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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, May 8, 2002

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 8, 2002

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[English]

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

[Editor's Note: Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

VICTORY IN EUROPE DAY

Mr. Carmen Provenzano (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we mark the anniversary of victory in Europe. For almost six years Canadians fought valiantly on battlefields around the world to preserve the democratic ideals that are Canada.

The road to victory was long and arduous. More than one million men and women enlisted in the forces; over 55,000 were wounded, and more than 45,000 of our soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice.

As we pause today to remember those who fought and died on the fields of Europe, our thoughts are also with our armed forces serving in Afghanistan and around the world in order to preserve those same ideals.

To the veterans of World War II, to our current armed forces and to all our veterans, today we remember what they have done and still do for us. All Canadians are truly grateful.

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• (1405)

TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIPS CANADA

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, at yesterday's industry committee meeting the minister credited the technology partnerships Canada program with rewarding innovation.

However, according to government reports Ontario and Quebec received 86% of all technology partnership funding, Alberta received less than 2%, New Brunswick received less than 0.5% and Saskatchewan received absolutely zero. The government obviously believes there is no innovation in Saskatchewan and this

is why it continues to shaft Saskatchewan as well as Alberta and New Brunswick.

Ernest & Young recently completed a report on the Alberta technology sector. It is growing rapidly and it is healthy. However its single biggest problem is raising investment capital. Yet technology partnership has limited Alberta to less than 2% of the funding.

TPC is a failure because it favours one region of the country over another.

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MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as this is mental health week I want to draw attention to the terrible cost of depression. Depression is the leading mental health illness, costing our economy over \$13 billion a year. Some one million Canadians suffer from depression. This illness is devastating to individuals, families and society.

With the current pace of life and rising demands on workers in our knowledge based economy, depression is expected to rise. The WTO estimates that in 20 years depression will be the second leading cause of disability behind heart disease.

It is time corporate Canada and governments recognized the impact of depression on the domestic and global economy. We must all work to intensify research and treatment efforts to better reflect the impact of this debilitating illness.

* * *

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS WEEK

Mrs. Judi Longfield (Whitby—Ajax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our country is renown in the world as one of the best places to live and we want to keep it that way.

Recent world events, as well as disasters here in Canada, have raised awareness among Canadians that they are not immune to the risk of having their lives affected by emergency situations, whether natural, technological or deliberately caused by individuals who wish to advance their own agendas.

Therefore it is a pleasure to rise in the House today in support of Emergency Preparedness Week. The theme for this year's week is "Keeping Canada safe—Emergency preparedness begins with you."

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The Government of Canada works in co-operation with provincial and territorial governments, municipal governments, the private sector and non-governmental partners such as volunteer agencies, to ensure that Canada is prepared to respond and recover from virtually any type of emergency situation. To mark this special week a wide range of activities will take place throughout Canada to raise public awareness and encourage our citizens to be prepared for emergency situations.

I ask all members of the House to encourage their constituents to take time during Emergency Preparedness Week to learn what they can—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

* * *

RED CROSS DAY

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that today is World Red Cross Day. This day celebrates the humanitarian work of millions of Red Cross volunteers and staff worldwide.

The guiding principle of all Red Cross work is the rehabilitation of people suffering the consequences of war, violence, natural disaster and malnutrition. Every year countless numbers of victims of conflict and disaster are helped by and through the Red Cross.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing the Canadian Red Cross Society for its work, and in wishing a very successful World Red Cross Day.

* * *

VICTORY IN EUROPE DAY

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, after five years, eight months and six days, the war in Europe ended with Germany surrendering unconditionally in a schoolhouse at Reims, France. May 8 was declared the official Victory in Europe Day, or VE Day, by the allies exactly 57 years ago today.

Canadians demonstrated courage and valour throughout the war in places such as Dieppe, Ortona, Juno Beach and many others. Over one million Canadians served in the war, 45,000 gave their lives and 55,000 were wounded.

Today we remember that the liberation of Europe was brought about by many of our young men who fought so bravely for the freedom we all enjoy. Fighting thousands of miles from home, in places they had never been, many of their bodies remain in the sacred grounds of war cemeteries throughout Europe. It has been said that “dying for freedom isn't the worst thing that can happen, being forgotten is”.

I pray that none of us will forget.

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• (1410)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the decision by Burma's military dictatorship to release Nobel peace laureate

Aung San Suu Kyi, an international symbol of freedom and democracy who has been under various forms of arrest for 12 years, is welcome. While the release might presage a new dawn, the test, as Aung San Suu Kyi put it, is whether the dawn will move very quickly to a full morning.

The indicators of that necessary transition which should guide international domestic policy include: the protection of Aung San Suu Kyi's unconditional freedom of movement and political action; the immediate and unconditional release of more than 1,000 political prisoners, including 17 elected members of parliament and one time student leader Min Ko Naing who remains in solitary confinement; an end to the practices of torture, forced labour and forced relocations; respect for freedoms of expression, association, movement and assembly and the right to a fair trial; the protection of the rights of ethnic and religious minorities; and an end to government media censorship.

Release should be seen less as a breakthrough for democracy than a test for democracy.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE LAST CHAPTER TELEVISION SERIES

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve in the House of Commons, I had occasion to take an interest in the fight against organized crime. Therefore, it is with great interest that I watched the series *The Last Chapter*, which impressed me by its realism and its educational content, if I may use that expression, as it impressed many television viewers in Quebec.

This series shows from within not only the internal rules of a criminal biker gang, but also what potential candidates must do to become members. The work of actors Roy Dupuis, Marina Orsini, Michel Forget and Dan Bigras is truly exceptional, and it gives authenticity to a well written text, which, even though it is fiction, seems very real.

Through this television series, Radio-Canada and CBC viewers were able to familiarize themselves with the jargon of criminal bikers, and learn about criminal activities in Quebec and in Canada, from 1997 to 2000.

I thank screen writer Luc Dionne, director Richard Roy and producer Claudio Luca for this fabulous series that will remain an unavoidable reference for anyone interested in—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

* * *

L'@VENUE-CENTRE INTERNET COMMUNAUTAIRE

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to L'@venue-Centre Internet communautaire, located in the riding of Hochelaga—Maisonneuve. L'@venue is a training centre designed to help young people find work by learning about computers and information and communication technologies.

In 1998, as the federal government official representing Industry Canada, I had the pleasure of meeting the whole team when the centre officially opened its doors. Thanks to the energy of the team members, this project has achieved tremendous success.

In the fall of 2000, L'@venue inaugurated a network of four community access centres to the Internet, thus allowing access to new information and communication technologies, at an affordable cost and on highly performing work stations.

The funds obtained from the federal government through the Internet community access program were properly managed, and the results show it.

Congratulations to the whole team at L'@venue for its exceptional contribution to our community.

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[English]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has been refusing to launch a specific action plan to defend tens of thousands of Canadian workers from losing their jobs and homes because of the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber dispute.

The government says it is afraid the American lumber lobby will accuse them of subsidizing the industry. This same lobby is a handful of wealthy lumber barons working to pump up the price of wood in the United States. They will lose the case that Canada is bringing against them at both the WTO and NAFTA.

Because the U.S. is using the wrong criteria to judge the threat posed by Canada's lumber, the government should go ahead and protect Canadian workers and their families instead of running scared. The longer the government sits on its hands, the higher the risk that individual provinces will try to work deals with the U.S. saying that Ottawa is making no progress and they cannot wait.

The international trade minister is risking the solidarity of Canada's position by letting softwood lumber communities suffer. The government does not care about the pain, suffering and loss being imposed upon forestry workers throughout British Columbia and Canada.

* * *

● (1415)

JIM BRADLEY

Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House of Commons to acknowledge and congratulate my provincial counterpart, Jim Bradley, who will celebrate his 25th anniversary as an MPP on Thursday, May 30.

Jim was a teacher with the Lincoln County Board of Education from 1967 to 1977 and a member of the St. Catharines city council from 1970 to 1977. He served on the St. Catharines transit commission, the public library board and the Niagara district airport commission. Jim worked tirelessly for his constituents since he was first elected to the Ontario legislature in 1977 and after 25 years he is one of the longest serving MPPs.

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He presently serves as the environment critic for the official opposition and over the years he has served in numerous roles, most noteworthy as the minister of environment from 1985 to 1990 in the Liberal government of David Peterson. The people of St. Catharines have been extremely fortunate to have someone as dedicated as Jim Bradley serve on their behalf.

As Jim's first campaign manager and MP I wish to congratulate him on his exceptional efforts over the past 25 years. May he have many more.

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WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow marks the 10th anniversary of the Westray mine explosion that killed 26 miners in my home province of Nova Scotia. Our hearts remain with the families and communities whose lives were permanently changed by that workplace tragedy.

Today we mark a double tragedy. It is sad and shocking that 10 years later there is still no federal legislation to hold corporations and their directors criminally responsible for knowingly putting their employee's lives at risk.

With 800 Canadians killed on the job every single year those are 8,000 lessons that have gone unlearned. For every worker killed on the job devastated loved ones are left behind.

How many thousands more must die before the government heeds the voices of injured workers and grieving families?

Every single member of the House should pledge today to fight for the families of the Westray miners and all others who suffered similar losses to ensure that their loved ones did not die in vain.

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[Translation]

WORLD RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT DAY

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, on World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, I would like to draw attention to the humanitarian efforts of thousands of people throughout the world, who bring aid and comfort to the countless victims of conflict and disaster.

With its theme "The truth about AIDS. Pass it on", the Red Cross is reminding us that more than ever it has to deal with the constantly growing HIV-AIDS epidemic.

Raising public awareness of the discrimination and prejudice faced by the more than 40 million people in the world who are affected by this disease is a major responsibility, when we realize that more than 500,000 children are born every year with the virus to mothers who have chosen not to undergo testing for fear of being stigmatized by their community.

Everything possible must be done to do away with taboos and change public perceptions. I call upon all members of this House to take real action to support the Red Cross staff and volunteers in their daily battle to improve the well-being of humanity.

Oral Questions

[English]

DOMENIC DI LUCA SENIORS

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to recognize a very special group of people from my riding. Fifty-five members of the Domenic di Luca Seniors are visiting Parliament Hill today. This is an event that they and I look forward to very much.

The Domenic di Luca Seniors are one of the largest and most active groups of seniors in York West. Under the leadership of their dynamic president, Julie di Luca, these energetic and lively seniors take part in programs that promote a healthy lifestyle. This includes events such as their visit today to Ottawa, a first for many of them.

I ask members of the House to join me in giving a warm welcome to the executive and members of the Domenic di Luca Seniors from York West.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to an issue that should have been raised last night but was not due to the petty politics of the Canadian Alliance.

In the past month I have been contacted by several families whose sons are soldiers currently serving in Afghanistan. In each case their boys have written home asking their loved ones to send them some food because of a shortage of acceptable rations in the field.

One case in particular is very disturbing because the soldier has lost over 30 pounds since he arrived there in February. We have often condemned the government for not supplying our soldiers with the equipment they need to do their jobs. It would now appear as though they are not even supplying them with food either.

The people of Canada are sick and tired of the government cutting corners and cutting costs when it comes to our military. The time has long passed for us to treat our men and women in uniform with the respect that they so richly deserve and send them the food they need.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

● (1420)

[English]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need to know whether the government is using its advertising and sponsorship programs to fund a kickback scheme.

Let us remember that Groupaction gave over \$70,000 to the Liberal Party at the same time that the government was paying it over \$1 million for three piles of meaningless photocopies.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister confirm that the police investigation into the government's corruption will examine this potential kickback scheme?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot confirm what a police investigation will involve because the police do their own investigations.

How do we know whether somebody has made a political contribution in Canada? We know because it is on a public register. It is declared publicly. It is open and transparent.

If one is trying to concoct some kind of illegal scheme it would be unusual to use a public disclosure system to do it.

Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals are all so clean why did one of their cabinet members have to send back \$25,000 after it was brought up?

Groupaction gave tens of thousands of dollars to the Liberal Party and in return received barrels of cash from the government for what? Nothing. That sponsorship program was a sham. Even the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs admitted that it had not done what the Prime Minister said it had done. Why was this money wasted? Perhaps it was because of a kickback scheme.

Why will the Deputy Prime Minister not assure Canadians that this possible cash for contract scheme will be included in the RCMP investigation?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am confused by the position of that party. On the one hand it says that the sponsorship program is a sham and on the other hand it writes letters to the government asking for funding under the sponsorship program.

The role of the program is to support community events and, in doing so, raise the profile of the federal government in all parts of the country. I applaud the Leader of the Opposition for seeking funding for his own project.

Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will stand shoulder to shoulder with my 120,000 heroic volunteer firefighters any day and the minister can stand shoulder to shoulder with his tulips.

Time and time again the government has manhandled many inquiries and investigations. Let us not forget APEC, Shawinigan, the Pearson airport inquiry and the wholly baseless airbus investigation.

How can Canadians be sure that this investigation will not be stage managed by the PMO? Why can Canadians not have a fully independent judicial inquiry into this mess?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we had a judicial inquiry at APEC because that was what opposition members asked for. The problem is that they did not like the results. The truth is that they want to go on a fishing expedition and that is not warranted in this case.

I want the hon. member to know that I am proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with his volunteer firefighters as well. I applaud his commitment to them. I am glad he asked the government for sponsorship money to support their event.

Oral Questions

Mr. John Reynolds: He gave the money to the tulips not to the firefighters.

* * *

COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that he did. He gave money to the tulips instead of the firefighters.

Let us look at the government's record when it comes to inquiries. We had an inquiry on the Somalia issue but when it got too close to the truth it was shut down. Will this inquiry be listened to by the government or will it be shut down if it gets too close to the sleaze and corruption?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we would like to remind the hon. member that the Somalia inquiry investigated a situation that occurred before this government was elected.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let us try the Krever inquiry which was an independent inquiry. The government let him complete his inquiry and then it completely ignored him. Krever said that compensation should be given to every single victim of hepatitis C but the government said no.

Will the government say no when this investigation is completed or will it listen to it?

• (1425)

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government, and I in particular, asked for the auditor general's report. The hon. members could not stand us saying yes to doing what was right. We did it anyway.

The auditor general's report will be tabled today. She will make recommendations and we will respond favourably to the recommendations of the auditor general when they are announced in some time from now.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Deputy Prime Minister defended the brazen misuse of public funds to keep Quebec from attaining sovereignty. He mentioned that Quebec had also procured advertising in *L'Almanach du peuple 2001* and that it was not free. He neglected to mention that, at \$252 per page, Quebec City got a much better price than Ottawa did, at \$6,369 per page.

Since the government is boasting about good management, can the Deputy Prime Minister explain to us today why Ottawa paid 25 times more than Quebec City for the same page?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the member got his figures, but 101 pages and \$650,000 are not the figures that he just mentioned.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we will come back to these figures; we have all the figures.

Yesterday, the parliamentary secretary misled the House by saying that we had paid the market rate. Yet, there cannot be two different markets.

So, today I am asking him to set the record straight, tell us the truth, act like a responsible parliamentarian and apologize.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite just made an allegation in which he used figures that were not accurate. I eagerly await his apology.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, just for the benefit of the minister of public works, \$650,000 for 100 pages works out to a hefty \$6,500 a page. This is a bit much.

Groupaction was paid a \$68,500 commission to act as a middleman between the federal government and *L'Almanach du peuple*. The government of Quebec paid \$30,000 less than the Groupaction commission alone for all these pages, including the sponsorship.

How does the government explain this?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again for the member opposite—and the Deputy Prime Minister pointed this out yesterday in the House—the Government of Canada took advantage of the opportunity to buy a number of pages in this publication, presenting in a non-partisan manner parliamentarians from both sides of the House and so forth. We did so at the going market rate, with no intention of wasting money.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the federal government explain that the price paid by Ottawa was 25 times higher—not two times higher, but 25 times higher—than the price paid by Quebec City for the same sponsorship in the same almanac, other than by admitting that their cronies took a very large cut?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is making allegations about so-called cronies.

This company, as well as all the others, were bidders in 2001. They first bid on a standing offer contract, and those on the standing offer list won a competitive process at the time.

* * *

SOCIÉTÉ RADIO-CANADA

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the scandals keep piling up with this government. Yet, during this crisis, the voice of Radio-Canada, which is a crucial source of public information, has been silenced.

Convenient, is it not? It may be convenient for the Liberals, but not for the public. The government must show leadership and provide the resources to solve this conflict.

Is it simpler for the government to send money to its friends and wait until the scandals are forgotten?

Oral Questions

•(1430)

Hon. Claudette Bradshaw (Minister of Labour and Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the union and the management of Radio-Canada met yesterday, May 7. They began a seven day blitz, during which they intend to settle the labour dispute.

I am patiently waiting, along with our mediators, for the conflict at Radio-Canada to be settled.

[*English*]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hear these words that I quote, "It's a strike. Your leaders from CSN don't tell you the truth. My husband is tough. He won't give up."

With those words, the CBC president's spouse dismissed the Radio Canada lockout as a dispute between the tough guy president and workers with illegitimate grievances.

From Moncton to Montreal to James Bay to Geneva, it is tough all right: tough for Canadians to get solid news from their public broadcaster.

Why is the government determined to abdicate all leadership while tough guy Rabinovitch perpetuates severe inequities and despicable labour practices?

Hon. Claudette Bradshaw (Minister of Labour and Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that when there is a strike and we are negotiating a collective agreement both the employees and the employers must come to the table. They must agree to a new collective agreement. If anybody should understand that, it is the hon. member.

We will not interfere. There are a lot of questions on the table. Yesterday they started a blitz. They are negotiating in good faith for a new collective agreement.

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GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, Groupaction, Challenger jets, Shawinigate, and the list goes on. The Liberals have so many skeletons in their closet they have rented another house.

Today we have learned that the RCMP may have to investigate Lafleur communications that, surprise, surprise, donated \$46,000 to the Liberal Party. Public money goes out, Liberal donations come in. It is the anatomy of corruption. At this rate we will have to open more embassies for the Prime Minister's cabinet and cronies. The plot of Liberal patronage thickens.

When will the government clear the air and call a full public inquiry?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some members of the House asked for the auditor general to prepare a report. I did precisely that.

The auditor general's report will be made public later this afternoon. I intend to table it in the House. She will, following that, be commenting to Canadians generally and to some members of

parliament. I will respond to that immediately after and no later than the end of the day this day.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): That is fine, Mr. Speaker, but an internal public audit shows that two companies, Groupaction and Groupe Everest, received 63% of the \$43 million dollar annual government sponsorship business. That is quite a return on a Liberal investment.

The RCMP has been implicated by association and having hired Lafleur communications, now owned by Groupaction, it may be in a conflict of interest if called upon to investigate them both. To protect the integrity and reputation of the RCMP, the Prime Minister should immediately call a public inquiry. This is an issue of honesty and public trust.

When will the government call a full public inquiry?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada contributed to the 125th anniversary of the RCMP. It contributes 100% of all other expenditures of the RCMP. To somehow state that constitutes a conflict of interest, I suppose one would have to have a conservative mind to understand that logic.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the prime Minister called home today and said that if there was any wrongdoing then those people would face the justice.

The auditor general has found plenty of wrongdoing: inflated contracts, contracts with no receipts, unqualified sole sourced contractors, all wrapped up with contributions back to the Liberal Party. All Canadian taxpayers demand justice on the mess the Liberals have made of their politically driven handout programs.

