



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 138 • NUMBER 024 • 2nd SESSION • 37th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, November 7, 2002

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

All parliamentary publications are available on the
"Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire" at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 7, 2002

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1000)

[*Translation*]

PERFORMANCE OF DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in order to inform parliamentarians and Canadians about government performance, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 86 performance reports for departments and agencies.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 109, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, two copies of the government's response to the report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights pertaining to the liability of corporations.

* * *

•(1005)

[*English*]

CANADA CUSTOMS AND REVENUE AGENCY

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second annual report of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency to Parliament for the year ending March 31, 2002.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Mark Assad (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 109, I have the honour to table, in both official

languages, for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the government's response to the report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration entitled "Competing for Immigrants".

* * *

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the associate membership of some committees of the House, and I should like to move concurrence at this time.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the petitioners from my riding draw to the attention of the House that the creation and use of child pornography is condemned by a clear majority of Canadians, but the courts have not applied the current child pornography laws in a way to make it clear that such exploitation of children will always be met with swift punishment.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to protect our children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all material which promotes or glorifies pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities involving children be outlawed.

JUSTICE

Mr. Joe Fontana (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present, pursuant to Standing Order 36, four petitions.

Routine Proceedings

The first petition concerns the case of Mr. Steven Truscott. My constituents are asking the Minister of Justice to re-examine the case and to ensure that justice is being restored to Mr. Truscott.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Joe Fontana (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I would like to present the other three petitions to the House. These petitions are signed by more than 200 constituents from London. The petitioners call upon Parliament to protect our children and to condemn child pornography.

Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition with 50 signatures from concerned constituents in my riding of Cambridge. My constituents draw to the attention of the House that a majority of Canadians condemn the creation and use of child pornography.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to take the necessary steps to outlaw all materials that promote or glorify child pornography.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand today to present three petitions on behalf of my constituents.

The first petition calls for the protection of children to be paramount. The government should take action to condemn the creation and use of child pornography because the majority of Canadians are already doing so.

The petitioners therefore call upon Parliament to protect our children by taking all the necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities involving children are henceforth outlawed.

• (1010)

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the second petition from my constituents calls upon the government to ban embryonic stem cell research and to promote research that does not involve the destruction of human life.

AGE OF CONSENT

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the third petition was put together by a young lady from Wilkie, a town in my riding. She is asking that the age of sexual consent be raised from 14 to 16, which all provincial ministers are calling for as well. It is our federal justice minister who seems to be holding it up at this time.

I am pleased to present these petitions today.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the petition I am presenting today is in addition to the tens of thousands of signatures that have already come in regarding child pornography. The people in my riding of Selkirk—Interlake are tremendously concerned about protecting our children and request that the use of pornography by pedophiles and other pornographers be stopped.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to take immediate action on this.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 2 and 9.

[Text]

Question No. 2—**Mr. Gerald Keddy:**

With regard to RCMP patrols in national parks: (a) how much are they costing Canadian taxpayers; (b) how many arrests have been made since May 8, 2001; and (c) how many poachers were arrested during the fiscal years 1998-1999, 1999-2000 and 2000-2001?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): (a) The RCMP has expended \$17,598,602 for the year 2001-02 and \$5,666,995 for the year 2002-03 as of September 26, 2002, for a total of \$23,265,597.

(b) The RCMP does not have a central database where arrests are recorded. The RCMP does collect data on the number of persons charged with violations of the Criminal Code, other Federal Statutes, the National Parks Act and Provincial Statutes, such as the Motor Vehicle and Liquor Act. There have been 11,776 individuals charged since assuming law enforcement duties in the Canadian National Parks.

(c) The RCMP did not assume responsibility for poaching investigations until May 2001 (FY 2001-2002).

Question No. 9—**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:**

What is the cost of the visit to Canada by Queen Elizabeth II, broken down for each federal department and agency involved, including the Governor General and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): The Department of Canadian Heritage currently anticipates a total cost of \$6,400,000 for the 2002 visit to Canada by Queen Elizabeth II.

The portion of this amount that relates to our obligations to other government departments are projected to be as follows:

DND—\$150,000

RCMP—\$70,000

PWGSC—\$250,000

Rideau Hall—\$130,000

House of Commons—\$20,000.

[English]

Mr. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[Translation]***CITIZENSHIP OF CANADA ACT**

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.) moved that Bill C-18, an act respecting Canadian citizenship, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it has been a privilege to introduce Bill C-18 in the House.

[English]

In this building, which represents the essence of our country, we will now debate a bill which touches upon the very identity of Canadians. We can see the importance of the Canadian citizenship bill when we think of the Canada we want in the years to come.

[Translation]

The Speech from the Throne says:

Canada has a unique model of citizenship, based simultaneously on diversity and mutual responsibility.

It says also that the government

—will reform our citizenship legislation to reassert the rights and reinforce the responsibilities that go with being Canadian.

[English]

I fully agree with these statements and I wish to explain to the House how the bill reflects these principles.

The legislation has a number of aims. First, it would ensure that our citizenship rules more clearly reflect the fundamental values of Canadian society.

[Translation]

Second, it would recognize and protect the value of Canadian citizenship.

Third, it would impress upon Canadians and newcomers that citizenship is a partnership, and that both citizens and the country have rights and responsibilities.

[English]

Fourth, it would change how we make decisions so that we can obtain fair results but in a more efficient manner.

For Parliament, citizenship is a fundamental issue. Deciding who is a full member of society is one of the most important powers of the modern state.

[Translation]

Canadian citizenship has been in existence since 1947. Since then, Parliament has made major changes just once. In 1977, the current Citizenship Act was enacted, but it has remained essentially unchanged since.

[English]

Our current legislation is based on a very solid foundation, and in the new bill we are not trying to reinvent the wheel. While the existing Citizenship Act has many fine qualities, we must admit that

our legal system, our values and the way we manage things have changed a great deal in 25 years.

●(1015)

[Translation]

The principles and practices in the current legislation should be fine-tuned to better reflect our present values and those that will guide Canada in the future. It is one of the reasons why this bill is a priority during this session.

[English]

Ours is a democratic country, open to new commerce. When I attend our wonderful citizenship ceremonies, I am glad that we continue to warmly welcome people from the four corners of the world.

[Translation]

As Canadian citizens, we want our new fellow citizens to respect and share some fundamental principles like respect for the rules of democracy, freedom and respect for the rights of others, even if they do not share our views.

[English]

Bill C-18 is itself an example of the values it promotes. In the first place, this citizenship legislation clearly sets out the principles on which it is based. A statement of objectives indicates the seven aims at the heart of the proposed new act.

[Translation]

They include the need to reaffirm that all citizens have the same status, to protect the integrity of citizenship and to require strong attachment to Canada for the acquisition of citizenship. It would be hard to be more transparent or set more fundamental goals.

[English]

The criteria for citizenship as stated in the bill are clear, objective and transparent. In a society like ours, which is based on the rule of law, this is the way to deal with this issue. The decision making process is also based on clarity, objectivity and transparency.

[Translation]

The bill is consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which was not in force when the current legislation was passed. As things stand now, hundreds of children adopted abroad each year by Canadian parents have to come to Canada as immigrants instead of Canadian citizens. The same thing does not apply to biological children.

[English]

The new bill would correct this form of discrimination.

As for the right to challenge decisions, the proposed procedure would be straightforward and accessible in clear-cut cases. Applicants would be able to request administrative review of decisions where an error in decision making has occurred. Applicants would also have access to the Federal Court.

Government Orders

[Translation]

At the other end of the scale, only the Federal Court will have the authority to make the serious decision to revoke citizenship. This change reflects some comments I have heard and to which I would like to respond.

[English]

At the beginning of my speech I reminded members that the bill aims to reassert the rights and reinforce the responsibilities that go with being Canadian. Persons who wish to obtain citizenship also have responsibilities. The first of these is allegiance to Canada and to its democratic system.

[Translation]

We have two other expectations that were known before and that are reiterated in this bill, and they are the applicants' knowledge about Canada and their knowledge of at least one of the two official languages of our country.

This new legislation is also more specific as to the substantial connection our citizens must have with their country.

[English]

We would no longer allow Canadian citizenship to be transmitted indefinitely from generation to generation among people who have never lived in Canada. However, to honour our tradition of openness and balance, persons born in Canada would continue to have an automatic right to citizenship.

[Translation]

The bill is also more flexible for those who have to work and do business abroad, by extending to six years the period during which they actually have to reside in Canada for at least three years before they can apply for citizenship. This is our way of recognizing that globalization is a reality and of extending a welcome to new immigrants.

[English]

Canadian citizenship has great value. When we attend ceremonies where people take the oath of citizenship we understand that being Canadian is a heartfelt source of pride. Members should ask any of the dozens of our colleagues in the House exactly how the simple ceremony changed them. I wish to congratulate them for having made that gesture and I would encourage them to continue attending citizenship ceremonies.

[Translation]

The bill recognizes the importance of the act of becoming or publicly declaring oneself a Canadian. It enshrines citizenship and reaffirmation ceremonies.

[English]

The men and women who preside over the ceremonies, known as citizenship judges under the existing Citizenship Act would officially become citizenship commissioners. They would become advisers to the minister in citizenship matters and play a role as citizenship ambassadors to the Canadian population as a whole. In so doing they would promote both the concept and the importance of citizenship.

[Translation]

They will continue to preside over citizenship ceremonies. In the past five years, these judges have sworn in an average of 160,000 new citizens per year—from St. John's to Victoria to Iqaluit—in dignified community ceremonies performed throughout the year and the solemn ceremonies during the week of July 1 and Citizenship Week.

[English]

Because people in Canada value citizenship we have a duty to see that a certain kind of merit principle is observed. People who do not share our fundamental values should not be granted citizenship. If they have obtained citizenship through misrepresentation, Canada must be able to correct the situation by revoking or annulling their citizenship.

• (1020)

[Translation]

This legislation provides better tools to ensure that.

Naturally, only the Federal Court will have the power to revoke citizenship. At the same time, it could order the removal from Canada of terrorists, war criminals and members of organized crime who had become naturalized Canadians.

[English]

In black and white cases the minister would have limited power to annul citizenship. In exceptional situations the governor in council could refuse applications from individuals who do not respect the values of our free and democratic society.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. members of this House discuss the bill before them, they must not forget that citizenship and immigration are closely related.

[English]

Last year Parliament adopted the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. The aim of that legislation was to reform and update Canada's legislation on immigration. Our citizenship legislation also needs renewal.

[Translation]

Many of our future citizens come to this country as immigrants or refugees. Like all Canadians, they are entitled to expect their receiving country to have a consistent policy regarding the two stages of their journey toward becoming Canadians.

[English]

I wish to move on to the management issues associated with the bill. The Canadian system currently handles approximately 190,000 citizenship applications a year. It is therefore understandable that we would want a system that would be efficient and produce fair decisions.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Relying on objective criteria will promote that. This bill will provide for an administrative decision making process. The majority of applications that pose no problem could then be processed much more efficiently.

[English]

Simple errors in decision making could be corrected without intervention by the courts. That would save much time and energy for my department, for applicants and for the Federal Court. Everyone would benefit from the new system.

[Translation]

To conclude, I firmly believe that this bill will make many winners and very few losers, if passed as is.

[English]

The losers would be war criminals, terrorists, members of organized crime, individuals with very few ties to Canada, and people who lie when applying for citizenship.

[Translation]

The winners would be all new citizens and Canadians who have joined our big family either by birth or by choice.

[English]

I am confident that members of the House will find this legislation worthy of quick adoption.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to give some thoughts on this new citizenship bill introduced by the minister.

I would like to shock the minister by congratulating him for bringing the bill forward and for some of the measures he has put into the new bill, which all members of the House have been asking for some time. As we know, the minister's predecessors in two instances tried to have a new citizenship bill introduced into the House and were unsuccessful. I am sure that this minister will be able to get the deed done, so I do congratulate him for that.

The new oath of citizenship is particularly positive. It reads:

From this day forward, I pledge my loyalty and allegiance to Canada and Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada. I promise to respect our country's rights and freedoms, to uphold our democratic values, to faithfully observe our laws and fulfil my duties and obligations as a Canadian citizen.

This is a good oath and I congratulate the minister for that.

The second big area where I wish to congratulate the minister is in moving the decision to strip Canadians of their citizenship from the cabinet level back to the judicial system. In our country, which is based on the rule of law, having these kinds of decisions made for political reasons by political players is not acceptable. The minister has recognized that and he will receive a lot of kudos for the measures he has put into the new bill.

Citizenship is an exciting privilege for many people. All members of the House have had the pleasure of being present at citizenship ceremonies where a number of people from all countries receive their citizenship and certificate. It is a privilege to be part of the pride and happiness those occasions generate. Our country has had

citizens join it from all parts of the globe and we are enriched by that.

The Citizenship Act is a very important document in that it sets out who has or may obtain the right to obtain citizenship, the grounds for and the process of revoking, restoring or denying citizenship, and the administration of the citizenship process. It is one that would affect many people, so it is an important piece of legislation.

Although the minister covered some of this, I want to go through the way the new bill differs from existing legislation. Canadians will be interested to know that the legislation being amended today was first introduced in 1947, which for a change was before I was even born. Some days that is a nice thing to be able to say. In 1947 Canada was the first Commonwealth country to enact its own citizenship legislation. The act was updated in 1977, 30 years later, to simplify the naturalization process and here we are in 2002 with an update of that 1977 legislation.

It is fair to say that most legislation could do with some modernization and some updating from time to time and certainly the government has recognized that here. It brought in a bill to update the Citizenship Act in 1999 and also in 2000. Both of those bills died during the review process. I am confident this one will not, but time will tell.

The bill changes some things and I want to go through that for Canadians who are watching the debate and who want to know exactly what we are dealing with.

• (1025)

First, in the current act, physical presence in Canada is not clearly defined as a requirement for citizenship.

The new bill says that there must be residence, it must be physical presence and it must be for three years during a six year period. An applicant for citizenship must be physically present in the country. It simply makes sense, as the government pointed out, that there be some real and substantial connection to our country on the part of people who are requesting to be made citizens.

The process under the current act is a quasi-judicial decision making process under what are called citizenship judges, which are appointments, by the government, and, I have to say, sometimes patronage appointments that are not necessarily based on background or knowledge of the area but on political considerations.

Under the new act that has been changed. The administrative decisions would now be made by the department, using objective criteria. That would be fairer and more certain for everyone concerned.

Under the current act, people can be prohibited from receiving citizenship only if they commit indictable offences. Under the new bill, summary conviction offences or offences in other countries can be used to bar people from receiving citizenship. This again makes sure that the law-abiding commitment to the rights and privileges of others in our country is respected by those to whom we extend Canadian citizenship privileges.

Government Orders

Under the current act, it is very difficult to rescind citizenship. Under the new bill, there would be new powers to annul citizenship obtained using a false identity and also to refuse citizenship in some circumstances.

Under the current act, revocation of citizenship has been vested in the cabinet. That has caused a great deal of concern, as I mentioned at the opening of my speech, but I will return to that later. Under the new bill, there would be a full judicial process. Again, returning to the rule of law and due process has been a very important step in the new bill.

Under the current act, adopted children must come to Canada as immigrants. Under the new bill, adopted children would be able to acquire citizenship without becoming permanent residents, which would make it much easier for Canadian parents to adopt children from other countries.

In the current act, the oath does not include allegiance to Canada. Under the new bill, the oath would require allegiance to Canada. Again, as I mentioned at the outset, that is something that I believe all members of the House applaud. Certainly the Canadian Alliance is fully supportive of that change.

Those are the main changes that we are dealing with in the act.

The remarks I have to make are, first, that we are supportive of the main thrust of the bill, particularly the new oath and the judicial process being restored for stripping Canadian citizens of their citizenship, the residency requirements and better language to deal with some of the loopholes that have been troublesome in the act since 1977.

There are some concerns. No act is perfect. Of course our job as legislators is to make sure it is perfect or as perfect as it can be given the variety of perspectives among members of the House.

I would like to suggest to the House some changes that we could and should make to the bill to improve it.

Although the change that would make it a court process for stripping citizens of their citizenship is a positive one, I believe a couple of areas of this whole issue have not been dealt with in the legislation as well as they should have been.

● (1030)

Unfortunately the legislation does not make stripping citizens of their citizenship retroactive. In other words, those people who already are before cabinet with recommendations that they be stripped of citizenship will remain in the cabinet process, as the legislation is now written, rather than going into the judicial process. We do not think that is fair.

It was very interesting that under the new Immigration Act, which we debated not too long ago, and the new regulations that came in, those regulations were made retroactive. In other words, even those people still in the process would now be dealt with under the new rules after a short period of time. There was some difference of opinion about how adequate that was. The committee felt that the retroactivity would be a problem. In this case, the opposite has happened. Instead of the cases presently in the system being dealt with under the new act, as they are under the Immigration Act, under

the Citizenship Act they would remain in the old process. This is not consistent and we believe it is also not fair to the people in the process.

The fact is that the people who are before cabinet with recommendations that they be stripped of citizenship stand to lose one of the most important rights that a human being can have, that is their citizenship in a particular country. We believe that privilege should not be taken away without the highest adherence to the natural justice process and the highest standard of proof.

Under the present process, the standard of proof required is only a balance of probabilities. This means there would be a fifty-fifty chance that people would actually be stripped of citizenship but they could still have the citizenship removed. We believe that the standard of proof should be beyond a reasonable doubt, which is the highest standard in our courts, and it should be found to be beyond a reasonable doubt in a court in a judicial process, not a political process.

Without casting any aspersions on the many fine people who serve in our cabinet, they are political animals. They must serve a lot of political interests. Some of us are aware of the politicization of some of the cases before the cabinet for loss of citizenship. It is very important for all parties to have a judicial process with due process, with a high standard of proof and a high standard of care that protects everyone. It is very important that we consider amendments to the bill to put everyone who stands to lose their citizenship into the judicial process with the highest standard of proof possible.

Another concern is that the number of people being considered by the federal court for revocation of citizenship could increase the caseload of the federal court. I would ask that somewhere, either in the legislation or in the regulations, that should be recognized. Additional resources may need to be made available to the federal court to handle this additional caseload, and we should address that. We have too many judicial and quasi-judicial processes that are overburdened to the point where due process for our citizens suffers, and that is not acceptable.

There was an article in the newspaper yesterday about the Supreme Court being deluged with applications for it to hear different cases, to the point where the Supreme Court said that it could not do all of them and that it had to limit them.

● (1035)

If important decisions are going to be made by the Federal Court we think it is critical to have sufficient resources and sufficient judicial eminences appointed so this can be looked after.

Under the new act, the minister would be able to actually annul citizenship if someone were found to have obtained citizenship fraudulently either by using a false identity or having been found after the fact to have violated the Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act. We think, particularly post-September 11, that this is a very important addition to the act. However we find it odd that the minister's power to annul is limited to five years after citizenship is granted using these inappropriate criteria or fraudulent means.

Government Orders

What if the minister does not find out about the fraud or the violation for five years? If the minister does find out after five years does the individual receive a get out of jail free card because the fraud or the war crime was not known before that time? We do not think the five year limit makes sense. We will be asking some pretty tough questions about that. If we are not satisfied that there was a good reason for limiting that window to five years, then we will certainly be supporting amendments to broaden that. We know that sometimes fraud and evidence of a violation of the Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act can come out more than five years down the road and it needs to be dealt with at that time.

We also have instances where there can be denial and refusal of citizenship, particularly if someone has been convicted of two or more summary conviction offences or an offence in another country. We applaud that because it is important. Canada, as we know, among all the nations in the world is very committed to a law-abiding, just society. We also think that if someone has been found to commit an indictable offence he or she should simply not be accepted as a citizen of this country.

Right now, as I understand it, an individual cannot apply if his or her application for citizenship has been suspended for five years, but then that person can re-apply. I do not think that is appropriate. I think that if someone has committed a very serious indictable offence, and those kinds of convictions would be rare and well justified under our very careful court system, then that individual should simply be deported from the country and not accepted as someone worthy of being accepted into our citizenry.

I have some concerns with the minister having the ability to deny citizenship if a person "has demonstrated a flagrant and serious disregard for the principles and values underlying a free and democratic society". On the surface this would seem to be a bit of no-brainer.

As a lawyer, which I am, as are many members of the House, I realize that there needs to be some specificity and some objectivity here. I am a bit concerned that this phrase can be very widely interpreted and that people could be convicted on what others might comprehend in their minds or on very loose criteria.

This is such a serious matter that the particular phrase needs to be more specific. We need to be clearer on what is meant by "flagrant and serious disregard for principles and values underlying a free and democratic society". It is very important that there be more certainty and objectivity in the law so people will have some fairness and clarity about when this particular provision might be invoked.

• (1040)

With respect to adoption, as I mentioned before, we really applaud the fact that this new provision will make it easier for Canadian parents to adopt internationally, to adopt children from other countries. We do have a concern, however, about a new provision that allows adults to be adopted after the fact, so to speak, if a Canadian citizen or someone who has become a Canadian citizen had a parental sort of relationship to that person when a minor. The Canadian citizen could adopt that adult person, who automatically would receive Canadian citizenship. I do not think this is appropriate. I think that adults should receive Canadian citizenship on their own merits because they have reached adult status. We do

not think this provision should be in the bill. We point out that there is some concern about abuse of that provision as well. It allows people who otherwise would not be able to receive Canadian citizenship to do so without meeting the criteria.

We also support the provision in the bill whereby the administrative function of citizenship judges would now be performed by departmental officials using objective criteria. There would be much more certainty and much more coherence in the way citizenship decisions are made.

We do have a concern about the individuals who are to become what is called citizenship commissioners. Although they would have no administrative responsibilities under the act, they have been designated to "promote citizenship". We have a concern about this for a couple of reasons. One is that we know the immigration and citizenship department has scarce resources. Some of the settlement programs are being cut back, for example, particularly ESL and day care for permanent residents and people who hope to obtain citizenship. Other programs are being cut as well. At the present time these citizenship commissioners, and I assume this will continue, earn between \$74,000 and \$87,000 a year. We just think that those resources would serve new Canadians and people who hope to obtain citizenship much better if they were put into some of the settlement programs and used to beef up some of the other areas of activity of the Canadian immigration and citizenship department.

The other thing, of course, and we have shown concern about this in many other areas, is that unfortunately these positions do tend to be patronage appointments. We think it is not a good use of public resources to reward friends and supporters of the government.

I want to be careful when I say that to acknowledge and to affirm many of the citizenship judges who have acted in the country in the past. I personally have dealt with some of them, as I know all colleagues have, and I have found many if not most of them to be highly dedicated people who are very well respected, with outstanding skills in really welcoming new Canadians and doing their jobs. However, now that there is no administrative function I think it simply would be better not to have these positions available. They really do not serve a strong purpose. It is a purpose that could be served by other members of the department or members in the community. I think it would be better if these patronage positions were simply eliminated so that those resources could be invested in ways that would serve new Canadians and the immigrant community more effectively.

• (1045)

With respect to due process, there is a provision in the draft legislation that a judge is not bound by any legal or technical rules of evidence. I made an investigation into this because on the surface it seems unbelievable that in Canada we would have any kind of judicial proceedings that are not bound by the ordinary technical rules of evidence. I wondered why there was this departure.

Government Orders

The explanation I received, in which Canadians and the House will be interested, is that all citizenship legislation has had these kinds of exceptions because sometimes information about applicants for citizenship is received through security documents or from foreign intelligence provided to the department, to Canada, on the understanding that it not be disclosed. However, it can be very important in protecting Canada from accepting as citizens individuals who are known by the intelligence community or through security activities not to be the kind of individuals who meet the criteria for citizenship.

I will simply say that this kind of exception should be rare, which I understand it is. I think it should continue to be, but to the largest degree possible it should also be specific. If we are ever to depart from recognized judicial practice in this country, where the rule of law is so important and such an underpinning of our whole society, it should be in only very specific, objective situations. I would be very concerned if it were somehow to be framed in this new legislation so that it could be expanded for whatever reason past any sort of appropriate limits. That again is something that we will need to consider very carefully in committee.

This is particularly important because under the new process, whereby people can be stripped of citizenship by the Federal Court, under the legislation there is no appeal from that finding. In other words, if the Federal Court makes the decision to strip someone of citizenship and is not bound by legal and technical rules of evidence, we can see where fairness, due process and adherence to the highest standards of evidence and truth could possibly fall by the wayside. I think that particularly in those cases we need to be very careful to make sure in regard to due process and rules of evidence that any departure from them is completely and fully justified under very strict criteria.

With respect to physical presence in Canada, we of course support that. We think it is very important. I think all Canadians would agree that those who become citizens should have a real and substantial commitment and connection to our country.

The next point is very interesting. If someone is in a common law relationship with one of our citizens in another country, one of our citizens posted abroad through work for a federal or provincial government or as a member of the armed forces, the common law partner's relationship with the Canadian citizen, once the relationship has existed for a year or more, will count toward time in Canada. I think this is really the hot date rule: make sure that Canadians posted abroad will be those people will enjoy having relationships with. But I say that facetiously. I think that because the Canadian is posted abroad, that individual's partner legitimately would have a connection to Canada through the partner.

• (1050)

One of the main points of this legislation is the new citizenship oath, which I think is very important. It ensures that new Canadians pledge to value and respect their Canadian citizenship and our country. As well, a revocation, currently done behind closed doors, will now take place in the more transparent and accountable venue of the courts. While some of the provisions I have noted need to be looked at, it certainly is a long step in the right direction.

The adoption provisions and the change from citizenship judges to a more objective process are also very positive.

I commend the government. I know that it is difficult not to move forward with a particular piece of legislation. Government is damned if it does and damned if it does not. If government moves ahead even though the legislation is flawed, then Canadians are not served. If the legislation is withdrawn, government takes heat for not getting it right. But I do think that in such an important area it has been good that government has listened to the citizenship and immigration committee and to other Canadians and other groups to make sure the legislation continues forward until it really does serve Canadians well and does meet some of the criteria needed in our modern society, particularly with the new circumstances we are confronted with, internationally and in our own country.

I again congratulate the minister and the government on making good strides in the legislation. I believe there is need for improvement. I know that other members will speak to it. Some have very strong feelings about some of the points I have raised and will be speaking very strongly about them. I am confident that these issues will be anxiously considered in the citizenship and immigration committee and I very much hope there will still be amendments to make the legislation even stronger on behalf of Canadians. I look forward to being part of that process.

• (1055)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is reassuring to see so many members in the House, among them the minister and the Chair of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

This is the second time this week that I have had the opportunity to take part in a debate on a government bill. You will tell me that that is what we are here for and it is a great pleasure for me to do so.

