has been an appeal launched and is due to be heard before the courts in September 1995. Pending the outcome of that particular decision I would be prepared to review with the hon. member as well as other members of the House the information in that particular decision to Canadians across the country.

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[*Translation*]

AEROSPACE

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry. In 1988, Canada made a commitment to participate with other partners in the international space station program, which is to put up a huge experimental laboratory in orbit around the Earth. This station will have a significant impact on scientific progress in many areas. However, the Martin budget announced a substantial reduction in Canada's participation in this project.

Can the minister give an update on the status of negotiations with NASA, so we can see how Canada could maintain its partnership while reducing its financial contribution over the next 10 years?

(1455)

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to see that the hon. member is interested in the Canadian Space Agency because it is a very important part of our general science program. We have completed our negotiations with the United States on the space station and later this

week I will announce the details not only of the space station but also of the long-term space plan.

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières): Mr. Speaker, could the minister still tell us whether the reduction in Canada's contribution to this project will have consequences on Canada's ability to conduct experiments in space and what impact this decision will have on scientific progress in Canada in areas such as pharmaceuticals and materials engineering?

[*English*]

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, I will be able to provide the member with details respecting some of those concerns later this week.

I assure him that in our preparation of the long term space plan and our negotiations with the United States over Canada's role in the space station we have endeavoured to a very great extent to protect the key interests of Canadian companies in their participation in the space program.

We expect to see the ability of Canada to continue to participate in the space program enhanced by a more general program which emphasizes our important interests in satellite communications, earth observation and remote sensing.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Infrastructure.

Yesterday the minister stated that he would reallocate some of the infrastructure funding to cover the federal share of highway 416. Leeds—Grenville where the construction is to be done is only allocated \$4 million under the program.

Will the minister tell the House what areas of the province will find cuts so that he can find the extra \$56 million?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, there are some 722 million federal dollars in the province of Ontario for infrastructure which, when we add the provincial and local government shares, means a program of over \$2 billion in that province.

There are allocations that are tentatively in the province for different municipalities. There are going to be, however, moneys that will not be taken up in the allocation, and certainly the municipalities are welcome to do that. There will be moneys available for reallocation.

We are committed, if the province brings forward an application for this project, to providing the funds so that we can do this much needed project of highway 416.

Points of Order

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, apparently the municipalities are not lining up for this funding under the infrastructure program. There must be something wrong with the program.

Will the government now reverse its decision to add \$2 billion to the national debt for a program that is not working?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that supplementary question because it gives me an opportunity to say that there is in fact very good take-up of the funds. We have now reached the billion dollar mark of the \$6 billion program.

We well knew when we entered into this program and with the province of Ontario established September 30 as the deadline for the initial round of applications that not all would be taken up in the initial round. It is a two-year program and we fully expect there will be further allocations. We are committed to providing the funds for 416. The member for Leeds—Grenville in the House has had a lot to do ensuring that much needed project gets going.

* * *

TRANSPORT

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport and has to do with the request that the Minister of Transport has received from the United Transportation Union concerning the alarming number of derailments that have taken place lately. The minister will have received a letter from the UTU on that matter.

(1500)

In light of its concern and the concern expressed by a railway carman about changing practices with respect to maintenance and inspection of rolling stock, I wonder if he could tell us what his response will be to this request.

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member brings a question of great interest to people who work on the railways, people who travel on the railways, people who ship goods on the railways. We have been through an extremely difficult winter.

The incidents that have occurred have been investigated, as the member would know, under the legislative and statutory requirements. We expect to respond to it. Both railways have indicated their very deep concerns about the number of incidents that did occur.

I will make sure, in response to the member's request as well as representations made by the unions and others, that we look very carefully at the matter because it is of very serious importance to anyone who understands what has taken place through this very rigorous winter.

The Speaker: It seems we are going to have a rather full afternoon. I have two questions of privilege which I will hear now.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

It is obvious that a first draft of a report to the finance committee was leaked to the media. This leaking of a report which had not been considered as of that moment by the committee is a contempt toward the members of that committee who have worked so hard for four months, holding over 60 sessions, hearing witnesses and deliberating.

This is a contempt to Parliament because if documents of this nature cannot be respected, our Parliament cannot function in a fair and equitable way for all members. I would ask that whatever possible be done to get rid of this deliberate leaking of documents in contempt of committees and in contempt of Parliament.

The Speaker: Before going any further into the question of privilege that the hon. member raises, perhaps it would be more in keeping with the practice that we have had so far if the finance committee were to look into the matter and report to the House itself.

This ruling was made earlier by Speaker Jerome, and if the hon. member would take that under advisement the Chair will continue discussions with the hon. member.

I have a second question of privilege.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot): Mr. Speaker, during Question Period, the Minister of Finance, who is normally a gentleman concerned about fair play, hinted, probably unintentionally, that I was the person who leaked the report on the GST. This accusation is without foundation and I would ask that it be withdrawn.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the hon. member, who is the finance critic for the Bloc Québécois, is an honourable person and I respect him. When he says that he did not leak this report, I believe him and, therefore, I withdraw my remarks.

*Points of Order**[English]*

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order of which I have given notice to you and to the parties in the House.

It has to do with the fact that we in the New Democratic Party have not been recognized as a party in the House since the beginning of this Parliament. In doing so I am fully aware that certain decisions relating to our current lack of party status were taken before you were elected as Speaker.

(1505)

I am therefore making these arguments with no intention whatsoever of pointing a finger at the Chair or at anyone else for that matter. The fact that we have been seated in the House as if we were independent members is a good example of what I mean. The seating plan took shape before you were elected as our Speaker, but it is only the most concrete symbol of the whole situation that I want to call into question today.

I have not raised this earlier because I thought it was appropriate for the House to become acquainted with itself after the unprecedented upheaval of the last election. This place operates not only on the basis of written rules but also on the authority of a large body of conventions which come from parliamentary practice. I thought it best to wait until the many new members had an opportunity to become familiar with the importance of conventions in the makeup of our day to day parliamentary constitution.

However, with respect to the issue I wish to raise today, the real conventions of this place and the conventional wisdom are not always the same. The recent conventional wisdom has been that the 12-member threshold for party status is a hard and fast rule understood in an unambiguous way by all concerned.

My point today is that the question of party status has in fact been governed by unwritten convention and practice and that the only thing that is hard and fast is the question of which parties qualify for certain moneys. I begin by making it absolutely clear that what I am seeking is not a change in those sections of the Parliament of Canada Act which pertain to money, but a recognition that that statute applies only to money and that all else is a matter of convention, practice and the discretion of the Speaker as the Chair seeks to fulfil its historic role as the protector of the House itself and the minorities therein.

There are no unambiguous definitions of parties in legislation, in the standing orders or in the procedural authorities, and yet parties are essential to the efficient operation of the House. Their officers, leaders, House leaders and whips try to facilitate what all of us do here as we discharge our public responsibilities.

Parties present themselves to the House as parties and are not created or disposed of by the House itself. Our membership in our respective parties is a matter between ourselves, our fellow caucus colleagues, our extraparliamentary organizations and ultimately our electors. We can leave our parties or be asked to leave our parties. We can create new parties, merge two parties into one, as did the Progressives and the Conservatives, or change the name of our parties as we in the New Democratic Party did.

The tradition of this place has been for the Speaker to accept the party affiliation that the parties and the members report to him or her. Yet since the beginning of this Parliament the Chair has not accepted the party affiliation that we in the New Democratic Party clearly possess.

The only possible precedent for this is the way in which the Bloc Quebecois was treated in the last Parliament. All other precedents, including the way the one Reform member was treated prior to the formation of the Bloc, points to the injustice and inappropriateness of the way the NDP is now being treated.

I would ask members to listen to my argument before they judge it. The authority for not treating us as a party has apparently been the Parliament of Canada Act which since 1963 has set out a threshold of 12 members for parties whose officers are granted special allowances and subsequently for parties whose members may sit on the Board of Internal Economy.

My point today is first to show that the wording of the Parliament of Canada Act does not empower or require the Chair to withhold recognition from parties with fewer than 12 members in spite of the conventional wisdom. Second, I am asking the Chair to follow the established practice of recognizing such parties in the House.

Let us then look at the wording in the Parliament of Canada Act. The words in section 62 read that the officers of "a party that has a recognized membership of 12 or more persons in the House" shall receive a variety of allowances. It does not say that a party must have 12 members to be a recognized party and clearly assumes that parties with fewer than 12 members are indeed parties.

In section 50 caucuses that do "not have a recognized membership of 12" are not entitled to have representatives on the Board of Internal Economy but are clearly to be construed as still being caucuses.

These clauses are worded in such a way that the question of other forms of recognition is at worst left open. At best the wording of the statute seems to imply that party as a concept is something independent of numbers and that 12 is the number of seats an already recognized party must have in order to qualify for money but not for recognition as such. Recognition of parties with fewer than 12 members is already implicit in the wording of the statute itself. If the Parliament of Canada Act says anything about official party status then it confirms rather than denies

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that party status itself is distinct from the financial provisions of the act.

(1510)

There being no clear and precise legal definition of party status, we may ask how the financial provisions of the Parliament of Canada Act came to be confused with the acceptance of party status in the House.

Shortly after the passage of the 12-member threshold amendments in 1963, the Ralliement Cr ditiste divided themselves from the Social Credit Party which was left with only 11 members. In the ensuing debates about the new seating arrangements, the new 12-member threshold was loosely applied to questions of parliamentary practice as the House sought to deal with the fact that two parties had been created out of one, a situation quite unlike the one in which the NDP now finds itself.

Indeed, in the last Parliament the 12-member threshold was also used to deal with the formation of the Bloc out of defectors from the Liberal and Conservative parties, another situation totally different from that of the NDP in this Parliament.

John C. Courtney, a political scientist who published a paper on party recognition in March 1978 in a volume of the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, explained the development of the misreading of the 12-member threshold very effectively:

Technically the 12-member threshold in the 1963 act and parliamentary procedure had nothing to do with one another, yet the timing of the events was virtually certain to produce a combination that would lead to the injection of the phrase "recognized membership of 12 or more persons in the House of Commons" into future debates over regulations and statutes dealing with political parties. The term, indeed more specifically the number, would gradually assume an authenticity of its own.

The view that the 12-member threshold constitutes a hard and fast rule in law about party status in this House is in fact an illusion. However, in an illustration of the old maximum that hard cases make bad law, misapplications designed to deal with divided and/or new parties are now side swiping the NDP in the absence of an appropriate will to discern the difference between some previous situations and the situation we find ourselves in at the moment.

A more reliable legislative authority for determining party status can be found in the Canada Elections Act. In sections 24 through 42 of that act, it is clear that parties lose party status not when they fall below the 12-member threshold but only when they fail to file certain documents or when they fail to officially nominate candidates in at least 50 constituencies 30 days before polling day.

Even though there is no question that the New Democratic Party is now a registered party under that act, in the House we are treated as if we were independents, no differently than some

other members who do not belong to a party registered under the Canada Elections Act.

To this point, informal arguments against the way we are being treated are often met with the argument that real independents could make a similar claim, that it is a primarily a question of degree and that a line has to be drawn somewhere. If the Canada Elections Act were taken into account this argument would hold even less water than it does now if that were possible.

There is therefore no legal authority, either in the Parliament of Canada Act—

The Speaker: I have given the hon. member a great deal of latitude in putting forth his point of order and, if I might comment, it is very well researched. I was wondering perhaps if the hon. member could now move to summarize on this particular point of order.

Mr. Blaikie Mr. Speaker, I would hope you and the House would realize that this argument takes some time to make. I will move as quickly as I can to the conclusion of my argument. However it is not something that we do every day here and I would like my argument to be heard, if that is possible. I will try to move as quickly as I can.

There is no legal authority, either in the Parliament of Canada Act or in the Canada Elections Act, for withholding recognition from us.

Past Speakers have not, moreover, applied the 12-member threshold to questions of party recognition. I would now like to direct your attention, Mr. Speaker, to a number of the relevant precedents which is perfectly in order with what a good point of order should be like, arguing from precedent.

The first and most relevant precedent is the party status accorded to the CCF after the 1958 election. Electing eight members to the House the CCF was then in a very similar position to that of the NDP in this Parliament.

(1515)

In 1958 the CCF continued to enjoy its full rights as an opposition party. CCF members were seated as a party in the House and were treated as a party in debate and during Question Period. The party leader was treated as a party leader in debate on the speech from the throne, being recognized immediately after Mr. Pearson and Mr. Diefenbaker. CCF members also sat as full members on committees.

After the 1963 introduction of the 12-member threshold, Speakers regularly interpreted the act as one that granted certain financial benefits to parties with more than 12 members. However that did not take away any other rights of parties that had fewer than 12 members.

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On February 18, 1966 for instance, Speaker Lamoureux allowed representatives of the Social Credit Party and the Ralliement Cr ditiste to respond to ministerial statements under what is now Standing Order 33(1), even though they had only five and nine members respectively. He argued that he did not see how the standing order concerning the right of opposition parties to respond to ministers' statements could be "interpreted in light of the amendment to the Parliament of Canada Act", *Hansard*, February 18, 1966, page 1435.

The force of the tradition of protecting the rights and status of small parties can be seen again in the treatment of the Social Credit Party after the 1974 election. With only 11 members the Social Credit Party once again fell below the legal threshold of 12 members required in order to receive financial benefits. The Board of Internal Economy nonetheless granted the Social Credit Party \$50,000 for research purposes at its meeting of October 22, 1974, a meeting attended by the present Prime Minister and by Mr. Mitchell Sharp.