Will the Prime Minister allow his exiled crony in Denmark to come home and face the music or will the new public works minister take the fall?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Again, Mr. Speaker, the reason there is any inquiry at all is that the minister of public works asked the auditor general to look into it. The process will take its course.

However I reiterate, if there is knowledge about political contributions being made, it is not because somebody discovered it. They are on the public record. That transparency exists as part of our system and there is nothing illegal about firms making contributions to political parties, and it is public.

•(1435)

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canadian taxpayers truly appreciate the efforts of Sheila Fraser and her hardworking crew at the auditor general's office. Unfortunately today's report offers scrutiny in only one small area of corruption.

Public works is only the latest department from over there where the Canadians see hard evidence of waste, incompetence and political interference at the expense of taxpayers.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister send one of his new \$100 million Challengers to bring Alfonso Gagliano back here to answer for his questionable record at public expense, I mean public works?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is being pretty silly about this. The program was audited in the first place by an internal audit ordered in 2000 by the government. A follow up audit was requested by the minister of public works. The information is being disclosed this afternoon.

Every attempt on the part of the government has been made to ensure that all information has been made available and that the audit has been done properly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, not only has the government been very generous with the companies selected through a competition to co-ordinate its sponsorship program, it even went so far as to give \$31.9 million in contracts to Lafleur Communications Marketing, a firm that was not on the list of 15 companies selected after the 1995 and 1997 competitions.

How does the Deputy Prime Minister explain this violation of the government's own rules in the awarding of contracts, if it is not to reward friends for services rendered?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under my predecessor, a number of improvements were made to the federal contracting system, following an internal audit report requested by him in 2000. It is on the basis of that internal audit report that the contracting system was improved and that new calls for tenders were made in 2001. As for future improvements, we will have to wait until later today.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when one refers to one's predecessor, it is because things do not smell too good. The stench of scandal is spreading and, after the revelations made about Public Works Canada, we have now learned that Canadian heritage suffers from the same syndrome and is awarding contracts without calls for tenders.

Does the government realize that an independent public inquiry is becoming more urgent by the day?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the contract that we awarded, we included appendix C and schedule 3 to comply with all the Treasury Board rules.

[*English*]

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have had enough stonewalling. It is time for the government to start co-operating with investigations into corruption. Canadians want answers, not more excuses. To this end, Alfonso Gagliano must appear before investigators.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister do the right thing and bring the ambassador home right now?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians are getting a little tired of allegations without any

facts. Canadians are tired of hearing allegations that this and that is a scandal and that this and that is wrong without any facts. It is just one giant fishing expedition.

There is a program. Opposition members like it. They like the money that they can ask for under it. If there are administrative problems, we will deal with them. If they have been handled badly, the auditor general will report on that. If there is further action required, of course the government will continue to provide all co-operation that is requested by anyone who is investigating it.

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, if it is a fishing expedition, why is the auditor general looking into it? Alfonso Gagliano must give answers. This matter is too serious for more Liberal stonewalling. The blatant waste of taxpayer money and a possible kickback scheme now demands accountability.

Why will the government not tell Alfonso Gagliano to come home immediately?

• (1440)

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, because no one looking at the matter is asking for it. Why is the auditor general looking at it? Because we asked her to.

This standing up and making allegations of kickbacks; why do these people not step outside the protection of parliamentary privilege? If they have something that they believe is a kickback, it is against the law, make the allegation outside. If they have any facts, produce the facts and the people responsible will be prosecuted under the law, and we will applaud it.

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[*Translation*]

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry is now becoming the mouthpiece of the oil lobby against the Kyoto protocol. On the one hand, he is undermining the agreement from within, by recommending that his colleagues not support ratification, and on the other, he is undermining it from without, by demanding fossil fuel export credits, totally contrary to the logic of the protocol.

Is the minister's new approach not just one more indication of the government's intention to reconsider ratification of the Kyoto protocol and the Bonn and Marrakech agreements?

[*English*]

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not at all. I have made clear on many occasions in the House the government's position. Further, we intend to proceed as we indicated back in 1997 when all first ministers, including the Prime Minister and also the Premier of Alberta, made it clear what the approach should be in handling the issue of ratification of Kyoto. We are doing that, exactly as planned some years ago. We are right on track.

I applaud the hon. member for his interest in the subject, but there is no change on the government side in terms of position.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, now the Minister of Natural Resources is adding his voice to that of the Minister of Industry in this mad rush to defend the oil lobby. Not only does the Minister of Industry want Canada to shirk its environmental and international responsibilities, but the Minister of Natural Resources goes still further by saying that plan B would have to be adopted instead of Kyoto.

Will the minister admit that this is just one more confirmation that Canada is renegeing on its intention to ratify the Kyoto protocol?

[English]

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the information from the federal-provincial-territorial committee is made public, which we expect to be in very short order, then there will be a number of options considered by Canadians from coast to coast.

We fully expect all sorts of other organizations, be they from industry or the provinces, also to put forward their views as to what makes an appropriate way for Canada to achieve its goals, which were made back in 1997.

No doubt, there will be many plans, many approaches and many suggestions and we will welcome all of them.

* * *

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have to say to the Deputy Prime Minister that if this is a fishing expedition, it is one that is about to hook some Liberal bottom feeders.

The auditor general will bring down her indictment later today and she will find that inflated contracts are going to Liberal friends.

When will the government seek the extradition of the Prime Minister from Spain to come back and deal with these serious charges?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that question is not worthy of a reply.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I say "if the glove fits, you must convict". This is the most serious scandal that this Prime Minister has ever faced and that is saying a lot. Gagliano was shipped off to Denmark as damage control. We have the immigration minister who has been muzzled now and the stink is really starting to spread.

When will the government call in an independent judge to take charge of this contracts for cronies controversy?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, is the member suggesting that the auditor general is not independent? A moment ago the opposition members were applauding her and her staff.

The independence is there. The auditor general makes certain recommendations. I hope that the member will stand and apologize for suggesting that somehow or other it was an indictment.

If there is evidence of criminal activity, let them bring it forward. I can say to the hon. member that we on this side will welcome the aggressive prosecution under criminal proceedings of anyone who has committed a criminal act because we too would condemn it

* * *

● (1445)

[Translation]

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, in response to my question, the government House leader admitted that the system for private members' business was not working well, to say the least, and invited us to take part in a round table. Last week, I and about thirty other members did just that. The discussions were productive. A number of consensuses seem to be emerging.

My question is for the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. When does he expect to report to the House on what was discussed at this round table so that we can take this further?

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

[English]

The standing committee has been working hard on private members' business. We want to thank all members who participated in the round table on private members' business.

Suggestions from that round table will be used by our steering committee to plan further steps to strengthen private members' business. The steering committee will meet the first Tuesday after the break and the member's concerns will be addressed at that time.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

The real corruption story, so to speak, in the House is not just Groupaction; it is the way the Liberal position on Kyoto has been corrupted. It has gone from one of commitment to one of cowardice now when it comes to the Kyoto accord.

The Minister of the Environment used to talk about his intention, then he talked about his preference and now he is talking about having to make a decision. The Liberal government's position on Kyoto has changed. Perhaps he could explain why the position has changed and when it is going to go back to being what it was, which was one of ratification.

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a press release back in 1997 following the Kyoto agreement stated that the first ministers agreed to establish a process in advance of Canada's ratification of the Kyoto protocol that will examine the consequences of Kyoto and provide for full participation of the provincial and territorial governments with the federal government in any implementation and management of the protocol.

We are following a plan laid out some years ago by a joint decision of the Prime Minister and the premiers of the provinces and territories. I fail to see how there has been any change in what I have just read out.

* * *

AIRLINE SECURITY

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government security tax on air travellers, Canada's new GST, is just a cynical Liberal tax grab preying on people's anxiety since the events of September 11. Take the airport in Thompson, Manitoba. People who fly from Thompson to Winnipeg have to pay the tax even though the airport is not required to have security.

Why is the Minister of Finance making people pay for security they are not receiving? Will he not admit this was an ill-conceived tax grab and repeal it immediately?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport has already explained that extensive security measures have already been put in place throughout the entire airline system. Further measures are going in week after week. The situation is being brought up to where it really must be. The government has made it very clear that it is not going to make any money on this but it is going to ask those who benefit from the service to pay for it.

I simply remind the hon. member that of the \$7.5 billion in national security expenditures, over \$5.5 billion were paid for by the general taxpaying public.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear from the sponsorship affair that the government is suffering from a political gangrene, which is slowly but surely eating away at its core.

Its system of patronage, perhaps corruption is a better word, leaves an odour of abject political decomposition on the other side of the House.

When are we going to get an independent public inquiry?

● (1450)

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member can use all the colourful language he likes but, if he does not mind my saying so, it will not get him very far.

The fact remains that the auditor general gave me her report, which I will be tabling in about 11 minutes. I am told that she will appear before a parliamentary committee at that time and that she will have a statement for the press at 3.30 p.m. I will give my reactions immediately afterwards.

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, Lafleur, Groupaction, Polygone, Columbia, Everest, and so on—with each passing week, we learn more and more about how taxpayers' money has been squandered in the sponsorship scandal. An RCMP investigation is in the works, and a good thing.

Oral Questions

But if the Prime Minister, who is in Europe, really wanted to save taxpayers money, could he not take Alfonso by the hand and bring him home to face the RCMP's questions and, at the same time, suspend the sponsorship program for the companies involved?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear baseless allegations. The member is making allegations without any information to back them up.

We have already pointed out that it was the minister himself who asked the auditor general to conduct an investigation. This afternoon, we will table the auditor general's report. I think it would behoove the member to have a little patience.

* * *

[English]

DANGEROUS OFFENDERS

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, habitual killer Conrad Brossard was arrested this week for the rape and murder of Cécile Clément. Brossard was on a day parole, courtesy of the National Parole Board despite its noting that he had difficulty managing aggressive impulses during previous attempts at release. We do not need any lengthy and expensive investigation to tell us that the parole board messed up, that it made the wrong decision, that it was negligent and therefore should be held accountable.

We ask the solicitor general, how many more Canadians have to lose their lives before he puts a stop to the early release of dangerous offenders?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a tragedy. Our sympathy certainly goes to the family and to the community.

I have expressed my deep concern of this tragedy to Correctional Service Canada and the National Parole Board. They are launching a board of investigation into the matter. They have assured me that they will have a full and thorough review.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this is a tragedy that is happening far too frequently in this country.

Conrad Brossard is but one more indictment against the faulty parole system and the failure of Correctional Service Canada to effectively rehabilitate career criminals. Dan Brisson, Dennis Strongquill, Mike Templeton and Benoit L'Écuyer are all police officers who were shot by parolees.

When will the solicitor general do the right thing and scrap the accelerated release programs that push dangerous offenders back into our communities?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is a tragedy and I have expressed my concern to Correctional Service Canada and the National Parole Board. There will be a full review of this very unacceptable incident.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the unanimous report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities is now one year old. The nightmares generated by the employment insurance program continue to pile up. There are hundreds of victims of the department's inaction: the self-employed, seasonal workers, older unemployed workers, workers related to business owners, pregnant women and youth.

Are we to interpret the minister's lack of action as a sign that the government has permanently resigned itself to doing nothing to rectify the flagrant injustices in the EI program?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Not at all, Mr. Speaker. We have made many changes to employment insurance to help workers.

We eliminated the intensity rule, established small weeks, improved access to benefits for seasonal workers, doubled maternity and parental leave, helped parents return to the workforce, eliminated the waiting period for apprentices, reduced the premiums for eight years in a row, amended the rule on reimbursements and more.

• (1455)

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, mostly, the government has misappropriated \$40 billion that belongs to the unemployed. The EI program is a disgrace to this government.

Given the promises made during the election by several ministers and members sitting in the House, is the government not ashamed of refusing to rectify these nightmares generated by its EI system? Will it put an end to the misappropriation of funds belonging to the unemployed?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, we have not hesitated in acting to help workers.

The real disgrace is that the Bloc Québécois often voted against changes that we proposed to help these workers.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the international trade distorting U.S. farm bill will cripple Canadian farmers. Net income on many farms is already well below the national poverty level. The government must shoulder its responsibility for international trade and keep our agriculture competitive in the face of U.S. subsidies.

Will the agriculture minister announce a trade injury compensation program today?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said in the House yesterday, I had a very good meeting with my provincial colleagues on Monday and

Tuesday of this week. We discussed a number of issues including the agriculture policy framework and our concerns over the American farm bill. I pledged at that time that the government will seek every way to challenge and to counter the effects of the United States farm bill on our Canadian producers.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we cannot wait forever. It is going to be a sorry sight when we see the agriculture minister go into cabinet on bended knee to ask the finance minister to do something.

I am wondering if the finance minister will provide any program money to implement a trade injury compensation program. He has the dollars. Let him stand up and say whether or not there is anything for Canadian farmers.

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member is not telling me he does not want me to go into cabinet. I will go in standing proudly with Canadian farmers. The government has shown before that when Canadian farmers needed assistance we gave them all the resources we possibly could to help them.

We solicit the support of the provinces. Some of them have been there, with considerable pressure in the past. I trust they will be there with us again.

* * *

SPORTS

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Richmond, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been media reports alleging discrimination with regard to the Government of Canada's—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. I know the hon. member is a popular member, but we have to hear his question. It is impossible to hear. The hon. member for Richmond has the floor. I stress this to all hon. members.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: Mr. Speaker, there have been media reports alleging discrimination with regard to the Government of Canada's funding of Canadian professional sports teams. Could the minister of public works set the record straight?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 1999 the Government of Canada has sponsored all Canadian professional hockey teams. Every team receives \$150,000 annually in sponsorships.

I cannot wish the Ottawa Senators good luck tonight, but I will wish all three Canadian teams good luck.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the environment minister said that he continues to promote Kyoto because of the opportunities it might afford. The only opportunity Kyoto affords is for an unwieldy bureaucracy to enforce the draconian restrictions. Studies which show benefits to Canada are based on outdated economic methods and unrealistic assumptions.

Why will the government not seize on the real opportunities and do more to promote conservation, all kinds of transitional fuels and alternate energy?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have major programs in this area. I must get together with my hon. friend. Perhaps we could have lunch together and I could go over the many programs in this area where we are promoting this.

I might add that in his own home province of Alberta, MLA Denis Ducharme is the chairman of the Alberta Energy Research Institute. I do not think that could be a conflict of interest, but nevertheless he is an MLA as well. I am pleased that he said, and I am quoting from a newspaper “Kyoto targets are reachable in a time frame not far off the Kyoto 2012 deadline”.

That is pretty good. I am pleased that Alberta is with us on this.

• (1500)

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I suggest he listen to the premier and some of the other members there and the environment minister.

I would also say it is pathetic what the government has put toward alternate energy. While the Americans have put \$4.6 billion toward alternate energy, he is talking \$5 million to \$6 million. It is pathetic.

Has the minister not noticed that his whole caucus is abandoning him? The ministers of finance, natural resources, industry and the Deputy Prime Minister are abandoning him.

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is another case where the Alliance members find the spending programs of the government are small and insignificant because of course we are so responsible fiscally. They believe in major expenditure.

I am delighted to hear the support of the Alliance Party for substantial increases in the amount of money we put into alternate energy and into research. We are delighted to see this change of heart.

With respect to the Alberta government, my hon. friend said in *Hansard* on April 18 “it is not reasonable that Canada should get credit for American emissions reductions”. Here is what the minister from Alberta said—

The Speaker: The minister will have to save that for another day. The hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY ACT

Ms. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a letter addressed to the Minister of Transport, the privacy commissioner is calling upon the government to respond to his objections to Bill C-55 on public safety, certain provisions of which he claims are a step toward totalitarianism.

How does the Deputy Prime Minister intend to respond to the privacy commissioner's concerns?

Mr. André Harvey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the privacy commissioner has merely said that he wishes to see the measures proposed by Bill C-55 implemented as promptly as possible. That is what we are proposing with Bill C-55.

* * *

[English]

ENERGY

Mr. Raymond Bonin (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Minister of Natural Resources participated in the meeting of the G-8 energy ministers that was held last week in Detroit.

My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. What were the outcomes of the meeting of the G-8 energy ministers and how will this outcome help Canada and other countries meet sustainable development objectives?

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of co-chairing the G-8 energy ministers meeting in Detroit last week, and along with me was the member for Athabasca, the critic for natural resources. We had an opportunity to talk about the most important global issues that affect energy. We talked about things like renewable energy, diversification of energy and how we can make sure that we have technology transfer and information sharing.

This is very important in terms of looking to the future, 10 to 20 years ahead, so that the global community can come together to help the developing world and to make sure it can develop its energy in a sustainable way so that we can build a better future for the world.

* * *

GUN REGISTRY

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the previous Minister of Justice said she was fully accountable and responsible for the Canadian firearms program, but yesterday in the House the Minister of Justice blamed the Quebec provincial police for issuing “Mom” Boucher's firearms permit. It appears that the new minister is accountable for everything in his department except the mistakes.

When will the minister start to take some responsibility for the huge mistakes in the gun registry?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a strange question. The member knows I am accountable for the firearms program. He knows that very well. He knows what I said yesterday, but if he does not know, he should maybe know better.

Actually, the question he is referring to is covered by the Privacy Act and based on the Privacy Act I cannot comment about any individuals who have access to the program across Canada. It is as simple as that.

* * *

• (1505)

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in connection with the preferential treatment of Dorval over Mirabel, the Minister of Transport stated yesterday, “Naturally, it is important to respect leases and I am not aware of the existence of any problem with the lease between ADM and the Canadian government. Both are international airports”. Yet the lease is very clear on the concept of “major international airport”. It is a matter of transporting freight and passengers.

How can the Minister of Transport honestly state that the lease is being respected and that Mirabel retains major international airport status, when ADM—

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport.

Mr. André Harvey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Quebecois are the only ones prepared to demand the resignation of the ADM board before they have had a chance to say a single word. If the Bloc does not want to follow our advice, I recommend it follow that of Pauline Marois, “It is wiser to wait until ADM gives us an indication of its plans before reaching any conclusion”.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Baroness Cox of Queensbury, Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and guest speaker at tomorrow's national prayer breakfast.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

The Speaker: I have the honour to table the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation that travelled to Japan from March 25 to 30, 2002.

[English]

I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation to China, from March 30 to April 6, 2002.

* * *

[Translation]

AUDITOR GENERAL

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the request I made to the auditor general on March 19 and also to the commitment made on that same day, it is my duty to table in the House the report of the auditor general on three sponsorship contracts.

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[English]

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, in both official languages, a number of order in council appointments made recently by the government.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

• (1510)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, entitled “Registration of Pesticides and the Competitiveness of Canadian Farmers”.

This is an unanimous report from the committee. All parties are concerned with the operation of the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, the regulations it has and how they affect Canadian agriculture. I would urge the minister to reply to the report as soon as possible so that Canadian farmers can use that agency in an effective way during this crop year.

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the eighteenth report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Sub-committee on Human Rights and International Development held hearings on human rights development and other matters in Colombia and prepared this report as a result of testimony received in Ottawa and Colombia.

Routine Proceedings

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, your committee requests that the government provide a comprehensive response within 150 days of the tabling of this report in the House of Commons.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-463, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (arm's length dealing).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to introduce a bill that would end discrimination against workers who do not deal with their employers at arm's length. This type of discrimination has been recognized by the Canadian Human Rights Commission. This legislation would be particularly helpful to our small and medium size businesses and especially to our family businesses.