Last Tuesday when I spoke on Bill C-17, I had many concerns with regard to the respect of human rights and freedoms. Today, my remarks will be of a special nature since the debate deals specifically with one of my favourite issues, because citizenship is no small thing. I am our party's critic on everything related to citizenship and immigration.

So I was somewhat eager to see the bill to repeal the old 1977 act back before the House. The return of that bill was more than expected. The current Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is the third one facing the challenge of reforming the Citizenship Act currently in force. The question is: will he manage to carry it through to completion?

However, another question comes to mind when one takes a careful look at this new Bill C-18. In its current form, should this bill be passed? The table is set for a very relevant debate.

Government Orders

Before getting into the ins and outs of Bill C-18, we must understand its underpinnings. Why has the minister taken the initiative to put this bill back on the order paper? Hon. members are as aware as I that a lot of water has gone under the bridge since 1977. Today's reality is totally different. Since September 11, 2001, moreover, this has been pointed out on numerous occasions in this House, and rightly so.

The phenomenon of globalization favours migration. Increasingly, countries are having to develop more clearly defined immigration policies to deal with the new challenges this brings.

If migration is on the rise, then obviously permanent residence and citizenship applications will also increase. Canada, like Quebec, is a host country for immigration, as we know. Canada receives about one-quarter of a million immigrants yearly. These will all be entitled eventually to apply for Canadian citizenship, at which point the measures set out in Bill C-18 will apply.

As well, even before that, there is the permanent residence application process. This entire process involves the same desire, to live together in one place, sharing the values of justice and fairness for all.

Given the changes the world is undergoing, it is normal, essential in fact, for legislation to adapt to the changing times. If the principle of Bill C-18 is indeed to bring the existing legislation up to speed so that it better reflects our values and aspirations, I am all for it. Let us make no mistake about it, however. Being in favour of the principle of a bill does not in any way mean supporting every provision it contains. The current context of the fight against terrorism seems to be becoming the justification for every imaginable action. We fully agree that it is absolutely vital to avoid the death of innocent civilians in terrorist attacks, but we absolutely do not agree with this justifying shameless attacks on fundamental rights and freedoms. Enslavement can never be justified in the name of freedom.

Now for Bills C-63, C-16 and C-18, the current fashion here on the Hill is, without a doubt, to hold debates two, sometimes even three, times on similar bills with different numbers.

•(1100)

Today we are debating Bill C-18, which used to be known in another life as Bill C-16, which in turn had started out a few years earlier as Bill C-63. All this may seem confusing and repetitive in the end. However, if we look closely at the bill, we see that there are differences in certain details, but very important differences.

Unfortunately, the differences between Bill C-16 and new Bill C-18 are not always for the better. Indeed, clauses 16 and 17, which I will come back to later, seem to result from an ill-defined reaction to the post-September 11 context.

It is certainly not by limiting the scope of the rule of law that we will improve matters in the world.

To come back to the old bill, Bill C-16, clause 10 stated, and I quote:

The Minister may, for the purposes of this Act, deem a person who is in Canada and who has resided in Canada for at least 10 years to be or to have become a permanent resident as of the day the Minister specifies.

The purpose of this clause was to allow people who have been in Canada for at least 10 years and who wrongly believed they were Canadian citizens, to become Canadian citizens, after having obtained permanent resident status, during the period set out in the legislation.

Take the case, for example, of parents who immigrate to Canada with one or two children, aged two or three, say, and become Canadian citizens. It is easy to understand that the children believe, quite honestly, that they too are Canadian citizens. This is not the case. In fact, if this person—once he or she reaches the age of 18, 20, 22, or even 16—commits a minor offence as an adolescent, he or she could be deported to his or her country of origin, even if he or she has no meaningful social ties to that country.

Will a child who lived one or two years in Haiti with his parents, and who then lived in Canada for 14 years, feel like a Haitian or a Haitian Canadian? That is the question that needs to be answered. Things would be easier if clause 10 from the former Bill C-16 were reintroduced in Bill C-18.

If hon. members think that this example is just a figment of my imagination, something that cannot happen in real life, they are mistaken. This is a real life example. On June 25, 2002, during its general assembly, the Bloc Québécois adopted a proposal dealing expressly with this issue. The deportation of young Haitians who had criminal records because they made foolish mistakes, as many people do when they are young, was the result of a serious misapprehension on their part. They believed they were Canadian citizens, with the same rights, privileges and duties as any other full fledged citizen. How could it be otherwise, since they grew up in Quebec?

This is not a cosmetic improvement but, rather, an addition that can make a huge difference in a person's life. What happened between Bill C-16 and Bill C-18 to make this provision disappear? If the rehabilitation of young offenders is a principle in which we firmly believe, should it not apply to these young people who grew up in Quebec, in the case of these young Haitians, and elsewhere in Canada?

•(1105)

In fact, to fully realize what may have happened throughout the legislative process that was primarily intended to modernize the old Citizenship Act, it is interesting to take a look at the features of Bill C-18.

First, it goes without saying that people who are born in Canada will always, without exception, be Canadian citizens. It is difficult to provide otherwise. However, those who are granted Canadian citizenship, that is, people who were born abroad to Canadian parents, will only be able to transmit this citizenship to the first and second generations. In fact, in order to retain their right to Canadian citizenship, those in the second generation will have to apply before attaining 28 years of age and have resided in Canada for at least 1,095 days, that is three years prior to the date of the application.

Government Orders

The idea is to avoid having people who have no connection with Canada and who have never come here avail themselves of Canadian citizenship. While this is a new provision in Bill C-18, compared to the current act, this provision was also included in Bill C-16. So, this change is not totally new.

Even though the concept of globalization is spreading at the speed of light, if you get to the U.S. border and state "I am a citizen of the world", you will soon find out that this expression is more poetical than practical. Let us say that these days it has become increasingly less fashionable to be stateless.

This is why Bill C-18 provides for an exception for third generations, should such a situation arise.

Mr. Speaker, I have a trick question for you. To make sure you are still listening to me, since it is cold outside, is there another category of persons that may acquire Canadian citizenship? Think carefully, Mr. Speaker; I am sure I will not have to tell you. You are right: adopted children can become Canadian citizens. This is where the issue starts to get a little tricky.

To start with, let us look at the current process for granting citizenship in the case of international adoption. To become a Canadian citizen, a child must first go through the immigration process, namely apply for landed immigrant status and then citizen status. Admittedly it may be very frustrating for parents who adopt a child to have to wait several years before the child can become a full-fledged citizen. That is a situation adoptive families would like to see rectified and we fully understand them. Nevertheless, I would like the government to proceed cautiously with any legislation on this issue.

Although we recognize the logic in granting citizenship, I would say virtually automatically, to adopted children, we must be careful not to create two different classes of citizens.

As members know, in Quebec we have the Civil Code. The Civil Code creates obligations for our law makers. Adoptions must be recognized by a Quebec court since this is an area of provincial jurisdiction. If the federal government goes ahead with the proposed changes without consulting the Quebec government beforehand to harmonize legislation, that might have a negative impact. I happen to know the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration quite well, and I know for a fact that he hates negative impacts. I can see the committee chair nodding.

With Bill C-18, the new measures would not apply to a child adopted by a Quebec family. He would then have to be sponsored and to go through the whole immigration process to finally be able to receive the same status as a child adopted in another province.

• (1110)

This would imply extra sponsorship costs for Quebec parents, which do not seem quite fair to us. As a matter of fact, in a letter dated November 6, 1998 and referring to Bill C-63, the grandfather of Bill C-18, ministers Rochon and Boisclair said, and I quote:

This bill raises various problems in Quebec, particularly with respect to the connection with and the specifics of our Civil Code, to the health care issue and to the additional costs that might be incurred as a result.

We can already identify two major factors. On the one hand, the provincial government does not oppose the principle of the proposed amendments as such, but rather the way in which they might be implemented. On the other hand, negotiations between both levels of government are essential to prevent any inequity. And I have no doubt whatsoever that the minister will want to correct potential inequities.

You understand that I will take this opportunity to remind this House that Quebec is a leader in international adoption. This is yet another compelling reason for the federal government not to proceed unilaterally on this issue, as is, we must admit, too often the case, unfortunately.

What about residency requirements? As members know, people can resort to subterfuge, which can sometimes be quite effective, not to mention the types of subterfuge we are unaware of. With your long parliamentary experience, I am sure that if you do the calculations, you will come up with figures much lower than the true figures. Let us face it, when it comes to subterfuge, the federal government is very cunning. Therefore, this was not much of a challenge for it. However, over time, we have smartened up.

This leads me to talk about the requirements regarding residency and physical presence in Canada. I imagine that you see what I am driving at with my references to subterfuge and presence in Canada. As you must certainly know, there are clever people who know different ways to make us believe that they were in Canada, while they actually were not. As a matter of fact, someone who applies for Canadian citizenship must be able, under the current legislation, to prove that he has resided in Canada during the three years preceding the date of his application. It is the law.

How can this be proven? Suppose I love playing golf. I am not very good at it, but I am smart. If I have bought an expensive membership in a Gatineau golf club, let us say that this is one point for me. If I have a valid Ontario driver's licence, which is also valid in Quebec, I get another point. If I also have big fat accounts in two or three Canadian banks, this has to prove that I reside in Canada. Otherwise, why would I have all that? Is it possible? It is quite possible. And why is it possible?

Simply because, one year after the 1977 legislation took effect, a Federal Court judge ruled that in order to meet residency requirements, it was not necessary to prove physical presence in Canada. That is the reason.

People only have to establish that they have maintained close ties with Canada during the three previous years. There are also extreme cases, where people had resided in Canada only a few days a year, just long enough for a weekend of skiing, perhaps. Any sensible person would admit that this truly is an aberration.

• (1115)

The stated purpose of Bill C-18 is to remedy that situation. What clarification does it provide? If passed, it will specify that 1,095 days of actual presence will be required, that is, three full years out of a total period of six years. Now, theoretically at least, there will be no more doubt, the frauds will be quickly detected.

Government Orders

At the risk of being labelled a spoilsport—something everyone will agree applies to me only rarely—I would point out that the truth must be revealed. In practice, how will this be verified? Until now, unless the government has been doing things behind our backs, there has been no way to verify this. There is no registry of who has entered or left this great big country. Of course, the new definition of residency will help reduce the number of frauds, but by how much?

There is one worrisome thought that comes to mind. What if the government, in its zeal to limit public freedom, decided to carefully examine airline records under these new powers it plans to acquire through its public safety bill we debated earlier this week? Who can state with any certainty that this avenue will not be explored?

Speaking of lack of certainty, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask you one question. Is it true that one of the principles of a free and democratic society is the right to a fair trial? I ask this because a reading of the famous clauses 16 and 17 of this bill makes this exceedingly uncertain.

What astounds me in particular is that Bill C-18 specifically states as follows, quoting clause 3(g), that the purpose of this act is:

—to promote respect for the principles and values underlying a free and democratic society.

Moreover, the government appears to believe in this to such an extent that it specifies, in clause 21(1):

If the Minister is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person has demonstrated a flagrant and serious disregard for the principles and values underlying a free and democratic society, the Minister may submit a report to the Governor in Council recommending that the person not be granted citizenship or allowed to take the oath of citizenship

What is meant by “reasonable grounds to believe”? What I might find reasonable, another might not, or vice versa. The minister might find reasonable what I do not. Do “reasonable grounds to believe” mean proof, suspicion, or something else we know nothing about?

I have another question. What will a flagrant and serious disregard mean to the current minister and to his successors? When a piece of legislation is reviewed every 20 to 25 years, it is obvious that there will be other ministers. How is the seriousness of this disregard measured? Does the wording not sound a bit arbitrary? To add insult to injury, once a decision is made by the governor in council, it is final and it cannot be appealed or judicially reviewed. Is that the kind of democracy we want?

Mr. Speaker, you are probably as appalled as I am by the attitude of the government, but you have heard nothing yet. My brief analysis of the provisions so far was only a preamble.

● (1120)

Let us get down to business and go over clauses 16 and 17 of Bill C-18. I am giving the reference because the people who are watching need to be able to look them up for themselves and see what the government is about to do to our basic human rights.

Why not use an example? You are getting to know me. You know that I like things to be crystal clear. I will use an example to show what would happen under the bill as it stands now.

Let us say we have a Canadian citizen named Ahmed Samir. He came to Canada seven years ago and got his citizenship four years

ago. He is a Muslim, a quiet man who comes from a good family. He works for a computer company and plays chess in his spare time. I hope you are starting to get a good idea of who he is.

But he still has friends in his country of origin, Syria. He goes back on occasion. After all, it is not unusual for someone who is proficient in IT to make more than MPs. Let us say that officials with CSIS start to have doubts about him. They track his air travel, and thanks to a certain bill that was passed in this House, they suspect him of being a potential terrorist. After investigating, they believe they have uncovered his true identity and they inform the Solicitor General of the case, who discusses it with his colleague, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and they nab him. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration examines the facts and concludes that Samir obtained his citizenship by lying at the time his permanent resident status was granted, and that his citizenship should be revoked.

That is all it takes. The minister and the Solicitor General of Canada decide to file a certificate with the Federal Court to the effect that the individual in question obtained his citizenship by lying in order to become a permanent resident, and then a Canadian citizen. In addition, the Solicitor General and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration ask that Ahmed Samir be declared inadmissible, since as far as they are concerned, he represents a threat to national security.

Once the case is before the court, the judge must ensure the confidentiality of the information on which the certificate is based and of any evidence the disclosure of which, in the judge's opinion, would be injurious to national security. The manner of the proceedings is also troublesome. The judge is authorized to proceed, and I quote paragraph 17 (4)(c):

—as informally and expeditiously as the circumstances and considerations of fairness and natural justice permit;

What does “informally” mean? According to *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, informally means “without ceremony or formality”. Does proceeding informally mean showing no respect for rules and formalities? That is the real issue. It is fair to ask this question if the government, which is allowing judges to proceed on an issue as important as revoking a person's citizenship and deporting him or her without respecting formalities, believes that this is acceptable.

Following each request made by the minister or the Solicitor General at any time during the proceedings, the judge shall hear the information in the absence of the accused and his counsel. This is not anything like our judicial system. If, in the judge's opinion, the disclosure of this information could be injurious to national security, he cannot include it in the summary, which means that he cannot inform the accused or his counsel, but he may consider such information in making his determination.

● (1125)

I think hon. members will agree with me that it is hard to defend ourselves properly when we do not know and cannot know what evidence is used against us.

Moreover, clause 17(4)(j) clearly provides that the judge may, and I quote:

Government Orders

—receive into evidence anything that, in the opinion of the judge, is appropriate

—and I draw hon. members' attention to what follows—

—even if it is inadmissible in a court of law, and may base the decision on that evidence.

What is evidence that is “inadmissible” in a court of justice? What kind of evidence are we referring to, particularly since it is specified that the judge may base his decision on that evidence? All sense of proportion is being lost in the whole process, and this is extremely disturbing.

So far in the trial of our fictitious friend Ahmed Samir, it is legally possible that he was not informed of any of the evidence and that some of this evidence would not be admissible in a court of law.

It is now time for the judge to make his decision. Based on the evidence available, he decides to declare Ahmed Samir guilty. You may think, and rightly so, that Ahmed Samir must have some recourse, some recognized right to appeal in a society such as the Canadian society, whose justice system makes us proud, but no. When the judge issues his ruling, Samir is stripped of his citizenship and deported to his country of origin under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, and there is no requirement to carry out the review or investigation provided for under that act.

Finally, the conclusion to this hypothetical but very plausible story is found in clause 17(9), which reads:

A determination under subsection (5) is final and may not be appealed or judicially reviewed.

This is the new federal version of democracy and the rule of law. Ahmed Samir is deported without any recourse. And what if the judge made a mistake? Even though that person is a judge, he is still a human being. Nobody is perfect. Anybody can make a mistake. We all know that, and it is even more obvious when we look at the federal government's actions. The right to make a mistake is also recognized by our society. This is why we have various levels of courts and why we can appeal a decision.

It is even not unusual for an appeal court to reverse the decision of a lower court. Why? Simply because that is the way of things. Judges, and the word says it all, are expected to judge, that is to pass judgment on facts, on the basis of evidence presented to them. Not all judges judge a given situation the same way. We must therefore recognize that mistakes are possible and give Ahmed Samir access to a defence worthy of the name. Above all, we must recognize that the right to appeal a decision is essential.

● (1130)

Georges Clemenceau, whom most of us in this House did not meet personally because he has been dead for quite a while, but have heard of, was a prominent French political figure from the late 19th century and early 20th century. He was famous for having been a key player in getting the Treaty of Versailles signed in 1919, among other things. He made a very interesting comment about Parliament that I wish to quote:

Parliament is the largest organization ever invented for making political mistakes, but the wonderful thing is that they can be put right, as soon as the country has the will to do so.

There is still time to act to prevent real-life situations like that of Ahmed Samir from happening next year or two or three years down

the road. If we have chosen to live in a constitutional state, we must abide by the applicable principles and provisions.

Are we going to have second-class citizens? This is somewhat ironic, because the government boasts about promoting a unique model of citizenship. I say no. And I agree with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration that there should not be two classes of citizens. The minister stated very clearly that there would not be two classes of citizens. All citizens are equal and, regardless of how we become citizens, whether through birth or immigration, we all have the same rights and the same obligations. It would seem however, that all do not have the right to a fair trial with an appeal process.

Clause 3(d) is particularly informative. It states that the purpose of the act is, among other things:

to reaffirm that all citizens, no matter how they became citizens, have the same status.

This is a fine statement, but will it apply in reality? In view of clauses 16 and 17 the answer is obviously no. In our opinion, do I have the right to appeal an unfavourable court decision? Indeed I do. Why then would an immigrant not have the same right? Is this to say that citizenship deserves to be treated with the respect required by the principles and values of a free and democratic society only when it suits us? I hope the government will be able to explain this somewhat controversial position in a clear, fair and respectful manner.

● (1135)

The time has now come to question a slightly archaic feature of Canadian society, namely Queen Elizabeth II. Far be it from me to suggest that this lady is not exceptional, nice and worthy of our admiration. That is not the question. But why should we still require newcomers to swear allegiance to the Queen when Canadian citizens by birth do not have to do so? Is it because we believe that the loyalty shown to her by citizens by birth inherently knows no limit? Some of my colleagues on the government bench may not agree.

If that is the government's argument, it should tell us. My colleagues and I might suggest the names of a few people who think otherwise. We do not have to go very far. If the Prime Minister were to look to his right he would see someone who shares our point of view.

In conclusion, I would like the government to explain something to me: why does Bill C-18, as it now stands, very clearly create two classes of citizens, with different rights and allegiance requirements, when it clearly states in principle that the purpose of the amendments is to reaffirm that all citizens are equal?

Once again, the government is shamelessly using a double standard.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for your kind understanding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I am glad it is appreciated, because your time was up.

Government Orders

[English]

As of the next speaker, speeches will be 20 minutes, followed by a 10 minute period for questions and comments.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to participate in the debate on second reading of Bill C-18, the citizenship of Canada act.

Like all other members who have spoken this morning, I too feel a sense of tremendous emotion when I attend a citizenship ceremony in my constituency. Perhaps it is one of the most meaningful and memorable occasions for us as members of Parliament. To join with new Canadians when they take the citizenship oath of Canada and to repeat the oath ourselves is truly a moving experience and a reminder of the great freedoms, rights and privileges of this nation Canada.

This is a very important debate for the House. This legislation is very important. Canadian citizenship is the highest right we as a democratic nation can confer upon those living within our borders. These rights and responsibilities define the egalitarian and democratic values that we hold. No one has legal or political rights extending beyond citizenship. A citizen's right to vote and the right to run for political office are our fundamental democratic rights.

In that context, given that tremendous feeling we have about citizenship, the rules for defining citizenship are very important. They run right to the heart of who we are as a nation.

Canada's population has now reached more than 30 million. The 2001 census data show that our growth rates declined in every province except Alberta when we compare our current rate of growth of population with the early 1990s. We also know from census data and other information that immigration was the main source of growth in Canada's population between 1996 and 2001.

It is projected that by 2011 all growth in our labour force will depend on immigration. What we do here in terms of the citizenship of Canada act, and what we do generally in terms of immigration and refugee policy, is vitally important for the economic growth of the country and the future of this land. In that context we must keep remembering that the diversity of our citizens has become a distinguishing feature of what it is to be Canadian, just as has our language duality.

I want to refer very briefly to an article by Gwynne Dyer which appeared in *Canadian Geographic* magazine in February 2001. I do not know of a better quotation to capture that sense of what it means to be Canadian and the diversity of our population. He said:

Canada, more than anywhere else, is truly becoming the world in one country. It attracts people for all the classic reasons, such as too little opportunity at home and lots in Canada, but also because of its growing reputation as a country that does not try to impose some new uniform identity on its immigrants—and, of course, for a thousand more quirky and individual reasons.

Canada's multicultural citizenship, our multicultural heritage, is unique and is very important. It has become a defining characteristic of our nation in the eyes of the world.

• (1140)

The evolution of Canadian citizenship truly reflects our evolution as a society from our ethnocentric past to our multicultural present.

I come from a riding that is probably one of the most ethnically diverse constituencies in Canada. We have an incredible history of welcoming people from all over the world. We have an area with strong multicultural roots that has always welcomed immigrants from every continent. We have experienced a large influx historically of people of Ukrainian, Polish, Jewish and German heritage. More recently, immigrants have come in large numbers from the Philippines, India, Portugal and many other Asian, Latin American, African and eastern European countries.

Our community with all of that diversity works in harmony. We have demonstrated, as other constituencies represented in the House have demonstrated, that diverse communities work and are a very positive force for building a great future in this country. In that context, I want to reference an article by Winnipegger Gerald Friesen, who wrote in response to outrageous comments made by Jean-Marie Le Pen who, in March of this year in his challenge for the presidency of France, challenged the viability of all immigrant based communities.

Gerald Friesen wrote that Winnipeg offers an alternative vision and proof that in fact diverse communities are viable and work and can be a positive force for social change and for building a civil society. I want to briefly quote Gerald Friesen because what he said is important to the debate we have at hand. He said:

The crucial story is that prairie Canada and Winnipeg, the region's largest city down to the 1960s, conducted Canada's first large-scale experiment in integrating immigrants from diverse backgrounds into a single community. The prairies demonstrated that a plural citizenship was possible.

You might say, so what? Didn't Chicago and New York and hundreds of other American cities have the same experience? Yes, they did. And the U.S. results, despite continuing struggles, are admirable. But Americans are quick to claim that they are unique. They are not. Consider the range of peoples in historic Istanbul, in historic Baghdad, in today's Sydney or London. Like these others, the Winnipeg example puts the lie to Le Pen's basic contention: it demonstrates that people of different ethnicities, races and religions can indeed live together in fruitful, vital cities.

That was a little background on my constituency and why I feel so strongly about this whole debate about citizenship as well as about immigration and refugee policy.

I want to put this in the context of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Since its passage, the charter has become instrumental in enforcing citizenship rights. It is our obligation to ensure that this standard is rigorously applied, especially to something as fundamental as a citizenship act.

The wake of the tragic September 11 events has presented the most significant challenge to our rights and freedoms as citizens in recent years. There are those who would react to this horror by severely restricting the very rights and freedoms that this terror aims to destroy.

Government Orders

We must guard the balance between security and freedom carefully in this defining legislation. In our view it is unacceptable that some Canadian citizens are being singled out for discriminatory treatment. The rise in the occurrence of racially or religiously motivated hate crimes is profoundly disturbing. We know the stories. We have been dealing with this in the House over the last couple of days. Some Canadian citizens have experienced discriminatory treatment abroad, particularly in the United States, due to profiling practices.

● (1145)

The recent case of Maher Arar, a 32-year-old Canadian citizen arrested during a stopover at New York's Kennedy airport on September 26 as he was travelling to Montreal from Tunisia and deported to Syria, brought home just how fragile our citizenship rights have become. That the confidence in Canadian citizenship has weakened to the point that one of our foremost authors, Rohinton Mistry, who was born in India, felt compelled to cancel engagements in the United States because of continued harassment by United States airport security authorities is unacceptable.

It is critical that this legislation is consistent with Canadian values that are enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, often taken for granted by those who are born here and acquire those rights as their birthright.

Just as changes to our view of citizenship have acted as markers of our social progress, citizenship has also provided the focus for several of the most shameful incidents throughout our history, occasions wherein we as a nation have failed to rise above our bigotries of the moment, some racial and some gender.

In that context we ought to acknowledge the work that has been done inside and outside the House to seek recognition for Ukrainian Canadians who were interned and who were considered enemy aliens. I want to acknowledge the work of the member for Dauphin—Swan River who has a bill before the House to seek official recognition and restitution. It is important for us in this regard to acknowledge the work of those who are struggling to achieve recognition and restitution among the Chinese community and to deal appropriately in this place with the Chinese immigration head tax and the Chinese exclusion act. These two incidents in our past still haunt us. They must be addressed and deserve to be considered in the context of this debate about citizenship.

As we consider changes to the Citizenship Act, they remind us that we must be vigilant to keep our vision and ideals at the highest level and to resist the ever present pressures to backslide or settle to lesser, divisive and exclusionary alternatives. At the time, assigning the restricting of citizenship rights to certain citizens or to deny citizenship altogether to certain identifiable groups may have been acceptable to the majority. Women had to engage in an incredible struggle to attain the right to vote. First nations only won the right to vote in 1960.

These and many other affronts to our current norms were promoted as reasonable by contemporary authorities. Race based immigration policies have only been formally dropped in recent years. Some Canadians contend that lingering vestiges of that bias may still be systemically embedded in our current policy. These issues are not ancient history.

As we examine Bill C-18, the Canadian Citizenship Act, our first question must be, does the bill meet the test? Is this the best we can do to express ourselves to set the parameters for defining Canada in the year 2002?

One key objective of the bill before us is to encourage those eligible to be citizens to in fact take the final steps to become citizens. We must acknowledge that in that process our full knowledge and sense of what it means to be Canadian, respecting the rights and freedoms of all people within the borders and boundaries of this country, must be respected.

We have just completed a lengthy parliamentary discussion and debate to finalize the new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. The government's stated objective in introducing that legislation was to increase Canada's openness to immigrants. The House of Commons citizenship and immigration committee reviewed that legislation and also put a considerable amount of work into studying this in its report, "Competing for Immigrants".

● (1150)

I am pleased to see today that the minister has tabled a response to the committee's report, "Competing for Immigrants". I want to register at this time some concerns about the failure of the government to address the main issue of many in our committee, and those who appeared before our committee, about setting a tone, establishing a vision. This included encouraging immigrants to come to this land, not closing the door to legitimate aspirants, or putting in place double standards that clearly are disincentives to those looking at Canada as a country of choice and emphasizing a renewed multiculturalism.