I am raising this point not to ask for similar financial benefits, but to illustrate how previous Parliaments have protected the rights of small parties so assiduously that they sometimes have ignored the 12-member threshold on financial matters.

In 1979 in a Parliament in which I myself participated the Social Credit Party sent only five members to the House. A striking committee did not include a member from the Social Credit Party although they did sit in the front row of the House, right down in that corner.

There was a motion by the Social Credit member that his party should have a representative on the striking committee. In the ensuing debate on October 9, 1979, it was made clear by the Conservative government and Liberal opposition that what was at stake was not only the particular issue of the membership of the striking committee but also the party status of the Social Credit caucus.

When the Social Credit motion failed, Speaker Jerome at first decided that the motion obliged him not to grant the Social Credit members party status. On October 10 he did not recognize their leader in the debate on the speech from the throne. His ruling can be found on page 69 of *Hansard* for October 11, 1979.

The next month Mr. Speaker, your predecessor, Speaker Jerome, revised his position and took into account the important responsibility of the Chair to protect minorities in the House. In debate on an opposition no confidence motion on November 6, 1979, Speaker Jerome recognized the leader of the Social Credit in debate immediately after the other opposition party leaders. He gave an eloquent justification for his decision from which I would like to quote. It is an important piece of evidence because

it qualifies the original ruling of October 11 published in the edition of Speaker Jerome's rulings.

I quote: "We ought to be clear at the outset that it is not a transgression of propriety to mention the name of the political party of the members who are involved; it is the Social Credit Party of Canada. Its members are members of this House of Commons and their leader is the hon. member for Beauce. Those are the realities. The vote"—on the striking committee motion—"under no circumstances, may I say, can be taken to pass out of existence a political party, nor can it be taken to render as independent members the group which has been recognized as a party and which has in fact been seated together as a political party. The Social Credit Party exists as a political party and the five members exist as members of that party under their leader".

He went on to say that even though the House had expressed itself on the question of the membership of the striking committee, he had certain responsibilities as Speaker.

Again, I quote Speaker Jerome: "It seems to me that the responsibility of the Chair and the responsibility of the House of Commons is to protect whatever rights minorities do enjoy and therefore it seems to me that I must conclude what it is that the members of the Social Credit Party are entitled to—I think that what those members are entitled to respects the fact that they are members of a political party so long as it does not give them an advantage that they would not otherwise enjoy as five members and secondly so long as it does not deprive other members of their right to participate in some way". *Hansard*, November 6, 1979, pages 1008–9.

(1520)

This is the approach to the question of party status I am asking you to take toward myself and my colleagues in the New Democratic Party in the House. We are asking you to recognize us as a party in the House just as previous Speakers have recognized small parties in the past.

One result of previous Speakers' recognition of small parties can be seen in the seating plans of past Parliaments. I would like to table some of these past seating plans for your consideration. I submit these for your consideration because they show that parties with fewer than 12 members have indeed been designated as parties and seated as parties with representation on the front benches.

I draw your attention in particular to the seating plan dated April 1989 where even only one member, the member for Beaver River, was designated as a member of the Reform Party. As I mentioned earlier however, this designation of the member for Beaver River disappeared with the advent of the Bloc and the decision not to treat it as a party. Currently the nine NDP

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members in the House are afforded no such appropriate nomenclature in the seating plan of this Parliament.

The Speaker: The hon. member will recognize that he has had every latitude. I have had indications that other members will want to participate in this point of order. I would ask the hon. member to wrap up now.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up. However, if I might be so bold as to say on my point of order, if I am being irrelevant or I am not speaking to the point, but I believe that I am—

The Speaker: Order. The Chair in no way indicates that the point of order is irrelevant. The Chair has heard a great many of the very relevant arguments the hon. member has put forward. The Chair at this point would ask again respectfully, that the hon. member come to a conclusion. Then we can have other views on this point of order.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I will indeed come to a conclusion.

The weight of almost all the evidence in both law and convention therefore comes down in support of our claim to be recognized in this House as the party that we clearly are. The only precedent that breaks the pattern is the treatment of the Bloc in the last Parliament.

At this point I do not wish to open the question of whether a party that forms between elections as a result of defections from existing parties should enjoy the same status as a party of members who sought election under their party banner. I do not want to enter into that debate.

What I do want to argue is that your ruling on party status should be based on a clear reading of the law and on the overwhelming number of precedents in support of our claim to party status, not on a single problematic precedent that itself broke with all precedent.

I will say what we are asking for so that you are absolutely clear of what I am on my feet about.

We ask first that the seating arrangements be adjusted to seat us as a party with proper precedence given to our leader as a leader and as a Privy Councillor, and that the published seating plan identify us as New Democrats, as is already the case in *Hansard*.

We ask that we be treated as an opposition party during question period where at present we are recognized only very rarely, systematically denied supplementaries and always relegated to the last question.

I would point out that in the last Parliament the leader of the Bloc was regularly recognized at about two-thirds of the way through question period. I direct your attention to *Hansard* of 1993 for February 11 and 25, March 9 and 24 and May 4. Therefore, it is clear that the leader of the New Democratic Party has been treated in an unprecedented manner and that due

consideration should be given to changing the way our leader has been treated since the opening of this Parliament.

My final point, for guidance on this matter let us return to Mr. Jerome's ruling of November 6, 1979. He said regarding the rights of small parties: "Participation in question period is their right, the same as any group of five members. It is not difficult to calculate mathematically what five members are entitled to as a proportion of the membership of the other parties". *Hansard*, page 1009.

If we apply Mr. Jerome's arithmetic to the situation in this Parliament, NDP members comprise 8 per cent of the opposition members and are therefore entitled to roughly 8 per cent of the opposition questions. By my calculations in a typical week there are some 125 questions and supplementaries posed by opposition members of which we should be entitled to 10. In practice you typically recognize us for only two questions per week. Occasionally you have not recognized us at all, as in the week beginning April 11 and only once have you recognized us for as many as four questions.

We therefore ask that we get the number of questions due to a party of nine members, that our leader be recognized after the leader of the Reform Party, that we be allowed supplementaries, and that we not always be relegated to the last question.

(1525)

Finally, we ask that in general we be treated as a party under the Standing Orders and that you work with our caucus officers in the customary ways to facilitate the operations of the House. My party colleagues and I are asking only that we not be discriminated against simply because we did not meet an arbitrary threshold of dubious relevance that has not even customarily been applied by previous Speakers to procedures in the House, against which there is ample parliamentary precedent for alternative approaches.

We have every confidence that you will see the merit in our case and we look forward to the results of your review of this question. We are not asking you to rule on this in a hurry, Mr. Speaker. However we certainly hope that by the time Parliament resumes its business in the fall after the summer recess that some changes will have been made along the lines which I have suggested in this point of order.

The Speaker: The point of order is indeed a very important one. That is one of the reasons the Chair gave every latitude to hear all of the arguments.

Are there other interventions? The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I was impressed with the very able argument of the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona on this important point.

I was also amazed because my recollection is that during the last election campaign, one of the pitches the New Democratic Party put to the Canadian public was that they should vote NDP in order that they could have 12 seats in Parliament and therefore be recognized as a party, because if they did not get those votes and did not get those seats then somehow Canada was going to suffer terribly.

Mr. Blaikie: It is.

Mr. Milliken: It is not. The hon. member says it is but of course it is not. It is doing better than it was. I think that is in large measure because there are fewer New Democrats in the House, but I do not want to get into that. It is irrelevant to the issue.

The fact is there are fewer members of the New Democratic Party here today. The hon. member has raised a point about the representation of the party in the House. Some of those points, Mr. Speaker, are ones you will want to consider when you review the arguments put forward by the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona.

Many of the rulings he has mentioned are accurate citations. However, I think he has ignored, perhaps deliberately, some of the rulings of Mr. Speaker Fraser on this issue in the last eight or nine years. They have significantly altered the thinking in respect of the application of the Parliament of Canada Act to the Standing Orders of the House.

I refer Your Honour to the decisions of the Speakers under Standing Order 33, which as Your Honour recalls allows for ministers to make statements in the House on Statements by Ministers and for the opposition parties to respond to them. The question of who constitutes an opposition party for the purposes of Standing Order 33 has led to the use of the Parliament of Canada Act as the criteria for making that decision.

I note that when this very argument took place in the last Parliament the New Democratic Party fully supported the position taken at that time by the government, by the opposition and by the New Democratic Party as the third party. The position was that one required 12 seats in the House in order to have the right to make a reply to a statement under Statements by Ministers. That effectively excluded the Bloc Québécois at that time from participating under Standing Order 33.

I would feel much more sympathetic toward the position of the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona had he and his colleagues taken a different position in the last Parliament, but of course they did not. They may have been wrong at the time; we all might have been wrong. I invite Your Honour in considering the matter to review the authorities at that time.

I also think it fair to bear in mind in looking at this that the hon. member says he is not asking for money. He is not asking

Points of Order

that the Parliament of Canada Act's financial provisions be applied to his party. I agree with him.

I recall when his colleague, the hon. member for Kamloops, shortly after the election said he was going to put a pitch for money in the House there was a howl of outrage from the Canadian populace. The hon. member for Sherbrooke made the same kind of suggestion, that he should have money for his party and the outrage in the Canadian public was palpable. I received many letters on the subject expressing extreme disagreement with the thought of giving money to these other parties when they had been properly thrashed by the electorate for the poor service they had rendered Canadians in the previous Parliament.

(1530)

I sympathize with Canadians in their judgment. I agreed with Canadians in their judgment and I, for one, was not prepared to give that additional money. Therefore I am pleased that he has not done that today.

On the other hand, he has raised some points that the Chair ought to consider. They are ones, considering the equities of the situation, that ought to be reviewed very carefully. I invite the Chair to take into consideration everything that the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona said and render a decision to the House that will be fair and equitable as between all the members, based on his submission.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, a request similar to this one was made at the beginning of the session by the member for Sherbrooke, on behalf of himself and his colleague, therefore on behalf of the entire caucus of the former Conservative Party. At the time, the Speaker refused to recognize the Conservative Party.

Therefore, this subject has been debated. At the time, I pointed out that the arguments raised by the Conservatives, and again today by the NDP, were raised three years ago by the Bloc Québécois. The Speaker of the day had ruled that these arguments were not valid enough to formally recognize the Bloc. We have since come to agree with the Speaker's ruling. I have considered all the arguments put forward by my colleague and I believe that the rule of 12 continues to apply, except under certain circumstances.

Most of these circumstances arise when there is a minority government in the House. Such was the case in 1979, 1963 and 1957 when the parties agreed to recognize a party without 12 members. For reasons that are fairly obvious, the Clark government may have needed the support of the Ralliement créditiste. Moreover, we saw what happened when they later withdrew their support. Therefore, in some specific instances, primarily when there is a minority government, official status will be granted to a party that does not have the required number of sitting members.

Points of Order

It has also been argued that the same rules should not apply to parties who did not field candidates during the election, as was the case with the Bloc at the time. One of the examples given by my colleague was the Ralliement des créditistes, a party formed in 1963. Need members be reminded that this party did not exist at the time of the election? Then, the party was known as the Social Credit Party and it was headed by Mr. Thompson. A split developed within the ranks and Mr. Caouette founded the Ralliement des créditistes, a party which had not formally existed at the time of the election, a situation similar to that of the Bloc. Yet, the government of the day recognized the Ralliement des créditistes precisely because it was a minority government. The situation was quite different when the Bloc came into being. However, the Ralliement was no more a party at the time of the election than the Bloc was.

Therefore, the precedent exists for granting official status to a new party, although it was not considered when the Bloc requested such status. However, with respect to my colleague's question concerning the seating arrangement in the House, I will concede that the Bloc members were allowed to sit next to one another, pursuant to an agreement between all independent members. As I recall, we had reached an agreement with the Reform member and the two independents, Mr. Kindy and Mr. Knowlan. If there is agreement among the independents, I see no reason why the NDP members cannot sit next to each other. Provided, of course, there is agreement.

As regards identification, I think the hon. member is right. The Bloc's name appeared in *Hansard* and during the televised debates. I do not know if it is the case now for the NDP, but it was for us. I think this could be done for them. We did not get that recognition at the beginning. We raised the issue in various more or less pleasant ways and, in the end, we succeeded in having the name of our party appear on TV and in *Hansard*. I think we could apply that decision to grant the same privilege, with respect to the number of questions per week.

(1535)

I am rather surprised to hear that Lucien Bouchard, the leader of the Bloc, was allowed to ask many questions. In fact, the figures show that, on average, he asked one and a half question per week. Whether that question had a major impact is a totally different issue which has nothing to do with the number of questions itself but, rather, with their quality. Again, the figures show that, on average, Mr. Bouchard asked 1.5 question per week, which is about what the NDP is allowed. I might add that those questions are always the last ones of the day, at about two minutes before three o'clock. In this regard, also, there is no change, compared to what the Bloc experienced.

These are the comments I wanted to make to help you make a decision.

[English]

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, I will be reasonably brief.

I want to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona for giving notice of his point of order. I would like to make a few comments on it, though first of all I would like to quote from *Hansard* of November 27, 1990, when a similar point of order was being discussed. At that time Ian Waddell, the New Democratic Party member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, argued in the House with regard to the Bloc Quebecois saying:

It is not a party. It does not have 12 people. Those are the rules. They should stop whining. The House has been very liberal to them and I find it shocking when they get up and whine, bitch and complain.

With regard to participation in question period and in members' statements, the House has been very generous with independent members and the Chair has been very generous, considering that very likely the New Democratic caucus has the poorest attendance record in the House.