This is one of the horrors that can be found in our current EI system.

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

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PETITIONS

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of presenting a petition concerning rural mail carriers. We know that they often earn less than minimum wage and that they do not have the right to collective bargaining.

Therefore, I present this petition to have paragraph 13(5) of the Canada Post Corporation Act repealed.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague, the member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, and pursuant to Standing Order 36, I also want to present a petition concerning rural mail carriers.

WORKERS OF MURDOCHVILLE

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition that was signed in just a few hours by several hundred people in Murdochville, during a visit by the leader of the Bloc Québécois.

The petitioners are calling on the federal government to take some practical steps so that the workers being laid off because of the shutdown of the smelting plant can be reinstated, find another job or receive adequate compensation.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to be so kind as to call Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-33 in the name of the hon. member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore.

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all documentation, including reports, minutes of meetings, notes, e-mail, memos and correspondence since 1994 within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans pertaining to the Tulsequah Chief Mine.

• (1515)

Mr. Geoff Regan: Insofar as the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is concerned the Motion for the Production of Papers is deemed unacceptable due to the following practical considerations in responding to this motion:

One, the documentation since 1994 is voluminous and is housed in Ottawa at various current and archived files and other sources: Vancouver and Smithers, B.C., and Whitehorse, Yukon.

Two, the documentation would require an extraordinary length of time to compile, given the various source locations and the need to apply access to information and privacy, ATIP, criteria, which means identifying legal opinions, papers dealing with international relations and possibly affecting future foreign relations, papers affecting federal-provincial relations and requiring consent of the province, and commercial and confidential mining process information provided by a third party. It is estimated that it would take approximately two to three months to compile this information and a further two to three months to have it reviewed by officials of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Department of Justice.

Three, much of the federal documentation is readily available to the public on British Columbia's provincial website, www.eao.gov.bc.ca, and is part of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act public registry.

Four, almost all documentation is in English only and would require translation. The cost would be at least \$30,000.

Five, likely this amount of effort toward addressing the motion could cause delay in co-ordinating the department's Canadian Environmental Assessment Act screening reports since the same individuals could be involved in both exercises.

Given the excessive costs and staff time required, we respectfully ask the hon. member to withdraw his motion and submit a more specific request.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that this matter be transferred for debate.

The Speaker: The motion is transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

Mr. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all other Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SPECIES AT RISK ACT

The House resumed from April 29 consideration of Bill C-5, an act respecting the protection of wildlife species at risk in Canada, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 4.

Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will state clearly at the outset that our party supports good legislation that would protect species at risk or endangered species. The problem is that we do not have good legislation before us. This is slapped together legislation. After 10 years the government still does not have the ethics counsellor straight so there is no reason it should have the bill straight either.

The committee did outstanding work but its work has been ignored by the faceless string pullers in the office of the Prime Minister. That is unfortunate. It demeans the work of all hon. members and leaves them wondering why they came here. We all believed that by coming here we could work on important issues that mattered to all Canadians. We believed there would be satisfaction in helping develop legislation connected with the issues.

The standing committee had required that stewardship action plans include a commitment to eliminate disincentives and regularly examine tax treatments and subsidies. The Prime Minister wants the words deleted but they are vitally important. They demonstrate that compensation is not only a cash payment but could involve other tax treatments vital to farmers and property owners.

While government always wants to create incentives and programs it must be forced to confront the realities of disincentives, the reasons people do not respond the way ivory tower bureaucrats think they should. Instead of giving property owners real assistance by sharing data about endangered species or configuring their property to protect sensitive habitat, the government might drop them a postcard. We thank the Prime Minister for making our lives so easy.

Environmental protection and the protection of species at risk should be viewed as a full partnership between the legislated and those who write and enact the legislation. That was the attitude of the standing committee but it is not the attitude of the Prime Minister.

The standing committee had another good idea: a review of the act every five years. It seems reasonable. However the drones in the Prime Minister's Office decided it should not be automatic. They said it should be left to parliament to decide when a review is necessary. As we all know in this parliament and most others, this means the Prime Minister could have a review whenever he had a whim. Committee members from both sides thought a five year review was good. However it was not good enough for the Prime Minister or the PMO. What happens if a species flourishes and is no longer in need of protection?

The Prime Minister is wrong to have done that. It would put the onus on parliament and remove an opportunity for greater accountability and public involvement. The Prime Minister only wants public involvement at election time. Come the next election the Prime Minister will be surprised at how involved the public will be. It will involve the government right out the revolving door.

I served as environment minister in British Columbia. I ran as open a department as I could. I wanted to hear the public and employees of my department. I did hear them. I am proud of the things we accomplished during my watch. How many people will be able to look back a few years from now and say they are proud to have had anything at all to do with this legislation?

The Prime Minister has corrupted the committee process and its work by overruling its well studied and well intentioned suggestions for change. Now we hear he has ordered the whip to be cracked. Anyone in his party who does not vote for this bureaucratic nightmare will join the endangered species list. That is a great way to run a government. He appoints members to a committee, lets them work long hours on legislation and then ignores their every recommendation.

We have all been through this in the House. Members on the justice committee, the health committee, the environment committee and many others worked long hours only to see the faceless bureaucrats in the PMO through the ministers on that side eliminate what all committee members had decided were good ideas. The justice minister is shaking his head. When I was justice critic we would get to the end of the committee process, we would all agree and then bang, our work went out the window. It was the same on the health committee.

● (1525)

The immigration committee was the same. Prior to September 11 we recommended scanners at all airports coming into Canada. We told the government to make sure it checked people. The Liberals all agreed with the idea. The day before the report was to come out the government called a meeting and cancelled it through the faceless bureaucrats in the PMO. Shame on them.

One of the government's own members had a private member's bill in the House. It went to the justice committee. It came back with every section blank. Was that fair? The faceless bureaucrats struck again. The government does not trust its own members in the committees of the House of Commons. That is absolutely shameful.

Government Orders

This has never been more evident than in the bill before us. Members on the Liberal side as well as other members in the House worked hard to come up with its many recommendations. What happened when the bill came back at report stage? They had gone. They disappeared. We have not heard any good reasons. We have been told it is what the minister wants. It is what he has been told by the PMO and the lawyers. By God, we need a change. We not only need a change of government. We need to change a lot of the lawyers we have been hiring around this place.

When the current Minister of Health was justice minister we had a bill on extradition. The policy had not been changed in 100 years but she brought in the changes. I got a couple of good lawyers and we tabled 13 amendments. We got them all through committee. I give the lawyers credit for that because they were experts.

I asked them later how we got them all approved in committee. Why had the government not done that in the first place? Why did we have to make the recommendations? The answer was that the government's lawyers like the amendments to be challenged so they can go to court and make a few more bucks for themselves and their friends. Those are the facts. The government should go back and read its bill. The amendments were approved by the committee and the government's lawyers. The government did not recommend them. The lawyers wanted more business. That is what happens in all legislation.

The government does not want to put into Bill C-5 that it would pay fair compensation at fair market value because market value is easy to figure out. The government wants the lawyers to be able to go to court and fight over what it is. Government members should be ashamed of themselves. They want Bill C-5 to have to go to the lawyers. It wants poor people whose land could be expropriated to have to hire lawyers. Does the government not realize the average person is scared to death when the word lawyer comes up? Most people are scared to death when they have to talk to a lawyer. They are scared of walking into a strange office and hiring someone to protect their rights and freedoms.

What is wrong with fair market value? Why is the government so afraid to pay Canadians fair market value for their land? They do it in British Columbia. We set up a program so people could get fair market value. People are allowed to hire their own appraisers. The government hires one. If they do not agree a third is brought in to break the deadlock. However members on the other side do not like that. They do not believe in true democracy. The Prime Minister appoints members to committee, lets them work long hours and then ignores their every recommendation.

A lot of people are focused on the issue of corruption in the government. However I hope Canadians will look carefully at Bill C-5 and realize how flawed it is. The flaws came only after the Prime Minister introduced them. If he had respect for the members of his party who worked so hard on the committee we might have legislation before us of which we could all be proud. It is unfortunate that the Prime Minister would rather spend his time on world jaunts in his new \$100 million luxury jets than on drafting thoughtful legislation that would benefit all Canadians. Bill C-5 will haunt future governments almost as much it will haunt innocent Canadians who are caught by it.

I appeal to all courageous backbenchers who have been holding up the bill whether they are Liberal, opposition or whatever stripe. They should stand and fight. The environment is one of the most important issues for our children and grandchildren. Bill C-5 is no good the way it is drafted, and a number of Liberal members know it. I appeal to them not to weaken. They should not succumb to the threat that they will have no nomination in the next election. They should stand and fight. We can all win and give Canadians a good endangered species legislation.

Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, everyone who has participated in the debate on Bill C-5, the species at risk act, agrees on the value of wildlife, the need to prevent species from becoming endangered and the need to protect those already at risk. That is the point of the bill.

Bill C-5 is one of the most complex pieces of legislation. The dynamics between the standing committee, the minister and the department have been quite confusing to say the least. There have been many amendments back and forth. I congratulate the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, my colleague from Davenport who is the chair, and all his colleagues on the committee for the hard work they have put into the bill.

However I think we can agree on a basic point. The government has been confounded for many years by the question of how to satisfy the many people who have a stake in the lands and waters where these species are found. These people have dedicated their lives to conservation issues and want to see something done in law. They come from different points of view and have different interests. The government has tried to ensure their voices are heard. It has tried to ensure the bill would work in Canada's constitutional context. Above all, it has tried to ensure it is fair and workable.

Some 125 amendments or motions were put forward by the standing committee. The government has accepted 75, which not a bad batting average depending on which amendments they are. I will be looking at the standing committee's amendments as they come forward. I will be supporting some of them. I still have concerns about the compensation issue and the listing process. I hope the government listens again to the amendments and acts on them, but at the end of the day I will be supporting Bill C-5.

Why will I be doing that? After nearly nine years of listening and adjusting it is time to get the legislation in place. While this has been going on species have become more threatened. Some have perhaps disappeared. In my office in Etobicoke North I have a photograph of a majestic grizzly bear in the Khutzeymateen valley in British Columbia. Mercifully, it is not an endangered species but it is time for us to act.

Government Orders

Even if the bill is not perfect and does not satisfy everyone we need to get the legislation in place. We have the co-operative relationships we need to deliver protection on a national basis across the country. Let us get going and provide Canadians with the legislative tools needed to get the job done.

Part of the job involves the people in the Chamber. I will talk about the role Canadians expect their members of parliament to fulfill. When a woodlot owner decides to harvest a section of his property the individual has a number of decisions to make. He must decide how many trees to harvest, the timing of the harvesting based on market prices, et cetera. When a farmer makes a decision about planting or harvesting many factors are taken into account as well. When a rancher closes off a pasture for a year or two it is because it is in the best interests of the land and the herd.

These people elect us as representatives. They expect us to understand the decisions they must make and the lives they live. However they are not the only people who elect us. Others with many different interests are at the ballot box.

Why do I mention who sent us here? It is because we must think of them all. That is our job. They hold us accountable for the decisions that affect their lives so we must design laws that allow us to do our job. We must be accountable.

We are not asking that politicians decide if the right whale is endangered or the piping plover's numbers are decreasing. Scientists alone would make the assessments and decide where species should be placed on the list of those at risk. It would be done through the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada.

• (1530)

For the first time in federal legislation this organization will be legally recognized as part of the assessment and listing process. The bill before us would include assessments of the status of species that would be scientific, expert and independent. They would be done at arm's length from government and away from any social and economic pressures.

Anyone can see the scientific decisions at any time. Decisions and findings by the committee on the status of endangered wildlife in Canada would be published in a public registry. The government and elected members of parliament must decide on whether to add a species to the legal list.

The moment it goes on that list a number of processes kick in under the act. For example, there are automatic prohibitions against the killing or harming of listed species and their habitats; there are mandatory plans that are required to be put together within specific timeframes for recovery of the species from dangerously low numbers; and finally, and just as important, the process under the law allows for the authority to take emergency action to protect habitat.

The decisions made under these processes could involve serious economic or social implications, particularly in rural areas that depend on fishing, farming and ranching. As I emphasized earlier, this would be the government's job. We are the ones to make these decisions because we are here to decide on such matters. We cannot ask this of scientists. It is just not fair.

We are the ones who must be accountable to those who put us here. We agree that the decisions must be timely. The bill would place a 90 day timeline for the development of the ministerial response to a committee on the status of endangered wildlife in Canada assessment. The minister must report annually to parliament on each of the committee's assessments and the minister's response to them. None of this would be done in secrecy. In fact, anyone at any time would be able to see the process in action through the public registry. It is a demonstration of the government's commitment to transparency.

With all these facts in hand concerned groups and the general public could hold the decision makers accountable for action that would be taken as well as action that would not be taken. As further evidence of the seriousness with which the government sees the need for timely action on species assessments from the committee on the status of endangered wildlife in Canada the government has already added 233 species to the initial legal list. The committee has assessed every single species with its updated criteria in the past few years.

It is time to look beyond the rhetoric. It is time to recognize that in the true spirit of the Canadian constitution we have formed legislation based on partnerships. The assessment and listing is just one such partnership. We rely on the expertise of scientists to determine the threats and status, and the expertise of elected members of parliament to move forward on actions that address those threats and status. Now we must get on with it.

• (1535)

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, we are debating a group of amendments to the species at risk bill. There are five groups of amendments and they are grouped to make it easier to debate certain common themes. This debate is on Group No. 4 and there are a number of amendments in this group.

I would like to affirm what all other members who have spoken have affirmed and that is that all Canadians would like to see species at risk preserved and protected for our future, our children, the protection of our environment and our own enjoyment. This is a bill that Canadians have an interest in, not only for now but for the future. The Canadian Alliance supports the intent of the bill which is to protect endangered species.

Unfortunately the bill is flawed. It fails to strike a reasonable balance between the interests in Canadian society of protecting endangered species and their environmental habitat, of protecting the legacy and the livelihood of many people in Canada, and the interests of the economic realities of any action taken by government.

I would suggest the House consider that the flaws in the bill are linked to the fact that government and officials in government have a poor track record of properly and satisfactorily administering some of these government activities. It is up to members of parliament to ensure that any uncertainties, any lack of proper balance in the way the government proceeds are addressed in the bill. We know from bitter experience that unless legislation is clear, unless proper balances are struck immediately in the legislation, that sometimes unintended consequences can take place.

Government Orders

I refer, for example, to today's auditor general's report on three contracts which were administered by the government, contracts for \$0.5 million, \$0.5 million plus \$50,000, and \$0.5 million plus \$75,000. The auditor general found that the government, in administering just these three contracts, and the senior public servants responsible for managing the contracts, demonstrated an appalling disregard for the Financial Administration Act, the government contracts regulations, Treasury Board policy and the rules designed to ensure prudence and probity in government procurement.

The auditor general said the government files on the three contracts were so poorly documented that many key questions remain unanswered surrounding the selection of the contractor and the basis for establishing the price and scope of work for the contracts.

The auditor general's opinion was that the government did not receive much of what it contracted and paid for. This is just one example that was tabled minutes ago in the House of how government bureaucracies and government ministries completely fail to protect public interest or even follow their own rules when they are dealing with public moneys.

I emphasize that this is just one example giving us reason as members of parliament to ensure that flaws in a bill which can affect the livelihood, the future and the families of people involved in legislation are protected as strongly as possible.

● (1540)

Unfortunately in Bill C-5 that is not the case. I would like to suggest some of the concerns that we have with the bill. For some reason many of the recommendations made by an all-party committee dominated by Liberal members were ignored by the government. Many of the amendments that we are dealing with are efforts by the Prime Minister's Office to reverse the work of our members of parliament.

Members of parliament should take this extremely seriously. This is our work. This is our judgment that is being overruled, overturned, and interfered with by civil servants who, as the auditor general just said, demonstrated, in the case she investigated, an appalling disregard for the legal rules that they were supposed to follow.

We should become concerned when we see the same situation with respect to overturning the judgment, the work and the proposals of members of the committee. Many of these amendments are overturning legitimate work and judgments made by hard working, dedicated, and concerned members of parliament on an important issue, endangered species.

We have, for example, a rather odd determination by these amendments to overturn a recommendation that a national aboriginal council be set up. It would now be a national aboriginal committee. We have a whole bunch of amendments in this group to change the word council to committee. Why? Who knows why? It has never been explained.

The House committee which had a predominance of Liberal members suggested, proposed and recommended one way but all of a sudden it needed to be another way.

Then we have something called stewardship action plans which omit the committee recommendation to look at tax treatment and subsidies as a component of compensation for landowners who are affected by the legislation. Some individuals have decided they do not want to look at tax treatment or subsidies, so that is being taken out in these amendments. Looking at disincentives to comply with the legislation has been ruled out. The recommendation that we examine disincentives and deal with disincentives to comply is being taken out by one of these amendments.

We have an all party recommendation that the government provide technical and scientific support to people whose lands and activities would be affected by the legislation. However, the government does not want to give them scientific and technical support. It wants to give them information, not scientific and technical information, just information. It could be anything. It could be a letter saying that everyone is on their own and that it is hoped no one is jailed for breaching the regulations in the act. We do not know what information means but that word is good enough for the government.

We have a requirement agreed to by all members of the committee that the legislation be reviewed every five years. We are dealing with people's livelihoods, with changing ecological conditions, and with changing movement in the numbers of endangered species, and yet the government does not want to review this every five years. It wants to let the thing go on and on, on auto pilot, without considering the rapidly changing circumstances that would be inherently coming about as the bill is in effect.

We have a whole list of amendments that deal with public consultation and publishing of action plans. We feel there will not be the kind of transparency, openness and public input that Canadians have a right to expect in a mature democracy. We must recognize this when we are dealing with people's legacies. Many people that would be affected had ancestors and families that homesteaded the land. Their families have been on the land for decades if not centuries. They have farmed the land and they have ranched the land. This is their legacy. Their roots are in this country and yet we are asking them to be responsible for government activities with no clear compensation plan.

● (1545)

We are prepared to make them permanently liable, even if they never knew they were breaching or never intended to breach the provisions of this act. Worst of all, this is being done to Canadians in the face of recommendations of members of parliament from all parties in the House. The government is simply overruling some of the common sense recommendations of our own House committee.

I would certainly urge members of the House to uphold not only the spirit but the clear intent of the House committee on the legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am please to speak to this bill today. For those listening, it is important to recall that we are debating the Species at Risk Act at report stage.

Government Orders

I am going to explain why the Bloc Quebecois is opposed to this bill and to the government's approach, which has taken the form of the various groups of amendments considered at report stage.

The bill's preamble reads as follows, and I quote:

the Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council is to provide national leadership for the protection of species at risk, including the provision of general direction to the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada in respect of that Committee's activities and general directions in respect of the development, coordination and implementation of recovery efforts,

In other words, with a bill which we are told respects provincial jurisdiction, we have a situation where the federal government once again wants to interfere in matters which do not concern it. It wants to tell the provinces how to go about things, without necessarily seeking their consent. That is why the Bloc Quebecois is opposed to this bill. It also opposed a number of amendments put forward by the government so that, ultimately, we could have a bill respecting provincial jurisdiction.