What we have looked for, and still look for, from the government both in terms of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and now the Citizenship Act, is a proactive strategy that encourages people from all walks of life to choose Canada, not one that puts in place a double standard in terms of people within this land nor differentiates between people for who are Canadians by birth and people who are here as landed immigrants or are refugees seeking protection. We want a proactive strategy to promote positive race and ethnic relations to strengthen respect for diversity in tandem with a clear and immediate response to any racially or religiously motivated hatred, and we know from recent events that is more important than ever.

Both the minister and the Prime Minister have stated that the future of Canada's prosperity depends on our success in attracting immigrants. Last July the Prime Minister, in a prelude to the dredging job done in the throne speech on resurrecting broken Liberal promises, reaffirmed the government's 1993 commitment to a 1% immigration target.

We just got the annual report for immigration for 2002. Where are we? We are not close to the 1% target established by the government as a desirable goal for immigration. It is certainly below the levels anticipated for this year. What happened to that dream? What happened to the vision?

We have some significant concerns with the legislation, in the context of the issues that I addressed, with respect to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and to our traditions as a nation that assures due process is always in play. We acknowledge the work by the government to move the matter of revocation of citizenship from ministerial and cabinet decision making and discretion to the Federal Court of Canada. However we also note that many discretionary powers still remain with the minister, and vague wording applies in terms of criteria to be applied.

I want to reference, as many others have and will continue to do, the discretion to annul citizenship for false representation or to refuse citizenship based on the following words, “flagrant and serious disregard for the principles and values underlying a free and democratic society”. As parliamentarians we deserve clarification of those words. We deserve to push as hard as we can for the government to recognize the need always for due process including the right to appeal and the right to have information to defend oneself in the face of accusations.

I also want to note for parliamentarians our concerns with respect to the abolishment of citizenship judges. One would assume that we would favour objective set criteria for determining citizenship, as we are, but we also know that we lose a great deal when it comes to the role of citizenship judges in showing some flexibility and understanding of extenuating human conditions. We know that by moving the process from judges to bureaucrats we may have a more clearly defined set of rules but we will possibly lose some humanitarian approaches in terms of extenuating circumstances that cannot be ignored and must be addressed. Our concern is to hear from the government how those considerations will be met and how people in real life circumstances will have their needs addressed.

● (1155)

[Translation]

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, you have been so kind to me that I just have to rise and see how kind you can get. The sky is the limit as far as your kindness goes.

First, I would like to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. I have had the privilege of sitting with her on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. As a humanist, she is extremely concerned about justice and always tries to stand up for the most vulnerable members of our society. I want to thank her for her speech today, which was a true reflection of her character.

I have a specific question for her. As we know, a number of young Haitians have been living in Quebec for many years and since they came here as youngsters, they did not apply for Canadian citizenship. They thought they already were Canadian citizens, that it was implicit. Now, these young people are facing deportation after committing crimes—which is unfortunate—but I do not think that the crimes they committed warrant their deportation to a country where they no longer have any roots.

Government Orders

I would like to know what the member thinks about this, because the citizenship bill now before us should in fact be exemplary legislation. When Quebec becomes a country, I hope that we can base our own citizenship act on all the features of this one. That is my question to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: I thank my colleague for her question. I would like to congratulate her first of all for her contributions to our committee and her vigilance as far as immigration and other issues affecting citizens are concerned.

[English]

I want to address the member's question in the context of fundamental rights and freedoms. I will not go down the path of putting this in the context of Quebec as a nation within Canada. We obviously will agree to disagree on that matter, but the member raises a very important point.

We tried to deal with this matter when the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act was before Parliament. That is where the issue ought to have been dealt with. This is the issue. An individual may come to this country as a very young child, perhaps even as a baby, with landed immigrant status, grow up to be an adult, may get in trouble with the law. If suddenly found to be in violation of Canadian law, he or she is deported to a country that is not at all familiar to that person.

The issue we raised in the immigration committee, and that needs to be addressed again with respect to the citizenship act, was what made reasonable sense, in terms of the issues we were dealing with, and what was consistent with our charter. Our view, which I believe is the same as that of the member from the Bloc, is that one should apply the Canadian law to those individuals and ensure that appropriate consequences for those actions are taken and that appropriate punishments for crimes are carried out. That should be done within Canada and that should be done consistently on the basis of landed immigrants, as well as people who are born in this land.

The member raises a very important point that the government has failed to address over the last year or so, as we have debated all of these issues. I hope that it is not too late for the government to recognize the significance of this matter.

● (1200)

[Translation]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the great importance of immigration and the fact there have been a number of attempts in recent years to change the current act, which dates back to 1977.

We have seen three ministers of immigration come and go. We have heard two throne speeches since we were re-elected in the fall of 2000. It would appear that today we are being presented with a bill that does not meet the public's expectations.

I would also like to find out from my colleague whether she does not feel that the government's approach to a policy as important as immigration is not somewhat irresponsible? What, in her opinion, are the main improvements that should be made to the bill we are debating in the House at this time?

Government Orders

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member of the Bloc for his question. It is a very important one and I shall try to answer it.

[*English*]

It is clear that upon reading Bill C-18, which is now before us, many of us find ourselves asking the question: Is the bill, as the government would have us believe, intended to create a positive atmosphere for immigration or is it designed more to keep people out? That is one of the key questions that must be addressed.

As the member has said, this is the Liberal government's fourth attempt to change the 1977 act. There is an old saying, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, again". It begs the question: Has the government finally succeeded with this try? In our view, the answer is, no. We do not believe the government has succeeded with this bill. We are therefore opposed, at this point, to Bill C-18 and will be looking for some specific changes.

We would like to see the government address concerns pertaining to cabinet discretionary powers with respect to the powers to annul and refuse citizenship. That is very important. We believe that within the revocation process, which is referred now to the federal court, there are still questions about due process that apply around appeal, access to information and general definitions.

We are concerned about the role of citizenship judges. Although we support the idea of a set of criteria and an even-handed process in determining citizenship, this initiative in the bill would eliminate the humanizing element in the process and any discretion in recognizing complex or extenuating circumstances.

We think that judges, and this was pointed out in testimony to previous bills, have played an important role, in terms of triggering language lessons, the further study of Canada and its values, counselling for battered women and their children, and employment counselling. That role was possible because citizenship judges were involved intimately with the cases at hand. Will that kind of flexibility be still at play in the system?

The citizenship test itself is a problem and judges help to deal with the problems inherent in that examination. For example, of the 20 questions that are asked of every citizenship candidate 2 are mandatory. We could end up with the situation where 19 of the 20 questions are answered correctly but the person would fail because he or she could not answer one of the mandatory questions.

It would seem that if people could get 19 out of 20 answers right, they would have a pretty good idea about Canada and what this country stands for. There could be cultural issues at play in terms of failure to answer that one question. There could be trauma involved in terms of someone who might have escaped from persecution. There could be language barriers in terms of someone not being able to understand the finer parts of a question. There could be the fear of being in an interview and having an exam. There are all kinds of reasons. A judge offered at least a hope that person could still be retested and still become a Canadian citizen.

What we should be doing is in fact—

● (1205)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River.

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, PC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to take part in this important debate on Bill C-18, the citizenship of Canada act.

First, let me congratulate the minister for borrowing ideas from Senator Noël Kinsella's Bill S-36, as well as my private member's bill, Bill C-417, which was tabled this past spring, the PC Party's version of the citizenship act of Canada.

I applaud and thank the member for Winnipeg North Centre for her kind remarks regarding the Ukrainian internment issue on which we had a press conference this past week. It was an educational process to inform Canadians of some of the bleaker moments in this country's history. We need to fix these things before we move ahead. The Ukrainian internment occurred from 1914 to 1920, where over 5,000 Ukrainian Canadians were interned and over 80,000 were made to register like common criminals.

There is a simple solution. The current Prime Minister wrote a letter to the Ukrainian community of Canada when he was the leader of the opposition back in 1993 telling the Ukrainian community that when he became Prime Minister he would deal with and resolve this issue. Unfortunately, the sad commentary is that the Ukrainian community, of which there are almost a million people in this country, is still waiting for this resolution.

It is simple to redress the issue. It will not cost the taxpayers any money. It will not even cost the government of the day an apology. It basically needs to recognize and acknowledge that the event took place. It was the first invocation of the War Measures Act which was passed in 1914. At that time the property of over 5,000 Ukrainian Canadians was confiscated, taken by the government of the day, and not a nickel has been returned to the rightful owners. It is time for this issue to be resolved.

As has been said this morning, this is the Liberal government's third crack at trying to pass a citizenship act. We heard about Bill C-63 and Bill C-16, both of which died on the order paper. If major changes do not take place regarding Bill C-18, I think it will end up in the same garbage container.

At this time I wish to thank the member for Kitchener—Waterloo who, through his fierce opposition during the debate on Bill C-16, brought to the government's attention some of its gross inadequacies, which we still find in this bill. Bill C-18 was supposed to be better than Bill C-16. Upon reading the bill I wonder whether it is or not.

Nevertheless there are some improvements. The criticism of Bill C-16, Bill C-36 and the former citizenship bills, which I consider more like naturalization bills of the Liberal government, has been that those bills promoted two classes of Canadian citizenship: one for those who were born in this country, and another one for those who were born elsewhere and came to Canada by choice.

Government Orders

The member for Kitchener—Waterloo, and other backbench members of the Liberal government, vehemently opposed this theory that there should be two classes of citizenship in this country. Last week the member for Kitchener—Waterloo introduced his own private member's bill, which I seconded. This hon. member would remedy these two classes of citizenship by placing the citizenship revocation process under the judiciary, with appeal rights, where it would be administered according to the principles of fundamental justice. That is why Canadians believe we have equality in this country. Until that happens we will never have equality in this country.

That is exactly the problem with clause 17 of Bill C-18. The irony of this is that former Bill C-16 put in place the solutions to remedy the problems within it. However, clause 17 in Bill C-18 reverses all of that.

● (1210)

Former Bill C-16 talked about judicial review—that we, as Canadians, should have access to the courts—but clause 17 in Bill C-18 reverses it.

Subclause 18(1), regarding the issue of annulment orders states:

If the Minister is satisfied that a person has, after the coming into force of this section, acquired, retained, renounced or resumed citizenship in contravention of section 28 or by using a false identity, the Minister may, by order, declare that the acquisition, retention, renunciation or resumption of citizenship is void.

In other words the minister has the right to revoke a person's citizenship. We call it an annulment. Subclause 18(5) dealing with limitation states:

The Minister may not make an order under subsection (1) more than five years after the day on which the citizenship was acquired—

In other words whoever receives citizenship is not secure in the first five years of obtaining citizenship in this country. Is it less than full citizenship of this country after five years? The government has it in reverse. If we think that people need to demonstrate evidence before acquiring citizenship, that is a different issue. Perhaps it should move the three year waiting period to five years, not do it after the fact.

My own belief and the belief of most Canadians is that once a person becomes a citizen, that person is a citizen and has the same full equal rights as everybody else. It is unbelievable that the government would take that attitude and that approach.

What about the rule of law? What about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms? Does that not apply within the first five years of obtaining citizenship? It does not under this legislation.

A just society is based on the rule of law. It is so ironic that this country takes time and effort into teaching other countries. For example, we have Canadians abroad in China teaching the Chinese how to operate under the rule of law because it is something that is missing in their system of politics. Yet at the same time at home we seem to fudge the whole area of the rule of law and the right of access to the judicial system.

We are still saying that government ministers, orders in council and governors in council can dictate whether one should have access to the courts when one is already a citizen of this country. We cannot do that. Either we are full fledged Canadians or not Canadians at all.

Otherwise we will have two classes of citizens, which we have today.

In my private member's bill, Bill C-417, clause 17 clearly describes the loss of citizenship. It states:

The right of citizenship may be revoked only by the due process of law and on the grounds prescribed by law.

That is the kind of statement and clause we need in Bill C-18.

Earlier this past spring Senator Noël Kinsella tabled the same bill in the Senate that I did in the House. We considered our bill to be a citizenship bill whereas Bill C-18 is seen more as a naturalization bill.

What is lacking in Bill C-18? We should be excited about citizenship in this country. What is missing in Bill C-18 is a preamble. It should create an atmosphere of passion and commitment to this country. I will give the House our ideas of what should be a preamble to create this air of excitement when one becomes a citizen of Canada.

● (1215)

Our preamble would read:

Whereas Canadian citizenship is a special treasure of inestimable value to be nurtured and promoted;

Whereas the heritage of Canadian citizens speaks to their ancient and beautiful lands which they inhabit in peace with nature;

Whereas Parliament is mindful of the dignity and worth of all Canadian citizens and the rich contribution that each can make to the growth of Canada; whereas the Constitution Act, 1867, the common law, the Civil Code, the Canadian Bill of Rights, the Constitution Act, 1982, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and other enactments trace the relationships among Canadian citizens over the years;

Whereas active citizens, through their labours, their democratic institutions and their laws, have built a peaceful nation where they may enjoy the harvest of nature and exercise their enterprises throughout Canada and the world community, while safeguarding the land, its creatures and resources;

Whereas the citizens of Canada enjoy the benefits of peace and prosperity, and they should be given an opportunity to make a contribution, each according to their talents and abilities; and

Whereas it is desirable to enact a measure to celebrate, protect and codify the riches of Canadian citizenship.

In other words, our version of the Citizenship Act, Bills S-36 and C-417, deals with the broad concept of citizenship as it applies to all Canadians and would replace the existing Canadian Citizenship Act which deals principally with the naturalization process. It states in positive terms the status, the rights and obligations of Canadian citizenship, encouraging all citizens to participate fully in the life and growth of the nation. It provides a modern form of oath of loyalty to be taken by new citizens and allows existing citizens to take the oath to reaffirm their loyalty to Canada if they choose to do so.

The Canadian citizenship commission would be established with a duty to promote an understanding of the nature of citizenship and respect for its value. We have heard the idea of values spoken about this morning; Canadian values, values that we believe in, such as the right to judicial process, the right to be treated equally in this country.

Government Orders

The commission would also advise the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration of proposed programs and events that would promote and celebrate Canada and Canadian citizenship.

Citizenship councillors would be appointed to continue the work of the former citizenship judges. They would preside at citizenship ceremonies, promote citizenship and may advise the minister on applications for citizenship. Members of the commission would be appointed from among those who hold the office of citizenship councillor.

The enactment would confirm the principal rights and responsibilities of citizens and would set out the manner in which citizenship is acquired. It would provide for the continued acquisition of citizenship at birth for everyone born in Canada. The residency for immigrants and refugees to obtain citizenship would be based on actual presence in Canada.

The distinction made between adopted children and children born abroad of Canadian parents is lessened for the purpose of acquiring citizenship. A right to transmit citizenship to persons born abroad of Canadian parents would be limited to the first and second generations, which I know the government borrowed from us in Bill C-18.

The enactment would continue the authority of the minister to annul the citizenship of persons who obtain their citizenship by using false identity or who were subject to prohibitions. It would allow the minister to refuse to grant citizenship on the advice of a review committee when national security required it. That is understandable. This is pre-citizenship, but the idea of the minister having the right to revoke or annul citizenship after one obtains citizenship goes against the belief in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It goes against the grain of equal treatment in this country.

Our enactment would establish a new Canadian citizenship tribunal which would consider whether an application for citizenship should be refused on the basis of public interest. If in such a case the tribunal so advises, the governor in council may refuse to grant citizenship. Again, this is pre-citizenship not post, as we would have by the Liberal government's Bill C-18.

• (1220)

We would also establish a process for dealing with applications for citizenship that is administrative rather than judicial. That would certainly streamline the process and would also standardize the process even further.

Prohibition and offences related to citizenship and its acquisition would be established in order to maintain the integrity of Canadian citizenship.

Many of the points that I raised may be found in Bill C-18. I applaud the minister for taking an open-minded approach and borrowing good ideas when he sees them.

At this point in time the PC Party of Canada certainly cannot support the bill in its present state, based on that one principle that we still have a scenario in the bill under clause 17 which creates an air of two classes of citizenship. We agree with many of the points and with many of the changes that have occurred in Bill C-18.

However, until that one scenario changes, my recommendation is that the PC Party vote against the bill.

I look forward to seeing the bill go to committee where we will listen to witnesses and make some major changes. Hopefully we will come up with a draft that is reasonable and supportable.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to debate the new citizenship act. I will try to put this in context of what it means to Canada.

We are a nation of immigrants who come from all over the world. We are a nation that in many ways represents the best in the world, having built a tolerant society that in many cases is the envy of the world.

The member who just spoke, the critic for the Progressive Conservative Party, myself as well as another 50 members of the House were not born in Canada. We came from elsewhere. We were debating recently in the House that the practice of the Americans trying to institute racial profiling on Canadians born in certain countries who were trying to gain entry into the United States was a bad thing and was something that had to be corrected. There are members of Parliament who originally came from some of those countries but who are Canadian citizens. Under those procedures they would be subjected to being registered and having their fingerprints taken. That is not right and the American government has recognized that it is not right.

I understand that in the context of 9/11 we do look at the world in a different fashion but practices such as racial profiling do not work. They require a great deal of resources and they are not effective. In order to be successful in combating things like terrorism, the efforts have to be focused and there cannot be scarce resources.

I have been in Canada since 1957 after fleeing a revolution in Hungary. In some sense 9/11 made me as a new Canadian, appreciate how hysteria can overtake us and lead us into making bad decisions.

As much as Canada should be a beacon to the world, and in many cases it is, it is imperative that we understand our history. It is imperative that we understand why on April 17, 1982, over 20 years ago, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was enacted to enshrine basic rights and guarantees to the citizenry of the country.

In the charter, section 7 on legal rights states:

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

I underline fundamental justice and security of the person. I say that because when we talk about the security of the person there are few things that would be as important to a person like myself, who is a citizen by choice or the six million other Canadians who are also citizens by choice, than the right to our citizenship and not to be deprived of it, except in the due process of law.

Government Orders

I will touch briefly on the history so we will understand why we need the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There are cases before our courts right now where members of the Chinese community want compensation for the head tax. The head tax represents one of the darkest periods in our immigration history. At that time someone who came from China would have to pay a humongous amount of money, something like \$5,000 at the turn of the century, which would be worth half a million dollars or more today, for the right to come into this country. The Asian exclusion act said that we did not want people coming to this country from Asia.

● (1225)

We have Project Roll Call going on right now that the critic on citizenship and immigration has spearheaded and spoken about. He has a private member's bill. Project Roll Call kicked off this week. It talks about Ukrainians. There are approximately one million Canadians of Ukrainian origin in Canada, or their descendants, who are living in this country. These people are looking for redress to a basic wrong where they were treated as less than human. They were classified as enemy aliens during the first world war; 5,000 were interned and another 80,000 were forced to register as enemy aliens.

We can go to other people who were Canadians living in Canada and who were forced to register as enemy aliens. We have members in the House from Italian backgrounds who have relatives who were forced to register as enemy aliens.

We had a law in this land that treated Canadians who fought in the first world war with great disrespect. We have had veterans of the first world war who were immigrants. Around 20% of the Canadian Forces who fought in the first world war were immigrants.

On May 28 we honoured the unknown soldiers by unveiling the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The person lying there could very well be one of those 20%. The practice we had in the country at that time was that if one was injured fighting overseas for Canada, then came back to this country and required relief and hospitalization, one could be deported. Surely we all recognize that this history has to be addressed.

During the second world war we had racist policies. The *SS St. Louis*, a ship full of Jews, travelled from Cuba to South America and past the coast of the United States and Canada. They were seeking refuge for almost 1,000 Jews who were fleeing wartorn Europe and persecution in Germany. What did we do? We turned them all down: the Americans, Cubans, South Americans and Canadians. We forced that ship to go back to Europe where many of those Jews perished in the gas chambers.

I bring that up because we also had a policy of "none is too many" for the Jews at the turn of the second world war. It was not until 1975 that we said it was not a consideration whether one was a person of colour trying to come into this country and we eliminated racial discrimination.

I say all those things because we are a nation of immigrants coming from all sorts of groups that have been discriminated against in their time. We have the Charter of Rights and Freedoms which was enacted by Pierre Elliot Trudeau and signed by the Queen on April 17, 1982. I cannot stress enough the importance of that.

● (1230)

With regard to the groups that have been looking for redress, we gave redress to Canadians of Japanese ancestry because of some of the horrible things that happened to them during the second world war. Not only were they subjected to the Asian exclusion act, but during the war they were interned and their properties were seized. They were dispersed to camps throughout Canada. What is so incredibly unforgivable is that after the war, 4,000 Canadians, many of them of Japanese ancestry and many of them born in Canada, were forcefully repatriated to Japan, a country that was devastated with Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a country that was obliterated.

It is imperative that we understand the fundamental underlying reasons why we have the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is in a way our day of atonement. The Ukrainian community and some Chinese communities are seeking redress right now for past wrongs. I can name all sorts of other groups that will also be seeking redress. I think to a large extent we have done that by enacting the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I would also suggest that we have a day of atonement, if for no other reason than for Canadians to understand the history of how we got to where we are. One only has to look at what happened to the Acadians.

It is imperative that we recognize the fundamental importance of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If we want to truly be a country that is a beacon of hope to the rest of the world as to how society should operate, we must ensure that fundamental rights are not violated.

As I mentioned, I came to Canada in 1957 as a refugee. My citizenship is important to me. I was greatly honoured by my constituents when they elected me for the first time to this House in 1993. I was honoured by the Prime Minister when he asked me to become Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in 1998.

Since I was not born in this country, notwithstanding the fact that I have been here since 1957, under Bill C-16, I and six million other Canadians, who like myself are citizens by choice, did not have the right to protection under the charter. When the government refused to give individuals those rights, I voted against the legislation and resigned as parliamentary secretary. I have been fighting the unfairness of that bill ever since.

I can tell the House that there are many more people enlightened about the Citizenship Act and what the revocation process is. I am pleased to see that in section 16 the government recognized the principle over which I resigned, which was basically that if one's citizenship were revoked, one should have the right of due process before the courts. One should have the right to appeal something as important as revocation of citizenship. One should have the right to go to the Supreme Court. One also should not be in the position where a political body like cabinet has the right to revoke an individual's citizenship. When I look back at the past injustices in this country, they were done by governor in council, by politicians.

Government Orders

• (1235)

With the institutions that we have built in our judiciary it is very important that we separate the mob that can exist because of 9/11. Everyone understands that because we lived through it. We should give that to the courts where the due process of law applies. Unless we do that, we do not really have a right to full citizenship. I am very pleased the minister put that section in.

I am not very pleased with clause 56. While we recognize that the law was bad and that it needed to be improved, clause 56 says that if a person is before the courts on citizenship revocation, the person will get the bad old process, not the new process. It seems to me that if we abolish capital punishment, we do not hang people on death row. That is a very fundamental principle. I look forward to working with the committee and the House to rectify that.

Clause 17 is totally new. It came in because of what happened on 9/11. We have to be very careful not to be stampeded into ruining what we accomplished in clause 16 by putting into clause 17 secret trials, no right to judicial review, a test of evidence, the rules of evidence do not apply and no appeal, not even a judicial review.

Clause 18 is also new. It would create a probationary citizen. For the first five years the judicial process would not apply. It would be done by the minister. The minister is good fellow and I like him, but the fact is that we all know it is not the minister who will make those decisions, it will be a faceless bureaucrat who does not have to answer for his or her decision. I think we can work with that, recognizing that 9/11 did happen to make it better.

One of the discomforts I have with the whole citizenship act is that it only deals with naturalization. It does not deal with all those other Canadians out there. Citizenship should be great news and something we should celebrate. I think a lot of that is lacking.

While there was an improvement in the citizenship oath, because it really put Canada first and foremost before the Queen, I can only say that my colleague from Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, in a private member's bill, Bill C-203, proposed another citizenship oath. I do not agree with all his wording but he has a fundamental section in it. He talks about the five principles of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms: equality of opportunity, freedom of speech, democracy, basic human rights and the rule of the law.

I am pleased to be engaging in this debate and this process. I look forward to working with the committee, the minister and all my colleagues in the House collectively with our wisdom, in a non-partisan way, because citizenship is not something we should ever play politics with. I really learned to appreciate my colleagues from the other side, and of course some on my side, when I was going through this battle over two years ago. I know that if we work together in a non-partisan way we will come up with a bill that will answer the issues I have raised. As Canadians, all 31 million of us, can celebrate the joy of being Canadian citizens.

• (1240)

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, PC): Madam Speaker, first I want to thank the member for Kitchener—Waterloo for reminding Canadians of their history. Their history is important to them. Certainly as we move forth into the future we need to resolve all those bleak moments and issues with all Canadians.

As we know, this country is made up of people from all over the world who come here seeking a better place to live and a better future for their children, me included. I am a very lucky person. I emigrated here as a young child in 1955. I am even more lucky because my father came here the year before the Chinese exclusion act of 1923 was invoked. That is how lucky I am. My grandfather came here to help build the CPR before the 1900s.

This being Veterans Week, it is a time to remember the reason Canadians went overseas and gave their lives. The reason, as we all know, was so that we could live in a free and democratic society. I think there is a relationship between Veterans Week and what we are doing today in the House in debating the issue of the new citizenship bill for the country. Most Canadians, me included, take their freedoms and liberties for granted probably 99% of the time, unless they come under attack.

This is a great time in history. We need to ensure that we remember in more ways than one. We need to remember the sacrifices that our young men and women made during the war years and to remind ourselves of why they did so. My question to the hon. member for Kitchener—Waterloo is whether he thinks Bill C-18 as it stands would survive a charter challenge.

• (1245)

Mr. Andrew Telegdi: Madam Speaker, I am not sure that it would. I think not. When the present bill finally is tested by the charter I am pretty confident that it will not meet a charter challenge.

Let me make a statement about the member's comments because I think there are some important components to them, about rights and about abuses that have happened in the past. I was not around, nor was I in this country, when the Chinese exclusion act was enacted or when any of the other atrocities happened. This is not to try to make people in Canada feel guilty, but to have them understand and recognize it. I was not around for what happened to the Acadians, but I recognize from reading history that it was very wrong.