I would like to get to some of the arguments that the member made with regard to having official party status. In 1974 the Ralliement Cr ditiste brought 11 members to the House of Commons. Despite their having less than 12 members all privileges which come with party recognition were given to them except for the extra stipend given to the leaders of the parties, other than the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, with at least 12 members.

In October 1979 Prime Minister Clark was in the process of setting up his new government. He put forward the names for composition of the striking committee and moved approval by the House. Initially one issue raised for decision by the House was whether the Ralliement Cr ditiste with six members should be represented on the striking committee. Mr. Clark moved approval of the committee with no Cr ditiste. Mr. Roy of the Cr ditiste put forward an amendment to the motion to include a Cr ditiste.

Mr. MacEachen, House leader for the Liberals, raised the following additional issues for consideration: first, whether the group would enjoy the status, particularly the leader of that group, equivalent in standing to that of the Leader of the Opposition, who was Mr. Trudeau, and the leader of the New Democratic Party; second, whether they would have full status of other parties in respect of the question period; and, third, whether they would have full status of other parties in respect of statements on motions in response to ministerial statements.

Additionally, Mr. Knowles, the House leader for the New Democratic Party, who is now a member at the table, reiterated some of the above arguments and added a fourth issue for consideration. He stated:

While it has come to be thought that 12 members were required for party status, we overstepped it when the party had only 11 members last time.

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He was referring to 1974. He further stated:

Can a party that has used a name in election come here and claim all of the advantages that go with party status regardless of how small it is?

That is from *Debates*, October 9, 1979, page 13.

Mr. Knowles, Mr. MacEachen and others argued to the Speaker against party status for a party with less than 12 members in the House. The outcome of this deliberation and the decision of the House rendered by recorded division was nay. The Speaker twice refused to overturn the decision of the House on appeal from the Creditiste even when attention was called to the popular vote which the Ralliement Cr ditiste received. That is in House of Commons *Debates*, October 10, 1979.

Other issues are that the stipend which is given to leaders of parties with at least 12 members, excluding the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, is covered by the Parliament of Canada Act which states:

—to each member of the House of Commons, other than the Prime Minister or the member occupying the position of Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, who is a leader of a party that has a recognized membership of 12 or more persons in the House—

This can only be changed by a legislative amendment, not by a ruling of the Speaker.

(1540)

A final issue connected with recognition of parties in the House has to do with research funding. The requirement that parties must have at least 12 members can be waived by the Board of Internal Economy which includes three opposition members.

My conclusion is that if the House were to grant recognition of the New Democrats or the Progressive Conservatives as parties in the House they should first address the precedents against recognizing parties with fewer than 12 members, including the 1979 precedent.

It should be noted that in addition to Messrs. Clark, MacEachen and Knowles, that Messrs. Chr tien, Axworthy, Gray, Kilgour, MacLaren, Masse and others voted nay to the amendment. Further, it should be noted that the Speaker at that time refused to overturn the decision on appeal since the House had raised these issues and put them to a vote.

Therefore a decision of any of the issues given should be given careful consideration by the Speaker of the 35th Parliament. The independent members in the House should not be given recognition beyond what should be accorded by any individual member unless the House agrees to give such recognition.

In brief summation, the recourse of the members of the New Democratic Party is to appeal to the House for changes in the legislation whereby they would be recognized. We believe it should not be an appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, to make a ruling on this issue.

The Speaker: The case has been well put today and well documented. The Chair thanks all hon. members who have taken the time to advise the Chair. I have heard from all parties in the House, including interventions made by the independents.

I will undertake to review the entire transcript of today, look at all of the precedents mentioned and come back to the House with some recommendations on the matter.

The Chair feels this is not a new issue to Parliament. I feel that the arguments have been very well made. I believe that I have received enough information at this point on which to at least base the beginnings of my own studies to come back to this House with a decision.

Mr. Hermanson: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, this point of order addresses another matter entirely.

Citation 317 of Beauchesne's sixth edition states:

(1) Points of order are questions raised with the view of calling attention to any departure from the Standing Orders or the customary modes of proceeding in debate or in the conduct of legislative business—

I would like to address my comments to the conduct of legislative business.

In a statement last Thursday, the government House leader indicated that the business for today would be Bill C-18, the Electoral Boundaries Redistribution Act. Instead we were advised at the House leader's meeting yesterday that we would be debating Bill C-34, an act respect Yukon self-government.

Although Bill C-34 was put on notice on May 25, it was not introduced until yesterday.

There is a concern here. How can the government expect the House to properly conduct legislative business when it does not even give members 24 hours to review the legislation before it is debated in the House?

Every Canadian will recognize that aboriginal self-government is an important national issue and deserves proper attention. The Reform Party has shown a willingness to co-operate with the government. We would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to use all powers and influence at your disposal to move the government toward conduct of legislated business that permits the members of the House to effectively fulfil their mandate as elected representatives.

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Standing Order 1 states:

In all cases not provided for hereinafter, or by other Order of the House, procedural questions shall be decided by the Speaker or Chairman, whose decisions shall be based on the usage, forms, customs and precedents of the House of Commons of Canada and on parliamentary tradition in Canada and other jurisdictions—

We would ask that you consider this standing order when making your ruling.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster has raised a point which I submit is not a point of order.

(1545)

The government is entitled to call whatever business it wishes on any given day with or without notice other than notice that has to be given at six o'clock to prepare the documents. It can be changed at the last minute, right up until the time it is called. That has been the invariable practice in this House.

I recognize that the hon. member is new to this place. Had he been in the last House, he would know that it was quite common for the government to call business without proper notice, with very limited notice and frequently to change the business overnight, having announced one day what it would be to change it for the next day. We were in a constant state of flux trying to know what kind of business we conducted.

The problem is that the hon. member and the members of the opposition have been spoiled in this House because the government has been so careful in giving extensive notice in almost every case of the business it is calling.

Unfortunately today the government was not in a position to proceed with Bill C-18. It is proceeding instead with Bill C-34. I admit that it was only introduced yesterday, but it is not a complex matter. It is thick but it is not complex. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development will soon give a speech that will elucidate every nook and cranny of the bill, and I invite the hon. member to remain for that speech.

There is no point of order here.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I would ask all hon. members to refer to Chapter VI of the standing orders at page 23:

40.(1) All items standing on the Orders of the Day, except Government Orders, shall be taken up according to the precedence assigned to each on the Order Paper.

Then it says:

(2) Government Orders shall be called and considered in such sequence as the government determines.

Therefore I would rule that there is no point of order in this case.

I would like to make a ruling.

BILL C-216—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: During Private Members' Business on Wednesday, May 11, 1994, the hon. member for Restigouche—Chaleur raised a point of order concerning Standing Order 73 and Bill C-216, standing under his name on the Order Paper. At that time I stated that the terms of the standing order are unambiguous. It reads in part:

Immediately after the reading of the Order of the Day for the second reading of any public bill, a Minister of the Crown may propose a motion that the said bill be forthwith referred to a standing, special or legislative committee.

[Translation]

Clearly, the prerogatives of Standing Order 73 are for ministers of the Crown. For this reason, backbenchers cannot exercise them. Therefore the Chair cannot accept the hon. member's argument.

The hon. member raised a very interesting point by drawing a parallel between Standing Orders 68 and 73, definitely suggesting that an amendment to Standing Order 73 could give backbenchers the same prerogatives as the minister.

The Chair has taken this matter under advisement and is now ready to make a ruling.

[English]

Let me say at the outset that having looked at the text of Standing Order 73 and examined its context, the Chair has no doubt that the ministerial prerogative it grants applies only to government public bills. While I must concede that the phrase "any public bill" might lead to ambiguity, the Chair could not accept as appropriate the application of Standing Order 73 by a minister with reference to a private members' bill. In my view such an approach would have the practical effect of transforming a private members' initiative into an item of government business and so violate the spirit that underlies our standing orders and our practice, namely, the absolute separation of government business and private members' business.

However the suggestion of redrafting Standing Order 73 to grant to the sponsor of a private member's bill the same prerogatives with regard to that bill that a minister of the crown enjoys with regard to a government bill seems to merit further consideration. It would, as I see it, offer a means for making an item votable that would create an alternative to the existing procedure, an alternative which many members might welcome. I would therefore suggest with respect that, under the terms of this ongoing mandate to study House operations and procedure and notably, its existing responsibilities vis-à-vis Private Members' Business, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs take this matter under consideration.

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(1550)

[Translation]

I wish to thank the hon. member for Restigouche—Chaleur for raising the subject and thus reminding the House of the obligation which all members have to ensure that their rights are maintained, while taking an innovative attitude to the evolution of these rights.

[English]

Mr. Solomon: Mr. Speaker, I am not certain whether this is a point of order or not but I stand as a duly elected member of the House of Commons to ask for your guidance with respect to the previous point of order on which I had wished to speak.

I understand you ruled that there would be no more speakers on it. However it is my sense, being a duly elected member of the House of Commons from the constituency of Regina—Lumsden, on a matter of a point of order that is important to my constituents and to me and to others in Canada, that I should be allowed to express the insights I have on the issue.

The Speaker: Order. Is the hon. member referring to the point of order presented by the member for Winnipeg Transcona?

Mr. Solomon: Yes.

The Speaker: That being the case, the Chair had heard very lengthy arguments about that particular point of order. The Chair made the ruling on the basis that the Chair felt it had heard enough argument to base at least an indication that the Chair would look into this matter further.

That is why I made that ruling. With all respect to the hon. member I am sure that he will recognize that at one point there is enough debate on a particular point of order for the Chair to make that kind of a declaration. I would ask that the hon. member to respect this decision.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*[English]***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 24 petitions.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present the 24th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding changes to the standing orders concerning publications of the Journals Branch of the House of Commons.

[Translation]

At the same time, I have the honour to present the 25th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, concerning the selection of Private Members' Business. Pursuant to Standing Order 92(2) the report is deemed adopted.

[English]

INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Zed (Fundy—Royal): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Bill C-12, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts with amendments.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) Madam Speaker, I move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), concerning a review of the Citizenship Act, the House authorize the required personnel of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to travel from place to place for the purpose of preparing and holding video-teleconference sittings during the weeks of May 31 and June 6, 1994.

I think You Honour will find unanimous consent for the motion.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

(1555)

PETITIONS

CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, these petitioners want to draw our attention to chronic fatigue syndrome which is not only a chronic but a disabling illness with no particular effective cure or treatment.

They point out that it is a complex illness particularly debilitating and often prevents employment and normal day activities. They request from the government and the health authorities recognition of its severity, extended public health response, more research, a co-operative approach among the

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major players to finding appropriate treatments, more education to increase awareness of the seriousness of this illness, and for each province one CFSME assessment diagnostic study and treatment centre so that this particular illness can be dealt with appropriately.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I would like to present three petitions on behalf of my constituents, the first one asking that the human rights code not be amended to include sexual orientation; the second asking that Parliament ensure the enforcement of the present Criminal Code of Canada prohibiting assisted suicides; and the third asking Parliament to act to extend protection to the unborn child.

KILLER CARDS

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I am tabling today a petition which calls upon the government to ban the importation, distribution, manufacture and sale of killer cards in Canada.

ETHANOL

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions, both from constituents in my riding.

In the first one petitioners are asking the government to maintain the present exemption on the excise portion of ethanol for a decade, 10 years, to allow this industry to establish itself.

We think the ethanol industry certainly in eastern Ontario would make a great contribution to the farm industry.

KILLER CARDS

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): Madam Speaker, my second petition is from citizens in my riding from places like Brockville, Maitland, Spencerville and Prescott petitioning against the importation and sale of killer cards. They applaud in this petition the action already taken by the Minister of National Revenue in announcing that his officials would seize shipments at the border.

One paragraph describes it quite well. It says: “ We abhor crimes of violence against persons and we believe that killer trading cards offer nothing positive for children or adults to admire or emulate but rather contribute to violence”.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I am pleased to present this petition on behalf of my constituents in Calgary Northeast who wish to draw the following to the attention of members in this House.

Whereas the majority of Canadians are law-abiding citizens who respect the law, whereas the majority of Canadians respect the sanctity of human life, and whereas the majority of Cana-

dians believe that physicians in Canada should be working to save lives and not to end them, therefore the petitioners state first, that Parliament ensure that the present provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada prohibiting assisted suicide be enforced vigorously; and, second, that parliament make no changes in the law which would sanction or allow the aiding and abetting of suicide or active or passive euthanasia.

I strongly support not only the content of the petition but also the efforts of those who hold such significant values and desire to see these values upheld.

(1600)

SUNSHINE VILLAGE

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose): Madam Speaker, under Standing Order 36 I am asked to table yet another petition along with four or five others that have already been tabled from various individuals throughout the country who enjoy the great facilities that we have in Banff National Park in my riding.

The petition reads that the stop work order at Sunshine Village in order to initiate yet another environmental study is an unnecessary cost to taxpayers. Numerous studies and public forums have already been held and expansion was approved by both Liberal and Conservative governments during the past 16 years. Therefore the petitioners call upon Parliament to allow the expansion at Sunshine Village as previously agreed to without further cost to taxpayers for repetitive environmental studies.

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre): Madam Speaker, it is with great honour that I rise today to present this petition asking the government to reform the Young Offenders Act.

This petition which calls for tougher laws for today's youth who commit violent crimes was started in my riding a couple of months ago by Jennifer Schuller and Tammy Carvalho, two grade 10 students at Mount Boucherie senior secondary school in Kelowna, B.C.

Jennifer and Tammy had become so fed up with the way the justice system dealt with their own age group that they took it upon themselves to start a petition to ask their elected representatives to fix the problem.