The wording of the bill is not such as to respect provincial jurisdiction, or the essential aspects of the protection of habitat in so far as the provinces are concerned. In fact, all indications are that the minister has the power to impose his vision of protection on the provinces when he deems it necessary. It is a bit paternalistic. Under this approach, if a province does not reach the same conclusions as he does, he will decide that his conclusions are the right ones; he will be a sort of umpire between the provinces. This is exactly the opposite of the spirit in which we wanted to see this sector managed.

In other words, this legislation will take de facto precedence over existing provincial laws, even when the habitat is fully under provincial jurisdiction. All this confirms that the bill interferes into areas of provincial responsibility and because of this, it is unacceptable.

In the section on general prohibitions, it states clearly that, and I quote subclause 34(2):

The Governor in Council shall, on the recommendation of the Minister, by order, provide that sections 32 and 33, or either of them, apply in lands in a province that are not federal lands—

The next subclause then states:

The Minister must recommend that the order be made if the Minister is of the opinion that the laws of the province do not effectively protect the species—

This describes the paternalistic approach that is unacceptable in this bill.

Similarly, clause 36 requires that when provinces classify certain species as endangered that are not listed on the COSEWIC list of designated species, they must apply the same prohibitions to these species as those that apply to the designated species. In doing this, the federal government is claiming the right to dictate how the provinces must go about protecting species. Restrictions and fines may not always be the route that a province wishes to choose.

As such, there is a contradiction when it comes to responsibilities. There is also a contradiction when it comes to the different approaches to ensuring protection. Throughout the bill, the federal government tries to impose its way of doing things, even if provincial legislation already exists.

As regards recovery strategies, the choice of themes is also troublesome when it comes to provincial jurisdiction. In fact, clause 39 sets out that "to the extent possible", the recovery strategy must be prepared in co-operation with the appropriate provincial minister.

It is this type of phrase that will lead to fighting between the provinces and the federal government, and perhaps to litigation before the courts. A business or an individual caught breaking the law could invoke this flaw, this possible conflict between federal and provincial laws. Either way, we would all lose and end up without the desired results. Even though this bill was introduced some time ago and has gone through the different stages, it seems to have been botched. For the most part, it gives the federal government the right to interfere in this, which is unacceptable.

● (1550)

We are also aware that most environmental groups are opposed to the bill. Even those who should readily support any attempt to improve the protection of wildlife species find the bill useless, even dangerous.

A lot of things are totally unacceptable in this bill. The need to amend it and make the significant changes the government did not make is obvious.

However, the main problem raised by all environmental groups is the fact that the decisions on the designation of species will be taken by the minister and his cabinet, and not by scientists.

Beyond the jurisdictional conflict, that is the conflict of authority between the federal government and the provinces, there is the fact that, since decisions will be made by a minister and his cabinet, and that the minister will be subject to a great deal of pressure, environmental groups are afraid that the same thing will happen as in the case of the management of marine species and fisheries, where the government gave in to political pressures for many years, with the result that some species have nearly or totally disappeared. I believe that, in this respect, environmental groups have an important point.

This is why environmental activists like the leader of the Canadian campaign for the protection of endangered species said that Bill C-5 was a total failure and would not ensure the protection of Canadian species.

Moreover, like one of its lawyers, whose statements are more balanced than that, the Sierra Club is criticizing the bill for being too weak and giving such disgraceful discretionary power to politicians with regard to the designation of species.

The minister is being criticized for favouring, through his bill, a piecemeal approach, left to the discretion of cabinet, rather than a comprehensive approach soft on negotiation, but supported by binding legal recourse, should agreement prove impossible.

Government Orders

The federal government chose to adopt a paternalistic attitude, as I said earlier, by imposing its ways of doing things, controlling how things will be done, and giving sweeping powers to the political arm of the government. This issue is linked to the interpretation of the law and nature with respect to biological situations, the behaviour of various species and situations well beyond the scope of political cabinet decision making. For this reason, I believe it was absolutely necessary that the bill be amended, and this did not happen.

As for the Government of Quebec, it stated, through its environment minister at the time, Paul Bégin, that the bill was just another example of useless duplication for Quebec. He said that Bill C-5, introduced by the federal government, was aimed at creating a safety net for the protection of threatened species and their habitat not only on federal sites, but also on the whole Quebec territory. Mr. Bégin said, and I quote:

Quebec has always behaved in a responsible and appropriate manner regarding the protection of the most threatened fauna and flora species and intends to keep on exercising its authority in this matter.

In other words, the federal government's intervention comes at a time when Quebec has already assumed its responsibilities and done part of the job. In this sense, the new federal bill is useless and may even create complications with regard to interpretation and lead to decisions that will not result in better management of species at risk.

The Government of Quebec believes that legislation such as that proposed in the bill could be acceptable if it excluded any species or habitat under provincial jurisdiction and if it were applied to provincial lands if, and only if, the province or territory specifically so requested.

In closing, instead of having a bill that reflects the reality of Canadian federalism, we have a bill that reflects the government's centralizing approach even on the issue of species at risk.

For all these reasons, we believe that this bill is unacceptable. Even with the groups of amendments, several aspects of the bill would have to be improved to make it acceptable. The essential condition would be that the provinces be allowed to make their own decisions with regard to their own territory, which is not the case in the bill as it stands now.

• (1555)

[English]

Mr. John Maloney (Erie—Lincoln, Lib.): Madam Speaker, some rather important themes have been running through the debate on the proposed species at risk legislation. They are themes, some of them rather subtle, that we must recognize.

First and foremost, and perhaps the area where we see the sharpest divide, is over a coercive approach versus a co-operative approach. We looked at both and studied both. We talked to experts and to people in other countries. We talked to conservationists and to our aboriginal peoples. We listened to everything that was said.

We looked at all this in the Canadian context, within the traditions and laws that support Canada's constitution. What we found, and the premise on which the legislation is designed, is that the key to effective species at risk legislation is the support and co-operation of those Canadians who depend on the land for their livelihood. It is as simple as that.

We have prolonged this debate while the same things are said: It is too strong or it is not strong enough. Who is right? Neither.

Because the bill has co-operation as the first approach, underscored by strength, it is truly Canadian. It is time now to pass the bill in the House and send it on to our colleagues in the other place.

Who has helped us decide co-operation is the most workable approach? All Canadians have helped us to decide. In some way we are all connected to the land but it is even more so for Canadians who live in rural Canada. The land is their livelihood. It is their past and future. It is at the very core of their lives. It is the rural Canadian who plays such a huge role in the protection and recovery of species at risk in so many different ways. Many of these people are stewards of the land already and have been for generations. They know the importance of conservation and of sustainable activities. They are partners and they are allies.

I would like us to remember that as we consider the issues of critical habitat connected to the proposed species at risk legislation. It is here that the co-operative approach is crucial because it is already working. It has already been successful, especially for rural Canadians. We must not undermine this and we will not undermine this.

The vast majority of lands in Canada are under provincial and territorial management and private ownership. If we want to stop the destruction or degradation of habitat, then partnership and joint actions are crucial.

This is about working with the provinces and territories, with private landowners, conservationists, local authorities, aboriginal peoples, farmers, foresters, fishermen, ranchers and voluntary organizations.

There is plenty of strength in the enforcement and prohibition sections of the proposed species at risk act. Protecting critical habitat will work best, in fact it will only work when we stress co-ordination, complementary action and inclusion. That is what Canadians do best.

• (1600)

Mr. Rob Anders: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if we have quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): We have quorum.

Mr. John Maloney: Madam Speaker, there is plenty of strength in the enforcement and prohibition sections of the proposed species at risk act. However, as I said earlier, protecting critical habitat will only work when we stress co-ordination, parliamentary action and inclusion. That is what Canadians do best.

For these reasons I cannot support any change to the bill that removes the incentive of stewardship as the first course of action to protect critical habitat.

Government Orders

The coercive approach to protecting critical habitat has already proven to be unworkable in many situations in the United States. We want to avoid species disappearing because they are pawns in protracted political disputes or costly court battles. We are taking care of matters in our own backyard of course. What I mean is the federal government has a responsibility to protect critical habitat in its jurisdiction.

The government is proposing that the species at risk act provide automatic protection to any critical habitat in a national park, a marine protected area, a migratory bird sanctuary or a national wildlife area, once it is identified by experts in a recovery strategy or action plan. For critical habitat anywhere else in federal jurisdiction, we are proposing that the proposed species at risk act require a competent minister to recommend protection if a critical habitat is not protected through stewardship or other federal legislation within 180 days of being identified in a recovery strategy or action plan.

We also want the bill to require ministers who are authorized under other federal acts to issue permits or licences for an activity to consider whether those activities could result in the destruction of critical habitat prior to the issuing of the permits or licences.

In summary, I cannot emphasize strongly enough that the results of nine long years of debate on habitat protection have brought us firmly down on the side of the co-operative approach backed by strong prohibitions. This is a Canadian solution. It is the Canadian way. For rural Canada, it is the most effective solution.

Bill C-5 is effective legislation that will help protect wildlife in Canada from becoming extinct. It will also provide for the recovery of species at risk. It is time to enact these solutions. Let us get on with the job. Let us protect our species at risk now and forever, for ourselves, for our children, for our grandchildren and for all who will come after us.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to participate in the debate today, a debate dealing with Bill C-5. I believe this is probably the fourth time I have spoken to the bill.

The more I look into this bill, the more I dislike it. The more we research the bill and the more we look at it to see if it will be effective in what it is to accomplish, the more we are concerned and the more we realize and recognize the gravity of what the bill would accomplish.

I go back 15 months to the first time that I stood in the House to deliver my maiden speech. Since that time I have spoken more about the sorry state of agriculture and the family farm as a result of the Liberal government's inaction than on any other topic. Again today we find ourselves standing and looking at legislation that would be an impairment and would have a negative impact on the family farm, agriculture and even more specifically, western Canadian agriculture.

I have spoken more on agriculture because no other issue impacts my riding to the degree that agriculture does. I am a farmer. My father is a farmer. My grandfather and my great grandfather were farmers. My neighbours, the majority of my friends back home and business associates are ranchers and farmers. Those who are not are in the business of supplying goods and services in farm communities.

Bill C-5 is not only disheartening of course to those involved in farming but also to farm communities when they recognize and realize the impact this legislation will have.

The importance of today's debate can be understood as we discuss Bill C-5 and its contents.

There is tremendous frustration being experienced in rural Canada given the repeated attacks by the government on our way of life, a way of life that has significantly contributed to the success of our country and which continues to produce, despite the many roadblocks that the government throws in front of it, an abundance of some of the highest quality food in the world.

We are continually under siege by a government that appears either disrespectful or oblivious to our way of life and common rural practices. It is a siege that has been exasperated by a Prime Minister who propagates government of the politicians, by the politicians and for the politicians rather than promoting a government of the people, for the people and by the people.

Bill C-5 will have a negative impact on the people of Crowfoot and rural Canada. This fact is even more evident given the failure of the Prime Minister to listen to his backbench members of parliament, particularly those representing rural ridings in Canada, especially in regard to not only Bill C-5 but also to Bill C-15B, the cruelty to animals bill.

Reportedly the government has vowed to pass Bill C-5 legislation despite the objections of some of its very own backbenchers, objections that have surfaced as the ferocity of our opposition has mounted against the bill over the last few months. The official opposition has been opposed to these two anti-farming, anti-rural pieces of legislation since their very inception. We have at every opportunity voiced the concerns of rural Canadians, the concerns of the people of Crowfoot, Cyprus Hills, Red Deer and other areas.

At every opportunity we stood to voice the concerns expressed in letters from ranchers and farmers.

Also, reportedly, the Prime Minister is making note of those on the government benches who are opposed to the legislation. In other words, he is saying that he knows who they are and that they will be whipped into line. There are no encouraging words from the Prime Minister as he attempts to strong arm Liberal backbenchers to forget representing their constituents and those who are involved in the agricultural sector.

We have ample opportunity, individuals and examples of those who were not whipped into line. John Nunziata knows all too well what happens when one votes against the government and in accordance with the wishes of constituents.

● (1605)

Last week the government apparently cancelled the vote on Bill C-5 because it did not have enough supporters on its own benches to win the vote. This legislation should not be reduced to number crunching. This bill is wrong. Regardless of those who will vote in favour of it or against it, the common sense approach to this bill would recognize that this legislation is not right. This will not accomplish what the government says it will accomplish.

Government Orders

We in the Canadian Alliance believe strongly that we need effective species at risk legislation. We need compensation. If we are to expect the farmers and ranchers to take their land out of production to protect a certain species, as Canadians, let us all share in the burden and give that property owner, rancher or farmer adequate and fair compensation.

What is the definition of fair and reasonable compensation? It is whatever they want to give at that moment. Fair market value is quite different. The government fails to recognize that farmers have a huge investment in their land. It is to the point now where the government has taken away the guns, it has taken away the land and one wonders when it will come to take away the wife and kids.

The Liberal government is failing to recognize that many rural Liberal and Alliance members of parliament are opposed to Bill C-5 because of the detrimental effects it will have on their constituents. One government source apparently claimed these government MPs were going to vote against the bill because they had a gripe against the Prime Minister. We do not want anyone to vote against the bill for that reason, but people can vote for whatever reason as long as they are voting against it because there is sufficient evidence in this bill to show that it is just wrong.

This type of autocratic, arrogant thinking completely demeans the Liberal MPs whose opposition and reservations are based on the opinions and fears of their constituents, fears that there will not be adequate compensation for landowners or that they will be unjustly dragged into court to defend common farm practices in the case of Bill C-15B.

Bill C-5, the endangered species legislation, is a terrible affront to our western rural way of life. The Liberal government has brought pieces of legislation before us today that are becoming almost as notorious as Bill C-68, the Firearms Act. Up until now there has been no other piece of legislation that has pitted rural Canada against urban Canada, but we have a beauty here. We have a piece of legislation that is wedge legislation which pits one against the other.

Despite being passed by the House almost seven years ago, Bill C-68 still invokes strong animosity and opposition toward the Liberal government, and so it should. Bill C-5 has the same potential because it is based on wrong principles. It is based on the principles that people who own land where a species at risk is found have the sole responsibility of protecting that species, even it means forfeiture or a loss of income because of having to take land out of production. It is wrong. It is time that every member in the House stands and says that this legislation is wrong.

Farmers are enduring financial hardships. If we go back to Bill C-68, we know it costs us \$700 million to administer a program that is does not work. Yet on the other hand, the Liberal government is holding back putting into this legislation fair market value for land taken out of production.

We have seen species on our farm that would be listed as species at risk and I will do everything to protect the species. However I cannot promise that when farmers look at the ability of the government to grab the land, to basically expropriate it and pay a pittance in the way of compensation—

Mr. Bob Mills: Or nothing.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: —or nothing for compensation, as the member for Red Deer suggests, that they will find themselves with the same fervent desire to protect that species at risk. It can guarantee nothing.

● (1610)

We need to guarantee. We cannot lose sight of the fact that we have species that are legitimately at risk of extinction and that we have a responsibility to protect them. I want to be one of those who protects them.

Let me make it clear that when the government comes to take land and not pay compensation, there are no guarantees. There are moneys to be put back into many different areas of rural western Canada. We have seen with Bill C-68 how the government takes it from one hand and is willing to give it back in other ways. There are so many different ways we could look at bringing forward legislation that would adequately protect species at risk.

● (1615)

Mr. John Richardson (Perth—Middlesex, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the words critical habitat protection have been much used both inside and outside the House of Commons in relation to the proposed species at risk act.

The critical habitat is the home of the species, the place it needs to grow, to reproduce and to thrive. It is not unlike our own homes and we know how we feel about those.

What concerns me somewhat is the rather cavalier way in which some say that critical habitat is not protected in the proposed species at risk act. They say it is only on federal lands and not even then. They say it fails without really saying how. These are people who are looking for an approach on critical habitat, indeed an approach on species in general, that is far more coercive than what has been designed.

Mr. Rob Anders: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am wondering whether or not there is quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): No there is not. Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I see a quorum.

Mr. John Richardson: Madam Speaker, with regard to species being added to the critical habitat regime within the federal jurisdiction, we went even further. We provided for automatic critical habitat protection in a national park, a marine protected area, a migratory bird sanctuary and a national wildlife area. These are all federal lands and the protection element is a crucial one.

For anywhere else in the federal jurisdiction, the government is also moving to require the competent minister to recommend protection if critical habitat is not protected within 180 days of being identified in an approved recovery strategy or action plan.

All federal ministers will be required to consider the possible impacts on identified critical habitat prior to issuing any licence or permit for any activity.

Government Orders

We must also remember that most of the lands in Canada are under provincial and territorial management and private ownership.

The policy intents of Bill C-5 were not arrived at overnight. They came from years of study and consultation, of discussion and examination. We know, because it is already working, that the co-operative approach is the Canadian way.

We must ensure the incentive is there to pursue stewardship and voluntary action as the first step in all cases for protecting critical habitat.

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is my first time to speak to the endangered species bill and I appreciate the opportunity to do so.

I listened with some interest to my hon. colleague from southern Alberta, the member for Crowfoot, who said this was an issue that pitted urban constituencies against rural constituencies. Although there is some truth to that, I think in the group of motions with which we are dealing today there is consensus among all Canadians that an openness in reporting and in sharing information is fundamental to democracy. These are things about which all Canadians are concerned.

Canadians want to participate, particularly in legislation such as the endangered species bill. They want to participate in the process of protecting endangered species. They want to know that the information they are getting from scientists and the government is up to date, complete and that they are treated with respect in providing information. I think that my colleague from Crowfoot would find that all Canadians whether they live in cities or on farms want to participate in the protection of endangered species.

I introduced a private member's bill to deal with endangered species which will be debated tomorrow. As a city representative, a member of parliament who represents an urban area, I know it is of concern to city dwellers. Perhaps there are some issues which city people tend to see from a different perspective because they have not experienced living on a farm and having their property threatened by confiscation or expropriation.

I posed that question to my constituents, about 90% of whom are urban dwellers. They felt that the compensation issue had to be dealt with and had to be fair. Even though they themselves may not ever have to face an expropriation order, they still felt that if we are to protect endangered species, if we are to protect the habitat in which the species dwell, there has to be some compensation to landowners to encourage them to participate in the program.

The motions in this group deal with how we share this information and how to get Canadians to participate in the process. The committee members who dealt with this bill and put amendments on the table felt that the aboriginal communities had to be brought into the process of sharing information. They recommended that there be a national aboriginal council brought into the discussion on endangered species. It was felt that they had an in-depth knowledge of the land and of the species that inhabit the land, where they are, how one finds them and how one might protect them.

For reasons unknown to myself and to many in the House, the government decided it did not want a council and wanted to change it to a committee. One has to question, when the committee members

who studied it felt that the council was the way to go, why the government would arbitrarily change the recommendation.

It just goes to show that the government is treating that committee in much the same way it has treated other committees. I sat on the transport committee for a period of time. We tabled a report in the House of Commons which was totally ignored by government. Although the committee studied for three months and listened to all the witnesses and the experts, the government really did not care what we said. I get the feeling from the changes the government has made to recommendations from the committee that studied the legislation it has the same kind of disregard for these recommendations that came from the committee.

• (1620)

The committee also dealt with the creation of stewardship action plans. Once again here is another area where the government chose for whatever reason to ignore the recommendations of the committee or to change them. We have to question where the executive branch of the government is going when it totally ignores the contribution that parliament and parliamentary committees make to serious legislation.

It really is a question of communication. Experts and citizens participate in the committee process by sending delegations and written submissions to committee. That is part of the consultation and community input to preparing government legislation. If that is totally disregarded, why would the government think that people would support the legislation once it was forced down their throats?