It is through having something like a day of atonement and recognizing the importance of the charter that people understand where the charter comes from and why we have put it in place. It is a very basic contract, with every Canadian, on individual human rights. I think that if we were to have that kind of situation, if we were to have their struggles and mistreatment recognized, a lot of groups like Canadians of Ukrainian descent would feel a lot better about that part of their history. It can be very haunting, as it is haunting for the Acadians to learn what happened to them, to learn about their struggles and not have them recognized. I think it is very important for us to recognize these things that have happened, such as the unjust internments that occurred. I think then we can truly move forward as Canadians equal before the law.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Kitchener—Waterloo for his comments. It is no surprise for anyone in the House that this member chose to speak. We know how much he cares about the citizenship issue, especially everything that has to do with the revocation process.

As we know, the bill before us provides a fully judicial process whereby a judge will decide whether or not a person's citizenship must be revoked. I would like to hear his views on clause 17(4) and the various paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g) and others, which deal with a number of elements I will mention.

During the judicial review, based on the information that a person has acquired or resumed citizenship by fraud, the judge must, among other things, first ensure the confidentiality of any information that could be injurious to national security; second, deal with all matters informally, that is without paying attention to the rules. He may proceed expeditiously, which means quickly. We all know that the wheels of justice grind exceedingly slow.

Third, the judge must examine the information and the evidence in private. That means that the accused will not be present.

Fourth, on each request of the minister, the judge may hear, in the absence of the person and counsel, any other information that would be injurious to national security if disclosed.

Fifth, the judge may provide the person with a summary of the evidence excluding anything that would be injurious to national security if disclosed.

Sixth, the judge may receive into evidence anything—even if it is inadmissible in a court of law.

Last, a determination made by a judge to revoke citizenship would be absolutely final and could not be appealed.

As the member is particularly concerned with justice in this country, I would like to know how he feels about the idea that some Canadian citizens may become different from other citizens, since we know full well that the appeal process is a fundamental element of the justice system and goes to the heart of the trust we have in it.

• (1250)

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Telegdi: Madam Speaker, I mentioned in my comments that this is a new section. It is a section that causes me concern because it was under the guise of terrorism and fighting organized crime and human rights violations that we ended up with this kind of process. Secret evidence is very dangerous. Not having the rules of evidence apply is also very dangerous.

If we recognize a possible risk to security or if we are dealing with a dangerous individual, there are mechanisms in place now such that people can be detained in custody while their cases are handled. Just because we make that determination in very serious cases, we do not take away all the rules of evidence and we do not take away the right to appeal.

As I mentioned, I look forward to working in committee on that section because it also takes in information from governments. There

are governments like the one in Iraq. Do we take information from Iraq if it happens to be looking for somebody it would like to have returned to Iraq to execute? It is not a clear-cut thing. Some governments are good and some governments are bad.

I think this section needs to be clarified and worked on. Ultimately, if one is a citizen, one should have the rights of a citizen. That is not to say that if people are involved in something bad we cannot get them out of the country and take away their citizenship. That is not the issue. The issue is that we have fundamental justice. It may be alleged that one has done something but that does not mean one has done it unless a court of law, with appeal, comes to that conclusion.

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys.

I am pleased to be speaking on Bill C-18 regarding the replacement of the Canadian Citizenship Act. The bill covers a number of issues regarding citizenship: who is a Canadian citizen, especially those born outside Canada; how people can be denied citizenship or how they can be stripped of their citizenship; changes in the citizenship application process; and a new citizenship oath. The bill is certainly an improvement over Bill C-16 from the second session of the 36th Parliament and is the government's third attempt to revise the Citizenship Act.

The legislation introduces a number of good things, but I still have concerns about a number of areas and I know other Canadians have concerns about them too.

I will start by saying that citizenship is a privilege. Canadian citizenship is a privilege and not necessarily a right. Given the right of automatic citizenship for any child born in Canada, it can cause problems. I will raise the issue of what has occurred on the west coast of Canada. Foreign individuals come to Canada specifically to give birth. They are here for the amount of time that it takes to deliver the baby and then they depart.

Those babies are Canadian citizens and can return to Canada at any time under any circumstances because they were born in Canada. Even if they have spent only the first few days of their life here, if they as adults have committed serious crimes, if they have become well known criminals or even terrorists, they cannot be denied access to Canada because they are Canadian citizens. This may not be a serious problem, but we have had very few years in which to monitor the situation. The oldest citizens under this provision would be 25 now. We do not know what kind of long term implications this will have. I think there should be some consideration of these loopholes that still exist.

Government Orders

Another concern I have is that children born to Canadian citizens who live abroad automatically become Canadian citizens. Not only do they, as a second generation, become Canadian citizens, but their children, the third generation, become Canadian citizens even if they have not been born in Canada. The new law proposes that for the third generation those children must reside in Canada for three years in the six years prior to the application for the retention of their Canadian citizenship. The government's reason for introducing this concept is to ensure that future Canadians have a strong link to Canada. This is why the government has done this.

One has to wonder, though, about the second generation. When those children, born from Canadian parents who live out of the country, do not have to live in Canada for any part of their life and still retain their Canadian citizenship, we have to ask ourselves how this ensures that future Canadians will have a strong link to Canada. I would suggest that instead of having just third generation children having to spend three out of the last six years here, the second generation of children should also have to meet that requirement. The bill should be amended to include the second generation of children. If the goal is in fact to ensure a stronger link to Canada, then there should be some onus on that second generation, as there is, I believe, in the present legislation we are changing. There should be some onus on that second generation of Canadians to also spend some time in the country for which they hold citizenship.

The new legislation gives clear details and more details about how citizenship applications would be handled. One of the new ways is that the bill is more specific about the time somebody applying for Canadian citizenship would have to spend in Canada.

● (1255)

Now it is suggesting that for acquisition of citizenship new applicants would be required to live in Canada three years or 1,095 days during the six year naturalization process. I have a concern with individuals who meet the minimum requirements, receive their citizenship and then leave the country when there is no commitment to the country itself. They get a citizenship from this country with no expectation to live here or contribute to our Canadian society.

Specific days will make it easier for those who make the determination to say people do or do not meet the requirements. However I still have problems with the requirement itself. We are basically saying to people they can get Canadian citizenship for expediency's sake or for convenience but we do not have any expectation of them being Canadian and contributing to our society.

Cabinet now has the power to deny citizenship to persons who have demonstrated a flagrant and serious disregard for the principles and values underlying the free and democratic society. I know there are some in the House who have a problem with that.

I think there are examples of individuals who have shown that they have no regard for a free and democratic society and that they do not believe in the principles under which this country operates. If they chose to come to this country from somewhere else because of our free and democratic society and all those things that support a free and democratic society, then one has to question whether we should give citizenship to somebody who has chosen Canada for the very reasons that they refuse to accept, or even worse, work against?

I do not have quite the same concern that some of my hon. colleagues have. I do have a concern that they have just process and that they are able to address the charges and whatever through our courts. There needs to be some kind of an appeal but I do not like appeals that last for four and five years. There can be something that is more expeditious than that.

One of the bigger questions is to have individuals who we can prove have a serious disregard for the principles and values. If we are hesitant to give them citizenship, then we have to ask ourselves why these individuals are allowed to remain in Canada as permanent residents. If they cause this concern and if they are working against our free and democratic society, why are they here as permanent residents in the first place?

The revocation process that this bill would bring in is a good one. Revoking of Canadian citizenship would have to go through the courts. That is something about which we can feel good. We are taking it out of the political realm and putting it into a judicial realm. It is a very good change.

The act would allow an accelerated removal process for persons accused of terrorism or organized crimes. It would allow the government to utilize protected information which disclosure would endanger the safety of people or compromise our national security. These are deserved and good improvements. However there needs to be more emphasis on the need for this information at the immigration stages to be dealt with before it gets to the citizenship part.

There are some improvements. An oath to our country is something of which my constituents are very supportive. They think that if people get Canadian citizenship they should make an oath to Canada. That again is another improvement. I am glad to see the government moving on that.

There are some concerns I have with this new legislation and there are some improvements that we need to acknowledge.

● (1300)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Madam Speaker, I wish to thank my colleague from South Surrey—White Rock—Langley for her remarks. I am pleased to note that she too has concerns about Bill C-18. I would very much like to hear her on what is missing in this bill.

In the previous citizenship bill, Bill C-16, clause 10 recognized the minister's right to grant permanent residency to a person who immigrated to the country at a young age and was still under the impression that he or she was a Canadian citizen. The minister had the authority to grant this person residency status. There is no such provision in Bill C-18.

Government Orders

I have a question and I would like her to answer it for me. In the case of a child aged two or three or a six month old infant who came with its parents to Canada, Quebec or elsewhere, grew up, went to school and developed in a Canadian or Quebec setting, and whose parents became Canadian citizens—it is therefore clear in the child's mind that he or she is a Canadian citizen—but did not go through the process of applying for permanent residency and citizenship, does she consider this child who grew up as a Canadian and was raised in a Canadian setting to be a Canadian or of a different nationality?

Would she be in favour of including in Bill C-18 this provision that enabled the minister to grant permanent resident status to children who came to this country at a young age, so that they can have full citizenship?

• (1305)

[*English*]

Ms. Val Meredith: Madam Speaker, I take it from the question that she, like myself, has run into cases where constituents assume that they are Canadian and then find out down the road, when they are an adult, that they are not because their parents did not put them on their application. There needs to be some provision for that.

I would suggest that a child in that case has more right to be a Canadian citizen than the child of a foreigner who comes to Canada, gives birth to that child and then takes the baby out of the country at four days old, never to live in Canada. A child raised in Canada from the age of whatever, whether the child is two months old or even six years old, who went to school, went to university, got jobs and worked in and contributed to Canada, has a far greater right to be a Canadian than a child who was merely born here.

I would certainly support an amendment acknowledging that there might be some other things we would want to work into it to ensure that there are some definitions regarding how that would be handled.

However I am interested as to why it would only be landed status and not Canadian citizenship, if it could be proved that he or she was brought over as a child and the parents were both Canadian citizens. I would argue that probably there should be some allowance for that child to become a Canadian citizen rather than just have permanent status.

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, one of the favourite functions that I have as a member of Parliament is to attend citizenship court. Having been born in Canada myself and having come from a long line of Canadians, I never had the privilege of attending it before. It was something that I had never even thought about doing. When I became a member of Parliament and I began to go to citizenship court, I took on a new respect for my country and for the people who make up my country. I especially enjoy the look on the faces of the people who are becoming Canadian citizens for the first time.

I take some exception to some of the things that are in the bill, which I will go into in a moment, but I want to give credit to the minister for putting this forward. It has been fairly well thought out and is an improvement over the previous legislation.

Now we will go to the part that I do not like and I will tell members why. It removes the new oath of affirmation. It removes

swearing allegiance to the Queen and her successors. That may seem like a very minor detail but for someone like myself who is a fifth generation Canadian, whose original ancestor came as a soldier from the Scottish regiment to defend the Crown, we are a family that is used to swearing allegiance to the Crown and I take some offence to having that part removed. It is not such a serious thing that I will get really worked up about it, but if someone has been in the country as long as my family has and has had those ties to the crown, it is a difficult thing of which to let go.

We have been in Canada since the early 1800s. When my ancestor came, he came as a soldier to quell an uprising in Canada. The first two generations were in Ontario. Their roots were very deep. I would like to take exception to what my ancestors did. They very foolishly sold the property they had for next to nothing. That right now is about 14 city blocks in the City of Toronto. If I could go back and change anything, I would change that.

Regardless of what happened, we then came to British Columbia. One of my uncles was the first motorcycle policeman for B.C. He is also used to swearing allegiance to the Crown, so it goes a long way. When I was sworn in as a member of Parliament, I too swore allegiance to the Crown, so removal of that does upset me. However I have gone on about that long enough.

Citizenship commissioners is the other thing. I really like the idea that we are now calling the people who swear in the new citizens citizenship commissioners rather than citizenship judges. I often felt at the ceremonies that we were misleading new citizens by calling the people who were swearing them in judges. They are not judges. They are political appointees. To call them judges is a misnomer and somewhat misleading.

However I wonder why we are calling them anything at all. Why do we need to have a specific person for that role? I went to the bother of finding out what we pay citizenship judges and I was shocked. We pay up to \$87,100 a year for a full time appointed citizenship judge, who will now be called a citizenship commissioner.

When I was thinking about ways to save Canada money and ways that we could find the funding we were looking for the important issues in Canada such as health care, I thought as a first step we could maybe look at eliminating those kinds of positions and putting that responsibility on to the member of Parliament, for example, with no pay. The member of Parliament is the representative of the federal level of government. We are here anyway, and if we were to ask the general public, they believe we are all overpaid because they do not quite understand what we do in here. Therefore why do we not take on that responsibility and not have a commissioner per se?

We have fabulous ceremonies in the Kamloops area which is the central portion of my riding. They are put together by a lady named Trisha Chmiel out of Kelowna. She works for Citizenship and Immigration. If people have not had the pleasure of meeting this lady, they have missed something. My colleague from Kelowna knows the lady well. She is incredibly efficient and effective. Those ceremonies have meaning.

Government Orders

●(1310)

She already works for the Government of Canada and therefore the people of Canada. Why would we not put her in this position? Why would we put an extra person into this position, especially when it is a political appointment? It makes no sense to me. We could cover all of these little areas without any difficulty at all.

We could also look at the possibility of using someone who is an Order of Canada recipient to administer these functions. That would also make sense and would be much more expedient than having extra people coming in.

The other thing I was concerned about when I read this, and I read it fairly carefully, was that there was some wording I did not like. One of the words I did not like was that we are pledging our loyalty and allegiance. When I hear the word “pledge”, I think “American”. I guess I get very territorial about the difference between Canadian and American when it comes to something like this. It would be better to use a word like “swear”, “affirm” or “give”, rather than the word “pledge”. I know this sounds petty but it is all in the way I hear it. When I hear it, it sounds more American. I would like us to maintain Canada's dignity and our tradition, and so I would like that wording changed.

When we are talking to these new citizens and having them swear an oath, in that oath I would like them to affirm that they understand that when they come to Canada, they certainly have the right to maintain their language, their culture, their religion, their food, their clothing and all of the things that are dear to them, but we also have to emphasize to them that they do not have the right to maintain old hatreds that they may have brought from another country. I would like to see something in the oath that allows people to denounce openly the negative things from their country of origin and affirms how they feel about being part of Canada.

We need to make people who come here feel as though they are part of the fabric and weave of Canada. If we think of Canada as a large piece of cloth, each of us is a thread and all of the threads form one large unit. We need to make people who come here feel a part of that. Having talked to enough immigrants who have told me what they have come from, these new citizens who are looking for a new life here, I think they would welcome the opportunity to denounce some of the negative things of the countries from which they have just come.

Generally speaking, the citizenship ceremonies are wonderful. People beam from ear to ear. Children are part of them. It never ceases to amaze me from how many countries we attract new citizens. It is what makes us so diverse and so unique in the world.

I want to elaborate a little on one of the ceremonies I attended. In the last ceremony for example, Canada received the gift of people from 42 separate countries. Does that not say a lot to the world about what we have to offer? What I am trying to put into this entire discussion is how much we need to protect that. We need to protect what people who choose us as a country value so highly. In order to do that we have to be very careful about the wording.

In closing, I applaud what the minister is trying to do. It definitely is an improvement over what there was before, but I would like him to take into consideration some of the things that I have said. I do not

want to lose that connection of swearing to the Queen and her successors. To me it is as meaningful as the ties that the French Canadian people feel to their heritage. There is room to leave it in. It does not hurt anyone and it certainly adds to the tradition of the ceremony.

●(1315)

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her excellent speech which was very sensitive to some of the issues about citizenship. I was particularly attracted to the fact that she focused her remarks on the oath of citizenship. I will be speaking very shortly on that very subject.

She said something that to me was very important. She said that in the oath of citizenship she regretted that there was not something that actually made newcomers to Canada commit themselves to some of the basic principles of being Canadian. She regretted that it did not say that.

I would ask the member how she feels about a change in the oath that I will be proposing by amendment later. I would change these words that are in the oath that is before us now which are “to faithfully observe our laws and fulfill my duties and obligations as a Canadian citizen”. I would like to change those words to “promise to uphold these five principles: equality of opportunity, freedom of speech, democracy, basic human rights and the rule of law”.

By specifying these concepts that are straight from the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, do we not do more to give newcomers to Canada an appreciation of their true obligations of being Canadian?

Mrs. Betty Hinton: Madam Speaker, I think those are very thoughtful remarks that the member made. I would like time to think more seriously about the exact wording that he has given.

We are in agreement on one major issue. I think it is important to not only to affirm the rights that people who have become Canadian citizens have but we also have to affirm the responsibilities that becoming a Canadian citizen brings with it.

Anything we can do as a group in a non-partisan manner to improve the wording of this new legislation would be to the benefit of the minister and all new Canadians.

●(1320)

Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a long time ago I chose this country. When I received my citizenship, I felt very proud. I had become a member of the best society on the globe.

Our hon. colleague mentioned some very important issues. I believe that each member of the House would have a different opinion about different issues in the bill.

It bothers me as well, as a citizen who chose this country, that we are a bit loose on the side where newcomers spend three years here, receive their citizenship and then leave the country. They work somewhere else and then come back. Some of them even collect welfare and social assistance on purpose. They are abusing the system.

Some of the proposals that I have heard today in the House are commendable. Is the hon. member proposing that the oath be changed? Would she agree that new citizens should commit to this country, not just pledge and sort of voluntarily accept this?

Once one becomes a citizen, one is a citizen and is part of this society. One should be fully committed to the nation which has accepted the person and the nation that one chose to be part of. There are no ifs, ands or buts about it.

Does the hon. member agree that we should change the wording so that it is very strong? Those who receive citizenship should be 100% committed to the nation and should respect the laws, not observe but respect the laws and the people of this country.

Mrs. Betty Hinton: Madam Speaker, this is going to be strange for a politician, a short answer, which is yes.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad to have this opportunity to speak to this legislation. I will be confining my remarks almost entirely to the oath of citizenship that is proposed in this legislation.

I had before the House, up until last week, a private member's bill proposing changes to the oath of citizenship which would reflect the principles of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but that bill has become non-votable as the result of the introduction of this government bill which also has a new version of the oath of citizenship. I would like to deal with the government's version that is before the House, my version, and just discuss some of the other oaths around the Commonwealth.

The oath of citizenship that is in this bill states:

From this day forward, I pledge my loyalty and allegiance to Canada and Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada. I promise to respect our country's rights and freedoms, to uphold our democratic values, to faithfully observe our laws and fulfill my duties and obligations as a Canadian citizen.

Madam Speaker, you might be interested to hear the text of the current oath of allegiance of New Zealand, another former Commonwealth colony. It states:

I swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God Queen of New Zealand and Her Other Realms and Territories, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith, and her heirs and successors according to law, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of New Zealand and fulfill my duties as a New Zealand citizen, so help me God.

You might note, Madam Speaker, that the words at the end of the New Zealand oath are exactly the same as those of the current Canadian oath, "to faithfully observe our laws and fulfill my duties and obligations as a Canadian citizen" or "as a New Zealand citizen". The wording is exactly the same. The wording is taken from pre-existing oaths of allegiance that had been established in the Commonwealth going back quite a long time.

It is also interesting to hear the text of the Australian oath of allegiance. Australia is an important country vis-à-vis Canada because our histories are very alike. We are both parliamentary democracies based on the crown. Indeed Australia just very recently went through a debate about retaining the monarchy and it significantly chose to retain the monarch. The oath of Australia states:

From this time forward, under God, I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey.

Government Orders

I would submit, at the very least, that the Australian oath has a much better ring to it than either the New Zealand oath or the Canadian oath that is being proposed in this legislation. Madam Speaker, I also draw your attention to the fact that in Australia there is, in my view, a correct distinction made in that an oath of citizenship should be to the country and it does not necessarily have to be to the monarch of that country in a parliamentary democracy. This is relevant too, because the oath of allegiance in Great Britain runs thusly:

I swear, by almighty God, that on becoming a British citizen I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, and her heirs and successors according to law.

Madam Speaker, you can see that the Canadian oath actually in the bill before us now is a combination of wording. The first half is the wording from the British oath and the second half is basically the wording from the Commonwealth oath that was used across the Commonwealth.

I should point out to you, Madam Speaker, that up until 1981, the British did not have an oath of citizenship whatsoever. The oath which I just read to the House is an oath of naturalization which was in response to the flood of immigrants that the United Kingdom has been experiencing.

• (1325)

I wish to provide a little history. The oaths of allegiance of New Zealand and Canada date their origins back to the 18th century when the British Crown felt obligated to require the people in its colonies, that it acquired by force of arms or by purchase because they were not British, to bear faithful and true allegiance to Her Majesty or His Majesty. The oath of citizenship that we have, that New Zealand has, and that Australia does not have, is wording that was derived from the United Kingdom as a colonial power.

The oath that I would like to put forward in the House—and I do so now—I would hope that people when they read *Hansard* can compare it to the previous oaths that I just read into the record. The oath that I offer the House for its deliberations would read:

In pledging allegiance to Canada, I take my place among Canadians, a people united by their solemn trust to uphold these five principles: equality of opportunity, freedom of speech, democracy, basic human rights and the rule of law.

The important thing is not to have a citizenship oath that requires the new person to swear to obey the laws, because the laws of a nation can from time to time be wrong. There are many examples in Europe. In Germany, which was a democracy after the first world war, a government took power and changed the laws that deprived people of their civil liberties. It led, indeed, to the second world war.

Simply saying that one will faithfully uphold the laws of a country I do not believe is good enough. Indeed, I think it is very dangerous in this age when countries across the world are struggling to find balance between civil liberties and the new threats of terrorism that have been emerging across the world.

Government Orders

It is vitally important for Canada to send a message to the world, through its oath of citizenship, about what Canada really stands for in this world that has become such a dark and dangerous place. I would submit that what identifies a Canadian more than anything else and how Canadians are perceived around the world and why so many people around the world want to come to Canada is because of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is not just a document that is part of our Parliament. This is the way Canadians live and act. This is what defines us as Canadians.

Whether we speak French, whether we are aboriginal, whether our history is from the Far East, the Middle East or central Europe, whether we are new Canadians or established Canadians, what identifies us as Canadians is the fact that all of us uphold the five principles of the charter: equality of opportunity, freedom of speech, democracy, basic human rights and the rule of law.

That is not just a commitment of newcomers to Canada. It is a commitment of the government, of Parliament, and of the people, that not just at this point in time but forever, as long as that oath of citizenship exists. And I hope that our oath of citizenship would exist as long as the country, it commits the country to uphold the rule of law, basic human rights, democracy and freedom of speech.

Another speaker was referring to the problems of revocation. He was very successful in changing the legislation because the previous bill, Bill C-16, actually created a second class citizen out of people who had their citizenship and who were accused of war crimes. A mechanism was inserted into that legislation that would have enabled the government to revoke citizenship without due process of law.

I submit that had we had an oath of citizenship that specifically committed the government to uphold the rule of law, then the government would not have been able to advance a bill that deprived a person of the due process of law, much less the basic human right of having that due process of law.

● (1330)

As times goes on I will be moving an amendment to the oath. The oath is here and I will be offering to the House the wording that I have just given. There will be two versions. One version will involve an invocation to God because the Charter of Rights and Freedoms begins with an invocation to God. I am sensitive to the fact that some people would prefer an affirmation and it is important to offer that opportunity to them.

There will be some debate about whether the Queen should be in our oath of citizenship. I do not believe she should be. I had so many opportunities as a member of the citizenship and immigration committee, as we developed policy for this very legislation in 1994-95, to hear representations from newcomers to Canada who could not understand why they had to swear allegiance to the Queen. People from around the world understand that the Queen is attached to the United Kingdom and it is a puzzle to them as to why they have to swear allegiance to her.

I note that Australia, our near cousin as a Commonwealth country, took the Queen out of its oath a very long time ago. It had precisely the same oath as New Zealand and has gone to an oath that at the very least is better than the Canadian one before the House now.

We can improve the oath of allegiance. I would like to see us committed as Canadians to the five principles of the charter: equality of opportunity, freedom of speech, democracy, basic human rights, and the rule of law. That is who we are as Canadians and we should say so.

● (1335)

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I thought the hon. member was going to deliver a wonderful speech. He was going in the right direction until he got into some interesting sidebars where I had to wonder where he was going with the issue.

It was interesting as he went through the various oaths and held up the Australian oath as a model. I also found it interesting when he talked about the recognition of Canada as a sovereign nation and not a colony. We as citizens pledge our allegiance to this country. That is who we are.

The member made an interesting observation when he said that our laws could be wrong. He also said it was not good enough to simply pledge our allegiance to obey the law. What kind of citizen would actually take on the responsibility of trading his or her own laws which would supercede those of the government that was running the country? I agree with the hon. member that laws could in fact be wrong, but the fact remains that those are the laws of the land. However there is a way to change those laws. Is the member advocating civil disobedience as a way of handling this situation?

Mr. John Bryden: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question because it is important to clarify it.

Basically, what I am saying by these five principles is that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is the law above the laws of Parliament and, indeed, it is in our Constitution now. Theoretically, we should not be able to pass laws in this place that are contrary to the principles of the charter which are summarized in the five principles I gave.

The difficulty is that sometimes in this place, and the previous citizenship bill is a classic example, legislation goes through this House that is contrary to the charter simply because members of Parliament and the bureaucracy are perhaps not as sensitive to the principles of the charter as they should be because the charter is a document of some length.

I tried to capture in the five principles of the charter the ultimate law that governs being Canadian, and that ultimate law is expressed in the five principles: the commitment to uphold democracy, freedom of speech, equality of opportunity, basic human rights and the rule of law.

Madam Speaker, that is the ultimate law of being Canadian.

Mr. Werner Schmidt: Madam Speaker, I have another question for the hon. member. It is all very nice to talk about the rights and freedoms that we have in the charter. It is wonderful. We do have rights and we want fundamental rights. What does the hon. member do with the sense of responsibility? When we have all these rights and freedoms, what happens to responsibility for the actions that we take?

Government Orders

Mr. John Bryden: Madam Speaker, that is precisely what the wording says. It says that a Canadian has a "solemn trust to uphold". A solemn trust to uphold is a responsibility. The responsibility is to defend democracy, the rule of law and basic human rights. It is to ensure equality of opportunity and to guarantee freedom of speech. These are the ultimate responsibilities of being Canadian. That is what being Canadian is all about and that is why we should spell it out in our oath of citizenship.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Madam Speaker, I must admit that it is quite interesting to see that a member of this House is so passionate about an oath of allegiance.

I have listened to him closely, and he has spoken, of course, of recognizing fundamental values, including freedom of speech and the freedom to have fundamental rights.

Given all that he has said, I would like his opinion on certain clauses found in Bill C-18, particularly clauses 16 and 17, under which a judge has the right, in certain circumstances, to use evidence that would not normally be admissible, and to decide based on such inadmissible evidence. He is in no way required to reveal to the accused what led him to make the decision. Furthermore, this decision is final and may not be appealed.