As their MP I am more than proud to convey their feelings to this House and to the Minister of Justice. Jennifer and Tammy feel as I do, that by making the Young Offenders Act tougher on youths who commit violent crime it will instil a feeling of greater responsibility for one's own actions in our young people.

Jennifer, Tammy and I believe that reforming the act is only part of the solution. We as communities, we in our homes and in our families and in our schools must work together to create an environment in which our young people do not feel the need to act out in a violent manner. We have the responsibility to teach our young people that they have to be prepared to accept the

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consequences of their actions. We cannot expect government to solve this problem alone.

Over 4,600 people from my constituency felt that Tammy and Jennifer—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The hon. member for Winnipeg St. James.

Mr. Harvard: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe there is a certain protocol and procedure followed in presenting petitions. I would submit that this hon. member is not doing that.

What we have heard for two minutes is a pure, unadulterated political speech and I would ask him to follow the rules of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I assume that the hon. member has terminated his intervention. Would the hon. member please present the petition without further comments.

Mr. Schmidt: Over 4,600 people from my constituency felt that what Tammy and Jennifer were doing deserved their support and I am happy to say today that I have helped Jennifer and Tammy show to the country, through the House, their intent and feeling.

RIGHTS OF GRANDPARENTS

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Madam Speaker, I also rise under Standing Order 36 to present a petition to the House from a number of citizens in the riding of Haldimand—Norfolk, in fact a number of grandparents in the riding of Haldimand—Norfolk, who would call upon the government to do something with the laws regarding grandparent access to grandchildren when there is difficulty between the grandparents and their own children.

They say that in no case may a father or mother without serious cause place obstacles between the child and the grandparents. I think that is something that all members of the House would probably support.

* * *

STARRED QUESTIONS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Starred Question No. 16.

Due to the length of the answer I ask that the answer be printed in *Hansard* as though read.

[Text]

Question No. 16—Mrs. Guay:

For the periods from December 1, 1992 to December 1, 1993, and from December 2, 1993, to the present, (a) what is the distribution by province, expressed as a percentage, of all contracts awarded by the Department of Government Services (formerly the Department of Supply and Services) (b) what is the total number of these contracts, the amount of each contract and their distribution by province (c) to whom were the contracts awarded and what was the province of residence of the contractors?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): This document provides a general overview of the contracting carried out by the former Supply and Services Canada (SSC) over a five-year period ending February 28, 1994. It can only be used authoritatively to show the number of contracts awarded, negotiated and signed in any given fiscal year.

The statistics provided cannot properly be used to identify the effects of federal contracting in generating economic activity within Canada for the following reasons:

The statistics in this report do not cover all goods and services purchased by the Government of Canada. SSC procures an estimated 55 per cent of the total goods and services bought by the federal government.

The threshold of purchasing authority for individual departments was increased to \$2,500 during FY 1991–92. The report for fiscal year 1991–92 and 1992–93 indicates less contracting activity than previous years as contracting information is retained by each department.

SSC contracting documents list the total value of any given contract. Large multi-year contracts will appear within the statistics for the fiscal year when the contract was signed.

SSC statistics reflect the organizational structures for payment used by Canadian suppliers. This is particularly true in those categories of goods and services which are regular, ongoing requirements for government. For example, for the purpose of billing, all federal purchases of ESSO products are processed through an address in Nepean, Ontario. Within SSC's data, all ESSO sales, regardless of where they occur in Canada, will be registered as having occurred in Nepean, Ontario, because that is ESSO's point of mailing. The reality is that fuel is neither refined in Nepean, nor does the oil originate from Ontario, nor are all ESSO products purchased in Ontario.

Because SSC's statistical base is purely designed to reflect levels of contracting activity—the signing and recording of contract documents—extreme caution should be used in attempting to ascribe precision or authority to this data for any other purpose.

Government Services Canada
estimated value of contractual commitments – excluding offshore
December 2, 1993 to February 28, 1994

Mailing address**

Mailing address**	No. of documents	value of documents \$000s
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Atlantic Provinces

Routine Proceedings

			Mailing address**	No. of documents	value of documents \$000s
Newfoundland	769	15,544			
Prince Edward Island	198	66,802			
Nova Scotia	2,447	70,520	Atlantic Provinces		
New Brunswick	986	21,863	Newfoundland	3,685	170,454
			Prince Edward Island	688	48,891
Quebec	5,154	368,698	Nova Scotia	12,367	400,392
			New Brunswick	4,106	140,917
Ontario	11,015	868,679	Quebec	24,022	1,642,655
Prairie Provinces			Ontario	50,322	4,177,072
Manitoba	997	46,843			
Saskatchewan	375	17,088	Prairie Provinces		
Alberta	1,913	17,465	Manitoba	4,830	317,853
British Columbia	1,881	67,477	Saskatchewan	2,179	98,296
Yukon	78	2,244	Alberta	9,893	425,583
Northwest Territories	62	1,329	British Columbia	9,580	364,603
Total Canada only	23,873	1,864,847	Yukon	410	7,936
			Northwest Territories	381	41,242
			Total Canada only	122,483	7,835,894

**The reference to mailing address reflects the location identified by the supplier for correspondence, billing or vendor supply point. Accordingly, the statistics provided here do not necessarily reflect the origin of the goods and services purchased.

Government Services Canada
estimated value of contractual commitments – excluding offshore
December 1, 1992 to December 1, 1993

Mailing address**

**The reference to mailing address reflects the location identified by the supplier for correspondence, billing or vendor supply point. Accordingly, the statistics provided here do not necessarily reflect the origin of the goods and services purchased.

Government services Canada
contracting by province*
for five years

Province	FY 1991-92		FY 1991-92		FY 1990-91		FY 1989-90		FY 1988-89	
	N ^o . of Document	Value in \$000s	N ^o . of Document	Value in \$000s	N ^o . of Document	Value in \$000s	N ^o . of Document	Value in \$000s	N ^o . of Document	Value in \$000s
Newfoundland	4,149	136,710	4,355	142,290	5,958	161,668	8,014	157,925	7,300	116,658
Prince-Edward-Island	608	11,397	945	14,723	1,452	18,004	1,798	23,940	1,833	19,026
Nova Scotia	15,261	395,961	17,021	493,418	21,340	429,095	28,178	366,429	26,785	439,681
New Brunswick	4,622	150,01	5,202	227,417	6,685	218,816	8,534	203,293	8,504	228,258
Quebec	26,687	2,061,845	28,316	1,425,769	37,843	1,522,862	45,792	1,488,218	47,120	1,305,560
Ontario	58,195	4,122,058	70,806	4,772,670	91,090	3,814,450	112,668	3,519,410	117,081	3,339,883

	<i>Government Orders</i>									
Manitoba	5,030	249,468	5,671	401,956	7,701	415,074	9,826	353,350	9,745	259,995
Saskatchewan	2 352	85,424	2,391	78,983	3,822	89,888	4,735	84,944	4,412	68,522
Alberta	10,832	704,116	11,050	358,878	14,363	348,555	17,148	705,895	18,128	335,919
British Columbia	10,985	345,030	12,342	606,699	17,215	388,778	22,450	364,893	22,054	395,696
Yukon & Northwest Territories	785	244,673	835	35,785	1,296	81,637	1,430	28,177	1,522	25,065
Across Canada	137	21,641	98	11,433	119	86,407	353	80,898	225	67,172
Total Canada	139,643	8,528,337	159,031	8,570,021	208,984	7,577,234	260,926	7,377,372	264,709	6,601,435

*Provincial distribution of GSC contracting presented here is based on vendor supply point (VSP), which reflects the last point from which the product was shipped, services performed or goods produced.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(1605)

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill S-3, an act to authorize General Security Insurance Company of Canada to be continued as a corporation under the laws of the province of Quebec, to which the concurrence of this House is desired.

Pursuant to Standing Order 135(2), the bill is deemed to have been read the first time and ordered for second reading at the next sitting of the House.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

YUKON FIRST NATIONS SELF-GOVERNMENT ACT

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) moved that Bill C-34, an act respecting self-government for First Nations in the Yukon Territory, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I rise to speak in support of Bill C-34, the Yukon First Nations self-government act, and to urge the speedy passage of this important and historic piece of legislation.

This act, together with the Yukon land claim settlement act which is also before the House, will usher in a whole new era of stability and opportunity for the Yukon Territory. It will provide Yukon First Nations with the power to govern their own affairs to a degree not heretofore possible. It will strengthen relations between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Yukoners and it will create an atmosphere of certainty which will encourage investment, development and jobs in the territory.

For these reasons this legislation has the strong support of not only the Yukon First Nations but of all sectors of Yukon society. The council of Yukon Indians was one of the very first aboriginal groups to request claims negotiations following the decision of the then Liberal government to settle land claims in areas where no previous treaties or agreements were in force. That was more than 20 years ago and the road to claims settlement and self-government has been a long and sometimes arduous one.

In 1986 the decision was taken to incorporate self-government into the negotiating process. Yukon is the first to come forward in Canada with both claims and self-government agreements. This has made the negotiations more complex, but in the long run I believe it will prove beneficial to settle both the land claim and self-government issues as a package so that we can begin to move ahead quickly on all points.

With this legislation we are on the verge of bringing to reality the hopes and dreams that had been nurtured by Yukon First Nations for more than two decades. In scope and complexity this is the most ambitious self-government arrangement negotiated to date. The legislation is unique in a number of respects. It is the only self-government legislation to apply to First Nations representing seven different aboriginal language groups in 14 communities. It is the only one that covers all the First Nations within a single province or territory.

Government Orders

Under the terms of an umbrella final agreement signed last year by the federal and territorial governments and the council for Yukon Indians the government is committed to negotiate individual self-government agreements with each of the 14 individual First Nations. In fact, four of these First Nations signed self-government agreements at that time. These were Champagne and the Aishihik First Nation, the First Nation of Na-cho-ny'a'k-dun, the Teslin Tlingit Council and the Vuntut Gwich'in First Nation.

(1610)

Self-government for these First Nations which cover about 36 per cent of the total Yukon aboriginal population will take effect immediately with the passage of this legislation.

The government is currently engaged in active negotiations with an additional five First Nations. I am optimistic that several of these will be completed by the end of this year. I hope that the government will also commence self-government negotiations with at least some of the last five First Nations later this year.

Overall, we expect to have completed self-government agreements with all 14 First Nations within five years.

Before reviewing some of the main features of this legislation, I would like to make clear to the House exactly what we mean by self-government in the context of this bill.

These agreements were negotiated under the previous government's community based self-government policy. They make no reference to the inherent right of self-government and they will not receive constitutional protection as treaty rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act upon passage of this bill.

I have indicated to the council for Yukon Indians, however, that I will consider this matter very seriously and once I and my colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, have finished our consultation on the implementation of the inherent right we will be reporting to cabinet and back to the council of Yukon Indians.

The principles embodied in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Constitution of Canada as a whole will continue to apply. First Nation constitutions will also provide protections for the rights and freedoms of First Nation citizens.

Although the council for Yukon Indians has long held that Yukon First Nations have an inherent right of self-government and have lobbied long and hard to see it recognized, it was their strongly expressed wish that we proceed quickly with this

legislation rather than delay the legislation pending the outcome of the inherent right of self-government.

I believe this was a wise decision on their part. By proceeding now on the basis of the current policy they will begin to reap the benefits of self-government at the earliest possible date.

At the same time, the agreement provides that the Yukon First Nations will in no way be precluded from benefiting from any rights or entitlements that might arise from the discussions I am carrying out at present with the aboriginal, provincial and territorial leaders on the implementation of the inherent right of self-government.

I would also like to comment at this time on the very constructive role played by the territorial government in these negotiations. They were tripartite negotiations throughout and indeed much of the work of implementing self-government will involve interface, co-operation and compromise between the First Nations and the Yukon government.

The territorial government has been very supportive throughout this process and the Yukon legislature has already passed self-government legislation which will come into effect as soon as this act is proclaimed.

Turning to the main points of the bill, one of the most important features is that it establishes First Nations as a legal entity with the power to enter contracts, to acquire land and to form corporations. This is a very important step in empowering the First Nations to manage their affairs and to plan and carry out their economic and social development.

The Indian Act will not apply to the First Nations or their citizens or settlement land with five exceptions. First, the Indian Act will apply for the purpose of determining which Yukon First Nation citizens are Indians within the meaning of the Indian Act.

Second, the Indian Act will continue to apply to reserves outside Yukon held for the use and benefit of a Yukon First Nation predecessor band. There are four such reserves held for two Yukon First Nations.

Third, the application of the Indian Act to reserves in Yukon is subject to negotiation.

Fourth, the minister's authority under the Indian Act to administer individual Indian money, which the minister currently holds, will continue.

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Fifth, section 87 of the Indian Act which provides for a tax exemption for Indians will cease to apply to all Yukon First Nations and Yukon Indian people three years after the legislation comes into force. The First Nations will have the legislative power to enact laws. Yukon self-government legislation grants law making power in four main areas. These include laws relating to internal management and the administration of certain rights and benefits received under the land claims agreement.

(1615)

They also include laws of a local or private nature which apply on settlement lands, laws relating primarily to the provision of programs and services to First Nation citizens, and laws relating to the First Nation power to tax interest and settlement land and other methods of direct taxation of First Nation citizens on settlement land.

By agreement these taxation powers will not be exercised for at least three years unless the First Nation and government agree otherwise. The First Nation power to tax does not limit the federal government power to tax. What this means is that the First Nation as a government will negotiate with the governments of Canada and Yukon to ensure co-ordination of First Nation tax laws within the existing system.