The motions in Group No. 4 deal with public consultation and how meaningful it can be and how much influence it will have. I have read some of the amendments being proposed and it would appear they are trying to clarify what public consultation will mean in the legislation.

In the other public consultations the government has had, it seems to have lacked the understanding that when it consults with the public, members of the public have an expectation that they are being listened to. Whether it is the Krever inquiry on the tainted blood situation, the Somalia inquiry or the APEC inquiry, the public is getting the feeling that when the government talks about public consultation it really means nothing. Some of the amendments proposed in this group try to clarify what the government means by public consultation and what the commitments by the government are when it makes these public consultations.

With respect to the reporting mechanism, another thing we have found is that the executive branch of government tends to think it can go away and do things on its own without communicating to parliament, without getting the advice and input of parliament. Certainly the executive branch has a duty to report back to parliament and to be held accountable to parliament for what it does on behalf of Canadians and on behalf of the House of Commons.

Government Orders

It is quite clear from some of the amendments in Group No. 4 there is a concern that there is no acknowledgment that the executive branch of government, the bureaucrats, have to report back to parliament and have to be held accountable for whether or not the legislation is working. The executive branch has to be held accountable for whether or not some of the provisions which are controversial are the right ones that should be there and to report back to parliament.

The committee recommended that not only should there be a review of the legislation in five years, but that it should be reviewed on a five year continuous basis. The government for whatever reason has determined that is not what it wants to do. It has made amendments to eliminate that.

That brings us to my fundamental concern which is that the executive branch of government is acting outside its jurisdiction and outside its role in a parliamentary system. Over and over again we see what the executive branch thinks the role is of a member of parliament. My colleagues who are in the House today and those who are here at other times all have a meaningful role to play in determining how legislation will impact on the community at large through regulations or whatever.

By ignoring the role of parliament, the need to bring regulations before parliament, the need to report back to parliament, the government has what I would consider to be a continuing contempt for this institution.

• (1625)

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to participate in the debate on this very important bill.

I want to say a few words about stewardship. We have heard that the government considers stewardship to be a very key part of the overall strategy to protect species at risk. I will take a minute to talk about what that really means.

We can legislate, debate, consult and research, and we have done all of that. We can listen to the posturing in the media and look at laws in other countries, and we have done that too. That is what we have done for a very long time, nearly a decade in fact, and it is time we had a species at risk bill. We have waited long enough.

However, during that time, nearly 10 years, species in Canada have not been ignored. This is a good thing. While we have talked, debated, researched and postured, the people of Canada have protected species considered to be endangered. They have put in hedgerows between fields so that birds have nesting spots. They have helped protect the nests of turtles and build special crossings under highways for animals. They have left fields to lie quiet during nesting and have proudly displayed their actions on the ranch fence, the farm gate post, the fishing boat and on the logger's truck. We owe them a great deal of thanks.

We cannot turn around now and say that the efforts of the people of Canada, their partnerships and hard work, have meant nothing. No, we cannot and we will not do that.

What we now have to do is ensure that everything that has been done is recognized and that we have measures in place to do more.

The habitat stewardship program has been on the ground for two years with \$45 million over a five year period to assist in stewardship activities. It has helped foster partnerships among first nations, landowners, resource users, nature trusts, provinces, the natural resource sector, community based wildlife societies, educational institutions and conservation organizations.

Through the eco gifts program we are also providing more favourable tax treatments for the contribution of ecologically sensitive lands. Over 20,000 hectares have already been donated as ecological gifts.

I am speaking today in favour of the government motions on the development of stewardship action plans in Bill C-5. The principle of developing a stewardship action plan, introduced in Bill C-5 by the standing committee, is well accepted by the government. In fact work is already underway to develop a Canada-wide stewardship action plan.

I also speak in favour of government motions to remove the arbitrary timelines for completion of action plans. Legislated deadlines could unnecessarily limit the number of action plans, their scope, as well as consultation in their development. Action plans must be completed in a timely manner. At the same time, action plans must be developed with the participation of landowners, resource users, aboriginal peoples and others who may be impacted. Action plans must also satisfy a range of requirements if they are to be effective. The decision for timelines is best left to the scientists and to the practitioners themselves. To this end, the bill requires recovery strategies to include a statement of when action plans will be completed.

I will now turn my attention to the original stewards of the land, the ones who have led the way for us, Canada's aboriginal peoples. They are the people of the land and of the sea with vast and rich stores of history and knowledge. They have been at the table for many discussions on the legislation. Their advice and input cannot be stressed too much. We simply could not have done it without them. We do not want that input and process to end so we are entrenching the role and importance of aboriginal traditional knowledge. We all share the responsibility for protecting wildlife. Canada's aboriginal people have shown us how and why.

• (1630)

We support the establishment of a national aboriginal council on species at risk. This council is consistent with the Government of Canada's commitment to strengthen its relationship with the aboriginal people.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the constituents of Surrey Central to participate in the report stage debate on amendments proposed to the government's species at risk act, Bill C-5.

Before I begin I would like to make it absolutely clear again that the Canadian Alliance members and I are committed to protecting and preserving Canada's natural environment and endangered species.

Government Orders

The Canadian Alliance supports effective endangered species legislation based on co-operation, science, respect for private property, transparency and accountability. Therefore the argument is not about whether we should have endangered species legislation but rather that we have effective legislation.

The Liberal record on species at risk is dismal. Since the 1993 red book, the Liberals have promised in every red book to enact legislation to protect species at risk but in eight years the Liberals have failed to pass endangered species legislation in the House.

The government has a poor track record in protecting endangered species over which it has direct control, such as the Atlantic cod, Pacific salmon and many others. Approximately 100 species have been added to the endangered species list since the Liberals first introduced endangered species legislation in the 35th parliament.

Out of the 13 motions that we are debating in Group No. 4, 12 have been moved by the Liberals and 1 by a Canadian Alliance member. Motions Nos. 6, 16, 17 and 20 deal with aspects of the national aboriginal committee.

The standing committee had wished to create the national aboriginal council but the government instead wants to call it a committee and so it has changed the words in various clauses.

I was a member of the environment committee at one time. I know how hard the members work in that committee. However the government is changing the will of the committee to suit its requirements.

The idea of an aboriginal committee is itself acceptable. The natives have a close knowledge of the land and environment and so consultation with them is appropriate, as it is with other stakeholders. However care must be taken to ensure that it does not become a special conduit for race related political concerns. Special privileges and exemptions from the act's application should not be based on race.

The name change from council to committee reverses the standing committee's work with no good justification. The government is showing contempt for the work of the parliamentary committee and its own members of parliament. It makes changes just for the sake of doing so.

Motion No. 25 deals with the creation of stewardship action plans. The government is showing contempt again for the work of all members of parliament in committee who asked for a commitment to examine regularly tax treatment and subsidies and to eliminate disincentives.

The government wants to delete this language but it is vital. It demonstrates that compensation is not just a cash payment but could involve other things, like tax treatment, which are so vital to farmers and other property owners. Further, the government must be forced to confront the realities of disincentives.

The government also wants to delete the standing committee's requirement that stewardship action plans provide technical and scientific support to persons engaged in stewardship activities. Instead the government will provide information relating to technical and scientific support available to persons engaged in stewardship activities. This is a small but significant difference.

Now, instead of giving property owners real assistance by sharing data on the presence of endangered species or assistance configuring their property to protect sensitive habitat, for example, the government can mail them a pamphlet.

• (1635)

Most of the remaining Group No. 4 amendments concern issues of notice and public consultation or discussion. This presents opportunities to stress the fundamental importance of making consultations as wide as possible and of ensuring that consultations have a real impact on the administration of the act and are not just done simply for window dressing purposes.

Initially the bill had provided for a parliamentary review of the species at risk act five years after it comes into force. The standing committee added the additional requirement that it be subsequently reviewed at five year intervals. Government Motion No. 130 will remove the standing committee's amendment again. The government does not think that automatic five year reviews are needed and instead would put the onus on parliament to put a review on the agenda should it be deemed necessary, and that is wrong.

Not only is it contemptuous again of the standing committee, it removes an opportunity for greater accountability and public involvement. Mandatory reviews of legislation are not quite as effective as a sunset clause, but perhaps a close second, but they are important for ensuring that an act is working as it was intended and it creates an opportunity to make changes. This is basic democratic accountability and ensures that legislation is kept ever green. Transparency is essential.

Motion No. 29 deletes the requirement that the proposed text of stewardship agreements be made public for at least 60 days of consultation. Since stewardship agreements can affect not just the landowner but neighbouring lands too, anything that would restrict consultation with affected stakeholders should be opposed.

On the other hand, Motion No. 114 ensures that when management plans are made public for public consultation they are referred to as proposed management plans. This shows that they are not yet final and that the government will respond to comments from the public.

The government should be open-minded in considering suggestions and comments and to ensure that consultation is really in good faith.

Sadly, if the government treats the Canadian public with the respect that it gives the parliamentary standing committee, then no consultations will be in good faith since it will have made its mind up already on all the key points and be unwilling to listen to another point of view.

Motion No. 126 deletes the requirement for all ministerial reports, including listing decisions, to be entered into the public registry. This reduces transparency and public access to important documents giving insight into how the list of endangered species is developed. There is no reason that ministerial reports concerning COSEWIC and listing not be made public instead of forcing citizens to go through the hassles and delays of access to information requests.

Government Orders

Motion No. 127 is a Canadian Alliance motion. Currently clause 124 allows the minister to restrict the release of any information if it is in the best interests of the species to do so. This is understandable under certain circumstances. For example, a landowner might not want the general public trespassing over his or her land looking for a rare bird. However, especially given the harsh criminal penalties in the bill, it is unacceptable that the government would be able to withhold important information from property owners. This amendment would allow the restriction of public release of certain information. However this must be taken with Motion No. 128, which was debated in Group No. 1, which required that in all circumstances the minister must notify an affected landowner, lessee or land user of the location of a wildlife species or habitat. This would ensure that the interests of people were respected, as well as the interests of the species.

• (1640)

Canadian Alliance members like myself and all of us on this side of the House are committed to protecting and preserving Canada's natural environment and endangered species. The work we are doing is for future generations. The Canadian Alliance supports effective endangered species legislation, not legislation that will not do its job properly. Our chief critic for the environment, the hon. member for Red Deer, has done an excellent job in analyzing the bill and I commend him for his efforts.

To conclude, Canadian Alliance members support effective endangered species legislation based on co-operation, science, respect for private property, transparency and accountability.

• (1645)

Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma—Manitoulin, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join this very important debate on an issue that has been a subject of discussion for many years. My hon. colleague from Surrey Central mentioned that this was a campaign promise made by our party going back to a couple of elections. Why it has taken this long is probably testament to our willingness to consult and find the best path through the difficult issues which comprise this important subject.

Our own caucus has had vigorous debate on the bill, ranging from the concern that it does not go far enough to the concern that maybe it goes too far. I believe we have come to a reasonable consensus that even though this legislation is not perfect, it is a great advance in the protection of wildlife species, which really is not only an issue of concern for ourselves and our children but for our children's children and beyond. This is an issue that speaks not just to decades in the future but to hundreds and conceivably thousands of years.

It goes without saying that as the population of the world has grown and shifted, the price being paid by our wildlife species has been very high in many cases. If we as a society do not take seriously the concerns that we have to build, to manage and to have economic benefit from our natural resources, and at the same time balance that against the needs of our wildlife, then we will all pay the price for not having seen far enough ahead.

I would suggest that this vigorous debate and the many months and years it has taken to get us to this point have brought us to probably the best bill that is possible under the circumstances. I encourage all members to move on with this very important subject.

We must not waste any more time because various species are at risk every day as we sit in the House debating this issue.

One of my colleagues from Prince Edward Island made mention of our aboriginal people and how important this issue is to them. They have lived in harmony with nature for untold thousands of years. We have many lessons to learn from them when it comes to protecting nature and protecting wildlife. In managing our relationship as humankind with nature, it is not often easy to find solutions but indeed we must.

As I have stated, some believe that Bill C-5 does not go far enough but for others it goes too far. This suggests to me that we have found a balance. When people provide criticism on both extremes, then possibly we have done the best we can do for the vast majority of people.

Not only would the legislation in Bill C-5 be effective in preventing wildlife from becoming extinct, it would also provide for the recovery of species. While not coming to a perfect result, after eight years of consultation I think the result is excellent, and the bill should move forward as balanced and effective legislation.

Much has been made in some quarters about the costs for agriculture, for forestry and for tourism. For example, people are concerned about the possible effect on snowmobile and ATV trails. It is my understanding that the legislation is not intended to impair the appropriate and proper evolution of our tourism activities. They are important to our economy. The legislation is not intended to impair traditional activities such as trapping. It is not intended to impair practices that have become commonplace. All we are saying here is let us be mindful of nature's place in all of this. We are saying that without nature we all lose as a society. It is a question of finding the right balance.

Much has been said about compensation. Under Bill C-5, fair and reasonable compensation can be paid—

• (1650)

Mr. Rob Anders: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am wondering whether or not there is a quorum.

And the count having been taken:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): We have quorum. The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin may continue.

Mr. Brent St. Denis: Madam Speaker, I knew we had a quorum. We always have a quorum. Members are working busily in the lobby behind me making phone calls to constituents, following up on very important files in support of issues in their ridings and issues across the country. I am very pleased that they are monitoring this debate from the lobby and I hope we will not have any more interruptions such as we have just seen.

Back to the point of compensation, as I said, Bill C-5 will provide for fair and reasonable compensation that can be paid for losses suffered as a result of any extraordinary impact when it is necessary to prohibit destruction of critical habitat. Funding is already available through the Government of Canada's habitat stewardship program to help landowners and resource users modify their activities so as not to harm species and habitat.

Government Orders

I should add that this legislation would be complementary to existing provincial and territorial legislation. In fact I would like to touch on the issue of co-operation with our provinces and territories. Under the accord for the protection of species at risk, we joined our provincial and territorial partners in making a series of commitments. We are working to live up to those commitments. We should understand that many provinces and territories have in many ways already lived up to theirs. Certainly we do not want to lag behind nor do we wish to compromise the efforts of our provincial and territorial partners.

As we have, the provinces have struggled with policies in relation to this issue as well. I would like to single out Nova Scotia and Newfoundland for the efforts they have made already in this regard. We have all repeatedly endorsed the spirit of the accord for the protection of species at risk. We have repeatedly pointed to our joint commitments to protecting species and their habitats and to bringing in legislation that enshrines these practices in law.

For decades the federal, provincial and territorial governments have been working together on wildlife management. We have many success stories as a result of this co-operation. The provinces, territories and the federal government have worked side by side on recovery, stewardship, critical policy questions and process. The Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council has met in good faith on a number of occasions and has simply pressed on with this very important work because we made a commitment and we are all determined to honour the bargains we have made. That is why the co-operative approach has to fit. That is why we need to fulfill the federal obligation for legislation on species at risk.

The public wants us to move forward on this. They want us to be mindful of the important concerns of our farming community, our tourism industry and our forest industry. Yes, these are important elements in our economy, and there is no intent here to compromise our ability to create and sustain jobs, to help build the economy, such as we have been doing since 1993. We plan to continue as long as the public will honour us with their support.

I would like add, too, that in a certain legal sense the issue of strict liability is something that deserves mention here. I do not want to lecture the House on what all of this means, but it is very important that interpretations of strict liability be consistent with other government legislation. Almost all federal environmental legislation and provincial wildlife legislation have strict liability offences. Anyone accused under this legislation would have the possible defence, however, of due diligence. Many witnesses who spoke before the standing committee told members that protecting endangered and threatened species represents the emergency room of wildlife conservation.

As I wind up my remarks, let me say that the public likes to see different levels of government working together and co-operating. They expect us to do together the things that make life better for our communities and their citizens, so that in fact when we imagine this country 500 or 1,000 years from now, if we indeed can, we imagine a country that is better than the one in which we live right now.

•(1655)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, Biotechnology; the hon. member for Red Deer, Species at Risk.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am honoured and pleased to speak to Bill C-5, an act respecting the protection of wildlife species at risk in Canada.

Let me say, first of all, that the Bloc Québécois cannot support that bill for various reasons, which I will try to explain. If we must oppose this bill, it is not just for the sake of opposing it. The subject matter is important and critical.

In my riding, Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, at this time of the year, the end of April and the beginning of May, we can observe the migration of snow geese, or Canada geese, all along the St. Lawrence River, in Beauport Bay, along the Beauport Shore, in Cap Tourmente and on the shores of Île d'Orléans.

The Bloc Québécois recognizes that it is important to protect the ecosystems of Canada. However, this must be done in a context of respect for the jurisdictions of both levels of governments.

Before going further and giving the reasons why our party opposes this bill, I want to say that, if I set the record straight by specifying that we agree with the principle, it is simply to keep the government majority from coming back later with totally demagogical statements such as “Since the Bloc Québécois voted against the species at risk bill, it is against the preservation of the species at risk”.

We heard this no later than this afternoon, during question period. Indeed, we heard the Minister of Human Resources Development explain why the Bloc Québécois had voted against the cosmetic amendments to the employment insurance reform. These amendments allowed the government to continue to take money from the employment insurance surpluses. This is why we voted against the amendments. This does not mean that we were against everything in the bill.

Liberals are experts in putting up smoke screens, in lulling people by saying “Since that party voted against the bill, it is against any change”. This was totally false in the case of the employment insurance reform, even though we recognize that improvements are needed.

We voted against the amendments because the government keeps claiming the power to take money out of the employment insurance fund.

It is the same thing with this bill. It does not mean that we are against protecting some species at risk. We are against the way the government goes about it.

Government Orders

We are aware that environment is a shared federal-provincial jurisdiction. It is becoming more and more obvious that the federal government is ignoring this reality and moving away from true harmonization with all government orders on environmental issues.

Instead of properly carrying out its own major responsibilities, the federal government keeps trying to take over jurisdictions other than its own.

Instead of trying to better control and assess toxic substances, such as pest control products, to assess the impact of GMO on ecosystems or to deal with transboundary pollution and migrating species, it introduces legislation that goes well beyond its own jurisdiction and that could lead to unnecessary duplication in areas dealt with by the provinces with regard to their own territory and their resources.

Although Canada was one of the first industrialized country to ratify the Convention on Biological Diversity, need I remind the House that it was for a long time among the five countries refusing to sign the Protocol on Biosafety, which is a direct result of the convention.

• (1700)

The federal government's position on genetically modified organisms does not reflect the position that it wants to defend with this bill. Moreover, we feel that what the federal government calls a double safety net—that is two levels of government operating in the same jurisdiction—waters down the accountability of both and seriously complicates the assignment of responsibilities.

The Liberal government's claims regarding the importance of a national approach to protecting species go against the spirit of true environmental harmonization and ignore the provincial legislation already in effect as well as the significant progress made by some provinces.

This bill will only create duplication, at a time when resources are limited and it is important to maximize efforts in this area and channel them properly.

We believe that the government should take into consideration the opinion of certain groups which are voicing concerns. We have noticed that even environmental groups are opposed to this legislation. Even groups that should naturally be inclined to support this bill are opposing it. The government should ask itself whether there is enough public support for this bill.