This, in my view, is nothing like the oath of allegiance he is proposing, in which, of course, there does not appear to be much evidence of this fundamental right to justice, in the situation that I just described.

• (1340)

[*English*]

Mr. John Bryden: Madam Speaker, the member is pointing out something that is very relevant.

One of the reasons for putting in the commitment to uphold the rule of law and basic human rights is to ensure that legislation always reflects that. The committee must carefully consider the sections that she has alluded to. I am not convinced that they are the ultimate answer for national security. It is really a national security issue for which the government has brought in these changes. It is concerned that it will receive information from foreign security and espionage agencies and not be able to divulge it in open court.

I would suggest that if it becomes absolutely necessary to have those sections, then it becomes all the more important to stress in the oath that we do believe in upholding basic human rights and the rule of law. When judges come to consider those cases, they will have those principles of the charter uppermost in their minds. Whatever they decide and however they decide, they will strike the finest line between the need for national security and the need to respect human rights and the rule of law in the broadest sense.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would first like to mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

This debate interests me a great deal. This new bill on Canadian citizenship is the third attempt since 1993 to add new elements to the legislation. During the previous two attempts, as we know, the bills

died on the Order Paper at various stages, without being passed. I think that everyone hopes this will not happen again.

I think it would be good to remind those listening that, prior to 1947, Canadian citizenship did not exist. Prior to that, we were British subjects. Canadian citizenship was created in 1947. Canadian citizenship was reformed in 1977, but the same legislation has applied since then.

Having worked on this issue and given it some thought, I would like to say that citizenship, for anyone who lacks it, is a precious thing. When people are born into their citizenship, without knowing it, or thinking about it, they do not understand its importance. However, if we have the opportunity to travel abroad and to see to what extent the fact of having citizenship and having a passport is the way to exist and have one's rights recognized internationally, then we understand just how precious citizenship really is.

It is only normal for a country to monitor its citizenship and impose requirements. For example, it is perfectly normal to require applicants to know the laws of the country and at least one of its two official languages. The level at which these requirements must be met has yet to be defined. As we know, blunders were sometimes made in that regard.

It serves no one's interest if new citizens are not adequately prepared to make a useful contribution to this country and vote. In Quebec, as in other regions of Canada, it goes without saying that Canadian citizenship allows these new citizens to make a full contribution.

We understand the minister's intentions; he wanted to correct certain things which, in his mind and in other people's minds, needed to be corrected. I will mention a few of these things, and also the problems that we anticipate at this stage of consideration of Bill C-18.

The Bloc Québécois supports the underlying principle of Bill C-18. However, and this is a general statement, a number of its provisions pose a problem and could easily generate controversy, particularly clauses 16 and 17. This means that many amendments will have to be proposed and, we hope, adopted, so as to correct a number of problems with Bill C-18.

The purpose of this bill is to require permanent residents to actually be in Canada during a total of three of the six years immediately preceding their application for Canadian citizenship.

There were two different bodies of case law, one based on the current requirement of actually living in Canada for one year, and the other to the effect that, assuming there were strong ties, there was no requirement to actually be in the country.

• (1345)

The bill is intended to clarify this requirement by making it necessary to have spent three of the past six years in the country. This seems a normal requirement. The only problem is that it is not easy to monitor permanent residence, and there are no means for doing so.

Government Orders

The second change I want to address is the introduction of a totally judiciary mechanism whereby a judge would decide whether a person's citizenship is to be revoked. The intent of this change is commendable, because until now this was a cabinet decision, except that the secrecy surrounding the current legal process and the means available to the judge in this connection make the minister's intended reform unworkable, because it ends up almost back to the old approach of secrecy and discretion.

There is reference to authorizing the governor in council—and everyone knows this means the government—to refuse citizenship to those who are in flagrant disregard of democratic freedoms and values. We can be in favour of this in principle, right off, except that there are no definitions for this flagrant and serious disregard for the principles and values underlying a free and democratic society. Hence the possibility of discretion, which would mean potential abuse of the use of this procedure by the government.

The minister may swear that his intentions are good. But even if we believe him, there could be another minister, in another government, who could use this provision, which might open the door to numerous violations of what could be called a basis right.

Another change that would have a big impact on Quebec and should be changed again to avoid being unfair to Quebecers is the fact that children adopted abroad by Canadians could become citizens before first becoming permanent residents. Adopting a child is costly and time consuming. Parents prefer a procedure whereby they can adopt in a foreign country as long as they follow the rules of their province, since adoption falls under the responsibility of the provinces, Quebec in our case.

The problem for Quebec is that the Civil Code, which was unanimously passed, as we know, provides that international adoptions must be finalized in Quebec by a Quebec court. If the bill as it currently stands is not amended, Quebec parents would be heavily penalized. If I may, I would like to point out that when it comes to international adoption, Quebec parents are way ahead of parents in other provinces. Indeed, of the 2,200 adoptions in Canada, 950 were in Quebec.

Finally, since I am running out of time, I will add that the government intends to change the oath of allegiance to allow for a direct expression of allegiance to Canada, without removing the allegiance to the Queen. We believe this should be changed. I am happy to hear that members on the other side believe that the oath of allegiance to the Queen belongs to another era.

An hon. member: It is an anachronism.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: My colleague is whispering to me it is an anachronism. Therefore, it should be changed. In conclusion, I will say that this new statute must allow all new citizens to exercise every right they are entitled to in this country, be it in Quebec or in Canada.

• (1350)

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member for Mercier what she thinks of the new procedure whereby, in order to acquire Canadian citizenship, an applicant would have to pledge loyalty, and I mean loyalty and allegiance, not only to the Queen, but also to Canada. The hon.

member alluded to this earlier, and this is something that I personally object to, for all sorts of reasons.

I would like to know what the hon. member thinks of the government's intention to include in our political and constitutional context the word "Canada". By including only the term "Canada", the Canadian government is once again denying the existence of the Quebec nation within Canada.

So, I would like the hon. member to tell us where, in her opinion, we stand. As we know—and this is what I am concerned about—there is no right to appeal the decision made in secret by a judge. There is no right of appeal in this whole immigration process.

What would happen, and this is what I am worried about, if a new Canadian citizen has pledged loyalty and allegiance to Canada and then, realizing the existence of the Canadian and Quebec realities, and the merits of the claims made by Quebec sovereignists, becomes a sovereignist in Quebec, lives in a region or in Montreal, joins the Bloc Québécois, the Parti Québécois, the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal or a national society, and becomes persona non grata in the eyes of the Canadian government, which closely follows this whole thing? The current minister of immigration made extremely harsh and unfair comments about our former colleague, Osvaldo Nunez, when he referred to deportation.

So, what would happen to an immigrant who becomes a sovereignist in good faith, under our democratic rules? Is there not a danger that a witch hunt will begin and that the government will invoke futile reasons, in secret, to revoke that person's Canadian citizenship, under the legislation, simply because that person is a sovereignist? Is there not a danger that the person could be sent back to his country, because he unfortunately became a sovereignist in Quebec, that is a good citizen of Quebec?

I would like to know what the hon. member for Mercier thinks of the government's intention to include the term Canada in the bill?

• (1355)

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Madam Speaker, many other Quebecers will surely have concerns about the question my hon. colleague just asked.

What I have to say is quite simple. Canadian citizenship gives new Quebecers the same rights as those enjoyed by all Quebecers, whether they are native born or new immigrants.

The law makes it possible, legal and even legitimate—as the Supreme Court ruled in answer to a question put by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs—to seek sovereignty.

So, if the minister's motivations are not all above board, legislation in Quebec and in Canada gives new citizens full access to the protection provided by our legal, judicial and legislative tradition. I do hope that the minister's motivations are pure, because, as I have said previously about another part of this legislation, other ministers will be appointed after him.

We will then have to fiercely protect the rights of new and native born Quebecers.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

SENIOR OF THE YEAR

Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, retired general surgeon, Dr. John Moffat was recently named senior of the year by the City of Cambridge.

Dr. Moffat is chairman of the Cambridge and North Dumfries Community Foundation, a former chairman of Wilfrid Laurier University and a founding father of the annual Can-Am Games.

Never one to seek the limelight, Dr. Moffat's generosity, kindness and tireless community involvement has touched the lives of many people in my riding of Cambridge.

I join all members of the House in congratulating Dr. Moffat on receiving this award. I wish him all the best and I encourage him in his volunteer efforts to make Cambridge the best city in Canada.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, we all know how important it was for Canada to join the coalition that broke the grip of terrorist and repressive forces in Afghanistan. However our responsibility cannot stop there. A year ago the fresh breezes of freedom began to blow in Afghanistan. Now, a year later, ominous clouds are on the horizon.

The school programs for girls, which sprang up due to the courage and conviction of many people, are now literally under fire. Last week alone, four of these schools were hit by the rocket attacks of Taliban related forces who want to crush the newfound freedom of this new generation of the Afghan people.

Valiant Canadians, like Sally Armstrong and the women's groups working with her, are alerting us to the need of a Canadian presence in Afghanistan to visibly work with agencies there to restore and protect these school programs to see young girls and boys educated and given the tools to help them work for a future of hope.

Canada was there shoulder to shoulder with our allies to liberate Afghanistan. We must now be there heart and person to person to help build and maintain the programs that will make liberation in Afghanistan a reality for generations to come.

* * *

• (1400)

[Translation]

THE QUEEN'S JUBILEE

Mr. Andy Savoy (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the year 2002 marks the 50th anniversary of the coronation of Her Majesty the Queen. It is an opportunity to reflect on the role she has played in the past 50 years, as well as an opportunity to look to the future of our nation.

[English]

As a way to commemorate the jubilee anniversary, the Golden Jubilee Medal was created to honour Canada's most extraordinary citizens. Twenty of these exceptional individuals are from my riding

S. O. 31

of Tobique—Mactaquac. These recipients have exemplified what makes Canada such an outstanding nation through their selfless giving of time and talent.

Today I am pleased to honour the following individuals from my riding: Rosie St-Onge, Roméo Lafrance, Noé Levesque, Morel Ouellette, Phillip Sharkey, Nina Briggs, Sister Evangeline Poirier, John Larsen, Teresa Madore, Michael Blanchard, Samuel Perkins, Eloise Craig, Roland Perry, Pauline Forrest, Hazen Craig, Dawn Lockwood, Harold Hatfield, Robert Simpson, Dr. Stephen Hart; and the 20th medal will be awarded posthumously to the late Dr. Joseph Cyr.

I once again congratulate all these deserving recipients.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the oil and gas industry has joined with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in an effort to create a detailed atlas of spawning and nursery areas for commercial fin fish and shellfish species on the Scotian shelf off Nova Scotia.

Using industry levied funds, DFO scientists in the maritime region will identify and map both spawning areas and key nursery and larvae concentration areas. The atlas will also include the times of the year when spawning occurs. Currently there is no single, comprehensive source of information regarding the locations of sensitive spawning and nursery areas for the Scotian shelf.

The atlas will be an important planning tool for industry and government in helping to identify marine areas that are sensitive to offshore oil and gas activities. Knowing the locations of biologically sensitive areas will greatly assist in the development of strategies to minimize or eliminate the potentially harmful environmental effects of proposed offshore oil and gas activities.

Work on the atlas is expected to be completed by early 2004.

* * *

[Translation]

MINORITY OFFICIAL LANGUAGE COMMUNITIES

Mr. Gérard Binet (Frontenac—Mégantic, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on October 16 I had the great pleasure of announcing on behalf of the Minister of Canadian Heritage funding of \$44,917 for the Megantic English-Speaking Community Development Corporation to help finance its initiative to keep youth from the anglophone community in the region.

This project is intended to encourage young anglophones from the Frontenac—Mégantic region to stay or return to live in their community by offering them a lifestyle and professional environment adapted to their needs. Local employers are participating in this program as well, and a presentation will be shown to all high school students.

S. O. 31

The Megantic English-Speaking Community Development Corporation demonstrates once again that it is by combining our efforts that we can encourage the full participation of official-language communities living in minority situations.

Congratulations on this marvellous initiative.

* * *

[English]

PROJECT RED RIBBON

Mr. Chuck Cadman (Surrey North, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, on Monday I participated in the launch of the Project Red Ribbon by the Vancouver chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Flying the red ribbon is a commitment by Canadians to drive sober. It is a highly visible, community public awareness program that depends on volunteer participation. It promotes the message that deaths and injuries resulting from impaired driving are needless tragedies and are totally preventable.

Each year, from November 1 to the first Monday after New Year's, volunteers ask motorists to tie a red ribbon to a visible location on their vehicles. This simple public display is a sign of respect for the thousands of Canadians who have been either killed or injured by drunk drivers.

Everyone can support the Project Red Ribbon by tying a red ribbon to their vehicles. It also serves as a reminder to drive sober at all times, not only during the upcoming holiday season.

By tying a red ribbon to our vehicles, we make a personal commitment to not drink and drive.

* * *

VETERANS WEEK

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the numbers tell the tale: 7,000 in the Boer War; 650,000 in the first world war; over a million in the second world war; almost 27,000 in Korea; and some 125,000 in peacekeeping missions. These are the number of people who have served us over the past 100 years. Well over 100,000 Canadians made the ultimate sacrifice in protecting our values of peace and freedom.

Our veterans gave us a country we are proud to call home. They gave us what one great leader called "the last full measure of their devotion". For that we remain eternally grateful.

It is our job to impress upon a new generation of Canadians the length and breadth of their heritage. It is their birthright. Just as we owe our veterans our gratitude and remembrance, we owe our young people their history. In turn, we call on them to carry the torch of remembrance. In doing so, we meet the demands of the theme of this year's Veterans Week to remember our past so that we might preserve our future.

• (1405)

[Translation]

IZZY ASPER

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, at a conference in Montreal, the president of CanWest Global, Izzy Asper, addressed a private meeting of 400 where no journalists were admitted, except for the one from *The Gazette*, which is owned by Izzy Asper.

The president of CanWest Global attacked universities and the media in general, accusing them of spreading anti-Semitic messages, calling them lazy, stupid and ignorant of history, insinuating that only he is right and everyone else is wrong.

Why did the Minister of Canadian Heritage not challenge the inaccurate and contemptuous remarks made by Izzy Asper?

The president of the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec quite rightly took strong issue with Izzy Asper's remarks, his slanderous criticism of the media and the fact that he used one of his journalists to spread his message throughout the country.

This confirms our fears of seeing a handful of owners use the media to push their own ideas.

* * *

[English]

BETTE MACDONALD

Mr. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to rise in the House to pay tribute to one of my constituents, Bette MacDonald.

Bette MacDonald is a well known Cape Breton entertainer who has been a household name for the past 15 years. During her time with the *Summertime Review* she became well known for her famous character, Mary Morrison.

I also had the opportunity to be in a commercial with her, which is quite the experience.

Not only is she a household name in Cape Breton, but she is also known throughout the country. She is now the star of *Rideau Hall*, a hit comedy series seen on Friday nights on CBC.

I, along with all Cape Bretoners, are very pleased that she was recently honoured with a Gemini Award for best individual performance in a comedy program or series.

She is a proud Cape Bretoner and a proud Canadian, and we congratulate her on her success.

* * *

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it has been reported this week that the provincial and territorial justice ministers have asked that the common use of conditional sentences be reviewed, especially for those charged with sexual assault against children and those in possession of child pornography.

In Calgary on October 9, James Wilson pleaded guilty to possession of child pornography, assault and obstruction of justice. The sentence for these crimes was one year of community service.

On October 17 in Winnipeg, the Manitoba Court of Appeal overturned a nine month jail sentence given to Leonard Elder, who pleaded guilty earlier this year to distributing child pornography. The new sentence for this crime, a 15 month conditional sentence to be served in the community.

On October 5 in Ottawa, Arthur Tremblay was sentenced to a six month conditional sentence and two years probation. He had accumulated over 30,000 pornographic images. The crown prosecutor asked for a jail sentence to reflect the seriousness of the crime.

It is very apparent that our children are in very real danger when our courts are the only thing standing between the pervert and our children.

* * *

[Translation]

ORDER OF THE LEGION OF HONOUR

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this evening, Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier and Mrs. Gisèle Lalonde will receive the Order of the Legion of Honour from the French government. On the same occasion, Jean Poirier will be promoted within this order, and made an Officer of the National Order of Merit.

This is one of the most prestigious honours in the francophone community. It is well deserved by these three individuals who have been devoted to the Canadian Francophonie for many years.

We are all grateful for the work that Senator Gauthier, Mrs. Lalonde and Mr. Poirier have done.

I regret not being able to attend this evening's ceremony, which the embassy has described as an opportunity to pay tribute to the entire Franco-Ontarian community.

I wish, however, to thank these three French Canadians from Ontario for their involvement and to congratulate them on this well-deserved decoration.

* * *

[English]

RAMADAN

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Canada's New Democrats I wish to extend our very best wishes to Canada's 650,000 Muslims who have begun their annual spiritual journey of Ramadan.

This ninth month of the Muslim calendar is considered to be a particularly holy time, during which worship and reflection are meant to bring peace and illumination to the mind and purity to the soul.

Tragic international events have led to misrepresentation and false characterizations of Islam here in Canada. It is my hope that during Ramadan Canadians of all faiths would take the time to learn about the rich culture and heritage of their Muslim neighbours. Let us all

S. O. 31

recommit to better understanding of diversity to promote international peace and harmony at home.

May Allah, peace be upon him, bless all who seek his guidance.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a report published this week, the Canadian Council on Social Development demonstrated unequivocally that not only has the 1989 promise to eliminate child poverty not been respected but, in fact, the situation has gotten worse.

Since the report came out, the Prime Minister has not said one word about the dismal failure of his policies to fight poverty. Why? Because he knows perfectly well that he is the main reason children and their parents have gotten poorer.

After slashing the employment insurance program that was built on 60 years of collective efforts, after going after the source of funding for our hospitals and social programs, now the government would rather dole out millions of dollars to its cronies than transfer to Quebec and the provinces the funds needed to keep children from going to school on an empty stomach.

This is a sad and sorry legacy for a head of state who is more concerned about saving a sinking ship than caring for hungry children.

* * *

[English]

MAYOR OF VANCOUVER

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an extraordinary man, His Worship Philip Owen, the longest serving consecutive-term mayor in the history of Vancouver.

During his nine years at the helm, Vancouver maintained a triple A credit rating and was judged for the last three years on the William Mercer Index as the best city in the world in which to live.

However, the distinguishing feature of Philip Owen's career as mayor is his vision and courage in implementing an innovative solution to the growing open drug problem in our city. Modelled on the successful approach of some large European cities, he treated substance abuse as a health problem and established a comprehensive, integrated strategy with four pillars: prevention, enforcement, treatment and harm reduction. With 90% community support he brought together three levels of government under the Vancouver Agreement to implement this plan.

He raised his voice for the forgotten and voiceless of our city. In recognition he recently received the B.C. Provincial Health Officers Award, given for the first time to a non-medical professional.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River.

*Oral Questions***CANADA-U.S. BORDER**

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, PC): Mr. Speaker, on October 11, Michel Jalbert, a francophone Canadian, was arrested for buying fuel at a U.S.-Canada border crossing, which is a local custom. He was charged with entering the United States without an inspection at customs and with possession of firearms.

Mr. Jalbert has not been offered any sort of plea bargain or help, does not know a word of English, has a pregnant wife and a five year old daughter and is not expected to be home by Christmas.

What is the value of being a Canadian citizen? Why does the minister not intervene in times of need like this? Why has the minister not been in contact with the American ambassador to protest in the strongest terms this abuse of a Canadian citizen?

The rights of a Canadian citizen living next to the Americans and the rights of landed immigrants appear to be of little interest to the Liberal government.

* * *

TERRORISM

Mr. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the transnational terrorist networks of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah share a common identity and purpose. Each seeks, by its own acknowledgment and assertion, the destruction of Israel and the killing of Jews everywhere. Each partakes of a culture of incitement, the teaching of contempt and the demonizing of the Jew, that is the most proximate cause of terror in the Middle East and beyond. Each issues religious fatwahas proclaiming Jews and Judaism the perfidious enemy of Islam, distorting Islam in its demeaning of Jews. Each seeks the destruction of peace while repressing Palestinians who seek peace or report on repression, as in the recent Hamas assault on Palestinian journalists. Each, as CSIS has reported, operates in Canada.

Astonishingly enough, none has yet to be named to Canada's list of terrorist entities, while the political wing of Hezbollah terror is sanitized. It is past time for Canada to do the right thing, to name terrorist networks as terrorist entities, as mandated by our undertakings under UN Security Council resolutions and domestic law.

* * *

QUEEN'S JUBILEE MEDALS

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it was my privilege and pleasure to participate recently in a moving ceremony which awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal to members of the community of Kelowna.

The recipients are: Albert Baldeo, Cathy Comben, Herb Comben, Mark Chambers, Kristy Coueffin, Alan Dolman, Shelly Gilbeau, Ben Lee, Lil Moller, Bill Pollard, the late Dudley Pritchard, Alex Recsky, Marion Sallenbach, Lois Serwa, Tim Schroeder, Paul Stapley, Judy Stephens, Dick Stewart, Ursula Surtees and Bren Witt.

I wish to thank them for their exemplary commitment to the well-being of the people of Kelowna.

● (1415)

EDUCATION

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Hamilton Training Advisory Board hosted Tech 2002: Women at Work. The forum on skilled trades and technologies is designed to encourage young women to enter non-traditional trades. This initiative brings together established women in the field with high school students considering entering a skilled trade.

The Hamilton Training Advisory Board was formed in 1996 and works to build partnerships within the City of Hamilton to promote and meet the city's skills and training needs. The advisory board is partially funded by Human Resources Development Canada and is just one more example of how the government is working to develop the skills of our future workforce.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD[*English*]**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government has been in office nine years yet it had to delay the recall of Parliament until October to come up with an agenda.

Now we have been here for over five weeks and the House has virtually no new legislation.

Let us take national defence. The U.S. mid-terms are over and the possibility of military intervention in Iraq grows, yet the government's ultimate position is unknown. Two reports have told us that the military is declining rapidly. For nine years the government has delayed decisions on equipment purchases, including helicopters.

When will the Prime Minister and the government put forward a concrete plan on national defence to revitalize our military?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we conducted a defence update over the course of the summer during which I met literally dozens of outside experts, and we have heard reports from parliamentary committees and from many others. I will be making a submission to the government and, as is normal in our country, I think the results in terms of budget will come out at the time of the budget.

* * *

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Of course, Mr. Speaker, the government also delayed the budget for several months.

Oral Questions

Nine years ago, the government first committed to a treaty on climate change, at Rio. Five years ago, the government put forward the Kyoto commitments. We have been in session for six weeks, yet Canadians, the provinces and businesses do not know what action the government is going to take to meet these commitments.

When will the government put forward a full implementation plan, a plan on the targets, the costs and the policies necessary to put the Kyoto accord into effect?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we intend to do has been laid out a number of times. I will repeat it for the benefit of the hon. member.

We had a meeting on October 28 with the provinces. The meeting discussed a draft plan that we had put forward the previous week. We received comments from the provinces and territories. We are incorporating those comments into the draft plan that we put forward. On November 21 we will have another meeting with the provinces and territories on the plan, with their suggested improvements.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there is not a single person who is not sitting over there who thinks the government has a plan.

The government has known about the clear need for certain criminal justice reform and yet again it has done absolutely nothing. The government has allowed the artistic merit escape clause for child porn to stand for months, and by its silence it appears to endorse voting rights for hardened criminals. The government has delayed dealing with age of consent legislation, giving a bizarre explanation of social and cultural considerations.

When is the government going to act on these criminal justice matters?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that the Solicitor General and I have been involved in a federal-provincial-territorial meeting. The spirit around the table was great and very positive. It was three days of discussion that were positive not only for me in terms of being justice minister but very positive for our Canadian society.

We talked about the question of child pornography. I was able to give them broadly the structure of the reforms that we would like to start before Christmas.

* * *

COAST GUARD

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Coast Guard in Newfoundland has been told to keep its ships tied up because the government cannot afford the fuel. To add insult to potential injury, the fisheries minister has asked the Coast Guard not to move them unless it has to.

The Coast Guard is not a cruise line. It is a search and rescue operation. Why are the Liberals not providing it with the necessary resources to do the job?

• (1420)

Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House that the Coast Guard has the resources needed to do its job. It is available for all search and rescue operations.

Fuel prices have increased. To save money, to make sure we use the resources the best available way, we have asked them to curtail or slow down all unnecessary movements. I think it is a logical way of using the Canadian taxpayers' resources responsibly.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, its responsibility suggests that it put the Coast Guard on the ocean, doing the job that is expected of it.

The Coast Guard in Newfoundland and Labrador responds to about 600 calls a year, half of them from fishermen. Along with protecting lives, the Coast Guard is our main line of defence against foreign overfishing.

Who does the minister think will patrol 20,000 kilometres of coastline in Labrador and Newfoundland if it is not the Coast Guard?

Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I would like to point out that he should have said that those rescues were 97% successful, one of the most effective Coast Guard operations in the world. As for fisheries patrols, the Coast Guard does carry out fisheries patrols. We use military aircraft and our own aircraft, satellite technology and all the modern technologies that are affordable and available to us and they do an outstanding job.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, evidence is piling up in the case of the former Secretary of State for Amateur Sport. Following a meeting between an official and the secretary of state's chief of staff, an e-mail dated March 17, 2000 confirmed that the secretary of state wanted to hire Everest to organize his tour.

On April 10, 2000, we learned that a meeting was held with the secretary of state's chief of staff, his director of communications, departmental officials and Everest to organize the tour.

Do these events not confirm that the decision to hire Everest for the secretary of state's tour was made seven weeks before the contract was signed?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker,

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how could the former secretary of state say he did not influence the hiring of Everest, Claude Boulay's firm, to organize his tour, when it has now been proven that his executive assistant and director of communications took part in an organizational meeting for the minister's tour seven weeks before the contract was signed?

Oral Questions

Is this not proof that everything had already been decided?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, such arrogance is unbelievable.

The minutes of the April 10, 2000 working session confirm that the purpose of the meeting was to establish initial contact between the key players and to set out the role of each in preparing the communications plan for the regional conferences.