In the long run this taxation power will enable First Nation governments to use taxation of its citizens and of use of their settlement lands as a revenue source for providing local programs and services which the First Nation governments deem necessary for its citizens.

While federal law of general application will continue to remain paramount unless inconsistent with the bill, the land claims bill, and the related agreements the law making powers granted to the First Nations will further strengthen control over their own affairs.

Each First Nation will have a constitution. These constitutions will provide for a number of things, including recognition and protection of the rights and freedoms of First Nation citizens.

The constitutions will also spell out how the validity of First Nation laws may be challenged, how financial accountability to the people will be assured, and how First Nation governing bodies will be established. These constitutions will provide the basic guarantees that the First Nations will be governed democratically and responsibly.

The First Nations shall also have law making powers with respect to the administration of justice. However, the legislation suspends this power until the year 2000 unless an agreement is reached between the Yukon and federal governments and First Nations on how the First Nation may exercise its power to make laws in relationship to the administration of justice.

All parties are legally obliged to enter negotiations toward this goal. In the meantime, First Nations will not exercise this power. I am hopeful an agreement can be reached long before the year 2000.

In the interim First Nations will have a limited power to establish penalties for violation of First Nation laws. Offences under the Yukon First Nation law will be prosecuted in Yukon courts and will be treated as an offence under the Territorial Summary Convictions Act.

The administration of justice is an area that has in the past caused much friction between aboriginal Canadians and society at large. Hopefully Yukon self-government agreements will lead to a regime in which the maximum responsibility possible will be handled by each First Nation within the framework of Canada's constitution.

The self-government agreements call for the transfer of many programs and services now being provided by the federal or territorial governments directly to the First Nations. First Nations will advise the government in each year of their priorities and plans for such transfers.

Government policy will neither be to rush this process nor to retard it but to respond promptly to the wishes of First Nations. The pace must be set by the First Nations in accordance with their perception of their capabilities, their priorities, and their aspirations.

In this regard I foresee a substantial downsizing of my department in Yukon over the next several years as all 14 First Nations implement self-government. The downsizing will be in the order of 75 per cent of the staff with the remaining 25 per cent kept in place to fulfil federal responsibilities and obligations set out in the self-government agreements.

(1620)

Finally, the agreement and the legislation propose a new and much improved set of financial arrangements than those we have had in the past with First Nations. These will be modelled on the current and successful five-year financial transfer agreements that now exist between the federal and territorial governments.

The financial transfer agreements will be the primary funding instrument between Canada and the Yukon First Nations and will be the mechanism for flowing current levels of band funding toward the cost of operating self-government, funding for current government programs that are taken over by the First Nations and funding related to the land claim implementation.

The new financial regime will allow First Nations to engage in longer range planning with a greater degree of certainty and to establish their own priorities against a certain fiscal stability.

Since taking on this portfolio last year I have met with many Yukoners and received many more letters from all sectors of Yukon society; aboriginal leaders, business leaders, religious leaders and politicians from all parties. All are urging the speedy introduction and passage of this bill, as well as Bill C-33. I have been particularly impressed by the emerging

Government Orders

consensus and the depth of desire not only for passage but speedy passage of both bills.

They recognize the importance of resolving the question of land claims and self-government to the future development of the territory.

They recognize the potential benefit of those agreements to the future well-being of the Yukon First Nation who make up one quarter of the territory's people.

They recognize that the certainty embodied in these pieces of legislation can only encourage more investment and development in Yukon to the benefit of all its citizens.

Yukon needs economic growth if it is to provide hope and meaningful employment for its young and growing population. More than half of Yukon's aboriginal population is under 24 years of age.

In recent years there has been a marked improvement in the education and training opportunities available to First Nations. All of this means little unless there are jobs to be had in a growing economy. Yukon needs investment and it needs resource development, industrial diversification, strengthened infrastructure and service industry enhancement.

I am convinced that this self-government agreement, together with the land claim settlement, will give a very real stimulus to the investment and growth that Yukon needs and for the creation of jobs.

The government has made it clear that improving the quality of life of Canada's aboriginal people is a major concern and priority. The document *Creating Opportunity* expressed it this way:

The priority of a Liberal government will be to assist aboriginal communities in their efforts to address the obstacles to their development and help them marshal the human and physical resources necessary to build and sustain vibrant communities.

This legislation will provide new hope and opportunity for Yukon's First Nations and will go to the very heart of that commitment. The bill is clearly deserving of our support.

On a more personal note and in closing, it is unfortunate that I cannot mention that above us in this assembly are people who have been working most of their adult lives toward this day. There are times in this portfolio, not often, that you walk away with a great sense of satisfaction that hope has been provided. These people from the CYI who have been here all week and out in front of the House of Commons yesterday were saying to each other: "We have been waiting 20 years". I cannot imagine working 20 years on one piece of legislation but they have and they have worked hard.

One stretch I was at went on for five solid days. That is the kind of commitment we saw in the last few months of drafting the agreements. With Canadians like these there is a lot of hope for our country, that they have that commitment to their own people and to Canada. They are to be commended.

I would be remiss if I did not mention in closing the help of the hon. member for Yukon. I received some excellent briefings from that member. When all the paper was piling up and I was not sure exactly what was happening underground, I would speak to her and she would tell me the way it was. I really appreciated that.

(1625)

I urge all members to give the legislation speedy consideration and passage so our fellow Canadians in Yukon can begin to enjoy the new life that they have hoped for and worked so hard to obtain for two decades. This day is here and they are to be commended.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak today on Bill C-34. In response to the Minister of Indian Affairs, who mentioned that he finds some days very satisfying, I will confide that I found the last 24 hours extremely dissatisfying and very arduous. First reading took place yesterday morning at 10 o'clock, so you can imagine my surprise when, in the afternoon, a pile of documents, one foot high, appeared on my desk for me to read before today's debate on these two bills. We are dissatisfied because we worked well into the night and are exhausted.

Fortunately, we were basically already in favour of self-government. If we took the trouble to review these documents as thoroughly and as humanly possible under the circumstances, it is because we had in mind these people in the Yukon who have been waiting for so long to see this matter of great concern to them finally settled.

Consequently, we did our utmost. We may have missed a few things, but for our part, we are in favour of Bill C-34.

I would like to take this opportunity to salute all those who dropped by my office during the week. On Monday night, we received a delegation from Yukon. I immediately cleared up an unfortunate misunderstanding, and I would like to do the same here now.

The Bloc Québécois never intended to delay the presentation of this bill. As you know, there has been a problem with the translation of the maps, but my party decided that it would not oppose the first reading. We mentioned that to these people from Yukon, because rumours had been going around in the north and in Yukon to the effect that we would oppose this bill at first

reading, on the basis of the Official Languages Act, which was not true, of course, and that is why I take this opportunity today to set matters straight.

As I said before, the Bloc Québécois already has a position on self-government. We support self-government. To define the concept of self-government, we have the choice of several dictionaries. For my part, I referred to the *Petit Larousse*.

Self-government is defined as “government of a group by the action of its own members, independently from a central power”. As for government, it is defined as “the right, function or power of governing, of running a country”.

An agreement on self-government means that the central power, the Crown in this case, agrees to relinquish a certain number of areas of responsibility to this group, to effectively enable it to assume responsibility for itself and decide its own future. That is no different by the way, from the traditional claims of Quebec which in fact wants a little more than self-government, namely complete sovereignty.

I have to mention in passing the similarity between the two situations. As I said earlier, the Bloc Québécois has always been in favour of self-government for native peoples and it demonstrates its support today by supporting Bill C-34.

The agreement was negotiated under the existing policy concerning self-government. This means that government commitments with respect to self-government for the nations concerned are not governed by the provisions of clause 35. They are not considered as part of a modern treaty. There is no protection under the Constitution, contrary to what we will see later in the case of Bill C-33. This must be made very clear from the start. Protection under the Constitution cannot be guaranteed today by tabling these agreements.

(1630)

About self-government, it should be pointed out that more than one definition must be examined more closely. Finally, self-government is exercised to some extent at the discretion of both sides. Advocating self-government is one thing, but this does not mean that there is a standard pattern that fits any situation for all bands and all first nations.

Based on certain claims, depending upon the willingness of the various nations, some areas of responsibility can be transferred quickly and others not so quickly, while others yet would not be transferred not at all. It is rather difficult, when discussing self-government for first nations, to say: “Here is a complete, comprehensive and definitive profile of self-government”. It will take shape as these kinds of agreements develop and it can vary from band to another.

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So far, four first nations in the Yukon Territory have entered into agreements on both lands claims—these are covered by Bill C-33—and self-government.

These are the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun, the Teslin Tlingit Council and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

That still leaves about 10 nations. The minister said that, during the year, we may indeed conclude and ratify agreements with five other nations. I think the fact that we may complete these negotiations within five years is a good sign and that it is the first step these nations must take to get rid of the Indian Act trusteeship although in fact—as I will explain later—they can opt for continued coverage under this act. I will explain some of its provisions a little later.

However, a number of preconditions are attached to self-government. As I pointed out a few minutes ago, the First Nations increasingly want to face themselves from the Indian Act trusteeship but they are a little afraid of what will replace it. I think a bill such as the one before us today shows that the Indian Act could be replaced with agreements enabling members of the First Nations to take control of their own destiny.

As a precondition, the First Nations must be willing to get rid of this trusteeship and to take control of their own future. The House of Commons, which has jurisdiction over this, must also recognize that this trusteeship must end and gradually give the First Nations the opportunity to take control of their own destiny. The will must also come from the House of Commons.

Last but not least among the preconditions—also the most important in my opinion—is mutual respect. This mutual respect is sometimes difficult to achieve. The agreements may not have been as difficult to negotiate, but this respect must still be maintained and cultivated on a day-to-day basis. We must mention it whenever such bills are tabled because the public often feels uncomfortable toward Natives and vice versa. I think that if we want to spread the beneficial effects of these agreements, we must achieve mutual respect. That is not always easy.

As we know, our vision of democracy as we experience it here today is not necessarily that favoured by the First Nations. They are not too familiar with the concept of delegated voting. Does that mean that their vision of democracy is not as valid as ours? I do not think so. It is just a little different and we must respect it.

We have a common law system and a civil law system based on property rights to land among other things. We are not used to letting our neighbours move their trees 15 or 20 feet onto our lands without saying anything.

(1635)

We must understand that, from the natives' point of view, the land does not belong to them; they belong to the land. So the way they see things is somewhat different and often very different

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from our view. I think that for future agreements like those before us today, this respect will have to be cultivated, and I assure you that I will be there to try to instill this respect.

Turning now to the presentation and the bill, if I look at what is in the agreements, the ability of these nations to make laws in the Yukon is being recognized. The things I noted which are major for me are that once they have to administer their affairs and pay for them—we realize in the bill and we agree—these people should run their own affairs more and more. If money is granted to them in the form of transfers or new royalties, we must also accept that they can enact legislation saying how they want to administer their affairs. That is how it is in the bills, and it is important that this be pointed out.

Also, still in a spirit of respect for native cultures, we realize that some programs will now allow a certain spiritual or religious influence in the way they run their affairs and the way they make their own future; for them, beliefs and cultural practices are extremely important and we will let their main programs be imbued with this culture.

There may also be legislation on native languages. From the representations made to my office this week, I gather that there are six or seven aboriginal languages in the Yukon and the common language in which they communicate most often is English, would you believe it. Later, my conclusion will emphasize the fact that the two cultures complement each other well, and I think that the opportunity now given to them to legislate in their own language in Yukon is a step in the right direction. Here, a parallel can be made with the Quebec government, which has some power to legislate on language issues to protect culture. Consequently, the Bloc Québécois fully supports this approach.

Medical care, health care and social services. This is a very holistic approach, as well as a feature of native culture. They try to prevent disease instead of trying to cure it, and even the treatments they apply are different from ours. Thus, they will be able to follow their cultural and traditional ways as regards medical care, health care and social services.

Training programs and tools. Again, I want to establish a parallel with Quebec. They are lucky to be able to enact legislation on training. Giving that possibility to these people will enable them to train their manpower according to the needs of their economic development, both traditional and modern. Unfortunately, Quebec still does not have that opportunity and, frankly, I envy them in that respect.

Education programs and services are also a major component of what we are prepared to give back to these people. It would be important for them to put in place an education system which would really transcend their traditional values. In that respect, we are pleased with the part of the agreement which allows

native peoples to take charge of their education programs and services.

(1640)

There will also be the possibility of enacting legislation related to local or private interests. There are provisions in the agreement and in the bill which are somewhat similar to what was provided in Bill C-16, the Sahtu legislation. The object was to find a happy balance between modern and traditional values. I think that goal was reached with the conclusion of this agreement.

Among other things, these people are given back the responsibility for protecting natural resources. Traditional activities such as picking, trapping, hunting and fishing, which they have been doing for centuries, are recognized. We are telling them “go ahead, its yours, its your territory”. Because of their closeness to nature and the Earth, these people have eloquently shown that they do not need complex legislation. Through their culture, they have learned to respect nature when they hunt and fish. They are not the type of people who would fish out lakes and then have nothing left. They do not need specific laws on this: it is part of their culture.

Again, I must make another parallel with Quebec. There are provisions regulating signage, including billboards. I envy them. This is somewhat like Quebec’s law 101. I hope that the Supreme Court of Canada will not periodically challenge the fact that they can post notices in a language understood by their people, and that they will not be required to include some English on their signs. Once again, I envy their authority to enact laws of a local or private nature, laws concerning signage, for instance.