I am also tempted to put my Liberal friends on the spot by asking them if there is enough support for this bill among government members. There appears to be serious dissent among Liberal members. I am anxious to see if they will behave like puppets on a string. I am anxious to see what Liberal members will do when the time comes to vote. I hope that those who, in all honesty and conscience, are saying that this bill does not make sense, will rise and continue to put pressure on their caucus and tell the government that this bill does not work.

I could talk about groups that came to meet us, elected officials and members of parliament. I could mention the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association. I worked for 14 years in that industry, with the Abitibi Price company. I could talk about the concerns of the mining industry.

Just recently, last week in fact, I received representatives from the Quebec real estate board, which has certain concerns. We cannot turn a deaf ear to these concerns. It is true that, sometimes, they may be based on competing interests and, in this case, interests that are different from those of environmental groups. We must recognize that fact. However, a government cannot turn a deaf ear to protests from within its own ranks as well as from civil society groups.

In a democracy, when is compliance with an act more likely? When there is a social consensus that is strong enough. My understanding of our role as parliamentarians is to pass legislation on which a consensus can easily be reached. Instead of that, because they form the government and because they have a majority of seats, the members opposite think that they can ram legislation through no matter what the public thinks of it. A government must be responsive to the needs and concerns expressed by the people.

Often, when we attend social activities in our ridings on weekends, we can see that if there is one thing that people do not like about governments at all levels—this certainly does not help the credibility of politicians—it is the fact that they do not listen, that they are not responsive to their concerns.

In conclusion, we, in the Bloc Québécois, recognize the need to improve the protection of our ecosystems, and the endangered plant and animal species that constitute them, but we do not believe Bill C-5 is the way to go. For these reasons, we oppose this bill.

• (1705)

Mr. André Harvey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this bill for the first time. My colleague from Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans never misses an opportunity to inform us on significant realities. I hope that he is not against this bill because of its reference to species at risk. It may remind him of his party's situation. At the rate his colleagues are leaving for Quebec City, I get the impression that the Bloc Québécois could be listed as a species at risk.

They do, however, have a somewhat contradictory attitude. They are prepared to adopt and defend all causes, but when the government develops and implements programs that enable us to attain the objectives they share with us—I am thinking for example of the infrastructure program and the highways in Quebec—when the government introduces a bill with \$2 billion in funding, like the one currently being examined by the Senate, they vote against it, instead of being consistent with their own principles. If there are programs that open the door to extremely important initiatives in medical or industrial research, they will vote against the budget measures for them.

Government Orders

All in all, it is hard to see much consistency between their theoretical demands and their concrete actions here in the House sometimes, and it is hard to see them opposing measures of great help to all regions of the country, particularly the resource regions. I could go on about this at great length.

As far as Bill C-5 is concerned, it is not true that the federal government pushes everybody around. From 1984 to 1997, that is 13 years, I have had the opportunity—and I am pleased to pay tribute to the Minister of Canadian Heritage in this connection—to work with numerous federal and provincial ministers on what is now called the Saguenay—St. Lawrence National Marine Park. It was created after many, many consultations. Its creation in 1997 will enable us to take steps relating to the whole issue of protecting nature and wildlife, which are very important. This federal government initiative, undertaken in conjunction with the government of Quebec, which as we know does not share our ultimate objectives, was carried out in very close collaboration. After only a few years, the results are extremely positive.

Today the fjord of Saguenay is on the list of Canadian parks. For my part I wanted to make sure that one of the most beautiful natural sites in Canada and in the world be made a national park. It was time to stop arguing.

This evening, I want to congratulate the Minister of Canadian Heritage and her parliamentary secretary, who has been following this issue very closely. I am very happy to have the opportunity to speak to the bill.

Of course, one is always striving for perfection. Some say the bill goes too far, others that it does not go far enough. For my part, I believe that in real life when one waits for perfection to go forward one can wait a long time. History is not made by people who strive for perfection every day. One must forge ahead, step by step. In the end, it is the best way to make history, I believe.

In my opinion, this bill strikes not a perfect balance but an interesting one. It is the result of several years of consultation. Obviously, some groups are still opposed to it. However, most people are in favour of a bill that will help the conservation of species at risk.

It will not be done haphazardly, but with the help of scientific groups that will make recommendations to the government. The government will have to act quickly to save these species at risk. This will not be done without very down-to-earth consultations with local people, and on the basis of proven scientific data. The government will have to respond to these recommendations.

The interesting point regarding the recommendations made by COSEWIC is that they will eventually be adopted by the government. The final decision will not be made without considering social and economic factors.

• (1710)

When I go to the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park I can see species preservation in action. I can observe species and contemplate the beauty of the fauna and flora of our lovely region. The marine park was developed in close consultation with the local population.

The success of this park is an example of people working together. It was extremely difficult. Negotiating with the Government of Quebec is not easy. We have many examples of this in connection with infrastructure programs, research, and the homeless. By the way, I wish to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Labour, who is also responsible for co-ordinating programs for the homeless.

It takes time. It is complicated. I assure you that we are not going overboard on visibility. What the Government of Quebec wants above all is transfers of money, with no strings attached. But we represent all Canadians. We represent the Canadian government. There is nothing wrong with that. Canadians need to know that their government can do things which are in their best interests.

We demonstrate this daily. The important thing is that as soon as this bill is passed, hundreds of species will have the good fortune to be declared species at risk for the purposes of protection and rehabilitation. It is time we got to work in this sector.

It is wrong to say that the Canadian government is not doing its job properly. Because of some of our initiatives in establishing parks, we are considered a model in the world. However, this is something that is not said often enough.

So, this evening I am obviously pleased to have an opportunity to speak and to say that I will be voting in favour of the bill. Obviously, the creation of the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park, in co-operation with the Government of Quebec, is one of the reasons that I will be doing so. Furthermore, my colleague from Lac-Saint-Louis, has had an opportunity to work as Quebec's minister of the environment.

All in all, this is a bill which will allow us to define those species truly at risk, and to do so with grassroots organizations. The government will have to respond quickly to the recommendations of scientists and community groups. These recommendations will not be made at random. They will be made on the basis of very objective criteria.

What is also interesting is that we will have the financial means, if necessary, to provide compensation. Orders will be used to confirm that compensation is necessary for a species at risk.

There is already a stewardship program in place, with a budget of \$45 to \$50 million. This program allows us to manage objectively, by considering the fact that people may, to some degree, be adversely affected by the protection provided. However, fair and legitimate compensation will be provided in such cases. This is an interesting thing about the bill.

As for the protection of species at risk, it is not true that the federal government will throw its weight around. Quite the contrary. I sometimes find that the federal government is extremely polite and respectful in its initiatives. I had the opportunity to witness this with the national marine park in the Saguenay fjord, and with the creation of a Canadian research centre for the processing of aluminum, the construction of which will begin next month. We respected Quebec's jurisdiction, and worked in co-operation with existing organizations.

Government Orders

I am convinced that Bill C-5 will be passed without interfering with provincial jurisdictions. The only thing is that, ultimately, if the necessary work to protect and preserve species at risk is not done, the federal government will have the privilege and the right to assume its responsibilities. But I am 99% if not 100% sure that this bill, which is under the responsibility of my very competent colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, will be implemented in the full respect of the jurisdictions of all the territorial and provincial governments, including the Quebec government.

I am pleased to have used the Saguenay—St. Lawrence National Marine Park to support this bill which, I am sure, will respect all the other jurisdictions.

• (1715)

[English]

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will begin my speech on Bill C-5 by setting the political framework for where we are at with the bill. I will then talk about the unintended consequences as a result of the bill and focus on some of the specific motions. My colleagues highlighted many of them today. I will touch on one of them and then focus on some others.

First, the political framework for where we are at with the bill. We had some potential votes last Monday. We came to the House for those votes and surprise, they did not happen. There was some disruption among the government members as to whether they were going to support some of these motions and amendments. It is important to remind people of what is going on within the political framework.

The environment committee worked hard on the bill for a long period of time and a number of amendments brought forward, some even by government members, have been gutted by their own people: the minister and the department.

One of our Liberal colleagues mentioned earlier in debate that it was time to do something. The government has been in power for almost 10 years and on this topic it has accomplished absolutely nothing. There is no legislation, 0 for 10. It has been 10 years and no legislation. If the minister wants to take great delight in that, that is fine.

I believe that if the government were to move quickly on an election promise made in 1993 perhaps we would have seen some legislation in place already. The flip side of that argument is the government telling us that it has consulted, looked at every side of the issue forward, backward and upside down and that is why it has taken so long. However after 10 years the government is not at a point where it has the support of its own members on this piece of legislation.

The Liberal government approach is to appear to do something while actually doing nothing. The government wants to appear to be doing something to people out there but actually not change anything. That seems to be the model of how the government is operating, not just with this piece of legislation but with others as well.

The unintended consequences of the legislation have some dramatic impacts. Yes, the government wants to bring forward changes. It wants to protect the natural environment and endangered species. The opposition wants to do the same thing through a good piece of legislation, unlike the one we have before us.

Has the government in its 10 years of dealing with this issue taken a look at some of the economic impact that would happen as a result of this legislation? Has it done an actual analysis? Some of the government members mentioned earlier, how will the bill impact tourism or other areas of the economy? What about compensation for individuals whose property could be taken if an endangered species were found on it? That question has still not been adequately addressed after 10 years.

The government once again, by its words not through its actions, has demonstrated an inability to achieve its intended goal. It promised something in 1993. It is now 2002. It has been almost 10 years and there is still no legislation in place.

Hon. Anne McLellan: That is because you are holding it up.

Mr. Grant McNally: It is absolutely unbelievable that could happen. The Minister of Health says that the opposition is holding it up. Her own colleague was on a radio talk show in British Columbia this past weekend saying the reason it was held up was because of the rural caucus and its great, triumphant entry into the process. He said it was the Liberal government rural caucus that saved the day and did not allow Bill C-5 to go forward. That is what the member for Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey said.

• (1720)

The fact of the matter is that the government is divided on this issue. Even though it has a big majority it has not been able to put forward this piece of legislation and bring it into law for 10 years. It is being held up because it is not a good piece of legislation. Some of the Liberal members are asking some serious questions about it. We appreciate that they are doing that. The opposition has been doing that for a long time by pointing out inadequacies with the legislation. That is the political framework for the bill.

The government does not want reports made public. It would cut that right out. It would inhibit some of the accountability that the committee sought to move into the bill and cuts it out. It is gone. It is just off the record altogether.

My colleague from Surrey Central touched on the amendment having to do with documents in the public registry. What has been struck from this section is a clause that would say that all ministerial reports, including listing decisions, would be made public. The government amendment would remove that. It takes it right out of play. Why is that? We are not certain. We would think that accountability and transparency would be items that the government would want to include in its legislation not remove them.

The government, if it were to reveal information and be open with the public, would receive more support not less support. Yet for some reason in this amendment it has removed that public aspect of listing information. I would like to give the Liberals some advice. If they were to release more information and were more open they would actually receive more support.

Private Members' Business

Instead we have seen over the ten years that they have been here that it has not been a credo they work toward. In other words they are less open and less transparent. This creates more perception in people's minds that something must be going on. They wonder how they can trust the government.

All of the other situations that the government has been involved in are well documented. The auditor general has pointed out some difficulties in all kinds of areas, whether it be public works or defence spending.

There is another government amendment which would remove the five year review of the bill. In other words, the bill would move from being less open and less transparent. It is moving in the wrong direction.

The government has been here for almost 10 years. It is quite clear that after 10 years the government has not been able to put in a piece of legislation on endangered species. It is divided on the issue. The legislation has gutted some of the good amendments brought forward by the environment committee. It is another example of how the Liberal government has mismanaged an important topic and broken an election promise going back to 1993.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that it has become clear for all of us here in the House over the course of this debate at report stage, that the majority of the members, regardless of their party affiliation, share the same goal: to improve the protection of species at risk in Canada. I think that everyone agrees that this is a noble goal, and I am happy to share this goal with my colleagues.

However, it is important to note that after nine years of studies, consultations, drafting of documents and fine-tuning, after having seen what works and what does not by assessing results that are already being seen in the field, the time has now come to act, instead of talking about goals.

This bill before us has been very carefully prepared and it is very balanced. It must now be adopted in order to produce good results for Canadians and for our cultural heritage.

We sought the help of countless individuals and groups to arrive at what we have been able to achieve as far as Bill C-5 is concerned.

Allow me to take a few moments to highlight the important contributions made by so many Canadians. For more than eight years we have been working to shape the Species at Risk Act. We have worked closely with many people, our provincial and territorial partners, and individuals who may be personally affected by the legislation, such as aboriginal peoples, rural landowners, resource users and other interested parties.

We must realize that the protection of species at risk has become an issue that concerns people across the country. However no one person can respond to this issue alone, because it is an issue to which all of society must respond.

The fact that species at risk have survived on private lands speaks to the good sense of stewardship that Canadians have. I am thinking

in particular of the river banks at Sainte-Rose, in my riding of Laval West, only a few kilometers from intense urban development, where there is a park that remains in a wild state. One can see ducks and white heron when walking the banks of the Mille-Îles River, thanks to the Government of Canada's program.

Therefore, it is important to continue to enjoy the support of those who live and work on the land, in the forest and on the water. We all want the protection of species to be ensured by those who live near them: farmers, ranchers, fishers, landowners and land users. Much more than mere wishes, this is the best solution, because this major piece of legislation is predicated on a co-operative approach. And this approach works, we know it does.

In fact, individual Canadians working on their own or through conservation agencies, industries or governments are already co-operating on a daily basis to protect the species at risk. Initiatives to recover more than a hundred endangered or threatened species are currently under way. These will make all the difference.

I would like to remind the House once again that the provinces and territories, aboriginal people and many other stakeholders were involved in the drafting of Bill C-5. Their efforts must be encouraged.

In closing, I know I do not have much time left, but I want to reiterate that Bill C-5 was made possible thanks to the co-operation of all the stakeholders, Canadians working on their own or through organizations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1730)

[*English*]

HEALTH CARE SPENDING

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should, in line with the Arthritis Society's Canadian Arthritis Bill of Rights: (a) recognize every patient's right to timely and accurate diagnosis, and to improved access to new medications; (b) ensure patients, wherever they live, enjoy the same quality of care; and (c) to achieve these goals, consider restoring federal funding to 25% of healthcare spending, moving towards restoring the federal contribution to 50% of total healthcare spending.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on an important concern shared by all Canadians, and that is the right of access to timely medical diagnosis and treatment regardless of income, education, social standing or geographical location.

My motion is in the form of a patient's bill of rights, a bill of rights to ensure that our national medicare system continues to serve the health care needs of all Canadians.

Private Members' Business

In putting this motion forward today, I want to pay special tribute to the Arthritis Society of Canada for its inspiring initiative on behalf of arthritis patients. The bill of rights that it put forward for public consideration was developed in co-operation with the Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance and in collaboration with 18 arthritis stakeholder groups across the country.

Its campaign is: one of raising public awareness and reinforcing the right of patients to timely medical diagnosis and care; second, the right of patients to informed consent on treatment, including access to information on treatment options and the full range of helpful medications; and third, the right of patients to research and representation.

I want to for a moment put into perspective both the nature and the extent of the concerns that lie behind the arthritis bill of rights. I want to do so by sharing four simple facts.

First, four million Canadians suffer from some form of arthritis. Second, 600,000 Canadians are disabled by arthritis. Third, arthritis and other musculoskeletal diseases cost the Canadian economy \$17.8 billion a year. Fourth, there are 100 different forms of arthritis. Luckily they fall into three groups: degenerative arthritis, inflammatory arthritis and non-articular rheumatism.

For more details about the extent to which the lives of Canadians are affected by arthritis, I would refer all members of the House and members of the public to consult the very informative website of the Arthritis Society at www.arthritis.ca.

I want to take the opportunity to salute the Arthritis Society for its emphasis on prevention and on the responsibility of patients to promote and protect their own health through their lifestyle choices and through education.

It is well established that early and accurate diagnosis of illness is the most reliable and effective treatment. Missed or delayed diagnosis results in debilitating injury and premature decline or unavoidable deaths.

The second step that the Arthritis Society points out so very capably is ensuring access to necessary treatment options, to treatment modalities, including specialists where they are required, surgeons where they are necessary, rehabilitation services and appropriate medications. That is where Canada's cherished health care system comes into the picture.

We know that this year's Canada Day will mark the 40th birthday of medicare, first introduced by the New Democratic Party, or its predecessor, in Saskatchewan.

[*Translation*]

Over the span of barely two generations, medicare has become a symbol of unity in our country, a system which characterizes Canada as a compassionate nation and makes our identity and our citizenship so precious. Medicare reflects our fundamental Canadian values: sharing, equity, community spirit and compassion.

● (1735)

[*English*]

In a Toronto *Star* op-ed article, Charles Pascal recently wrote about his coming to Canada some three decades ago. He said the following:

The Canada I fell in love with was one where...we owed each other as neighbors [and] was expressed by our investment in universal health care and public education.

Fortieth birthdays are not always easy. It is shocking that some appear willing to surrender this precious legacy. It is even more shocking to realize that among them are those who are charged most directly with protecting our health care system.

I think we all know now, it is a matter of record and it is a matter of human suffering, that the infamous 1995 budget dealt a serious blow to health funding and health quality in this country. In hacking away the social services funding and killing the Canada assistance plan on top of reductions to our health transfers, the 1995 budget struck a further blow to the capability of community service agencies and municipalities to deal with the social and economic determinants of health, which are equally important.

That budget set a pattern which has now become the doctrine of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance: oppose, elect and then embrace. First, during an election vigorously oppose a right wing policy. Second, get elected on the basis of that opposition. Third, once elected, embrace that right wing policy that was so vigorously opposed on the campaign trail. The Liberals as we know did that with the GST. They did it with free trade. They did it with funding for public broadcasting. We know that they did it with health care cuts.

At the same time, we know that we have suffered massive cuts to health funding. Despite the government insistence that the funding levels have been restored for a public not for profit health care system, we know that the restored funding does not even bring the level of funding for a public health care system to where it was in 1993 when the Liberal government was elected.

We know that when those cuts were taking place, there were major increases in health care costs and requirements. Those have resulted from at least five different sources: first, expensive technological advances and life prolonging procedures; second, the costs associated with a rapidly aging population; third, insufficient focus and certainly insufficient funds for prevention, which the Arthritis Society has pointed out; fourth, an almost total ignoring of environmental health and of occupational health and a virtual ignoring of the overall determinants of health; and fifth, extended drug patent monopolies which have made prescription drugs the fastest rising health care cost in the country.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

The provinces and communities had to battle, find funds to make up for the federal cuts, or cut services and close beds in the hospitals. In Alberta, Ralph Klein went ahead and approved private hospitals and for-profit clinics. In Ontario, Mike Harris made it known that he was behind Alberta all the way.

[English]

Now we have a new federal health minister who basically says "that is okay with me". Sadly, we have to recognize that we have in the cabinet of this government today the most pro privatization health minister in a generation. After a string of federal health minister pledging eternal loyalty by day to the Canada Health Act and shredding it by dusk, at least the current health minister is more honest than her predecessors about where she stands.

Let me say that she is deluded if she thinks that Canadians support her soft on privatization position.

How bad has it become? It is bad enough that the Prime Minister's former colleague, Monique Bégin, broke her silence a couple of months ago and openly criticized the Liberals in no uncertain terms. Here is what she said:

The feds are...not sharing fairly in the risks of a constantly evolving and growing health care system, the burden falling squarely on provincial governments....For both accountability purposes and for good governance, we should revert back to the spirit of a 50-50 cost-shared arrangement, block-funded by cash transfers established in multi-year blocks.