How can the Minister of Public Works and Government Services claim everything was done according to procedure when, as early as April 10, 2000, Everest was identified as one of the key players, even though it had not yet signed any contract?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government would undertake no liability and make no commitment whatsoever until the requisition was properly acted on, and that occurred on May 30.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the Minister of Public Works and Government Services deny that, from the moment Everest was identified as one of the key players at the April 10, 2000 meeting, that is seven weeks before it officially obtained the contract, Everest had already started work? It was a done deal; the die had already been cast.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just answered that question. The fact is that if individuals anticipating doing business with the Government of Canada undertake some activity prior to the existence of a contract, they do so entirely within their own responsibility and at their own risk.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of Justice responded to the report of the standing committee on justice with respect to the need for corporate criminal liability legislation. I want to begin by saying how disappointed we are in the quality of the government's response and in the lack of any specific timetable for when exactly it will bring in this legislation. It seems designed more to assure directors than to assure workers, who are dying at the rate of 900 a year in this country.

I want to ask the Minister of Justice if he could tell us why the report is designed in this way and why there is no specific commitment to bring in legislation early in 2003.

• (1425)

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the committee for its wonderful work and report.

The justice department has given the committee its full cooperation. We have prepared a discussion paper and today we have tabled our answer. We are proposing to proceed with amendments to the Criminal Code. We must have a look at the question of corporate liability based on the Criminal Code, as well as the common law definition. We know that maybe we will have to broaden the doctrine of the directing mind. This will be done pretty shortly.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the committee called for legislation having to do with the liability of directors and officers. This is precisely what the government has not recommended. Not only that, the government, it seems to me, has taken a very cavalier attitude toward deaths in the workplace. It reads "...injury and loss of life at work occurred generally in the corporate workplace". There is not even a sentence following this sense of regret that this is the case or a commitment to do anything about it.

In the spirit of democracy, which seems to be breaking out over there, why not respect the recommendations of the committee and bring in something having to do with directors and officers?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that question is not as simple as the member thinks it is. The question of corporate liability is indeed a very complex question. We are facing the Criminal Code as well as the criminal definition and the directing mind doctrine.

We have checked as well what takes place in other countries and other jurisdictions. There is no perfect model. We would like to draft an amendment to the Criminal Code to ensure the best protection possible to employees.

* * *

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, on May 26, 2000, a Heritage Canada official, Roger Farley, sent an e-mail asking that a clause be added to the Groupe Everest contract. He did not send that e-mail to the Department of Public Works, which formally approved the contract five days later. He sent it to Patrick Doyon, director of communications for the then Secretary of State for Amateur Sport.

The government claims the then secretary of state had nothing to do with this contract. Why then was his director of communications involved in contract negotiations?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we are preparing a communications plan, it usually requires that we communicate with each other.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): She was better off saying nothing, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Public Works said "The choice of Groupe Everest was made by officials at Public Works". On March 17, 74 days before the contract was signed, an e-mail from Canadian Heritage identified Groupe Everest as the then sports minister's choice. On April 10, 50 days before the contract was awarded, Amateur Sport was meeting with Groupe Everest on the contract.

Will the Minister of Public Works, and I would ask him to listen with care to my question, tell us the precise date on which Canadian Heritage and Amateur Sport were told they could begin negotiations with Groupe Everest?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the records in the file indicate that a requisition was provided by the Department of Canadian Heritage dated the 29th of May and the contract was dated the 30th of May.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, nine years ago a Liberal defence minister said that the Sea Kings could last until 2000 if they had to. Eight years ago a Liberal white paper said there was an urgent need to replace the Sea Kings. Five years ago another Liberal defence minister said we will follow through on our plans to replace the Sea Kings. Three years ago the last defence minister said it was the number one priority. A week ago the minister said that it would be his highest priority.

When will the government actually replace the Sea Kings?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating the hon. member for the two years of great service he provided as vice-chairman of the defence committee. I would also like to commiserate with him on the fact that he lost that position earlier today.

As for the Sea Kings, I have said it is a high priority for me. I hope we will get the right helicopter at a low price as soon as possible.

• (1430)

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the defence minister criticized military personnel for making sarcastic jokes about the Sea King helicopters. He said the humour was in poor taste. Let me tell the House what is really in poor taste. It is the way the minister criticizes the gallows humour used by those condemned to fly in our Sea Kings instead of providing them with new helicopters.

When will the minister tell Canadians specific dates for the replacement of the Sea King helicopters, or will he admit that his government has no intention of replacing them?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the safety of our brave men and women in the Canadian Forces who fly those helicopters and their families are of paramount concern. I stated that I thought it was in poor taste to have pictures denigrating those helicopters, given that our men and women are flying them.

I also have said repeatedly that it is a high priority for me. There has been some slippage and I am working very hard to get that helicopter as soon as possible.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minutes from the April 10, 2000 meeting show that Everest had started its work organizing the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport's tour seven weeks before the contract was signed with the government. This is quite a financial risk for a company.

Who had enough clout to give Everest a solid enough guarantee that it would take on the risk of carrying out a large part of this contract, without yet having been awarded it officially? This had to come from the top.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no one gives guarantees to the private sector. If work was undertaken in advance of a formal contract being authorized, then that work was entirely at the risk of the private sector company.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, is it not obvious that the only person who had enough clout to reassure his friend, Claude Boulay, and tell him, "Go ahead Claude, you'll get the contract for my tour, I'll look after it for you", was the secretary of state himself?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government's systematic neglect of our military is threatening the safety and security of Canadians. Some countries have even questioned our lax borders. Now we learn that the navy will be receiving cuts and it will be forced to ground its ships for five month periods of time. Drug smugglers, terrorists and other individuals will take advantage of this.

My question for the Minister of National Defence is: Why is the government forcing our navy to ground our ships, leaving our borders defenceless?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our borders are far from defenceless. As I have said in the House before, there are stresses in the defence budget. We are not allowed to run a deficit. Therefore some low priority items in the navy's budget are being postponed as a result of the need to live within our budget. This is responsible behaviour from the point of view of the taxpayer.

I might add that this new planning group with the United States, where we will work more closely with the United States to defend our coasts, will be a plus for Canada.

Oral Questions

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have a message for the defence minister. Defending our borders is not a low priority. This is not a small problem; it is acute.

I am asking and pleading with the defence minister as we all are. It is not only us. Our military personnel are also asking the minister because they are deeply worried that we cannot protect our shoreline.

My question is simply this: In this age of terrorism, will the minister stand up, be counted, and put the investment back in our navy so that it does not have to ground our ships and leave our borders undefended?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of water around our country. It is always a challenge for both Canada and the United States to defend it. We will be working more closely together in the future to do that.

But I can tell the hon. member that in terms of our top priorities, there has been absolutely no change. These priorities are: force generation for the campaign against terrorism, maritime surveillance, force protection and Victoria Class submarine preparations. There has been absolutely no reduction in any of those vital programs.

* * *

• (1435)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the Minister of Public Works and Government Services says, no company would spend seven weeks doing most of the work of a \$500,000 contract without having the government's authorization, unless it had obtained a very strong guarantee that it would be awarded the contract.

I am simply saying to the secretary of state that since he used his influence to help out his friend Claude Boulay, does he not think he should step down immediately?

[English]

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe a question was asked again about a minister in his previous portfolio. This was raised in the House of Commons yesterday and the Chair will recognize it is out of order to put a question in that form.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when referring to the ethics counsellor and in tabling his code of conduct 15 days ago, the Prime Minister said, "When it comes to matters of ethics, it is up to the Prime Minister to decide, not the ethics counsellor".

Given this statement, and given the overwhelming evidence that we now have regarding the secretary of state in the awarding of the Everest contract, should the Prime Minister not immediately fire his secretary of state, who is involved in this affair up to his neck?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was informed that an opposition member wrote to the

ethics counsellor on this issue. It is up to Mr. Wilson to look into the matter. We will wait for the findings.

* * *

[English]

TERRORISM

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in refusing to ban all Hezbollah activities in Canada, the government has been offering the lame excuse that the left hand of Hezbollah does the killing but the right hand is a social group.

Today I have obtained the official written policy document of Hezbollah. I quote its leader. He states, "We obey the orders of one leader. Our military apparatus is not separate from our overall social fabric". Hezbollah's own leader says there is no difference between the military arm and the social arm.

Will the minister now agree with him and ban all Hezbollah activities in Canada?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the anti-terrorism measures that we have put in place are effective. As the member knows, there is a list. We have listed seven entities.

CSIS in fact does not need to have people on a list in order to be able to do its job. It is in fact doing its job.

As we have indicated before, we will be adding new entities to the list as evidence becomes clear.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this is the first hint that something may happen. The government may be adding entities, but the first responsibility of any government to its country is the safety and security of its citizens.

The soft stance that we have been taking on Hezbollah could put innocent lives at risk in Israel, but Hezbollah's own document suggests that countries like ours may be targeted. I quote its own leader, its own document, "America and its Atlantic pact allies are Hezbollah's enemies".

We are in NATO. We are an ally of the United States. We are enemies of Hezbollah. Will the Solicitor General move quickly to ban all activities of Hezbollah in Canada?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. We take our responsibility very seriously. In fact yesterday the Minister of Justice and I were at meetings with federal, provincial and territorial ministers and we talked about this very issue.

There is a process toward listing entities. We are following that process to the letter and if other entities need to be—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Order, order. It is almost impossible for the Chair to hear the Solicitor General, even when he is sitting very close. It must be dreadful for the members at the other end of the House. We have to be able to hear the questions and answers and I know that some of the members who are making the noise asked the question. They must be interested in the answer. So we will have some order, please.

The hon. Solicitor General I believe has finished that answer, so we will move to the hon. member for Saint-Lambert and a little order, please.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Yolande Thibeault (Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence has mentioned his ongoing review of the supply chain project and his intention to make an announcement this month.

Given the interest in this issue of the House and various stakeholders, could the Minister of National Defence tell us whether a decision on the future of this important project has been made?

• (1440)

[*Translation*]

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her excellent question.

[*English*]

I have advised my department that we will not be proceeding with the supply chain project. Instead we will be moving forward with a strategic approach to managing materiel within the Department of National Defence.

This decision will improve the management and lower the costs of our supply chain. It is also consistent with my commitment to achieve administrative efficiencies with the department as I outlined in my Toronto Board of Trade speech.

* * *

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, U.S. Attorney General Ashcroft confirmed today that place of birth remains one of the criteria for U.S. screening at the border. This means that Canadian citizens born in foreign countries are still facing arbitrary arrest, detainment and interrogation.

In light of these developments, could the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us why he pulled the travel advisory warning Canadians about the potential trouble they face if they cross the border?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first thing I would challenge in the premise of the hon. member's question is to suggest that these are arbitrary measures.

The arbitrary measure was to take somebody on the basis of where the person was born. We raised this with the United States and they responded to us as good neighbours do and said they would look at it. They have come back with a positive response. Mr. Ashcroft said this morning that will no longer be their policy.

We cannot say to our American allies that they cannot take objective standards and objective measures to ensure their security.

We are assured by them that is what they are doing. We will monitor the situation and we will work with them always to ensure the security of our borders together.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on September 25 the Prime Minister and the Premier of Ontario launched a 60-day process to determine the best use of \$300 million to alleviate the border problems in Windsor. We looked forward to an open and accessible process that would have the best interests of the community in mind. That is not happening. The joint management committee will not hold a single public meeting. The integrity of the process is also in question.

Can the acting Prime Minister tell us if the Minister for International Cooperation has used her office to influence or interfere with the integrity of the process and will there be a public meeting before decisions are made?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member of course is wrong. The people of Windsor do not want more process. They want action. That is the reason the Prime Minister and the premier said within 60 days they will have action. No more public meetings. No more wasting time. They will be focusing on solutions.

The hon. member ought to know as someone from that community that Windsor and the region support the member for that constituency because she knows what is needed now is action and not more talk. That is what we will be doing.

* * *

[*Translation*]

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is now clear that the government intends to introduce a bill on the implementation of the Kyoto protocol next spring. However, the Prime Minister is still insisting that the House must adopt a meaningless motion before the end of the year.

What is the point of such a motion if the government is already expecting to introduce a bill? Why not just go ahead and introduce it?

[*English*]

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his election as vice-chair of the environment committee. It may be his only election win in recent months and it is important for him.

I would point out to him that the vote in the House will be the vote on ratification. A similar motion will be presented in the Senate. It will come before the House before the end of the year. As I was explaining to the Leader of the Opposition, it will come sometime following the meeting on November 21 with the provinces and territories.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, for months the government has insisted it has a plan to implement Kyoto, but it keeps hiding the details. The Prime Minister will not even meet with the premiers to discuss the plan.

Oral Questions

Earlier this week the leader of the government in the other place revealed that the enabling legislation to implement Kyoto will only come to Parliament probably in the spring.

If the government already has a plan, why not bring the legislation to the House immediately so that we can have a real debate on Kyoto prior to ratification?

• (1445)

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me repeat again that we had a meeting with the provinces on October 28. They made some proposals to the draft plan that we put forward. These proposals are being considered. We are incorporating them into another document, the final plan, which will be presented sometime before November 21 so the provinces and territories can look at it before the meeting on November 21.

On the basis of that plan and of course a resolution of the House, the House will have a debate and will be called upon to vote on the issue so the Prime Minister has the guidance of all 300 other members of the House on whether or not he should ratify the Kyoto accord.

* * *

BORDER SECURITY

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this morning U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft made it clear that strong borders make good neighbours.

Clearly the Americans do not trust the government's commitment to security, which is why they are strengthening their border measures to the detriment of all Canadians.

Has the government been advised as to what specific concerns the Americans have about our lack of security?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the facts are that the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States were working very closely for a long time on border security. The Manley-Ridge exercise has been extremely successful. We have greater security and greater efficiency, and that is in the interests of both Canada and the United States.

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, individuals who claim refugee status at a port of entry into Canada are given a preliminary interview and invariably released into Canadian society. About 25% of these claimants fail to show up for any subsequent immigration proceedings. That is almost 10,000 people. The government has no idea who they are and where they are.

Is this one of the reasons that the Americans are strengthening their border controls?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely inappropriate to ask this kind of question, considering that Canada and the United States have signed a safe third country agreement and that this agreement will soon be ratified. On the contrary, there is very good cooperation between our two countries.

AGROPUR PLANT IN CHAMBORD

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, everyone in the region of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean is outraged about Agropur buying the plant in Chambord only to close it down and have the milk produced locally shipped to its plant in Granby.

Will the minister responsible for the Canada Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec make a commitment to the people of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean that the federal government will do everything in its power to support any initiative to get this business going again?

Hon. Claude Drouin (Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two meetings have taken place already, and Canada Economic Development will, as usual, follow this issue closely and do everything in its power, within its program, to support the region.

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, given that it is important that he react quickly if and when a recovery project is submitted to him, could the minister responsible undertake to proceed swiftly and to provide financial assistance in order to preserve the concept of local processing, which is being jeopardized by the plant closure in Chambord?

Hon. Claude Drouin (Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if promoters put a new project on the table, we will look at it, as I just told the House, within our program, with a view to supporting them.

* * *

[*English*]

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, new U.S. border security measures are going to affect Canadians negatively, thanks in part to the government's failure to cooperate with the Americans in creating a continental security perimeter to keep terrorists out.

Given that there are over 50 terrorist groups operating in Canada and that the government has lost track of 24,000 people in this country with extradition orders, why is the government surprised to hear about these tougher measures? When will the government get serious about continental security by tracking down the 24,000 people in Canada who have extradition orders and whom it has lost track of and remove them from the country?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who is the opposition critic is much more familiar with this issue than this member.

Oral Questions

I think hon. members know that not only was the legislation amended but we have new regulations and a new agreement with the Americans, who are saying that we are doing a wonderful job. Today, Mr. Ashcroft was not critical of Canadians. On the contrary, he was very positive. So, let us be careful when asking questions.

• (1450)

[English]

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let us be careful when we allow people who have extradition orders to remain in this country. Let us be careful in creating a continental security perimeter to ensure that American immigration policy does not continue negatively to affect Canadians.

I ask again, when will the government take measures to track down and remove the 24,000 people who are illegally in Canada and who pose a risk to both our security and that of our neighbours?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only are we efficient but we have invested another \$600 million since September 11. We put in place more immigration control officers. We have had removals. We do not believe that refugee claimants are potential terrorists. We believe in this country that we should fulfill our international duties. When those bad seeds are here, we kick them out. We are doing what we have to do.

* * *

[Translation]

MARRIAGE

Mr. Claude Duplain (Portneuf, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. In July and September of this year, the courts in two provinces, Quebec and Ontario, found that the opposite-sex definition of marriage is unconstitutional. Both gave the government two years to deal with this issue.

If Parliament fails to act, marriage will automatically be modified in these two provinces.

What is the government doing about this?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank my colleague for this excellent question. As hon. members are aware, over the summer I had the opportunity to express, on behalf of the government, our views on this matter and to indicate that, in the current context, this being an issue fundamental to Canadian society, all parliamentarians have a role to play as well. For that reason, I have this very day asked the Standing Committee on Justice to proceed with consultations, in order to allow the public to have a say on this important issue.

At the same time, I have tabled a discussion paper containing a number of options. We are open to others as well, not just to those set out in the document.

* * *

[English]

GRAIN TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the walkout of grain handlers at the port of

Vancouver has been going on for over two months. Now picket lines at Prince Rupert have completely shut down the movement of grain out of the west coast. Due to the drought, this is one of the worst years that farmers in western Canada have ever had. Now the government will not even ensure that their meagre grain crops can be shipped to customers.

Why will the government not help powerless farmers caught in the middle of this dispute?

Hon. Claudette Bradshaw (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am quite concerned about the dispute and the farmers. On this side of the House, I had a meeting with several ministers today on that account.

Our conciliators are meeting with both sides. We urge both sides to go to the table so they can create a good collective agreement. That is what democracy is all about.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, is this situation not just hunky-dory? We have farmers who are locked up and grain workers who are locked out.

Farmers cannot afford to have the Prince Rupert port closed down. Producers view this lack of action as just one more example of the government's inattention and disregard for western Canadian farmers.

When will this member of the government step in and use final offer arbitration as a means of solving this dispute?

Hon. Claudette Bradshaw (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are two issues here. One is that I am very concerned about the grain moving. The chair of the Canada Industrial Relations Board is there now and is speaking with both sides. I hope to have a decision on Prince Rupert soon.

On the other issue of final offer selection, the labour department celebrated its 100th year last year. Do members want to know how many times it asked us for final offer selection? Once in 100 years.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the situation of Michel Jalbert, who has been jailed in the United States since October 11 for filling up his gas tank in that country, is getting more complicated. After Mr. Jalbert presented a letter from Maine authorities allowing Quebecers to fill up without going through U.S. customs, a letter that proved his innocence, the attorney for the State of Maine added a new charge.

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs not agree that the Canadian government must stop dragging its feet, since Michel Jalbert's trial is just a few days away, and make strong representations to the U.S. government, so that even in jail Mr. Jalbert can have access to all the services that will allow him to put an end to this nightmare?

Oral Questions

•(1455)

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have certainly raised this issue with U.S. authorities. We defend the rights of every Canadian citizen.

However, U.S. authorities have told us that Mr. Jalbert was asked twice not to cross the border into the United States. So, this is a special situation. Having said this, I can assure all members of the House that we will defend the interests of every Canadian citizen. We are doing so for Mr. Jalbert, even under these circumstances.

* * *

[English]

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the pending implementation of the Kyoto accord, could the parliamentary secretary tell the House whether a process at the World Trade Organization can be initiated to clarify whether implementing the accord would create or could create an even playing field for some countries?

Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member raises an important and interesting question. Before the WTO can take action, there has to be possible trade violations. Kyoto does not call for trade measures by signatory countries in trying to meet their greenhouse emission reduction targets. In implementing Kyoto, it is important to note that countries would have to do so in a manner that is fully consistent with their international trade obligations.

* * *

IRAN

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in Iran 400 people have recently been stoned or hung, 270 of those people were women.

With 60 million Iranians at risk, I ask the minister this. Are there specific resolutions before the United Nations on human rights violations in Iran and why has the government done so little to protect those human rights?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to inform the member as to the specific resolutions that will come up before the Human Rights Commission.

I want to assure her and members of the House that I have raised this issue. I raised it with the Iranian foreign minister when I met with him at the United Nations General Assembly. We have always taken these concerns to the Iranian authorities and we insist absolutely that Iran's place in the world depends on its willingness to conform to international human rights standards. We will work with the government and the people of Iran to give them the chance to do that.

* * *

[Translation]

CHILD POVERTY

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the latest report from the Canadian Council on Social Development informs us that child poverty has increased.

Everyone knows that if children are poor, it is because their parents are poor.

Will the Minister of Human Resources Development finally acknowledge that by tightening the eligibility criteria for employment insurance, she is directly responsible for the rise in child poverty?

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister was asked this question last week, and I will repeat her answer.

In simple terms, the report published by the Canadian Council on Social Development also indicated that the levels of poverty, the degree to which low income families fall below the poverty line, these levels have decreased.

* * *

[English]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday a company was fined \$125,000 for contaminating the environment. Last year a mining company received a \$150,000 fine for an unsafe workplace where an explosion took the life of a worker. The government's income tax legislation allows companies to claim these types of fines as a tax deduction, an expense to do business and increase profit.

The New Democratic Party has called on the government to close the tax loopholes in the legislation. Where are the changes? Why are dead workers the cost of doing business and a tax deduction?

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, another member already asked that question. There are certain fines that are acceptable as tax deductions and others that are not. It is part of the Income Tax Act. It is very clear and I said that earlier. If the hon. member had been paying attention, she would have heard the first answer.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, nine years ago this week the government cancelled the contract to replace the outdated Sea King helicopters. The Sea Kings now require 30 hours of maintenance for every hour of flight time, and a number of pilots have lost their lives.

Will the Minister of National Defence today commit to the House that the military will have Sea King replacements before February 2004, before the Prime Minister retires?

Business of the House

●(1500)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating the hon. member for her recent election as vice-chair of the defence committee. I am aware of her genuine commitment to the men and women of the Canadian forces and I am sure she will do an excellent job.

As for the Sea Kings, as I have mentioned many times, it is for me a very high priority and I am trying to ensure that we get the right helicopter as quickly as possible.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are ramming through bilingualism enforcement measures. The Canadian Alliance is demanding expanded bilingual services in the nation's capital. However bilingualism is a divisive affirmative action program for francophones that discriminates against anglophones. Francophones hold 78% of all civil service jobs designated as bilingual. Last year francophones got 71% of all bilingual jobs and 68% of promotions.

Why is the minister refusing to end systemic discrimination against anglophones in civil service hiring and promotion?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the second amazing question from the same member. The last one was about visible minorities in the public service. This time it is about linguistic duality in the public service. The member should perhaps look at the values of Canadians and for what Canadians are ready to fight. Diversity and bilingualism in the public service are among them.

* * *

[Translation]

CUBA

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for Latin America, Africa and the Francophonie, who is just back from the first Canadian ministerial visit to Cuba since March 1999.

Following this mission, to what extent does Canada feel it has achieved its objectives?

Hon. Denis Paradis (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa) (Francophonie), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question is timely. I am indeed just back from Cuba.

One of the issues we raised was tourism. Each year, 400,000 Canadians travel to Cuba.

Another issue we raised with the Cubans was the size of Canada's investment in their country. Canada is the second largest investor in Cuba. We will also put in place agreements so that our SMBs, or small and medium sized businesses, can increase their presence over there.

We also raised the issue of human rights and democracy. In continuing our dialogue, we have agreed to have parliamentary exchanges.

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, other than the normal question as to what we are doing for the rest of the week and when we get back, yesterday the leader of the government in the Senate announced in the Senate that on or shortly after November 21 a motion would be introduced in the Senate and in the House of Commons to support the principles of the Kyoto protocol and specific legislation that would bring it into course and effect. She went on to say that some of the provisions would have to be done by way of a bill that would come in the year 2003.

Could the government House leader bring us up to date on the Kyoto package and also advise us if, because of the chaos over there, announcements of what we will be doing will be coming from the Senate? Will that continue in the future?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help it if the questions being asked of the government in the Senate are better than those being asked of the government by the opposition in the House of Commons. There is very little I can do about improving the quality of questions across the way.

Yes, it is true that we do not intend to have the debate in the House of Commons, out of respect for provincial governments, before November 21. I can confirm that the minister, my colleague, is very respectful of the provincial authorities.

He asked if there would be an implementation bill. If an implementation bill is required, those bills are always introduced after the ratification has taken place, never before, as witnessed by Bill S-2 presently before the House.

On the weekly business statement, today we will continue with Bill C-18, the citizenship legislation, followed by Bill C-17 respecting public safety, which I hope the House will carry shortly.

Tomorrow our first item of business shall be the report stage and third reading, if possible, of Bill C-14 respecting certification of diamonds, otherwise referred to as the Kimberley process. We will then return to bills not completed today.

Next week is a constituency week.

●(1505)

[Translation]

When we return, we will take up the same business where we left off, inserting report stage and third reading of Bill S-2, the tax conventions bill, at the appropriate time after it is reported from committee.

On Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, November 19 and 20, there will be a take note debate on modernization of procedure.

Tuesday, November 19, will be an allotted day.

Government Orders

[English]

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having just made the announcement, I move:

That a take-note debate on proposals for modernization and improvement to the procedures of the House of Commons shall take place for four hours from the ordinary time of daily adjournment on November 19 and resuming at the ordinary time of daily adjournment on November 20, provided that the provisions of Standing Order 53.1 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to this debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, An Act respecting Canadian citizenship, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to take part in the debate on Bill C-18, which deals with Canadian citizenship.

The Bloc Québécois has always been in favour of a new citizenship act, since the current one dates back to 1977. Twice, the current government attempted to amend this act, first in 1998 with Bill C-63. A year later, in 1999, we had Bill C-16, aimed at modernizing the Citizenship of Canada Act.

The bill before us today, Bill C-18, contains 12 elements that I would like to list by reading the summary. It says, and I quote:

(a) the continued acquisition of citizenship at birth for most persons born in Canada.

The word most means that it will not be the case for everybody.

(b) residence requirements—

I will only make a few comments as I only have 10 minutes, but we agree with this. In the past, the definition was inadequate. We will certainly debate this in committee, but in our view, it is still inadequate although greatly improved.

(c) a new judicial process to revoke the citizenship of a person—

This is a new process. It is a judicial process. It says further:

(d) new authority for the Minister and the Solicitor General of Canada to sign a certificate that commences the proceedings—in which security information may be used—

This is a sure sign we are in the post-September 11 2001 era. The whole aspect of security is being beefed up. On the face of it, we cannot oppose that, but we must be careful, as is the case with other statutes, when trying to deal with people who might be a threat to Canadian security, not to infringe on the rights of other people who have nothing to do with the security of Canada.