They will also be able to issue various permits, which will also be useful in the case of construction projects. I will not enumerate every single case, but it is clear they will have a great deal of latitude in many areas. This is very good for them, and I am delighted. Regarding construction regulations, they seem to have their own approach to labour relations. I repeat, I do not expect a lot of legislation on the subject. These people usually have a great appreciation for fairness, so I do not imagine there will be many labour problems in the construction industry in the Yukon.

They will have jurisdiction over transportation and vehicle use, which makes sense. Regulating and prohibiting alcohol consumption are a major problem, and I think this point was made before. It is a major problem that affects society, but especially societies with tremendous social problems, and one realizes these are often connected with the problems created by alcohol consumption. The fact that they intend to deal with this issue through their own social and health services may be a completely different approach. So there is a connection between health and social services and how they intend to use legislation

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to regulate or prohibit alcohol consumption. This being a crucial problem, I agree they should be given the opportunity to deal with it themselves.

The same applies to public safety. As far as protecting the environment is concerned, I think I gave a good description of the situation. Because of their attachment to land and water, it is important for them to be able to deal with these issues. I think they can teach us a thing or two about protecting the environment and the great respect they have for their Mother the Earth, as they often say. I think it is entirely appropriate to give them back their jurisdiction over the environment.

There will also be legislation to regulate or prohibit firearms. We must realize that, because of modern hunting techniques, the number of firearms in circulation in Yukon, as in many parts of the north, is considerable. It makes perfect sense for them to be able to regulate possession of firearms.

(1645)

Here again, I have every confidence that the possession of firearms will be regulated so that the focus is on possession for the purposes of daily survival, rather than for the purpose of committing crimes. I have no doubt whatsoever that this will be the intent of the regulations.

The bill also provides for laws of general application. I noted in the agreement that a separate agreement could be negotiated to resolve the problem of inconsistencies arising between catch all laws. If I understand the terms of the agreement correctly, further negotiations will take place in the near future once this legislation has been in effect to determine if indeed there are some inconsistencies between these legislative texts. There will have to be some discussion on points of agreement and the necessary changes will have to be made. I felt it was important to take note of this provision in the bill and in the agreement.

In other words, we are not making any final decisions here today. There is nothing to stop us from re-opening the debate at some later date. If we disagree on certain issues, we have to find a way to talk about it and if inconsistencies arise, then we will have a mechanism with which to try and smooth out any irritants.

Regarding the administration of justice, once again, we are prepared to allow them considerable latitude. In the agreement, this issue is even the focus of a separate sub-chapter. We realize that there are many problems involving the justice system and here again, the problem is one of culture. We realize that it is difficult to get the First Nations to understand our notion of justice.

I think that even more respect will have to be shown for First Nations to ensure they have their own justice system, with all this can entail. Again, if problems do arise, I think we will just have to get together and see how we can work things out.

But I think it is becoming increasingly difficult to apply the White justice system in its entirety in the Yukon Territory or in the northern territories. It is inappropriate. I think that more respect must be shown for the value systems of these nations, and their justice system. And this agreement will give them an opportunity to implement them.

Concerning taxation, there are also very interesting provisions in this agreement, from what I have seen. I was pleasantly surprised for the First Nations to notice, for example, the possibility of taxation for localities, as well as the possibility to collect property taxes and to operate a taxation system with legislative powers in taxation matters.

I would say that for once, we are allowing them to free themselves from this guardianship, the dependence created by the Indians Act. And if we can manage to make our transfers match their capacity to break away and develop their economy, I think that will be great. The possibility also exists for transfers to continue, since nothing in here says that these have to stop because we give them taxation powers.

I think that a transition period is necessary and the bill leaves an opening so that transfers will continue, and if these people succeed in developing their economy, of course, then I think that transfers from the crown should be reduced accordingly.

In conclusion, from having looked at the agreement, although I was up until three or four o'clock in the morning—I did not really keep track of the time—I realize that it is a step in the right direction for the people in the Far North and the Yukon. I even ask the ten other First Nations to speed up the discussion. I think that it is really a step in the direction of getting rid of this trusteeship. We are telling them: "The white man's law that applied to you need no longer apply now. You are being given jurisdiction and being allowed to develop your economy. Go ahead. We will even help you to do it. We will respect your traditional values, we accept that you are still a little reluctant to take the route of modern economic development. We will give you a hand with it".

(1650)

All this to say that I am happy for the four Yukon nations which have signed these agreements. I hope to see, in the near future, all 14 Yukon nations reach such agreements.

These people must be congratulated for their tenacity. They must be congratulated for their democratic consultation process. As you know, when negotiations last for 20 years, those who were involved in the process two decades ago have now become what they call elders. These elders use their wisdom to help those who now sit at the negotiating table.

Another feature of the native culture is the fact that those who negotiated are happy for themselves of course, but their main source of contentment is to enable their children and grand-

Government Orders

children to take charge of their own destiny. This must be pointed out and emphasized.

These people have worked very hard and the elders of the time, as well as today's negotiators, can now see the results of their efforts. I think this may be an example to follow for all First Nations in Canada. As I said, these people negotiated with determination, but they also did it in a peaceful way and this is important.

At times, negotiations broke down. As well, there are issues on which no agreement was reached. Negotiating is not a perfect solution. The two sides are never completely satisfied. However, this exercise was conducted peacefully. It led to an agreement on self-government and a bill to confirm it. As well, the elders are happy for future generations. This is typical of the native culture and it is an example which we should follow.

For all these reasons, the Bloc Québécois will certainly support Bill C-34.

[English]

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Madam Speaker, today the House has been asked to debate Bill C-34, a bill regarding self-government for aboriginal peoples in Yukon. The bill apparently affects serious issues such as land, moneys, language, rights and freedoms, perhaps even constitutional matters.

Reform members have been most co-operative in dealing with government legislation proposed in the House. We have had regular consultations with the government and a great rapport has been built up between our caucus and the government with regard to the handling of legislation. We often disagree on the content of the legislation but we are very happy to debate the issues in this House. However, we would like to debate them from a position of knowledge.

We have some real concerns about Bill C-34. The bill was placed on the Order Paper for one week before the government finally introduced it yesterday. Members of the Reform Party, knowing the complexity of this issue as I mentioned earlier, contacted the minister's office last week to see if they could be briefed on the intent of the legislation in order to adequately prepare for the debate. I suggest that this was a fair request but it was a request that was denied.

Finally my colleagues received the departmental briefing only this morning, the very day of the debate. Also, we had less than 24 hours to review this legislation. As my hon. colleague from the Bloc mentioned, he was up until three or four o'clock in the morning trying to wade through all of the material.

Probably one of the reasons it has become so complicated is that Bill C-34 is directly connected to Bill C-33. While I have not yet been able to see it, my colleagues tell me that Bill C-33 is nine or ten inches thick. It requires some time to review and to

understand the complications and the factors involved with its relationship to Bill C-34, the bill we are debating today.

The Reform Party refuses to take part in this type of debate when it is not properly prepared, through no fault of its own. The government has not been able to properly manage its legislative agenda. It is in the position where all of the bills are in committee, on notice, or have not yet been introduced. Furthermore, it was indicated to our caucus that we would be debating Bill C-18 today, a bill which we have studied at great length and are prepared to discuss.

(1655)

It is with much regret after having stated these facts that we feel we cannot contribute in the most meaningful way at this time on this bill. We do not want to be a part of the government's ineptitude. With much respect for the House and wanting to maintain quality debate, I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Call in the members.

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

(Division No. 49)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Benoit
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Brown (Calgary Southeast)
Cummins
Epp
Frazer
Gouk
Grubel
Hanrahan
Harper (Simcoe Centre)
Hermanson
Hoepfner
Johnston
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Meredith

Ablonczy
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)
Bridgman
Chatters
Duncan
Forseth
Gilmour
Grey (Beaver River)
Hanger
Harper (Calgary West)
Hayes
Hill (MacLeod)
Jennings
Manning
McClelland (Edmonton Southwest)
Morrison

Private Members' Business

Ramsay
Schmidt
Speaker
Thompson
Williams—41

Ringma
Silye
Stinson
White (Fraser Valley West)

Torsney
Ur
Walker
Wood—155

Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)
Valeri
Wappel

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I declare the motion negatived.

It being 5.42 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

NAYS

Members

Allmand
Arseneault
Assadourian
Augustine
Bachand
Bakopanos
Bellehumeur
Bernier (Gaspé)
Bethel
Bhaduria
Bonin
Brien
Bryden
Bélisle
Calder
Cannis
Caron
Cauchon
Chrétien (Frontenac)
Collenette
Cowling
Crête
Dalphond—Guiral
de Jong
Deshaies
Dhaliwal
Dubé
Duhamel
Dupuy
Eggleton
Fillion
Finlay
Fry
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Galloway
Godin
Grose
Guay
Harvard
Ianno
Irwin
Jordan
Kirkby
Kraft Sloan
Laurin
LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso)
Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)
Lincoln
Loubier
MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys)
Maloney
Marleau
Massé
McGuire
McLaughlin
McWhinney
Mifflin
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Murphy
Nault
Parrish
Peters
Picard (Drummond)
Pillitteri
Reed
Riis
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
Serré
Sheridan
Solomon
St. Denis
Stewart (Brant)
Telegdi

Anderson
Assad
Asselin
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)
Baker
Barnes
Bellemare
Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)
Bevilacqua
Bodnar
Boudria
Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Bélair
Caccia
Campbell
Canuel
Catterall
Chamberlain
Clancy
Collins
Crawford
Culbert
Davialt
de Savoye
DeVillers
Discepolo
Duceppe
Dumas
Easter
Fewchuk
Finestone
Fontana
Gagliano
Gagnon (Québec)
Gauthier (Roberval)
Goodale
Guarnieri
Harper (Churchill)
Hopkins
Hfody
Jackson
Keyes
Knutson
Langlois
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)
Lee
Leroux (Shefford)
Loney
MacAulay
Malhi
Marchand
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCormick
McKinnon
McTeague
Mercier
Milliken
Minna
Murray
Nunez
Peric
Peterson
Pickard (Essex—Kent)
Pomerleau
Richardson
Ringuette—Maltais
Rock
Scott (Fredericton—York Sunbury)
Shepherd
Skoke
Speller
Steckle
Szabo
Terrana

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

VOLUNTARY FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of amending the voluntary firemen's tax exemption from \$500 to \$1,000 in order to account for inflation and recognize the value of their services to the community.

He said: Madam Speaker, within the wording of this motion, somehow something missed my recognition. What it says in the wording of the motion is: "amending the voluntary firemen's tax exemption". As we all know, across rural Canada we no longer have only firemen. We also have many firewomen across the country. It is a generic word.

I want to bring to the attention of all hon. members that many of our fire brigades now include women and they provide a very responsible and important role within those fire organizations.

It is my pleasure today to stand and to talk about Motion No. 193. This motion, although deemed not votable by the House management subcommittee, recommends that the government consider the advisability of amending the voluntary firemen's tax exemption from \$500 to \$1,000 which I think puts it into the context of inflation and speaks very well to the services that these firefighters provide to our rural communities.

There is no question in the minds of anyone in the House about the exceptional work done by volunteer firefighters. My motion tries to pay special attention and tribute to these men and women in recognition of their dedication and selfless service to their communities.

Volunteer firefighters serve communities with very little compensation. Generally they are given honorariums that cover out of pocket expenses incurred while dealing with fires and assorted emergencies and in dealing with training sessions. I am confident that there is no one in the House who will disagree with me that this remuneration is worth every penny they get.

The Income Tax Act exempts the first \$500 of allowances received by these volunteer firefighters, but in 1980 that was increased. It used to be \$300 and it was increased to \$500 in

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1980 to recognize the growth of inflation at that time. Since 1980 it has stayed exactly the same as it is today.

Over the last 14 years annual inflation rates have increased as many of us know. In fact, most of this honorarium now is subject to tax. Unfortunately this effectively takes the expense reimbursements away from the firefighter.

In my opinion this is mostly unfair and that is why I brought forward this motion again this session. I brought this forward in the last House. Unfortunately at that time it was not a votable motion. It was talked out by the government members who used to be on this side of the House. There are one or two of them on the other side of the House now.

Volunteer firefighters provide an invaluable and vital service to our communities and form a solid protection base under which rural communities exist within this country. Not only do volunteer firefighters provide a service to rural communities, that is where they are mostly seen, but also to urban areas, as members know, where we have a number of volunteer firefighters.

There are almost 76,000 volunteer firefighters across the country. It is a significant number of people who have dedicated their time and service to their country and have really proved to Canadians what volunteerism is all about.

These volunteers spend many hours in training and on the upkeep of their fire stations, the care and maintenance of their fire equipment, all without any remuneration. They drive their privately owned vehicles in response to emergency alarms. Their privately owned vehicles are also used to travel many miles to deal with training sessions. Many of these people spend a number of hours throughout the week in specific training sessions to help them in doing their job.

Frequently volunteer fire departments are the only service organization in a number of communities across this country. They are the ones out there helping our children in distress, the ones out there on the roads dealing with the messy situation at a traffic accident which many of us would rather not see.

These are the people behind the scenes whom we do not see. They are in the face of these tragic situations, dealing with them. They are the ones raising money for community halls and community centres. They are the ones in small towns across this country who are the backbone of volunteer work in these communities.

They are the people who really keep these communities going. They can be found taking all sorts of other roles within communities such as organizing hockey and baseball teams, community garage sales and fund raising for many important community events.

It would hardly seem right when it is remembered that in many volunteer fire departments the practice is to pool those moneys received from this disbursement of a lot of their hard work and labour. A lot of times this pooled money is put back into the firehall.