Madam Bégin has advocated an immediate move to a 25% federal cash contribution in health care spending from the current level of 14% to 16%.

I do not need to remind the House that Monique Bégin is no gadfly. She is a highly respected former cabinet minister, former colleague of the Liberal members on the government benches today, who is very much credited with having brought in the Canada Health Act. She did so working in collaboration with progressive citizens and with devoted health care workers, especially the nurses of this country.

I want to reiterate that the danger this chronic underfunding poses to the quality of health care is obvious, but it also puts the nature of care, and that is public health care, in severe jeopardy. Federal funding is the only level that Ottawa has in enforcing the standards of the Canada Health Act. As that funding has eroded, Canada's right wing provinces have become ever more bold about bringing in a second tier of private for profit health care.

The ultimate expression of that boldness came two months ago with Alberta's Mazankowski report. That document was a virtual smorgasbord for increasing the share that individuals would be required to pay for health care, like higher premiums and medical savings accounts, or as one highly respected health policy analyst has called medical savings accounts, the Enron of health care.

Canadians deserve to know whether this federal health minister is prepared or not to champion Monique Bégin's prescription for nursing the medicare system back to a state of health. So far the minister's only answer to that question when I have had an opportunity to put it to her in the House has been, and I quote, "The

NDP leader is the only person in the country who thinks Ottawa's health funding is insufficient".

Cherished Canadian values, like social justice and social solidarity, are being sacrificed on the alter of the almighty market. It is time to turn that around.

Across the country today, Canadians are conscientiously engaged in the Romanow commission hearings, trying to have some influence and some say in the future direction of health care in Canada. With their participation and their presence, they are showing their commitment to medicare every day and in every city where the commission meets.

I want to reinforce tonight the point that it is past time that the federal government made a similar commitment, by committing today to restore federal funding, first, to a 25% share of health care costs in Canada and ultimately to restoring full 50:50 funding of health care.

As we debate the importance of the principles and concepts embraced in the bill of health of the Arthritis Society, let us keep in mind that these principles, these aspirations and these needs will only be satisfactorily met if the government commits to an adequate level of funding.

● (1740)

Let us not leave those aspirations as expressed in the arthritis bill of rights as simply words on a piece of paper. Rather, let them be a contribution to our realizing the dream of all Canadians to ensure that people's health care needs are met when and where they are required to be met, regardless of their income and regardless of where they happen to live in this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I thank the hon. member for giving me the opportunity to rise in the House today to speak to Motion M-484.

The motion calls on the government to recognize every patient's right to timely and accurate diagnosis, and to improved access to new medications and to enjoy the same quality of care wherever they live. It also calls on the federal government to consider restoring federal funding to 25% of healthcare spending, moving towards restoring the federal contribution to 50% of total healthcare spending.

This motion raises issues near and dear to the hearts of many Canadians. We all know that healthcare is one of the profoundly important issues we must deal with today as a country.

On that point, the work currently being done by Mr. Romanow, the chair of the Commission on the Future of Healthcare in Canada, will make an important contribution to the national dialogue on healthcare. The commission was struck barely over a year ago, on April 4, 2001.

Private Members' Business

It has now entered the consultation phase or the public dialogue phase of its work. Its final recommendations are due in November. Its work will allow us to reach a consensus on how to reform the Canadian health care system. We are looking forward to what Mr. Romanow will recommend to ensure the long-term viability of the health care system.

I will now get back to the motion before us today and which, as I just said, is dealing with important issues such as quality of care, access to new medication and health care funding mechanisms. I would like to deal with each one of these three issues and tell all those who are here today what is being done in those areas.

To start with, I will say that quality of care is a notion which has several dimensions. We could say that a quality health care system is one that gives priority to the patient. It is integrated, flexible and efficient, and quality is a concern throughout the health care chain, from promotion to prevention and treatment.

The federal government keeps on working with the provinces, the territories, health care professionals and volunteer organizations to make sure that Canadians, wherever they live, have access in a timely fashion to the health care they need.

Let me give a few examples of the efforts made by the federal government to ensure quality health care.

We are working with our provincial and territorial partners and other interested parties to find the best solutions to deal with the issue of labour shortage in health care. For instance, in September 2001, the federal government announced a \$3.95 million contribution over three years to a study on the physician workforce.

This study is being conducted in consultation with Human Resources Development Canada, Health Canada, the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Advisory Committee on Health Human Resources and representatives from the medical community. It is aimed at gathering evidence that will be used to develop a human resource strategy to improve the quality of care given Canadians and their access.

The report of the Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada indicates that we need to reinforce our commitment to quality health care. Urging Canadians to take part in a study on health care delivery issues might be a great way to improve the flexibility of the health care system so that it can better meet the needs of patients.

Through the Canada Health Infrastructure Partnerships Program, the Government of Canada recently announced an investment of up to \$1 million in the Yukon Telehealth Network. This innovative project will deliver telehealth services and programs such as telemental health, tele-learning and X-ray support to six remote northern communities. It is believed that telehealth will significantly improve access to high quality health care.

Second, we know how important it is for the people of Canada to be able to rely on good diagnostic services and to have access to new, safe and efficient medication.

Although health care delivery, including hospital services and medical procedures, usually comes under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, the federal government still has an important role to

play. It is funding medicare for almost one million Canadians in certain groups.

When the first ministers met in 2000, one of the priorities mentioned in the action plan for the renewal of our health care system was to guarantee all Canadians access to new medication that would be better suited to their health condition and more cost-efficient. Since that meeting, Health Canada, in concert with its provincial and territorial partners, has developed strategies to implement this priority.

For instance, federal, provincial and territorial health ministers have recently agreed to set up a single medication review process for all drug plans provided by both government orders. This will be great for Canadians, because it will ensure that all drugs go through a standardized and thorough review process.

• (1745)

Although the government does not support the motion before us today, it continues to work on strategies to improve access to new, appropriate and best value drugs, while ensuring the funding necessary for these strategies.

Finally, the motion before us today asks the government to commit to a specific contribution to health care funding. On this side of the House, we had numerous occasions in the last few years to debate this issue with members opposite, and I am pleased to do so again today.

The Canadian government provides funds to the provinces and the territories through the Canada health and social transfer.

The CHST is a block funding mechanism that applies to health care, post-secondary education, social welfare and social services. The provinces and the territories get to distribute the funds according to their priorities, but must abide by the principles of the Canada health act.

The Government of Canada is aware that the health care system needs stable and predictable funding. In September 2000, acknowledging the need to increase health care funding, the federal government decided to allocate, over five years, \$21.1 billion of new money to the Canada health and social Transfer, including \$2.2 billion for early childhood development.

Furthermore, the Canadian government has committed to invest \$2.3 billion in three targeted areas, according to priorities which had been agreed upon, namely frontline health care, biomedical equipment and information technology.

For the current fiscal year, namely 2002-2003, the total transfers from the federal government to the provinces and territories will reach an all time high of \$19.1 billion.

Private Members' Business

Together with the tax transfer component, CHST entitlements for 2002-2003 will reach \$35.7 billion, or \$6.3 billion more than in 1994-1995.

By 2005-2006, the cash transfer of the CHST will have reached \$21 billion, for an impressive total of \$40 billion if we include fiscal transfers.

Moreover, wishing to improve predictability of funding, the federal government will determine by 2003-2004 the cash transfers for the years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008.

Moreover, the federal government is also making cash transfers as part of the equalization program, which allows provinces to provide their population with reasonably comparable levels of public care services, at reasonably comparable taxation levels. In 2002-2003, equalization payments should reach \$10.2 billion.

The federal, provincial and territorial governments recognize that it takes more than money to improve access to quality health care.

The government I represent, in co-operation with its provincial and territorial partners and other stakeholders, is clearly taking active measures to meet the needs in terms of quality health care and access to new medication, and it is investing significantly in health care.

● (1750)

[English]

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Motion No. 484 having to do with the patient's bill of rights.

The leader of the NDP based her motion on recommendations issued by the Canadian Arthritis Society. The society should be congratulated on its initiative to raise awareness of the shortcomings of our health care system. Believe me, there are lots of them.

I would like to commend the initiative for recognizing the responsibility of the patients when it comes to their own health. That is very important as we look ahead. Ensuring that we pursue a healthy lifestyle in Canada is integral to saving the health care system in the 21st century. It is a new approach that we have talked about since the 1970s but have done precious little about.

I want to take a quick snapshot of a few issues, one of which is cigarette smoking. The health issues of one in every six patients is smoke related. If we can stop people from cigarette smoking until the age of 20, very few will pick up that habit which will devastate our health care system and which destroys the lives of so many Canadians.

A fit society is an integral link to the health of a nation. A whole generation of Canadians has grown up eating fast foods in front of television sets and computers. It will destroy our country if we do not do something about it.

We must look to some of the solutions for a healthy lifestyle and become knowledgeable about available treatments. Treatment plans are very important and we must actively participate in the decisions affecting our own bodies. With the advent of information on the Internet, many patients know more about their own bodies and illnesses before they walk into a doctor's office. It changes the dynamics. Many doctors have told me that is absolutely true. They

have a hard time in this knowledge based economy staying on top of all the cures and all the different potentials. It will be much more of a team effort in the 21st century.

We have to be the leaders in active lifestyles and look at prevention in more than just what we do but also in what we eat. Health food stores are doing a booming business. We are a society that is concerned, and we need to be more concerned about building up our immune systems to prevent becoming ill.

Those are going to be some of the solutions in the 21st century. Co-operating fully with mutually acceptable courses of treatment, with physicians and the health care system, is one of the areas we would like to see us move forward on.

For the health care system to be sustainable we must become more accountable as to how we access the system. We can do this by becoming educated on the costs associated with the various access points. Canadians need to know that emergency wards in hospitals are more costly than their neighbourhood clinics. They have to know it is important for us to access those clinics if we are going to sustain the health care system. That is one small area of information that needs to be given to the patients. Increased accountability becomes an increased efficiency of the overall use of taxpayer dollars.

The Canadian Alliance supports the intent of the motion. In fact our newly ratified policy says that we would ensure a timely, sustainable and quality system for many generations to come, for all Canadians regardless of their financial means. That is what Canadians want. That is what has been reflected in our policy because we reflect the values of Canadians.

Unfortunately the motion glosses over some of the real problems of our health care system, one of which is the ongoing Liberal mismanagement of our health care system. We would not be talking about implementing elements of a patient's bill of rights if Canadians believed the Liberal government was doing a good job of managing our health care system.

The system as we know it is threatened by the baby boom bubble that is hitting it now. Motion No. 484 simply repeats what the Canadian Alliance has been requesting for some time now, the respect of the five principles of the Canada Health Act, with the additional sixth principle of sustainable funding.

● (1755)

That should not need to be there. It should be a given. It is just good practice. Yet what the Liberal government has done over the past decade has made it absolutely imperative. What happened to our health care system in the mid-90s must never happen again. We will lose it for sure if that repeats itself.

We need a government willing to live up to its commitment to deliver sustainable health care to the Canadian people. Our health care system has been on a downhill slide since 1993. We have been operating on nine years of crisis management in health care. The Liberal government's lack of planning and long term investment will take years for a Canadian Alliance government to fix.

Private Members' Business

I will talk a bit more about the motion which would recognize every patient's right to a timely and accurate diagnosis. It is accepted that when the Liberals came to power in 1993 they attempted to balance their books on the back of the health care system. They chose to finance government slush funds with dollars that should have gone into health care.

The Alliance Party would make the interests of health care users paramount. That would be the guiding principle of all its initiatives. We need to explore innovations to reduce waiting lists and improve quality of care. We must modernize the Canada Health Act where necessary to ensure timeliness, quality and sustainable health care service for Canada.

For the most part Canadians eventually receive the health care they require. The problem is that they do not get it in a timely fashion. For many of them it is too late and they do not make it on the waiting list. That is an absolute disgrace for our country. Many Canadians get sicker on waiting lists. We need to do something about that.

Waiting lists in Canada for surgeries, X-rays and basic checkups cause undue frustration and diminished quality of life. They reduce productivity levels in the workforce. Growing hospital waiting lists put pressure on family physicians to take on ever increasing caseloads and rush patients through to support their bottom lines. It has an effect on quality of care and accuracy of diagnosis. We need a government that supports health care professionals. It is not enough to claim to be a champion of the health care system. The actions of the Liberal government have shown Canadians otherwise.

The other part of the motion would ensure patients enjoyed the same quality of care wherever they lived. The government's neglect of the health care system has had enormous consequences. The provinces were forced to lay off thousands of health care professionals. It is absolutely amazing.

We are short a staggering number of health care professionals. Doctors tell us we need 2,500 more doctors per year to sustain the system. Nurses have come up with a study which says we need 112,000 new nurses in the next nine years to sustain the system. Enrolment in medical and nursing schools was cut back drastically in the mid-90s. The government was warned of the problem but did absolutely nothing about it. Funding has been scaled back for promised new medical technologies and the upgrade of obsolete equipment. All told, the government has withdrawn \$25 billion from the CHST since it took office.

We must have sustainable and predictable funding to allow for the enforcement of the Canada Health Act. Instead the government has chosen an adversarial approach in dealing with the provinces. It is more interested in interference than co-operation. This hurts Canadians. When it comes to funding we have reduced real cash transfers to health care by 30%. Some 35% to 40% of provincial budgets go into health care while just 5% of federal money goes into it.

However throwing more money at the problem is not the answer. We need a new approach to reining in the escalating cost of drugs. We need to find more efficient ways to deliver health care. We need greater accountability within the system. We need to place greater

emphasis on prevention and keeping people out of hospital in the first place.

● (1800)

The Liberal government has talked a good talk about protecting the health care system but has left it to the provinces to foot the bill. We have been left with a decade of drift. We need to change that if we are to stay in the system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I remind hon. colleagues that cellphones are not allowed in the House. In the last 15 minutes I have heard two of them. I ask members to please abide by the rules.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I assure you I have no cell phone, and some members of my party fault me for that. You can see, however, that it might help us continue the debate.

I congratulate the hon. member from Halifax for her pertinent motion. I cannot resist pointing out, however, that since this is private members' business, we are in an extremely problematical situation. We have to remember that the government has made use of its majority to deeply undermine parliamentary democracy—this we know—by defeating a private member's bill that was deemed votable.

I plan to remind hon. members of this every time I rise, in support of a colleague who has made use of this vehicle in order to do our work as legislators, when it comes down to it.

Basically, we have no problem with the motion. I understand that there are four million Canadians who suffer to varying degrees from some form of arthritis.

Arthritis is a sneaky disease. One day, a person can be severely affected, and the next quite fine. People with this disease have no way of predicting what their condition will be next. There is one thing about arthritis that differentiates it from other things like diabetes or heart disease. There is a shortage of rheumatologists. This will hold true for the next few years. We are faced with the challenge of proper manpower planning in the health field.

As we know, this is National Nursing Week. I will therefore take this opportunity to thank them. I have met in my office with nurses and their official spokespersons. They have reminded me—perhaps something we have a tendency to lose sight of—that in the health system nurses perform 75% of billable services that are delivered by health professionals.

Private Members' Business

They deserve our recognition. Nurses play a vital and central role in our health system. They fulfill that role under difficult conditions, because all governments have slashed health budgets. As we have said and keep on saying: the federal government has cut \$25 billion in transfer payments.

It is easy to imagine what that means. In Quebec alone, it means an annual shortfall of \$2.5 billion in health care funding because of the federal government's cutbacks.

In a federal system, it is impossible to think that what one government does will not affect the other. The situation is even more unbelievable in view of the absolutely huge surpluses.

Yes, it is true that a little must go to Radio-Canada. A little must go to a number of other crown corporations. However, we certainly have an obligation to ensure the provinces can assume their responsibilities.

Arthritis is a disease affecting four million Canadians of all ages, but particularly those who are getting older. It can reduce one's dexterity and mobility. It is without a doubt an extremely painful disease.

The member from Halifax spoke of arthritis and the fact that so many Canadians suffer from it to remind us of which principles should guide us, as legislators, in our approach to health care.

Through her motion, the member from Halifax is asking us, as parliamentarians, to recognize that each patient has the right to a timely diagnosis. I understand her point. In the case of arthritis, as for any other disease, it is easy to understand that early diagnosis is best.

• (1805)

The parliamentary secretary will agree with me, given that he is a former gastroenterologist—if I am not mistaken—which means he treated disorders of the colon and small intestine, basically of the entire digestive system.

The Parliamentary Secretary will agree that the earlier the diagnosis, the easier it is to take measures, find a cure or the appropriate medication.

This is what the member from Halifax is calling for, and we wholeheartedly support the first paragraph of her motion.

She also refers to medications. This is interesting, since, as health critic, I have read in numerous studies about the pressure that is being felt in the different components of the health care system.

Allow me to quote a figure. Together, the provinces and the federal government spent \$56 billion last year. This is nothing to sneeze at. It is a considerably large share of our collective wealth.

In the next ten years, which is not very far off, we will need to invest between \$80 and \$90 billion in the health care system. Why? If in 2003, the Government of Quebec wants to provide the same services, without adding any new services, without acquiring any new medical technologies, it will have to allocate another 5% of its budget to health care. Imagine that. No government can maintain this rate of increased spending.

Which brings us to the motion moved by the member from Halifax. We need to think about the cost of drugs. Right now, the largest expense, the single greatest factor contributing to increasing costs in our health care system is drug costs. We need to think about what we want to do about this.

For example, many new drugs are introduced. The Patented Medicine Prices Review Board was established by the Tories. We must acknowledge that they had the forethought to look in depth into the whole issue of intellectual property. If memory serves me well, it was Bill C-22, which then became Bill C-91.

Obviously a country such as Canada, like other countries around the world, needs an extremely active research sector in biotechnology.

At the same time, it must be recognized that about twenty new drugs are introduced every year. This creates pressure because our fellow citizens are informed. The Patented Medicine Prices Review Board has a mandate to look at whether the cost of drugs is higher than inflation. This is then averaged with the most developed countries, countries in the G-8. It is true that the drug costs in Canada are not higher than elsewhere but, at the same time, because many new drugs are introduced, consumers and patients press for access to them.

It has been established that drugs are the costliest for the health system in the two years following their introduction. For example, I have learned that big pharmaceutical companies, brand name companies, which do research, are lobbying members of parliament so that drugs can be advertised on television like in the United States.

I saw an advertisement for Viagra. You will tell me, Mr. Speaker, that Viagra is a dangling affair. However, if one lived in a society where most drugs were advertised, can one imagine the pressure on the system? We have to resist this lobby.

In conclusion, we support the New Democratic Party motion and we urge the government to restore transfer payments to their 1993-94 level, with indexation. If the provinces have the means, there can be more research on drugs. With more research and greater means, there can be more drugs covered, and that will contribute to the well-being of people with arthritis.

• (1810)

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the motion brought forward by the leader of the New Democratic Party. This motion gives us an opportunity to talk about the health care system, but first, I want to talk about arthritis. Several members of my close family and my extended family suffer from this disease.

Private Members' Business

Contrary to other diseases, when a person suffering from arthritis consults a physician or goes to hospital to be treated, it does not necessarily show depending on the progression of the disease or the type of arthritis. It does not show, but it hurts. And it is not really publicized. Even though the Arthritis Society does a good job at raising awareness, it is not a popular disease. There are not enough specialists to treat arthritis patients and to develop drugs and treatments for these people.