Further on it says:

(e) new authority for the Minister to annul the citizenship—

Indeed, in some cases, when we realize that people are a danger for Canadian and Quebec society, we agree. But again, we must be careful. Sometimes, when trying to do something good, we do something bad, no matter how careful we are.

It also stipulates:

(f) new authority for the Governor in Council to refuse to grant citizenship where a person has demonstrated a flagrant and serious disregard for the principles and values underlying a free and democratic society;—

We do not have a problem with that, except that the new authority is granted to the governor in council, meaning the cabinet. It might be an issue of concern to those who promote human rights. We will see how it goes when the bill is scrutinized, but some issues need to be raised.

The summary continues:

(g) new prohibitions and offences with more severe punishment in order to maintain the enactment's integrity;

Nobody can argue with that. It continues:

(h) restricting the transmission of citizenship to persons born abroad of Canadian parents to the first and second generations, with an automatic loss of citizenship at the age of 28 years to those in the second generation who have not resided in Canada;—

Of course, that seems reasonable. Why grant citizenship to someone who has not resided long enough in Canada? There may be a discretionary aspect to this process that needs to be addressed, though. It continues:

(i) lessening the distinctions made between adopted children and children born abroad of Canadian parents for the purpose of the acquisition of citizenship;

There are two categories of children: those who are born abroad and those who are adopted abroad. This is something we may want to discuss, but to which we are not strenuously opposed.

● (1510)

It also says:

(k) a new office of "Citizenship Commissioner", to replace the former "citizenship judge", with new functions related to conducting citizenship ceremonies, promoting citizenship and advising the Minister;—

We saw earlier that the government wants to take out some elements of the citizenship examination to bring it to an administrative level. Citizenship judges will now be called citizenship commissioners. There is a purpose for promoting people who used to be called judges to the position of commissioner. The government is thus freeing them from certain duties and is creating another type of duty to make it clear to immigrants who become new citizens what they have to do to become good Canadian citizens.

Government Orders

We, in the Bloc Québécois, as Quebeckers, are saying, “We accept this, but here is a word of caution”. However, we noted that some improvements have been made, based on our past demands. Concerning immigrants who become Canadian citizens, in Quebec at least, there are now some documents coming from Quebec, particularly a letter from the premier. It must be pointed out that a portion of immigrants is chosen by the Quebec government, pursuant to an agreement between the Quebec government and the federal government. The portion chosen by Quebec includes so-called regular immigrants. The other portion, which is chosen by the federal government, includes mostly refugees.

Now, there is a twelfth element I would like to elaborate on. Since two colleagues from the Bloc have talked about this previously, I do not want to repeat what they said. This has to do with modernizing the oath of citizenship. Clause 34 refers us to the schedule. As a matter of fact, this is the only element in the schedule, and I will quote it:

From this day forward, I pledge my loyalty and allegiance to Canada and Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, I promise to respect our country's rights and freedoms, to uphold our democratic values, to faithfully observe our laws and fulfil my duties and obligations as a Canadian citizen.

We should compare this with what was said in the past:

I affirm that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen.

Obviously, nobody can be against the observance of the laws and the fulfillment of the duties of the ordinary citizen. What is new here is the word Canada, which has been added. Up to now, the oath used to mention only the Queen. But some Canadian citizens have been wondering about that. Even the Minister of Finance has asked if we should put that back in, but we can see the word successors has been left out. Maybe the finance minister will heave a sigh of relief.

The word I am concerned with right now is Canada. Why? I wonder why the word “Canada” is being used. Ever since the 1995 referendum, the government has had a policy of putting the word Canada everywhere it can. The names of a number of departments have been changed. For example, we now have the Canada Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec. The word Canada has been inserted. We also have VIA Rail Canada and Canada Post.

• (1515)

Many names have been changed in the same way. The Canadian government has advertised about health for example, using the word Canada systematically.

This is all fine and good, but there is a renewed emphasis by the constant repetition of that word. It should also be pointed out that a newcomer who wants to become a Canadian citizen is not treated the same way as other Canadians. People who were born in Canada, in Quebec or elsewhere in Canada, do not have to take the oath of allegiance to Canada.

Time flies, and I hope I get the opportunity to answer questions so I can complete my remarks.

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite never ceases to amaze me. At one point, I even

wondered if we were talking about immigration and citizenship or rather the political dimension of Quebec separating from the rest of Canada.

As far as we are concerned, we have before the House a bill dealing with citizenship I hope to have the opportunity to speak to it very soon, but first I want to go over some of the mistakes the member made, and one in particular that is noteworthy.

First, pursuant to the agreement between Quebec and the Government of Canada, the federal government has jurisdiction not only over refugees, as the member just pointed out, but also over all immigration matters, except for independent immigration. That includes family reunification and not only refugees.

Second, every immigrant has the right to apply for Canadian citizenship, whether he or she lives in Quebec or elsewhere in Canada. That is a good thing. It shows that we do not have two classes of citizenship in Canada, just one, and so much the better.

Why use the word “Canada”? Because the last time I checked, we were still just one country; coast to coast to coast, we are one country and proud of it. That is the reason why we want this bill to talk about Canadian citizenship and nothing else.

• (1520)

Mr. Antoine Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I admit I have trouble finding any question in the parliamentary secretary's words. I heard several comments instead.

She has made a distinction I accept in connection with independent immigration, but there is still an emphasis being given. That must not be the only thing in the bill. What I was stressing is continuity.

As for the other aspects, she has said I was restricting myself to political aspects. She did not listen to the beginning of my speech when I read the summary of the bill before us and focused on certain words. She has probably not had the opportunity to read the bill, which is not my problem, but I would invite her to read the summary.

As for the rest, it is a matter of how you look at it. She says “Yes, we will treat Quebeckers the same as other Canadians”, but that is precisely one of the problems we face as Quebeckers. We want to be a distinct society. If in fact there were elements of a distinct society and if that concept really meant something, then perhaps many Quebeckers would say OK, but that is not the problem.

Instead of being an annoyance, this has strengthened my conviction that this bill is not very respectful of Quebec society.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the questions and comments period on this bill to point something out to my colleague.

Even if this bill should in principle be endorsed by everyone in this House, it does have some anomalies. We realize however that some ministers—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker, could you call to order the member for Portneuf who keeps interrupting me merely to mouth platitudes?

Government Orders

There are anomalies and let me point out just one of them. It has to do with the whole of issue of children adopted abroad. As we know, pursuant to the civil code, Quebec has jurisdiction over the whole adoption finalization process. In Quebec, our civil code provides that adoptions must be finalized by a Quebec court.

However, under the bill, children adopted abroad by a Canadian citizen will now be able to obtain their citizenship on request, thus bypassing the immigration process.

Does our hon. colleague not agree that the provisions concerning international adoptions run counter to what has been done in Quebec? What is even worse, they violate something very fundamental in Quebec, our civil code.

Mr. Antoine Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question. It shows that he is quite familiar with the issue. In fact, he was the Bloc critic on this issue for several years.

He referred to a very specific feature of Quebec. We have our own civil code. It is unfortunate that the hon. member for Laval West, who sits on the other side of the House, will not recognize this. She talks about Canada being one country, coast to coast. She does not recognize Quebec's uniqueness, something the member for Rosemont—Petite-Patrie does quite well.

• (1525)

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to take part in the debate on Bill C-18, an act respecting Canadian citizenship.

As everyone knows, a bill similar to Bill C-18 was originally introduced in the previous Parliament. Because Parliament prorogued, we had to reintroduce this legislation, which is now Bill C-18. It is very similar to the former bill on citizenship, except for a few improvements.

Allow me to provide an example with the purpose of the legislation. This purpose was not mentioned in the former bill. It is in response to the comments made by members of the other place, who asked us to clarify the intention of the legislator and the values attached to citizenship, that we clarified the new Bill C-18. These clarifications will be the topic of my presentation today.

[*English*]

The first and most important purpose of the bill is to define who is a Canadian citizen and how citizenship may be acquired. This speaks directly to the fundamental purpose of the legislation, which is to set out: the requirements to obtain citizenship and when they can be applied with wise compassion; how people are citizens, either through birth in Canada or to a Canadian parent; how they can become citizens through adoption by a Canadian; and how citizenship may be lost, including under certain circumstances involving fraud or false representation.

The bill sets out revocation in which citizenship is lost because of fraud, annulment, second generation birth abroad and renunciation.

[*Translation*]

I will have the opportunity to talk about these issues in a few minutes. The second purpose of the bill is to encourage the acquisition of citizenship by all who qualify. In my own riding of

Laval West, there is a large number of former immigrants who are now Canadians. There are also a few people who have never considered applying for Canadian citizenship, who did not think of the benefits, and the responsibilities, that go along with it.

The new Bill C-18 includes provisions that would streamline and simplify the naturalization process. We know that some immigrants are afraid to apply for citizenship and do not know how to go about it. In this bill, we set out clear and objective requirements that are easier to understand and, more importantly, easier to apply, while also taking less time.

The result that we hope to achieve is to ensure that, as regards permanent residents in Canada, no one gets special treatment and all are equal before the law, including when they apply for naturalization as Canadian citizens. In other words, we want to ensure that all applications are treated consistently and fairly.

In fact, these provisions speak to the fundamental Canadian values of openness, openness to people from elsewhere, to languages and cultures from elsewhere, and acceptance—I am not saying tolerance, but acceptance—of diversity, however it may present itself in Canada.

We want to encourage persons, regardless of their race, ethnic background, religion or country of origin—that is the great Canadian tradition we want to uphold with this bill—to become Canadian citizens, full and active members of Canadian society, which, as I said earlier, entails responsibilities of course, but also has its advantages. It is a matter therefore of making the process as accessible and straightforward as possible to allow people to have access to citizenship as easily and quickly as possible when they want to apply.

The third purpose of the bill is to protect the integrity of Canadian citizenship. Such protections reflect the conviction that citizenship matters. Citizenship is a qualified right. Acquiring Canadian citizenship cannot and should not be taken lightly. As someone who has gone through the process of becoming a Canadian citizen, this citizenship is very important to me. That is why I wanted to rise today to speak on Canadian citizenship.

• (1530)

Some people, those across the way in particular, seem to think that the provisions of Canadian citizenship are relatively simple. They are not. Citizenship and Immigration Canada conducts security checks with CSIS and criminal checks with the RCMP. Every person who applies for citizenship is fully investigated.

Those who take the oath during the citizenship ceremony must also sign a form. I did so myself. I also had hundreds of new citizens do the same. New citizens sign a form stating specifically that they have not engaged in any criminal activities since the time they applied for citizenship. This, combined with the RCMP and CSIS investigations, ensures that, at the time they are granted citizenship, these persons are truly free of crime.

To become citizens, applicants must also demonstrate a commitment to Canadian values. Like any people, any nation, we have values that we hold dear. This makes perfect sense. We ask that people who come here with the intention of becoming Canadians show us that these values are dear to them as well.

For example, under the proposed bill, a person could not be granted citizenship for three years after being convicted of an indictable offence outside Canada, or an offence committed in another country that would be indictable under Canadian law.

This is an example which shows very clearly that there are rules that must be followed and that all those outside Canada who wish to become part of our society must accept those rules as we accept them as citizens.

[*English*]

The fourth objective of the bill is to reaffirm that all citizens have the same status. This should be a fundamental right of all Canadians. Whether they were born in Canada or became Canadians through a naturalization process, all citizens should have the same rights and privileges before the law.

As everyone knows, I was not born in Canada. I came to Canada from another country and became a Canadian citizen. I am very proud to say that I am standing in the House today and participating in the debate because I was elected by some of the people in my riding of Laval West. I am extremely proud of this. This is not possible in a lot of countries.

• (1535)

The only people who can run for office in some countries are those who were born in that country and whose parents are citizens. That was not the case for me, and I am certainly not the only example of this. There are many other examples of people here in the House who were not born here and were not citizens, not only members of Parliament but also ministers. We are very proud of the fact that all citizens are equal whether they are citizens born or citizens made. This is a tradition that we have in Canada and Bill C-18 builds on that tradition.

The fifth purpose of the act is to require a strong attachment to Canada to acquire citizenship.

We know of cases where people have used Canadian citizenship for their own purposes when they did not really want to live in Canada or did not really adhere to Canadian values. This is something that we cannot accept. In fact people must live here for a certain amount of time, show that this is the country of their choice and that this is where they want to live for quite some time.

Residence is defined as a physical presence in Canada. It does not mean that people cannot travel for business reasons or travel for pleasure. They can do all this but they must show that they intend to

Government Orders

reside in Canada before they can become citizens. Under the bill, claimants would need to know that they have to live in Canada for at least three of the six years prior to their application; this means an accumulation of three years within a total of six.

[*Translation*]

The sixth element of this bill is increasing awareness of the significance of Canada citizenship. I myself have seen just how emotional new citizens are about becoming Canadians. The ceremony is an important event. I would like to relate a personal experience.

On July 1 last year, on Canada Day, we organized a major event in the riding of Laval West. We invited recent and not so recent citizens. The ceremony was scheduled to start at 10 a.m. but most of the people who would be taking the oath that day were already there at 8 a.m., so anxious were they to be sworn in as new citizens.

They took pride in becoming new citizens. It was touching for all of us there, not just myself, but the long-established citizens, Quebeckers and Canadians, who were there with me. They told me “We see how happy these people are to become citizens and be able to live in this country”.

The bill also attempts to touch on this element. In the new oath, new citizens must clearly express their loyalty to Canada. We must not forget that Canada is our country. It is a country, again, that accepted me, and that has accepted thousands and millions of people, and we owe it our loyalty.

This bill contains a new mandate for those who used to be called citizenship judges, who will now be known as citizenship commissioners. These commissioners will continue to preside over citizenship ceremonies, but they will also champion and promote the active participation of citizens in their communities, as well as advise the minister on citizenship matters.

One role of the commissioners, and a fine one it is, will be to underline that all citizens should demonstrate mutual respect and understanding so that each citizen can contribute to the best of their ability to Canadian society.

• (1540)

The final purpose of the act is to promote respect for the principles and values underlying a free and democratic society. This too, is supported by the new wording of the oath, which explicitly requires citizens to respect our rights and freedoms and uphold our democratic values.

In addition, another measure would allow citizenship to be refused when an applicant has demonstrated a flagrant and serious disregard for the principles and values underlying a free a democratic society.

Government Orders

Canadians have worked hard to build a democratic society where the rights of women and children are respected. And we ask that those who want to live here and become citizens recognize that women have full rights in our society, and that children also have equal rights.

It is relatively easy to take for granted something so many of us acquire simply by being born here. But as anyone who has chosen to become Canadian will tell us, there is nothing more fundamental that ties us to each other and to Canada.

Our citizenship is about a lot more than just the right to hold a Canadian passport. Whether we realize it or not, it is fundamental to our sense of belonging and to our sense of purpose—to living up to our responsibilities to respect the laws and traditions that allow us to live and work alongside one another peacefully, in a climate of mutual respect and trust.

Diversity and mutual responsibility are hallmarks of what it means to be Canadian. Our citizenship, the way in which it is acquired and the circumstances under which it can be lost, must reinforce these core values.

This bill both respects and revitalizes the covenant that binds us to each other and to our country, regardless of whether we chose to become Canadian or were born to it.

I urge the members of the House to keep these intentions in mind as they review the contents of this proposed legislation, particularly in the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the questions and comments period following the speech made by the hon. member for Laval West, who sits on the other side of the House.

I agree with her when she says that this bill reflects Canadian values. I am willing to acknowledge that. The problem is that it does not take into account the unique nature and distinct character of Quebec. I have used the example of children adopted abroad before, and will do so again.

Under this bill, children adopted abroad by Canadian citizens will now be able to get their citizenship on request and therefore bypass the immigration process. There is a problem with this since, pursuant to Quebec's civil code which is recognized in Canada, adoptions must be finalized by a Quebec court.

So, in Canada, children adopted abroad who settle in Quebec might have to meet different eligibility criteria than if they settled elsewhere in Canada.

Therefore, my question is the following: would it not be wiser to agree to what various Quebec ministers have been asking for since 1998, which is to set up some kind of tripartite partnership? We could work together to speed up the process, to consider how we can ensure that children adopted abroad who want to settle in Quebec will not be penalized and, lastly, to ensure that the federal government will take into account the unique nature of Quebec, including one of its very distinct characteristics, its own civil code?

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, I find the logic of the member across the way somewhat twisted, if I may say so, since it happens that I was chair of the Conseil des communautés culturelles

et de l'immigration of the Quebec government at the time when the issue of foreign adoption was a hot topic.

At that time, the Quebec government intended to—I do not want to elaborate too much on this, but it answers the question put by the member across the way—streamline the adoption process to allow children to be reunited with their adoptive parents in the fastest and simplest manner possible.

What I see here is that through Bill C-18, this is exactly what the Government of Canada wants to do, namely to meet this need for children who are adopted abroad by Canadian parents. It is quite reasonable to think that a child's parents want the child to become a Canadian as quickly as possible, fit into the social fabric, go to school and feel equal to other children at school.

I found the word used by the member across the way passing strange when he mentioned that such children would “avoid” the immigration process. Nobody wants to avoid anything. The purpose of this bill is to streamline the process so that it meets the needs of families, especially those families in a difficult situation, and to ensure that the situation is sorted out as fast and as simply as possible.

● (1545)

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in this very instructive debate today.

The parliamentary secretary forgot to refer to November 6, 1998. At the time, ministers Rochon and Boisclair sent a letter to the then Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, in which they mentioned the problems generated at the time by Bill C-63 on the reform of the Citizenship Act.

The Quebec ministers stated that this bill raised various problems in Quebec, particularly with respect to the connection with and the specifics of our civil code, to the health care issue and to the additional costs that might be incurred as a result. The ministers referred, among other things, to the issue of adoption.

As for us, we are not at all opposed to the adoption process. We are simply saying that there is a problem with our civil code regarding immigration and international adoption of children. This is what we are saying to the parliamentary secretary. We want this bill to take this specificity into consideration.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite referred to the letter, I found it interesting that she told us about the health care issue. However, she finished her speech before quoting the Quebec minister on the issue of international adoption. I wonder why she did not quote the minister on this issue.

Government Orders

I know there were talks between the federal immigration minister and the Quebec minister responsible for immigration. There is an agreement between the Quebec government and the Canadian government. I would simply suggest this—I am not a minister, I do not know what the two ministers agreed on—, if indeed there is a problem—and I am not saying there is one. If there is a problem with reconciling the legislation and the civil code, I cannot see why the Quebec minister does not send a letter to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to try to see how to reconcile these two documents.

We have had this kind of problem many times. Each time the federal government wants to come forward to help Canadian families, whether on international adoption or parental leave, and it tries to provide greater benefits to Canadians, some members opposite say, “This does not help the spirit of separation”. Perhaps not, but it certainly helps Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, of all the vexing problems that we as members of Parliament have to deal with in our ridings, one of the toughest is our ability to advocate for our constituents in terms of immigration issues.

I have a couple of questions for the hon. member. First, why is there no hotline for members of Parliament that would enable us to work with the department to solve some of the immigration problems we have?

At the end of June of this year the department changed the rules without informing anybody, especially the people applying for landed immigrant status. Applications that were received a couple of days after the end of June changeover were immediately returned without including the money. It was completely unfair that people were asked to endure and to go through the same process again.

Is the member willing to put in a window of opportunity, like a grandfather clause, so that those people who applied before the end of June of this year would have their applications dealt with as per the rules and regulations that existed in the first half of this year?

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, I recognize that the member is as involved with immigration as I am but he is addressing the wrong person. I am Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development, not Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

On the question of hotlines for MPs, a few of us have a lot of people in our constituency who ask for our advice or help with immigration problems, whether it is with regard to visas or whatever. I have a full time person in my constituency office who does nothing but immigration cases. I know other MPs have this arrangement as well. All I can say to the member is that I will make that suggestion to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and we will see what happens.

With regard to his second question, I would remind the member that there is a government website that contains a lot of information to which most Canadians can have access if they have a computer, which a lot of them do today.

● (1550)

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will continue on the line of questions that I asked the hon. parliamentary secretary.

It is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-18, an act respecting Canadian citizenship. I will deal with some specific problems the immigration department has been facing and which it has not been dealing with for a long time; issues of fundamental rights and wrongs and issues of fundamental fairness.

Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Langley—Abbotsford.

The first problem has to do with the admission of qualified professionals into Canada. As members know, I am a physician. However getting medical professionals into Canada, whether they are physicians in particular or other medical professionals, has been exceedingly difficult even though their qualifications meet the needs of our country.

I will give some examples. A highly competent female physician, who was trained in the U.K., has been working in northern British Columbia for more than a year. She would like to move to another part of British Columbia but all kinds of obstacles have been put in place so she cannot do that. Her husband, a highly qualified paramedic in the U.K., cannot work in Canada. As a result, both of them are leaving to go back to England. We are losing two highly qualified medical personnel who want to work in an underserved area in Canada but cannot because the Department of Citizenship and Immigration has created all kinds of roadblocks for them.

A second example is that of a South African physician who worked in Saskatchewan for five years, and who paid taxes in British Columbia for five years. He applied for landed immigrant status. His application has gone back and forth. The department asked for more money and it said that small questions, which were irrelevant to his application, were not answered to its satisfaction. For example, the department wanted to know what he was doing between the ages of 14 and 21, and what his employment record was in his early 20s. Few people in their 40s or early 50s would know that.

Those are the obstacles that are being put in place for highly trained professionals. It is miraculous that the individual is still working as a physician in an underserved area of northern British Columbia because he certainly has options in other areas.

A third example is that of a highly trained specialist who was trained in the United States and who wants to work in northern British Columbia. He would be the only person practising his trade in an area that deals with individuals suffering the ravages of diabetes. All kinds of obstacles have been put in front of this highly qualified individual who wants to immigrate to Canada and work in our country, even though he is licensed and trained to practise in the United States.

What kind of immigration department would put blockades in front of highly trained people who have skills that Canadians desperately need in the medical field and, I believe, in other fields? The department has to deal with this problem and it has to deal with it fairly and rapidly for the sake of everyone.

Government Orders

In the case of the South African physician, even though he has been paying taxes for five years, his children cannot work here. Why can his children, who are in high school and would like to work, not work in Canada even though their father has been paying taxes?

We have umpteen cases of individuals applying for landed immigrant status who simply cannot work in Canada for lengthy periods of time while their application process is taking place.

Work is an important element for people who want to integrate and contribute to Canadian society but the Department of Citizenship and Immigration has such ossified rules that it does not allow people to do that in our country.

What the department does allow are individuals who have been convicted of indictable offences to stay in Canada. I am shocked at the number of people who have been charged and convicted of indictable and non-indictable offences and who have been allowed to stay in Canada even though they have proven not once but a number of times to be a danger to Canadian society.

• (1555)

The argument put forth by the department was that we cannot deport these people because they are refugees. Obviously we have sympathy for people who are applying for refugee status, but I have no sympathy for somebody who applies for refugee status in Canada and yet breaks the laws of this country in a manner that is severe. To commit an indictable offence means to commit a very serious offence, and some of them are violent offences. These violent offenders are allowed to stay in our country. Furthermore, they are allowed to receive medical care and are covered by our medical system, while those individuals who emigrate to Canada and are working here cannot get medical coverage for their children. I do not think that is fair.

I have a couple of specific cases from my riding.

One is the case of Dhamret Inderjit Kaur. She is a young woman, married to a Canadian, who has applied and reapplied for landed immigrant status. Every time we write a letter to the department asking where her application is, the processing time has been 10 to 12 months. In the meantime, there have been a number of deaths in her family in her country of origin. She would like to go back. Her husband is here in Canada, yet the department does not allow her to go back for bereavement cases, saying that she can go if she wants to but she might not be able to get back into the country.

What kind of person, knowing that she may not be allowed back into Canada, would leave her husband in Canada to go back to see family when there has been a death in the family? It is a Catch-22 for these people and I think it is fundamentally unfair given the circumstances they find themselves in. First, she is dealing with a death in her family in her country of origin. Second, she may not be able to see her husband again because she is allowed out of the country but not allowed back in.

There is also the case of Marcus Murphy. He applied for landed immigrant status in February. We sent a request on November 1 asking about this man's landed immigrant status and asking that he be allowed to work because of extreme financial hardship. The response? It will take another 10 to 12 months to process his application. That is not right.

There is the case of Edward Mukahanana. He applied on January 31. He is a qualified graduate in financial administration. There was no word on his application. We wrote to the minister on November 4 but got no answer. He cannot work. His wife is supporting him. They are in financial hardship. Why does it take from January 31 to November 4 to not even receive an answer on the status of this gentleman's application? He is not allowed to work and therefore cannot contribute to his family and our country.

Last, there is the case of Mariyka Ferrier. She applied on July 3. On August 14 her application was returned because one answer to a question was missing. What was that question? She had failed to explain what she had been doing between the ages of 14 and 21. How is that relevant to an application for this individual? The application was resubmitted on August 27. A new process was started October 1. She is a graduate linguist and cannot work or get medical benefits. We wrote to the minister on October 29 and so far there has been no answer.

This speaks to the frustrations of all members of Parliament with respect to the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. We all want to do our job. In fact, it would help the ministry if it enabled us to do our job by having a hot line we could call so that we could get answers rapidly for our constituents and deal with their immigration problems.

Second, it would also help to allow people and their children to work while they are waiting for landed immigrant status to be determined. It is good for them and it is good for Canada. They would be contributing to our country not only in terms of manpower but also in terms of taxes. Their contributions to our country would enable them to integrate and engage in our multicultural society, of which we are very proud.

In closing, I will say with respect to Bill C-18 that there are some good things and some bad things about it. What is good is that the revocation of citizenship is long overdue and this does get it into the hands of the Federal Court. I compliment the hon. member from the government who gave up his position as parliamentary secretary to make a stand on the issue. He is a courageous person who did the right thing for the right reasons and that should be known.

• (1600)

However, on the issue of adoption in the bill, why the government would allow people to adopt adults we can only surmise, but we are fundamentally opposed to that. Rather than allowing people to adopt adults, we should allow them to adopt children instead.

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak to Bill C-18 today. Based on personal experience, I have a lot of things to say about citizenship and immigration but I want to talk about two specific things today.

Government Orders

I want to talk about one particular aspect of the bill. The reasons why citizenship applications could be refused are in the bill, but the fact that citizenship applications would not be terminated if a person broke the law before the conditions were fulfilled really would be a mistake for this country. I want to talk about two cases I am working on right now. Since I have been a member of Parliament, I have been an intervener in something like seven or eight criminal cases and at the Immigration and Refugee Board. Those people have been deported.