As members know, in many rural areas money is not available to provide some of the needed equipment. A lot of time the reimbursements they get for some of their own expenses go back into these community halls, into their equipment and uniforms. Basically our rural firefighters and our volunteer firefighters are paying for the service that they provide to our communities. Obviously these men and women are dedicated volunteers as has been stated and they take great pride in their communities. I believe it is only right and proper for the government to recognize this contribution and that is why I brought this motion forward.

(1750)

Let me stress once again that these men and women, these very proud Canadians, are giving freely of their time and energy and have put their lives on the line for many Canadians.

I had the opportunity of going into a fire with some of my local volunteer firefighters. There are 13 in my area. They took me into a burning house all packed up in a training exercise. They showed me what it was like, what their lives were like, on many occasions. I was scared. It was a very scary, very tough situation, and it really gave me a good sense of where these people are coming from on a daily basis.

I do not feel that they have been recognized at all for this service and I am not suggesting in any way that these people want special recognition. In fact, a lot of them would wonder why I am up here trying to give them more money because most of them in the earlier years did not even use up their full compensation. It is an important thing. As a House we should recognize it, for recognition is long overdue.

We have seen the effects in the recessionary years across this country. More and more communities are turning to volunteer firefighters to provide these essential services. As I said, the money is not there and how much would it cost Canada if we had to pay firefighters instead of relying on the generosity of volunteers?

There can be few people in this country who do not know, who have not been directly affected by these volunteer firefighters. More now than ever we need to strengthen and expand the forces to fill the gaps that are occurring because of the lack of services provided because of the downturn in the economy.

I put it to this House that the costs involved in providing this increase are small compared with the savings made in terms of

Private Members' Business

human lives as well as dollars. I suggest that this House would save greatly by voting this increase to volunteer firefighters.

As I mentioned earlier, this motion unfortunately like many motions across the House because of the archaic nature of our Private Members' Hour is not votable and I know that is a problem for a lot of members across this House. In this debate today I hope at least that members in this House will recognize the important role that volunteer firefighters provide to our communities.

I hope that all Canadians who are listening to this today will give a pat on the back to their local firefighters.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm): Madam Speaker, today I welcome the opportunity to speak to the hon. member's motion to raise the voluntary firemen's tax exemption from \$500 to \$1,000.

I would like to start by commending the hon. member for his motion, since it also gives us an opportunity to acknowledge the work done by these people and to say they are useful members of our society, and I think that is a message we can send them from this House.

The hon. member said twice that because of the standing orders, his motion was not votable. I do not know whether the hon. member could ask for unanimous consent, but if he did, I am sure he would obtain unanimous consent for the House to vote immediately on this motion. I do not know whether the hon. member is listening.

Raising the voluntary firemen's tax exemption from \$500 to \$1,000 would be an opportunity for members of this House to give tangible recognition of the social commitment and dedication of all voluntary firefighters in Quebec and Canada.

I think the average person does not quite realize how important voluntary firefighters are to our communities. They are voluntary, because considering the compensation they receive would hardly justify considering them otherwise. And as such, they should not have to pay income tax on the pittance they earn by serving the community.

(1755)

They are not permanent workers, since their main occupation is not as firefighters; they earn their living doing something else. However, they are on call and must leave everything behind to respond to distress calls. Moreover, volunteer firefighters must use their own vehicle to get to the emergency situations which they must face. These men and women, because there are indeed men and women in this service, must carry pagers with them so that they can be reached day and night. They

must also attend different courses and conferences, as the hon. member mentioned earlier.

It is important to note that the tax exemption has not been changed since 1980. At that time, it went from \$300 to \$500 to account for inflation; some people thought that the \$300 amount was not fair any more and should be amended to \$500. That calculation has not been done since 1980. I think that, today, we could make exactly the same calculation and come up with the amount of \$1,000 as proposed in this motion.

Since 1980, while inflation has been considerably increasing every year, volunteer firefighters have been paying more taxes on a service they voluntarily provide to their communities. Consequently, it would be normal to increase the tax exemption according to the standard of living in our society. Also, it is important to keep in mind the abilities, both physical and academic, that such a job requires. Generally, volunteer firefighters have attended all the basic first-aid courses: St. John's Ambulance, Red Cross, CPR and others. This is quite something for a job you do only on a voluntary basis.

We should also point out, and this is very important, that volunteer firefighters help municipalities to provide a service they could probably not afford otherwise. It is a fact that in the rural municipalities that cannot afford a professional firefighting brigade, the role of volunteer firefighters is vital. The safety of millions of people is in their hands.

Without them there would be a multimillion dollar void which would have to be filled with our taxes. I believe the hon. member mentioned that point in his speech. If we do not raise this exemption, if we do not acknowledge in some way the work of these dedicated men and women, and if they stop being volunteer firefighters, municipalities and taxpayers will have to pay dearly to get a similar service. So, why not raise this exemption again? This would send a tremendous message to these men and women who put their lives on the line to save others.

On a social and community level, how many times have I seen volunteer firefighters take part in fundraising campaigns, either for the MIRA foundation, the United Way, or shelters for abused women or drug addicts? How many times have volunteer fire departments joined civil defence teams to assist communities ravaged by floods, tornadoes or other environmental disasters?

In my riding of Berthier—Montcalm, I saw the volunteer fire department at work, fighting against floods along the St. Lawrence and cleaning up after a tornado hit Maskinongé. They do a terrific job. Public security is in good hands. On the national level, the tragic fire at the tire depot in Saint-Amable, in the Montreal area, highlighted the remarkable role played by these men and women who are much more than volunteer firefighters. They got involved after the fire to make sure that the neigh-

Private Members' Business

bouring population suffered as little as possible from the damage to the environment and got all the help they needed.

I believe that such events opened the eyes of many. One must realize that these volunteers have to leave their jobs, their homes, and their families to go and help the community when it is threatened. I call upon the government to vote in favour of this motion—it will not be a direct vote, but through this House, the government should get the message—to increase this tax exemption from \$500 to \$1,000 without delay. Together, we must send our heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers who are dedicated to public security across Quebec and Canada.

(1800)

Volunteer firefighters are too often forgotten by the government and the population as a whole. Today we have an opportunity to thank them by supporting the motion. As elected representatives, we feel secure because of them and we must support the motion.

As for me, I thank the 994 volunteer firefighters in 50 different municipalities in my riding. I want to show them my entire support in this motion and I will see to it that the government adopts it as fast as possible.

[English]

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound): Madam Speaker, I rise to praise the motion placed before the House today by the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk. I share totally his views about the great job done by volunteer firefighters. They are a dedicated, hard-working group of people to whom all of us owe a great debt.

In my riding of Capilano—Howe Sound several communities rely heavily on the work of volunteers. In Squamish, 55 volunteers complement a core of six full time firefighters. Pemberton and Lions Bay rely entirely on 20 volunteers for their protection from fire.

In the beautiful resort community of Whistler, 11 professionals rely on the help of 36 volunteers. I feel particularly close to this group because I have attended their annual ball. These people not only know how to have fun, they also show their dedication to public welfare by using the occasion to raise substantial funds for charity. I feel closer also to these Whistler firefighters because I have seen them in action when they took care of a chimney fire in the house of one of my neighbours. Hearing the roar of such a fire in the stillness of a snowy winter evening is an unforgettable experience. Seeing their professionalism in dealing with this inferno has made me an eternal fan of theirs.

I would also like to tell you, Madam Speaker, that Whistler is a very dry and hot place in the summer. Trees and bushes grow between the many wooden houses. I have often descended into the valley on the chair lift and was very uneasy thinking about

the scene before me, how easily a small fire could spread through the community, leaping from house to house through the low brush, fanned by the famous Squamish winds. The property damage would be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. There would be great risks for people and animals. However I find myself reassured by the knowledge that the large contingent of very competent firefighters is there, quickly and at all times, to deal with any small fire before it erupts into a major conflagration.

At any rate, I hope that they will forever be able to maintain the enviable record they have established during the 30-year history of the Whistler community. No fire has ever gone out of control.

The professional and volunteer firefighters in my riding can be counted on, not just to fight fires, but to provide valuable services in all kinds of other emergencies. Just a couple of weeks ago they had to use the jaws of life to free from a car a severely injured motorist and two others. Their efforts came too late for the two who died in the accident.

The Whistler firefighters are superbly skilled in their task. Last year they won first place in a provincial competition testing their rescue skills. They are about to enter this competition again and I wish them the best of luck.

I support the idea that the federal government should make a solid contribution to the well-being of these dedicated people. They save citizens local taxes which would have to be raised if they were to be replaced by professionals.

Therefore it seems very fitting that the private member's motion being discussed should urge the government to raise the amount of fees which are freed from taxation. However, given the government's current financial conditions, members must be very vigilant not to add to the deficit. In this spirit, I therefore suggest that the proposal be modified to make it less costly. I propose that the government raise the allowance annually by the increase in the consumer price index, using the \$500 limit in 1980 as a base. In my view this approach would be fair and I am sure that it would be acceptable as such to the volunteer firefighters who make such great contributions to public welfare.

(1805)

The sentiments which I have expressed are not just mine. They are also shared by my hon. colleagues from the Reform caucus, in particular those representing the following ridings: Prince George—Bulkley Valley; Kindersley—Lloydminster; Fraser Valley East; Kootenay East; Nanaimo—Cowichan; Okanagan—Shuswap; Macleod; Saanich—Gulf Islands; Lisgar—Marquette; Yellowhead; Athabasca; Surrey—White Rock—South Langley; Okanagan Centre; Surrey North; Calgary Southeast; Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt; Wild Rose; Lethbridge; Red Deer; and Calgary Northeast.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche—Chaleur): Madam Speaker, I have been listening quite closely to the comments of the various members of the three parties. I gather there is some support for the motion.

I wonder if we could have unanimous consent to approve the following motion and then continue on with the debate. I would like the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion. I move:

That this motion be votable.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Could I have some precision on the motion. Are you suggesting that we stop the debate now or do you want debate to go on?

Mr. Arseneault: I know it is a little unusual, but with unanimous consent we can do that because we do have some speakers who want to continue speaking. I would ask for unanimous consent that the motion be votable at the end of the hour.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The House has heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Arseneault: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak to this motion which, I think, is very important to all Canadians.

I would like to start by commending the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk for all the work he has done on this very important issue. It is not the first time he has raised this issue in the House. I remember very clearly having worked with him on this issue in the last parliamentary session. It is very encouraging to see someone who does not forget the issues he considers important. I commend the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk for his tenacity and his dedication. I am proud to rise today in support of this motion.

I had written in my notes that I was disappointed that the motion was not votable but I see that this has been changed with the unanimous consent of the House. I am very proud and very happy to say that the motion is now votable. I thank the hon. members, my colleagues. I urge all hon. members to maintain a spirit of co-operation in this House.

This motion is in keeping with the government's policy of restoring integrity and equity to the political system. The government looked at the issue of student loans and at other things and set out to ensure that the loan values honestly reflect the cost of post-secondary studies. The time has come to apply this equity principle to volunteer firefighters.

(1810)

Volunteer firefighters do exceptional work. The dedication they bring to their communities is very important. They encourage volunteerism in our country.

[*English*]

I am very pleased to be able to speak this evening on this issue. I am also pleased that the member for Haldimand—Norfolk has brought it to the House once again. His motion asks that the voluntary firefighter's tax exemption be raised from \$500 to \$1,000 to make it more meaningful in the context of inflation and the valuable service these volunteers provide to their communities. Such a move is in keeping with the government's policy of restoring integrity and especially equity to the fiscal system.

The government has looked at the issue of student loans and set out to ensure that the value of the loans honestly reflects the cost of studying. If I can compare the volunteer firemen with the students, they are doing a service to the community and it is costing them money. Therefore, we should have some type of equity built into the system. I believe this motion does that.

We have heard the member from the Reform Party and the member from the Bloc Québécois speak about the firefighters in their regions. I suspect their thoughts would be unanimous right across Canada, that these firefighters do exceptional work in their communities. These are volunteers. They do work that goes far beyond the call of duty. They even encourage the spirit of volunteerism.

In this day and age everyone is out for the almighty dollar and we see limited numbers of people getting involved in their communities. A lot of them are becoming armchair activists. These firefighters are the people out on the front line and it is our responsibility to make sure that we, not necessarily reward them financially every time they do something, but put justice in the system so it is not costing them to be a volunteer. I would suspect that should go for other groups as well.

The firefighters in my area, and I am sure other members will be speaking about their firefighters, are no different from those in other areas. They are all well trained. They are on duty 24 hours a day, basically on call on weekends, at night, in the middle of storms when we are home asleep or comfortable reading the newspaper or pursuing our favourite pastime, watching the parliamentary channel. These people are well trained in first aid, CPR and emergency operations.

Their work is pleasant in certain circumstances, but quite often it is not. They are on the scene of emergencies. They are on the scene at fires and car accidents. Quite often these scenes bother them, but someone has to do the job.

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They help young people in distress. I know the volunteer firefighters in my area are always involved with educational programs and fire prevention. They are helpful. They are in malls. In fact just last weekend we were in the mall in my hometown. I had my son with me. We were walking along and who do we see but a number of firemen giving out pamphlets to the parents and the children were receiving balloons. They were giving out safety advice to the parents on how to protect their children in crowds, how to keep better rapport with the children. That is beyond the call of duty. These are volunteers. They not only teach children about fire safety, they teach parents how to be safe with their children.

Quite often they raise money for community events. They raise money for charities. They raise money for their own uniforms quite often. They raise money for equipment that the community cannot afford such as the jaws of life. It is usually the firefighters who hold bingo's and some even have auxiliaries that help out. They hold bingo's, sell tickets and have door to door campaigns. They are always involved with this type of activity.