This disease can last for years and decades. It hurts not only those who suffer from it, but also those who live with them.

As my colleague from the Bloc Québécois mentioned, there are fewer and fewer specialists. What about research? What about drugs? My colleague raised the issue of patent drugs as opposed to generic drugs. There are 4 million arthritis sufferers—there are several types of arthritis—and all these people are waiting for a miracle pill. Arthritis cannot be cured. If a small pill can alleviate the pain, people will push the governments to help them financially so they can take it.

It is all about funding. Everyone says that money is not the only solution, that adjustments must be made.

Incidentally, it is not for the federal government to make adjustments with regard to the services that are provided; it is the provinces' responsibility. However, the federal government can take a leadership role, something which is lacking right now with this government.

That being said, the system is underfunded. It is not only the opposition members and the provinces that say so, but also government members. Liberal members have told us, "The system is underfunded; we need to put more money into it". In fact, the minister has acknowledged that more money is needed. The appointed commissioner—his royal highness—Mr. Romanow, also said, even before releasing his report, that more money was needed.

Where is the money? What are we waiting for? Are we waiting for the Romanow report? Are we waiting for the Queen to show up here to give the throne speech? What about the four million people suffering from arthritis? What are we doing for these people in the short term? Not much. We are told, "Yes, we will invest more money", but we are still waiting.

Money gives us choices. However, when it is time to invest in health care, the government is rather devious. It will not give back to the provinces and the regions, to the people who need it, the money it has cut. On the contrary, it would rather create new programs. Instead of unconditionally giving the money back, it says, "We will give you some money, but you will be held accountable for how it is spent". The government is big on accountability when it hands out money to the provinces, but not so much when it gives money to communications firms. But that is a whole other issue.

Before putting conditions on transfers to the provinces, we all need to agree on one thing. The money belongs to those who provide the services. The role of the federal government is to redistribute the money. Only then, if it feels magnanimous, which will hopefully happen from time to time, should it be allowed to set up very specific programs, together with the provinces and territories, in very specific areas.

●(1815)

I have no problem with developing a national communication and information system, such as the one that we are setting up. But what information will be transmitted? The fact that four million Canadians suffer from arthritis and that it is more difficult to get drugs in a territory than in a province? This would not help much.

What must be done is restore funding. But the government must not merely restore funding and then wash its hands of the whole issue. The government must restore funding and make up for the lost ground. We all know that the government has money for this.

In the fight against the deficit, the government made cuts everywhere, but in a totally inconsistent manner. These cuts were of the order of 6% to 8% for federal programs, but 32% to 38% for the provinces.

Why do the figures vary so much, particularly as regards the provinces? It is because some provinces were more affected, since equalization was taken into consideration. But the fact remains that the federal money given to the provinces was reduced by more than 30%. Thank goodness, the government has not had to face a recession since 1993.

The budget policies that were put in place as of 1991 have had an impact. Why 1991? I am not the one saying this. It is the Minister of Finance who says that the 1991 monetary policy put in place by the previous government helped the government cut costs. I am not saying this, the Minister of Finance is saying it.

Be that as it may, the government currently has money. We are talking about a surplus of between \$9 billion and \$10 billion, perhaps \$8.5 billion. Even after taking out \$3 billion for the reserve and \$2 billion for a foundation, there is still between \$9 billion and \$10 billion left.

So, can the government deal with the sick now? Can it have a vision and do some planning? No. The government wants to wait. It is waiting for Mr. Romanow. It is waiting for the Queen, for the throne speech. Then, it will wait for the next budget. The government will announce what it intends to do this fall. But first, it will react to the findings of a commission. This is where we are headed. How wonderful.

We are told, "Wait, be patient". If we ask questions regarding health care, we are told, "We are expecting a report". MPs' offices are full of studies and reports by task forces on health. They are full. Their filing cabinets are full.

Ask the Library of Parliament to do some research on how many studies were done on health care in Canada. There is a multitude of them. We could fill the House of Commons with these documents, but a new commission has been established. The government's financial involvement is being put off.

The government will present some wonderful programs in the throne speech, which will be read by Her Majesty, and in the budget, which will be read by the future leader of the Liberal Party. But when will we see action? They are gearing up for the election instead of taking action in the area of health care. This is unfortunate.

Adjournment Debate

I went to Saint-Boniface, in Manitoba—a little bit of partisan politics does not hurt once in a while—for a byelection. We met with people. By the way, we have an excellent candidate. He is the best of the lot; his name is Mike Reilly.

I met people in coffee shops and in old folks' homes. In a coffee shop I met a volunteer, a French speaking Manitoban, a man who has been involved for years in the area of health care. He wants to help people in his community.

He told me, "Listen, we had to make a choice last week". "How come?", I asked. "Money is scarce, so we had the choice of either adding a few rooms to the long term care facility or buy a scanner. We may choose a scanner, because we are hoping that the religious orders will help us even more".

What is this all about? We cannot get away from it. I hope that people in Saint-Boniface and elsewhere will send a message to the government. In Saint-Boniface, Richmond—Arthabaska, Ottawa or elsewhere, people say health is a priority. For a country to be healthy, we need healthy people.

• (1820)

[English]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been my privilege this evening to introduce a motion that was very much inspired by the Arthritis Society's bill of rights.

It was my further privilege to have had the opportunity to share the motion at a fabulous fundraiser event in my own riding in Nova Scotia. It was sponsored by the Arthritis Society of Nova Scotia and was in celebration of the contribution made by two highly respected community spirited volunteers in Nova Scotia, Ruth Goldbloom and her husband Dick Goldbloom. Ruth and Dick are community volunteers par excellence. They typify the kind of community support that exists in voluntary organizations like the Arthritis Society.

The point of the motion we have before us is to talk about the government's responsibility. We were elected to parliament to be responsible and that is why I introduced the motion this evening.

We have been treated to a smug recitation from the government member about what the Liberal government is doing to perpetuate the status quo but let me briefly remind all members what the Arthritis Society has said about why the status quo cannot be afforded. I will quote directly from its campaign material that has surrounded the proposal of this arthritis bill of rights.

The bill of rights reads:

There is a crisis in arthritis. We do not have enough specialists or other health care providers in Canada to care for people with arthritis.

Levels of arthritis care vary dramatically across the country. Poor or delayed care often results in disability and joint deformity. This leads to personal tragedy for individuals and their families and to unnecessary costs to our health care system.

I listened very carefully to the government spokesman, followed by the spokesperson for the official opposition, the Alliance. They both spoke about two fundamentally important principles: first, efficiency as it relates to health care; and second, efficiency as it relates to accountability, particularly accountability around increased

uniformity in the level and the quality of services available to Canadians.

There are at least four ways in which we know how to make the system less accountable, less efficient and less uniform. These are all practices being pursued by the government or at least presided over by the government in its steadfast refusal to do anything meaningful about ensuring that the principles of the Canada Health Act are observed and upheld.

The first way is to go the route of shifting more and more the higher financial responsibility for health care onto the provinces because we know that will result in a greater patchwork. Since some provinces have more resources than others it will have an effect on the level and quality of care provided to the residents of the respective provinces.

Second, shifting more and more of the health funding contribution of the federal government onto tax points. It is really the same point. Some provinces have a deeper and broader tax base from which to draw in order to fund health care. It is a prescription for greater inequalities.

Third, it is shifting a higher and higher percentage of health care costs onto the patients themselves. We know now that it has reached an absolutely unprecedented level of 30% of health care being funded by patients themselves. Of course some patients have deeper pockets than others.

Finally, it is shifting more and more of the health care system into the commercial arena onto privatized corporate sources, and for the same reason. If we are going to spend the dollars to generate profits for health corporations we will be taking that money away from the actual direct funding of health care.

Those are fine words that we hear about a concern for greater efficiency, greater accountability and a more uniform system of care for Canadians.

• (1825)

In wrapping up, let me say that the aspirations reflected in the arthritis bill of rights and the principles on which that document is based will not be met unless the government learns these four lessons and unless the government is prepared to recognize that the most accountable, most efficient form of health care is a not for profit universal system that is adequately funded, and that means the federal government making a 50% contribution to that funding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. As the motion has not been designated as a votable item, the order is dropped from the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

Adjournment Debate

[Translation]

BIOTECHNOLOGY

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some time ago, I asked the Minister of Industry a question about a practice which is accepted in Canada, the granting of patents for human genes. I was wondering if we should maintain this policy.

The minister replied that the issue was under review and that there had been some precedents. In fact, I believe we have been issuing patents for human genes since 1985; in the meantime, I have learned that the first application for such a patent came from the United States, from the University of California, in 1978. The first gene was patented in 1983, I believe. Therefore the phenomenon is not new.

I have three concerns and four minutes to explain them. The first one is political and philosophical. I have a hard time accepting that human genes can belong to the private sector.

I think that this knowledge we are acquiring, at a cost of billions of dollars in research, mostly done by the public sector even if it does not remain in the public sector, this knowledge on the genome sequence of the human species, or other species, belongs to all of humankind. It can be compared to the knowledge that benefited all of humankind when we first established the properties of the elements, when the periodic table was created.

I believe that if someone found a new element and wanted to take out a patent for it, he would be shown the door. It is not conceivable, for instance, to have a patent on oxygen, hydrogen, sulfur or whatever.

This practice is allowed for human genes or genes of other species. Philosophically speaking, I have some difficulty with this and with the policy we have. I believe that scientific knowledge should be shared and it should not be patentable. Knowledge of human gene is scientific knowledge. This philosophical aspect of the issue is the first reason I question this practice.

The second aspect is an economic one. It has been said that this will help our economy, but I am not convinced. At the moment, there is a case before the courts dealing with the patenting of a gene for breast cancer. A company is using this patent to stop research on other processes connected with this function of the gene. I look forward to seeing the ruling on this case.

The third concern deals with international development. In its report, the World Health Organization says that in 2000 \$8 billion was spent on human genome research and of that amount 80% of this was spent in the United States. It is understandable that this research is being carried out in the United States, in some European countries, in Japan, in Australia and in Canada, all industrialized and developed countries.

If we pursue this policy of patenting human genes or genes of other species, it is conceivable that some day between 20 and 25 developed countries will have all the patents for all species. There will be some 150 or more countries left behind, because they do not have this capacity to acquire knowledge. They will have to pay private companies to get the capacity to use the knowledge in order to develop.

These were my concerns. I hope to have other opportunities to talk about them and that other members of the House will do the same, because I believe it is a fundamental issue.

• (1830)

Mr. Serge Marcell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government would like to reiterate that, to be patented in Canada, a gene, like any other invention, must be new, non obvious and useful, in accordance with the terms provided for in the act.

Thus, genes are only patented in Canada if they are identified, isolated, purified and have a known usefulness. Genes as they exist in nature cannot be patented under the Copyright Act. For example, a gene within its natural habitat, such as the human body, cannot be patented.

In the last twenty years, since the process of gene isolation and purification has become technologically possible in Canada, patents have been delivered for inventions involving plant, animal and human genes. The same is true in other major jurisdictions such as the United States, Europe, Japan and Australia. As far as we know, none of these countries are considering a change to their patent legislation to ban human gene patenting.

A patent on a gene only gives its owner the right to prevent other people from producing, selling or using his or her invention for a twenty year period after the filing of the patent application.

A patent on a human gene does not give its owner any property rights on the person from whom the gene was derived, or any right on a person who later receives a treatment with the patented gene or a product derived from this gene.

A patent does not allow for the marketing of an invention. Additional research and innovation on a given gene can in fact be promoted by the patent process because of the requirement for the patent application and the invention to which it pertains to be publicly disclosed within 18 months of the application being filed.

There have been numerous instances where the isolation of human genes has had a positive impact on health. Cystic fibrosis, Tay-Sachs disease, Duchenne muscular dystrophy and the early onset of Alzheimer's disease are all examples where genetic research could have a positive impact on the health of many Canadians.

Progress in genetic screening will ensure that Canadians at risk of contracting these diseases can be diagnosed earlier. In the future, this could give them the opportunity to start treatment earlier, which, at the end of the day, would improve their quality of life.

We are just beginning to realize the potential of this type of research to advance our knowledge of the human genome. Progress in genetics is fueled by progress in biotechnology. However, progress in biotechnology requires a considerable amount of research and development.

Adjournment Debate

Patents are very important for the high-growth biotechnology industry in Canada. They provide companies with the economic incentive they need to invest in the long and costly research and development process, which is often necessary to produce and market medical products.

Canada's patent regime looks to balance the need for effective patent protection of biotechnological inventions with the need for increased access to information and increased use of these inventions.

At the same time, we value the disclosure of new innovative technologies. Patent protection allows us to balance these needs by encouraging the disclosure of innovative research while giving patentees an exclusive right in order to protect their investment in a particular invention.

• (1835)

Mr. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, using the term invention in connection with the human gene strikes me as a bit bizarre. Human genes already exist. We did not invent them. We discover them, just as we discover the properties of elements. At some point, therefore, the law should be reviewed.

If I understand correctly, the only consideration has been an economic one. Philosophical and political considerations have not come into play, just the economic one. That is all that matters. I am here to defend the common good, to defend the public, not the private sector. I am here to defend and improve, if possible, the condition of our entire species, not just here, but worldwide. This emphasis on the economic means that only private and corporate interests are being considered. I admit that this is where I have a problem.

I hope that there will be an opportunity to debate this issue again when the committee set up by the government tables its report, which is expected in the spring of 2002. We should have it soon.

Mr. Serge Marcell: Mr. Speaker, I am in fact very sensitive to the arguments put forward by my colleague. I agree that there should be a debate on this topic.

When we speak of patents, we are speaking of patents on drugs, on biotechnology research. It is still for the common good. There are people who invest in research and development, still for the common good.

But when it comes to the human genome, serious philosophical questions arise, as my colleague pointed out. We are therefore going to let the committee do its work and then the government can take another look at this.

[*English*]

SPECIES AT RISK

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the arguments about the importance of compensation in the bill have been made a number of times in the House. The reason I am appearing at the late show is that in the way the minister answers, he implies that in fact it has been dealt with.

My argument has been that he lost the argument in cabinet. In fact I have a cabinet letter which states that. I also have background material from many people, including the rural caucus chairman of

the Liberal Party, who says that compensation must be there. The Canadian Real Estate Association says that it must be there. There is a lack of certainty regarding the availability and scope of compensation, says the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, and it says compensation must be there. These are the frontline soldiers that the minister talks about so often when he speaks about the bill.

My question is simple: Why would it not be in the bill? Why does it have to be left to the regulations, which may or may not be drawn up? Why not put it right in the bill and say that it will be there as a last resort? That is what those people on the land have to hear. They want to know that all Canadians value preserving species at risk, as we all do. Therefore, we all should absorb some of the costs of doing that. They do not want to be the only ones to have to do that.

Also, the words "fair and reasonable" are the interpretation of a judge. Every Canadian out there knows that leaving it to a judge to interpret may give us a pretty wide range, whereas if we use the term fair market value, that is very specific. That means that an appraiser appraises the land or the loss and takes all of the sales and what has happened in the area and decides the value. It would not be left for a judge to arbitrarily interpret. It is very specific.

My questions on April 29 were simply these. Why is it not in the bill? Why has the finance minister not put something in his budget to cover this? It is fine when the minister and members from the other side get up and answer and say to trust them, that they will draw up the regulations, that they will be fair, and that this will be dealt with. In actual fact, unless there is money allocated and unless it is in the bill, I do not think it will happen. It should be at fair market value.

Compensation becomes the number one issue, really. Yes, habitat protection, mens rea and all of those other things are important. Obviously everyone knows we have to protect habitat if we hope to preserve a species at risk, but if we leave out that compensation the people on the ground will not participate. That, then, is the question.

• (1840)

Mrs. Karen Redman (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment has said, and will continue to say, that the government is committed to making compensation regulations soon after proclamation of the proposed species at risk act. The government has never stated otherwise. Those who have tried to make it sound otherwise are not correct.

The Minister of the Environment has also said, and will continue to say, that we agree that compensation should be provided to anyone who suffers a loss from an extraordinary impact of the critical habitat prohibitions in a fair and reasonable way. We cannot be more definitive than that.

Adjournment Debate

Can any member across the floor tell me at this precise moment exactly how much to pay for 3.6 hectares of land that cannot be used for cultivation for four weeks because it is a nesting site for the Bicknell's thrush? Will the birds soon fledge and fly away, and will the nest be abandoned? Can there be a cultivation a few weeks later and then a time out for nesting the following year? Can we use a law to determine the market value of what might have been cultivated? No, we cannot put this down in law.

We must be realistic about the term fair market value. This term may be relevant when applied to land acquisition and land expropriation situations but it probably has little relevance for almost any situation that could arise under the species at risk act. Concepts such as fair market value are relevant considerations in quantifying the impact on a case by case basis but determination of the level of compensation should not be limited to this concept alone.

Compensation for restrictions on the use of land is a complex issue. The government needs to have the practical experience in implementing the stewardship and recovery provisions of SARA and in dealing with the question of compensation. Establishing a definitive approach without the needed experience may well end up excluding some legitimate claims. This is a very important point. For now, determinations of compensation will be made on a case by case basis. When we have the experience we can prescribe a more definitive approach. As the Minister of the Environment has stated, and will do so again unequivocally, that does not mean there is no compensation.

Work has already begun to develop general compensations that will be ready soon after SARA is proclaimed to enable any person to make a claim, if needed.

The government is committed to do a thorough consultation with everyone who can help us gain the necessary experience and who has a stake in a fair and effective system.

To provide further certainty that we intend to honour our commitment to landowners and others the government withdrew Motion No. 109 on compensation regulations. Because of this change the governor in council would now be required to make regulations necessary for the provision of compensation under the act.

There is opportunity in the legislation. There are provisions for compensation in the legislation. There is a consensus from rural Canadians because they told us what they wanted and we listened to

what they said, and we acted on it. It is time to end the posturing and deal with the facts. It is time to pass the legislation.

• (1845)

Mr. Bob Mills: Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is there is no money in the budget. With no money we cannot pay compensation. As long as the minister is there, yes, we might get regulations. However the minister could change at any time and who knows what the new minister would say.

A few years ago when I was a university student I worked for the Canadian Wildlife Service. My job was to go out and sign leases with farmers to not drain, burn or plough slough and marshland areas. We were able to calculate a value. I spent the whole winter taking aerial photographs and outlining the area and then coming up with a compensation figure which the farmer then took. This has been done for a lot of years. There are many examples where dollar figures have been put on things, such as, oil leases, roads and all those things.

Mrs. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out something that is important in the species at risk legislation. It does respond to the needs of rural Canadians. The bill was formed with rural input. There were over 155 consultation sessions. The majority of these involved rural Canadians in many different parts of Canada. They talked, we listened. We adjusted our policy then we talked and listened some more.

I refuse to accept any criticism that Bill C-5 is not rural friendly legislation because it simply is not true. The key to effective species at risk legislation is the support and the co-operation of those Canadians who depend on the land for their livelihood. There is an overwhelming consensus across the country, especially by rural Canadians, that the government should pass the bill because it puts the co-operative principle first. Legislation will not protect species unless Canadians act on it.

We have the appropriate balance. It is built on co-operation not coercion. The bill is based on building trust not looking tough. The bill and the overall strategy itself is an opportunity for rural Canadians.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 6.49 p.m.)

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