(1815)

Often the only remuneration these men and women receive is some type of honorarium to cover the out of pocket expenses incurred while dealing with fires and assorted emergencies or attending training sessions.

The Income Tax Act exempts from taxation the first \$500 of allowances received by volunteer firefighters. Since 1980 this level has remained constant at \$500. As a result of this constant \$500 level the government is now penalizing a lot of these volunteers. Because of inflation it is costing them more money to be volunteer firefighters than if they stayed home and did nothing.

Our volunteer firefighters are now paying for the service they actually provide to the community. This is over and above the time and effort they have already donated. If we were to add up all of the hours, we would never be able to afford these firefighters as full time workers. Nor could we ever afford volunteers in other sectors if we had to pay them. Therefore, it is only fair that the government increase this exemption from \$500 to \$1,000.

These volunteers no doubt have saved communities right across this country millions of dollars. The cost of this measure is well below the savings generated by these volunteers.

[Translation]

The expenses incurred by the voluntary firefighters often exceed this tax exemption of \$500. The cost of gasoline, car insurance, clothing and dry cleaning, for example, has become prohibitive. So, it would be in the interests of voluntary firefighters to increase the tax exemption.

[English]

In conclusion I congratulate the member for Haldimand—Norfolk. As I mentioned before he presented this motion in the last Parliament. I congratulate him for his tenacity and his devotion to this cause. I support this motion and I hope all members will see fit to support it when the time comes.

As the member for Restigouche—Chaleur, I would like to thank all the volunteers in my region.

[Translation]

I want to salute and thank the voluntary firefighters.

[English]

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce): Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me this evening to speak on this important private member's motion. I congratulate the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk for his hard work and diligence in the preparation of this motion and for his dedication to the volunteer firefighters who put their lives on the line every time they are called out.

The member has been working for a long time to get this motion passed in this House. I am confident all members will see the benefits of this motion and will call on the government to consider amending the volunteer firefighter's tax exemption from \$500 to \$1,000.

The Income Tax Act currently exempts \$500 from taxation. This had been increased from \$300 to \$500 in the 1980 taxation year. Looking at inflation since that time based on 14 years it is certainly due time we recognize the firefighters for their efforts and the kind of work they do for their communities.

This is not the first time this motion has been presented. In one form or another it has been brought into this House on other occasions. This topic was discussed even as far back as 1982 and again in 1983. In 1989 the member for Haldimand—Norfolk reintroduced the motion.

I trust the next time we speak on this issue we will be passing the motion into law and finally giving volunteer firefighters the increased level of tax exemption they deserve. I saw the spirit and goodwill which can prevail in this House this evening in allowing this motion to become a votable one. I applaud members opposite and on this side as well for their diligence in doing this.

(1820)

In the past members who opposed similar motions were worried about pitting one volunteer group against another. This is not the case in this evening's debate. All the motion says is that it is time to give proper recognition to our firefighters, recognition in the form of increased tax exemptions. This is not a question of developing a new exemption, but recognition of

the fact that the current exemption is not sufficient because of the effects of inflation over the past 14 years.

All across the country thousands of brave men and women, volunteer firefighters, offer their services to fire departments, fire associations and auxiliaries. Even in larger communities volunteer firefighters are heavily relied upon by full time firefighting forces. Without volunteer firefighters full time departments would not be able to provide the level of protection and service needed by communities.

I would like to read into the record the names of some of the departments and auxiliaries I represent as the MP for Huron—Bruce. I think of the towns of Zurich, my own home town where I have family members serving on that fire department, Wingham, Kincardine, Lucknow, Southhampton, Seaforth, Exeter, Hensall, and Bayfield. For those who do not know my riding there are places such as Dashwood and Huron Park which would be pleased to be recognized as also having volunteer fire departments.

I look forward to this coming Saturday when I will have breakfast with firefighters from the Brucefield Fire Department. I also had the pleasure of serving as one of the board members of the Bayfield volunteer fire department during my many years in municipal politics.

I congratulate all the firefighters of Huron—Bruce for the exceptional job they have done for us all these years. These brave men and women provide an invaluable service to the people of their communities. They literally have the lives of their friends, families, and neighbours in their hands every time they are called out. They serve their communities with honour, dignity and pride. It is for this reason we must acknowledge their importance and allow them exemptions of \$1,000 in recognition of their important duties to their community.

The hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk has better knowledge than some on the importance and value of volunteer firefighters. I can think of no better example of the dedication and bravery of volunteer firefighters than the Hagersville tire fire. That fire was deliberately set and took the time of many firefighters for many days. The extremely dangerous and volatile situation forced hundreds of families to be evacuated from their homes.

Who came to the rescue and became the first line of defence for the people in that area? Of course it was the volunteer firefighters of the local communities. They were outgunned by the fire but they persevered. After many long days, sleepless nights and personal sacrifice and hardship, they were able with some help to defeat the fire.

This is a great example of the dedication and professionalism of volunteer firefighters. Most of the time these individuals are ordinary people: farmers in our communities, store owners,

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plumbers, electricians, and so on. Once they are called upon to put on their hats and boots they become the protectors of their communities.

Often when called these men and women are docked pay from their wages so they can serve their communities. I would like to recognize the employers who in many cases continue to pay the wages of their employees when they are out fighting fires for their communities or doing those other services normally attributed to fire departments.

In addition to the financial cost, they experience personal sacrifice in terms of loss of time with their families and physical and mental strain. I am sure many of us tonight can relate to an incident where family members were called away from an important family occasion because of a fire or because of an emergency within the community.

(1825)

Volunteer firefighters do not just protect their communities, they also volunteer their time and resources to charitable causes and community events. As the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk has already mentioned, these men and women volunteer for everything from supporting and organizing minor hockey and softball to raising money for the needy and organizing holiday events and celebrations.

They are an integral part of their community. After all, what we are really talking about is a sense of responsibility of community and volunteerism. In today's world of financial hardships, increases in violent crime and deterioration of family values, we are relying more and more on the help, protection and generosity of others.

I am sure that every member has in the past and will continue in the future to volunteer in some capacity to some worthwhile charity or cause. In every community across this vast country volunteers are lending a helping hand to many different people and worthwhile causes. The elderly, the young, the disadvantaged and the disabled all rely on a growing group of generous people for support.

We must do everything we can to encourage these types of actions and therefore when it comes to giving some tax breaks to a group of people who protect their communities, I fully support this initiative and feel its passage is long overdue.

In conclusion, I would once again like to commend my colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk for being persistent in giving the volunteer firefighters of Canada the recognition and support they deserve.

Mr. Murray Calder (Wellington—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak today on the motion presented by my colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk.

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The motion recommends that the government amend the voluntary firefighter's tax exemption from \$500 to \$1,000 in order to account for inflation and recognize the value of their services to the community. Most Canadians probably do not recognize the importance of our volunteer firefighters and I would like to look at some of the stats.

Nationally there are 76,000 volunteer firefighters. Over 65 per cent or 17,000 of the 26,000 firefighters in Ontario alone are volunteers. Ninety-five per cent of the province's 653 fire departments are staffed in whole or in part by them.

The legislative reference to this motion is section 6(1) of the Income Tax Act. This section exempts the first \$500 from taxation of allowances received by the firefighter. Raising the level or threshold is not a new idea. In the 1980 fiscal year the amount was increased from \$300 to \$500 as was previously stated and there have been no increases since 1980 despite substantial increases in inflation and the cost of living.

There are really two issues here: first, to update the tax provision which is outdated and no longer representative of today's buying power; second, the issue of fairness in providing recognition to those thousands of volunteers. Clearly without volunteers many communities would not have fire protection.

This is not an exaggeration but a recognition that many rural communities simply do not have the financial resources to pay for full time firefighters. Even with volunteers many communities in my riding are still dependent on shared services with their neighbouring municipalities. I would like to take a couple of minutes to give members a personal position on this.

In the late 1960s we had a fire on our farm. We have a poultry farm. It was a three storey building, 21,000 square feet, and it caught on fire. It is dead centre on our farm. We had a century old farmhouse. There was a drive-in shed and two more barns on the other side.

The heat was so intense it broke every window on one side of the farmhouse. There was a 2,000 litre propane tank in front of the barn. The firefighters helped us that night to move that tank away. There would have been a huge hole in the ground had that not been done. They could not save the barn, but they saved the house, the drive-in shed and the two other barns. A lot of it was in jeopardy of their own lives.

What would the cost be of increasing the exemption? I believe this point was raised earlier by another speaker. The cost of full utilization of the new exemption is estimated to be \$38 million. This is a lot of money and yet what volunteer firefighters provide our communities offsets this lost revenue. Without these volunteers a community would either have to forgo fire protection or hire a full time force at a staggering price, a lot

more than what I have just mentioned. The resulting increases in municipal taxes necessary would be prohibitive.

(1830)

Let us move on beyond dollars and take a closer look at these people in our community. These volunteers are busy people who hold down full time jobs and yet have time to devote to their community. I know that every Thursday evening in many of the towns and villages in my riding firefighters hold drill practices. Often they will go on training sessions held in different parts of the provinces at their own expense.

A volunteer force is a term used to distinguish it from a paid or professional force. These are terms I do not like to use because there is nothing unprofessional about these volunteer firefighters. Beyond firefighting they are called upon to perform a host of other duties. They are trained in CPR, first aid, highway accident rescues and other emergencies.

Regarding highway accident rescues, it could be a father heading out to an accident in which his own son or daughter could be involved. That is a great emotional point.

One emergency in particular that comes to mind in my riding is the tornado touchdown both in Grand Valley and the Orangeville areas. This week marks its grizzly anniversary.

Beyond these duties firefighters selflessly devote their time to parades, fire safety awareness campaigns, sponsorship of local causes and fundraising events to help sustain their service. Not only do they do their own work for nothing but they also have to go out and raise money for their own fire department. Almost all of this is done at their own personal expense in terms of time and money.

I believe that this motion is significant in that it provides recognition by this House of the work our volunteer firefighters do and I am thankful for the opportunity to speak in support of it.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Waterloo): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise on this motion and to commend my colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk in his initiative.

There is no question that increasing the deduction from \$500 to \$1,000 for volunteer firefighters is long overdue.

In my capacity as local councillor I have had exposure to both professional and volunteer firefighters. In my community the quality of life would not be the same if it did not have volunteer firefighters. In a rural community it would be impossible to have a professional firefighter force.

When we talk about volunteer firefighters we are talking about volunteerism at its best. There is a real melting pot, what the community is about, and there are people who respond at all hours of the night, leaving their jobs to do so. There is no question that their employers are to be commended as well. I

really hope that at some point we do something to recognize firefighters in general.

I have attended far too many funerals involving firefighters. I recall part of the firefighter's prayer: "God, if it is your will that in the line of duty to save a child or a life I give my life, then I ask that you take care of my children and my wife". That kind of selfless devotion to duty and devotion to our fellow human beings is to be commended and recognized. I believe that this issue should be redressed and redressed now.

(1835)

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Madam Speaker, I too compliment the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk on this initiative. There is nothing greater than a good volunteer fire department in the community. We all hope that we never need it, but that when it is needed it is there.

When I was first elected to a municipal council in my home township, I was appointed chairman of the local fire committee and public works committee. We started a very good fire department made up of a group of people who wanted to work for their community, who had been doing some work in it but had no equipment with which to work. We ended up giving them some equipment.

Over the years, they like those in many other rural communities have built up their resources and firefighting equipment. They have taken special courses, visited schools to talk about fires and how to prevent them, and have gone into homes to make inspections.

As the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk knows, these are not just everyday citizens out there fighting fires. They are indeed professionals in their own way. They deserve our credit. They deserve to have the volunteer firefighter's tax exemption as recommended by the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk.

The hon. member for Restigouche—Chaleur mentioned the jaws of life. What could be more important in today's robust and rapidly moving world with the highway traffic and railway traffic, particularly if it runs through the middle of a built up community, than to have the jaws of life on those highways and roads in order to save people's lives. Our firefighters are very, very well trained to operate the jaws of life.

They carry out all these dedicated tasks together in their home community, but it goes far beyond that because they work with fire departments in neighbouring communities. Within a matter of a very short time a number of these departments can come together to fight a large regional fire.

I believe that rural Canada, our small villages and towns, are very well served by volunteer firefighters. I think they deserve the attention of this House. They deserve the consideration of this House for a greater tax exemption. It costs them a lot of

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money for clothing that is ruined and that does not come cheaply.

We are not asking much for them. The hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk probably knows many of these people. It is nothing for them to have to buy new clothing after a fire. They have to buy protective clothing as well which costs a lot of money.

Fire departments do raise money on their own. It is a co-operative thing for them to do. There is a good rapport among those firefighters and their families. They do fundraising and it is up to our communities to support them because they are there to support us in time of need.

It is very important too that all Canadians, including volunteers, realize that if it were not for volunteers in every walk and every area of life such as recreation and firefighting, there would be many qualities of life that we would not have in rural Canada today and indeed in larger communities as well.

Let us not just talk here in terms of rhetoric in the House of Commons about giving a tax deduction to volunteer firefighters. I think we should mean business on this because these people are a very important part of every small community in this country.

If we did not have volunteer firefighters to support and to look after people at times of grass fires, bush fires, brush fires, house fires, barn fires and road accidents, as has been mentioned it would cost this nation and individual taxpayers a lot more money than it is costing today under our volunteer firefighters program.

Let us give these people every good turn that we can and say thank you to them by giving them a tax exemption.

Once more I compliment the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk and other members in the House who have spoken today on behalf of the volunteer firefighters across Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Motion agreed to.)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired.

It being 6.42 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.42 p.m.)

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