I am currently working on two situations. Both of these situations involve individuals staying in Canada and eventually getting citizenship. The first case is that of an American wanted in the United States on drug charges. He has come to Canada and has applied for refugee status, which is unheard of in this country. The refugee board is giving him a hearing. I applied to become an intervener in this case in order to fight it. I had the most difficult time trying to get into this hearing, because I am Canadian, for one thing, and also because the individual said he did not want me at this application hearing. The decision was up to him, not me, which is incredible to say the least.

The individual is claiming that he has been persecuted in the United States because of its drug laws, so he is claiming refugee status in Canada. In his mind, it is not prosecution but persecution. Hon. members can imagine the outcome of this application if he wins it. Basically everybody in the United States who is wanted on drug charges could apply to Canada for refugee status, have a hearing and get it.

The consequences of this are very severe indeed. I cannot understand the government on the other side actually acquiescing to some form of protest from an individual from another country, in particular the United States, because he does not happen to like the laws. If this individual wins, not only do we have somebody here who is running from the United States because he does not like the drug laws, but he will in fact become a citizen of Canada. The hearing will take place, so that part of it is a done deal. Let us hope this is not a done deal behind closed doors, because if it is we will have one heck of a lot of Americans applying to come into this country.

As it happens, I found out just recently that this same individual, a non-citizen in our country, applied for a certificate for medical use of marijuana. There are all kinds of people in this country looking for certificates for medical marijuana. What happened? Because of the ingenuity of the other side, he got the certificate. Not only did he get a certificate to carry, grow and smoke marijuana, and as an American citizen no less, he is permitted to grow 59 plants and store up to 2.6 kilos, enough to keep 20 people going for a month.

•(1605)

I do not understand the government. I do not understand the logic. I do not understand the stupidity across the way. I do not understand why we cannot intervene in cases like this. I do not understand why Americans get to claim refugee status in this country. Americans do not understand why Americans can claim refugee status in this country.

But we are not going to get an answer here and we are not going to get an answer under Bill C-18. Basically it states that if one

applies for citizenship one will get it, with the exception that once in a while an application may be refused. The bottom line on all of this activity is that nobody quite understands what the heck is going on in this place, much less in the citizenship hearings, the immigration hearings and the refugee board hearings.

I know I am talking to myself here, because no one over there is listening—

An hon. member: I'm listening.

Mr. Randy White: That member is listening, is he?

Now let me talk about a fellow by the name of Phrasanonh. He did 14 months in the prisons in my riding for deliberately running down some young people with a car. One of these people eventually lost his life. Phrasanonh, after a long fight, was ordered deported. Not only was he ordered deported, he was ordered deported promptly. I asked the government to me know when he was to be deported, knowing full well that the chances of that were a joke. The government said it could not let me know when it was to deport him because that is privacy. We are not supposed to know that. That is a secret. I waited and I waited and, sure enough, he showed up again. He was never deported. Even though he was ordered deported, he was never deported. Where does he show up? In Abbotsford, in my community, once again on assault charges.

So what have we achieved with Mr. Phrasanonh? He does a little time, he is ordered deported and I am not allowed to know if he is deported. I have to stumble over it. I have to find out by accident that not only was he not deported, he is up for assault. So I guess he is going to stay because the government has no intestinal fortitude to do anything other than that, and he will get his citizenship eventually. Congratulations, I say, we really need him in our crowd.

There is something terribly wrong here, but I have been talking about this for 10 years. It has been 10 years and the government is listening as much today as it always did. The Liberals over there have a closed mind about the problems in our country. They are passing citizenship bills but they are not looking after the basics of our country. There are people here who should not be here. They should be moved out. They should not get citizenship. But the other side just does not give a damn. No matter how much we talk about it, it goes in one ear and out the other.

I have about one minute left to say what I think about those fellows over there.

An hon. member: There's not enough time.

Mr. Randy White: There is not enough time, because I have case after case after case of individuals who are criminals, serious offenders, and who are still in this country after being ordered deported. They are still wreaking havoc on our society. They will eventually become citizens and then can wreak more havoc on our society.

Government Orders

This stuff here today is not worth the paper it is printed on unless the government starts to make some productive changes in our society in terms of kicking out people who do not deserve to be here. I feel a little better after saying that, but not much better about the government doing squat about it.

• (1610)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will let my colleague from the Canadian Alliance pursue his rhetoric. According to his reasoning, what do we do? Do we let them in? What solution does he see to all these problems?

[English]

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, it is amazing that he says it is rhetoric. I have been involved in every one of these hearings I talked about. I am involved on a daily basis. It is anything but rhetoric; it is reality.

The way to resolve this, if the government wants to build legislation on a citizenship program and wants to allow individuals to be citizens under new rules, is to make darn sure that those who should not be citizens do not remain in our country. That is the whole point.

Individuals who are not worthy of being Canadian citizens are actually becoming Canadian citizens and nothing is being done about it. If the hon. member calls that rhetoric, then he is just as bad as the guys across the way.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the member elaborate to the House about the specific situation?

In my experience there always seems to be confusion between immigrant applicants and refugees. In the matter of someone who is in Canada who has sought a refugee claim, the member will acknowledge that there is a criminal records check. I am not sure what he was referring to that somehow they subsequently found out. Either there was a criminal records check or there was not.

If the member is talking about immigrant applications, the vast majority of these are made offshore. People do not arrive here until after all those checks are done.

In terms of the overall scheme could the member help the House understand the magnitude of this? Or is this an isolated case where there was an error made, either in another country in confirming the background checks? Or is he suggesting there is evidence, and maybe he could advise us if there is, of the magnitude of that problem?

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, I can only speak for my area and if my area is any indication the magnitude is rather severe.

I get these cases all the time. I cannot work with all of them. The ones I work with are not necessarily individuals who have been pre-screened and have no record. They commit crimes when they come to Canada. That is the difficulty we are having here.

If they have an application for citizenship and commit crimes during the process, then the application should be gone during the

process. Otherwise, individuals are coming into the country, they are committing crimes, and they are allowed to stay.

We go through a large number of deportation hearings. They are essentially a waste of time. Essentially, in all the cases I have gone through, which are numerous, hundreds of thousands dollars are spent on these cases, but yet nothing happens at the end of the day. These people end up staying in Canada and they end up citizens. That is wrong.

• (1615)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to participate in this important discussion on Bill C-18. When we talk about citizenship, it is one of those inherent rights that is a privilege as well as an important process of involving oneself in society. People receive the opportunity to vote and receive a status that was granted to other people who have been here for many years, decades as well as generations. Citizenship is an inherent process that has to be taken seriously.

This bill is another attempt to improve the process and there are actually some improvements in the bill that the government should be commended for. I have some reservations with some other points and I want to discuss them now because this will be an important debate as we move along during this process.

The hon. member before me had mentioned some specific negative cases that are serious with regard to citizenship and immigration. However to give a balance in terms of what else is out there, we have recently seen many immigrants become citizens and contribute quite profoundly to the formation of this country not only in the past but even currently.

We can look at authors such as Rohinton Mistry, who is a nominee for the Giller prize. During his book tour he was recently harassed at the American border because of his ethnicity, despite the fact that he is a Canadian citizen. He is contributing quite profoundly to the arts, culture and economy of Canada and is a good example of bringing people forward who can contribute. Our own Governor General, for example, is someone who has become a Canadian citizen and is contributing quite well to the Canadian public discourse and service.

Those people cannot be forgotten. That whole process must be scrutinized very significantly. We are talking about a process where by we are building a country because our current birth rate is deficient in renewing itself in a healthy manner to sustain ourselves in terms of our quality of life, our economy, and the way that we can function in the world.

Canada's population has now reached 30 million people. Census data shows us that the main source of Canada's population growth between 1996 and 2001 was immigration. It is something that I have concerns about in terms of a nation. We must have a healthy policy to bring in new citizens and have the resources available because I believe other government policies are affecting our birth rate and ability to sustain ourselves.

Government Orders

A good example is the debate that recently took place with regard to student and youth issues in our country. They are having to go to school much longer in life. They are offset with significant financial burdens that have been profound and have developed at rates much higher than the rate of inflation and the cost of living. They have had to delay their marriages, families and other opportunities and that has contributed to some of the problems we have.

Youth these days often work two or three jobs to be able to sustain family development. That has had a result with regard to our population growth. Nevertheless, that is what makes Bill C-18 so important in terms of getting it right and renewing our numbers in this country.

One of the things that is important to recognize in Bill C-18 and has not been talked about very much in the discussions I have heard but raises some concern with me are the fees that are increasing. Working formerly at the Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County I have had the opportunity to work with refugees, landed immigrants, as well as new citizens. There is an increasing financial burden on those people coming into our country. It is taking a toll on their ability to live with dignity and, more importantly, to get on their feet, qualify for certain educational or training programs and get into the economy in a full capacity that is going to lead to their contribution to our country in a meaningful manner.

The fees for actual citizenship would be increasing. It would be \$200 for an adult and \$100 for children. There is no distinction. For example, a family consisting of two parents and two children would now pay \$600 more. This is similar to some of the fees of the past, namely the head tax on landed immigrants. It is something that has been substantially added to the process where people must pay thereby creating another financial burden. It is like, "Welcome to Canada, you are now in debt". That is a big problem because we must provide the opportunity for people to contribute back into society quickly and readily. Having a debt load will not encourage people to pursue the educational aspects necessary to be productive and invest in other options such as training or the things they need to be successful in our country.

• (1620)

Another issue that gives me some concern is the changing role of the commissioners. The decision making process is being taken from them. I would rather see that as opposed to a potential patronage appointment. Perhaps local communities could get involved in terms of selecting a commissioner who would be someone who is responsive to their community and has been involved there for many years. Some of the commissioners who are doing that now are actually from those backgrounds. I would like to see the ownership happen from the bottom up in terms of the community having access to the commissioner and being able to participate in that process.

Through my program I have seen youth come through and find training programs or go back to school. Eventually those with landed immigrant status got their citizenship. One of their proudest moments is to have the opportunity to be able to swear allegiance in the ceremony. To have some specific local connection is very important. Having the bottom up approach for the selection would be much more advantageous.

Another interesting aspect to the bill is the new oath. I will read the new oath for the general public so it understands what new citizens are saying with regard to their commitment to Canada. It states:

From this day forward, I pledge my loyalty and allegiance to Canada and Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada. I promise to respect our country's rights and freedoms, to uphold our democratic values, to faithfully observe our laws and fulfil my duties and obligations as a Canadian citizen

Our country must ensure that it is not a rhetorical comment back, something that is not going to be met on the other side without the full support of our community and government. That is something that sadly enough has happened with some qualified people coming to our country who have the credentials that are necessary but are not allowed to practise their skills.

In Windsor we have many people who are physicians or engineers. They have a number of different professional credentials and they cannot practise their educational skills, qualifications and investments that they have made in themselves to be fully productive. When they take that oath the government should be mindful that it needs to provide the appropriate bridging mechanisms so that these people can be successful and also have a country that believes in them as much as they believe in their new country.

There is a new program called clear residency requirements. I have some reservations with regard to that process. There are different individuals and they have to spend three to six years here, but at the same time if they are students, visitors or temporary workers they only get a half day for every day they are in Canada. I have some reservations about that particular aspect of the program.

Students studying full time might become immersed in their studies. They become very involved. They are paying significant tuition. As well as that they are paying an advanced tuition if they are from outside the country. They can fall in love with this country. I know that has happened. One just has to go to the university and one will find people who have come here who truly fall in love with this country. They are dedicated full time students. They are involved and volunteering. Why are they getting a half day? I do not know why that was decided. Why not a quarter? Why not an eighth? Why not a full day? That is important when they are making a significant financial commitment to our country and it should be recognized. It is also a cultural and educational commitment.

I do not understand why half days are imposed on students. It really takes from the momentum of them graduating as, for example, Canadian citizens after spending three or four years getting an undergraduate degree and maybe a graduate degree after that. They would only be enhanced. It also takes away from the business argument. We have seen what is happening at our border right now where even Canadian citizens are being harassed by the United States because of their background and race.

• (1625)

Specific people who are being targeted have come to my office in Windsor. It is not right or fair for them to be targeted, because they are Canadian citizens.

Government Orders

I will use students as an example. They have gone through the programs and have met the education criteria and are ready to contribute. They might have the opportunity to do business elsewhere in terms of living in Windsor and working in Detroit. A lot of that actually develops, which is healthy for the Canadian economy because they are bringing in new wages and taxes, and they are advancing themselves.

Having Canadian citizenship is so important for them to be able to do that. I would like to see that advanced. It could actually help their business and development growth. The recent border problems really illustrate the need to have the foresight to protect people who invest in our country and contribute.

That situation in itself is really interesting. There are doctors, lawyers, and other people who go over just to visit family. They have lived here for 10 and 20 years and they are being fingerprinted and photographed. There are individuals whose family members have been detained for over two hours, and their young children sleep on the floor in the United States office, and they are not able to get back into Canada. They have done this when they wanted to get into the U.S. Then when they want to come back to Canada, they have to go through this process. I do not know how their fingerprints are going to change over a matter of hours. Nonetheless that has been happening.

We should really support those people who get this type of responsibility and make this oath to Canada. One of the reasons I feel so strongly about the residency concerns relates to the fact that we are going to lose opportunities for people because they will still be waiting with an unknown status. It is bad enough that the dual citizenship of Canada is not always respected right now, but it will be even worse for those who actually have a graduate degree, who have been paying taxes in Canada and who have been contributing to this country. They might be made more vulnerable because they happen to be students. I do not think that is right.

With regard to the rest of the bill, it does have some positive elements with regard to the opening up of second generation Canadian families born in other countries. We see a lot of that. Reconnecting the family unit is very positive. It is something in which we need to invest, in terms of making sure there is access for people to bring people forward who are going to contribute. They have the actual wherewithal and more important, they have the support not just within the extended family but also within the business community and this makes our communities strong.

Windsor has 94 different ethnic communities. That makes us the second most diverse area, outside of Toronto. It is a healthy environment with people supporting people. We need to recognize that having the family unit strengthened is a value that we have currently in Canada and it is one we want to extend as we develop the citizenship portfolio for people.

With regard to the actual bill itself, my concerns have been expressed. I look forward to further debate on it before making my personal decision about supporting the bill. There need to be some changes. There need to be some improvements. It is something that at least has been worked on. It has failed in the past but I am hopeful that this time we can work on some of these problems and accomplish some benefits.

We really do not have time to waste in the sense of making sure that our citizenship and immigration is something that thrives. Our other government policies certainly are making it difficult for Canadians to have a strong birth rate that will sustain our economy.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Windsor who certainly has brought his diverse community to our caucus on many occasions. He has taught us a lot about the relationship Windsor has had with the U.S. It is interesting to note that the actions of the U.S. have tarnished that relationship, not just for Windsor but for all Canadians.

I would like him to expand a little on whether or not he ever thought he would experience in his lifetime a McCarthyism type of approach. It is the approach of treating one cultural group in the way that used to be done years ago when they were all lumped into one category, for example, as all being thieves, criminals or terrorists, in many cases with no justification whatsoever.

I wonder if he ever expected in his lifetime, in this day and age, that we would be living through that once again. In spite of having numerous groups come to us wanting restitution for harms that were done before, and we still are dealing with that, did he ever expect that we once again would be allowing this to take place with one specific group of people within our country?

• (1630)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague's question is a good one. It poses a philosophical challenge in terms of thinking about what has taken place over the last few months in Windsor.

I live on Elm and University, about a block away from the Detroit River. I can look down my street and see the Detroit River. It is a multicultural, working class neighbourhood.

What is interesting is that when I walk down the street to our beautiful waterfront and look across to Detroit, Michigan, one of the buildings I see is the Rosa Parks Tower. Rosa Parks, as we know, was someone who fought for civil liberties because of the experience of hate, racism, bigotry and all those different things.

I look at the towers standing on the Detroit waterfront. It is very empowering because they have been there for many years and they signify something very special.

Rosa Parks' commitment and her dedication to fighting for some of these issues are being challenged nowadays and it is by the same country which I think has forgotten that it is not about the colour of a person's skin. but it is about the content of an individual and his or her ability to participate, to be a functioning member. More important, it is about the belief in building a country in which one should not be judged by the colour of one's skin. Unfortunately, we are seeing that in Windsor. We see other groups and organizations that will be sucked into this vortex. It is very meanspirited. It is very disconcerting, the ability to do it.

Government Orders

I am an Ontarian, a Windsor resident. When the atrocities were committed by Timothy McVeigh in the Oklahoma bombing, he was from Michigan and I did not assume that anybody who came from Michigan was a terrorist. I did not assume that he represented the general population at large. I did not draw any conclusion or make any specific reference to that. I feel more of a sense of solidarity for fighting back against horrible people like that who create atrocities on all of us.

It is unfortunate what is happening right now at our border. It is not just the economic issue of people being able to go back and forth and being able to trade. There are social and cultural elements as well. We have a great symbiotic relationship with the city of Detroit which is only two miles across from Windsor in terms of the border. It is a very special relationship. I would like to see that relationship protected and enhanced.

We are seeing a wonderful revitalization of downtown Detroit. It has very special connotations for the whole nation. We play a good role on our side. However the current situation is making it very difficult and it is setting us back in many respects. More important, more people are fighting back on this issue and they will not give up because it is not about what one looks like, it is about who one is as a person.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during consideration of Bill C-18 respecting citizenship, one element has hardly been covered until now. It is the government's authority to refuse to grant citizenship in the name of the principles of a free and democratic society.

The government is opening a wide door in the name of a principle, the principle of a free and democratic society. This principle is vague, unstructured and undefined. The minister told us that this prerogative might be used in the case of citizens who have no criminal record, but who have committed violent acts in the past.

Is there not a danger, with such a vague, soft and inadequate measure, of opening the door for the government and the minister to refuse to grant Canadian citizenship to certain individuals? When principles are mentioned, a responsible government has to define them.

Would it not have been better to define and outline what the minister calls the principle of a free and democratic society, to ensure that citizens who are entitled to being granted citizenship are not refused?

• (1635)

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, it is a good question in the sense of the definition of the actual bill. There are a lot of discrepancies that can happen through its actual interpretation. It is a good point that has to be taken in mind. We have to have clarity with some of those issues. If they are not vetted through this process, it will lead to more confusion than we have seen through immigration, citizenship and the actual application process. It is something that has to be debated thoroughly with regard to the clear definitions of how things are constituted and how they will be applied. If that does not happen, the bill will fail again.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, although I had a lot to say already about Bill C-18 during questions and comments, this is the first time I have made an actual speech on this bill, which amends an existing statute, the Citizenship Act, one that has been around a very long time. It was introduced in 1977.

When examining a bill, it is important, particularly when it is a citizenship bill, to keep in mind what has gone before. We need to remember that Bill C-18 is, basically, an old bill first introduced in 1993. At that time it Bill was C-63. It then returned as Bill C-16 and today returns in virtually the same form, as Bill C-18.

The government has told us, and reminded us throughout this debate, of the importance of supporting this bill and passing it quickly. Admittedly, a bill dating back to 1977 needs to be updated, because there are imperatives and procedures that need updating and sometimes even simplifying.

The process I have just explained, and the historical background on the three bills, which died on the order paper, either because an election was called or because a new session started, demonstrate how little priority is, attached to passing a new bill and modifying the existing citizenship legislation.

Let us recall that, prior to 1947, there was no law setting out what might be called legal citizenship. Legal citizenship began with the advent of this act. What did the 1977 act allow? A number of things, but I will touch on two, one of which was reducing from five to three years the time required to qualify for permanent resident status, that is the length of time before one was eligible for Canadian citizenship.

The other important aspect of the 1977 legislation was that it did away with something which is completely unacceptable, the right to hold dual citizenship. Before 1977, a person with Canadian citizenship automatically lost citizenship in another country. The 1977 legislation provided a framework that we want to renew today.

What does Bill C-18 do? It reinforces the current citizenship legislation. Bill C-18 clarifies, according to the government, certain legislative provisions. Finally, it reinforces certain administrative procedures.

Apart from these amendments, it would be foolish to believe that the bill before us is only aimed at meeting administrative imperatives with regard to Canadian citizenship. Some fundamental elements will alter the way we do things in Quebec and the way we are planning Quebec's future, whether we talk about the citizenship oath or the lack of respect for the provisions of the civil code of Quebec dealing with foreign adoption.

We can only be critical—it is our right in this House—of this bill that is a far cry from the mandate given to us by our constituents in Quebec, namely to make sure that Canadian legislation meets future needs, but also to defend their interests.

Government Orders

• (1640)

Defending those interests means, among others, defending the civil code of Quebec. I am sure my colleague will do this in committee as I did when I was my party's critic on this issue, and as my colleague from Hochelaga—Maisonneuve did. In committee, we will defend the Civil Code of Quebec.

We will show that under the civil code of Quebec, only a Quebec court can finalize an international adoption through Quebec's Secrétariat à l'adoption internationale.

We will show that the provisions of the bill that would grant citizenship without having to go through the immigration process contravene something fundamental. To a degree, it could result in major constraints and distortions between two children adopted abroad who settle in Canada, more precisely in Quebec as compared to another province. The civil code is clear and must be enforced.

As Minister Rochon, among others, asked on March 6, 1998, would it not be better if the federal government would consider some bilateral arrangement between the Quebec government and the federal government when the time comes to grant Canadian citizenship to a child adopted abroad?

One of the fundamental principles recognized in several Canadian acts and enshrined in the Constitution is that the best interests of children should always prevail. If the federal government supports this principle, then it will agree to make some bilateral arrangement with Quebec to streamline the citizenship process for children adopted abroad.

We have several concerns about this bill. We also believe that the government is using this bill to do some nation building, as evidenced by the oath of allegiance to Canada. We would like the duties of the citizenship commissioners to be clearly defined to ensure that they remain neutral, efficient and non partisan.

• (1645)

Too many immigration commissioners have been appointed because of their so-called professionalism or other such qualities, but a look at their record makes one wonder. The appointment process for immigration commissioners has been called a patronage den, not only by us but by other independent organizations.

With this bill, the government has the opportunity to clarify the real role of the citizenship commissioners and ensure they are not partisan, but it refuses to do so.

This House and the study of this bill in committee will clarify the situation and the role of citizenship commissioners.

In addition, using the principle of a free and democratic society as a reason to deny citizenship is puzzling. The minister said "These are principles that will enable us to deny citizenship on rare occasions. They will apply only occasionally".

One cannot assume that the legislative provisions of a bill will be used only on rare occasions. We cannot make such an assumption, first, because we do not know the state of affairs. Also, there is no guarantee that the government will not try to use this provision to deny Canadian citizenship to a number of people.

It is totally unacceptable, in light of these powers and the power of these provisions to deny Canadian citizenship, that the use of the principle of a free and democratic society as a reason to deny citizenship is not better regulated. As I said earlier, this is all very vague, fuzzy and inadequate in terms of direction with respect to a provision that has and could have such an impact.

Of course, we are not saying that citizenship should be granted to persons who committed violent crimes against certain ethnic or religious groups. However, we believe that these principles ought to be strictly set and regulated.

Another aspect is the citizenship oath. Each time Bill C-63 or Bill C-16 has been discussed since we came to this place in 1993, we in the Bloc Québécois have expressed doubts about the real political will of the government regarding the oath of allegiance. We have condemned in the past oaths of allegiance that involved swearing allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen. Now, the government wants new Canadians to swear allegiance to Canada.

There is reason to express doubt about this government's real motives regarding the use of this oath. Is it trying to show Canada's uniqueness? Is it trying to show that the Quebec and aboriginal peoples do not exist? These are questions we feel entitled to ask at this stage of the consideration of the bill. I am convinced that, at committee stage, the hon. member responsible for this issue will have some genuine and tough questions for officials about what this allegiance to Canada really means.

The other fundamental issue to which I must go back is the Quebec civil code. Through this bill, the federal government refuses to recognize our civil code. Since March 6, 1998, Quebec ministers have made repeated calls—orally or in writing—to ask that the Quebec and federal governments work bilaterally to streamline the process to grant Canadian citizenship to children adopted abroad, while respecting the Quebec civil code.

• (1650)

Unfortunately, since 1993, and particularly since 1998, the letters sent by the Quebec ministers have been ignored. Today, we can only ask that the principle of the best interests of the child be applied in Canada. Because if we believe in the fundamental principle which says that the best interests of the child must be protected, it is with these interests in mind that the federal government must cooperate with the Quebec government. The Secrétariat sur l'adoption internationale has done an excellent job. In absolute as well as relative numbers, Quebec welcomes more adopted children from abroad than any Canadian province.

Government Orders

This shows that not only the civil code, but particularly Quebec's approach in this regard, work properly and are effective. What the federal government wants to do through clauses 16 and 17 is to create distortion in something that works just fine.

How can we accept that, as regards an approach that is working, an approach that has allowed Quebec to welcome, both in absolute relative numbers and more adopted children, the federal government is proposing a provision which, by virtue of clauses 16 and 17, could go as far as creating a form of discrimination toward children, and also toward Quebec parents. The government must be receptive to these repeated requests.

The government must heed these demands, because back in 1998, ministers Rochon and Boisclair explained that this bill raised various problems in Quebec, including how to reconcile the legislation and our civil code, and the health issue and additional costs that could ensue as a result.

To close, I would say that this bill contains a number of incongruities. Of course, the time had come to update the Citizenship Act, which goes back to 1977. Of course, certain provisions needed to be clarified. However, there are certain provisions that concern us on this side of the House.

First, there is the issue of foreign adoptions. Second, there is the issue of the oath of allegiance to Canada. Then there are the citizenship commissioners. Under this bill, their appointment could be seen as a plum patronage position. We have a golden opportunity to change this.

I would like to close with one of the more original ideas proposed by my colleague, the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve. There has been much talk of legal citizenship, but he spoke of civic citizenship. Why not have a copy of Quebec's Charter of the French Language, our Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms given out at the oath ceremony? I think that would be the honourable thing to do.

• (1655)

I am sure that my colleague will present amendments in committee to ensure that Bill C-18 could include this original idea.

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Rosemont—Petite-Patrie for providing us with the background to this bill that amends legislation dating back to 1977. He also told us about the irritants that the Bloc Québécois feels must be removed to improve this bill.

I would also like to hear my colleague talk to us about the legal process that has been put in place, which will make it possible to deport certain immigrants to their country of origin, without the right to a fair trial and without the right to appeal. The day after this bill was introduced, the French-language media told us that there were some irritants in this regard.

I would like to have the comments of my colleague about the problems that are in this bill.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, concerning what my colleague is saying, the bill sponsored by the minister of immigration is quite consistent with his approach and his political background.

I would like to remind the House that, on April 10, 1995, the current minister of immigration, the member for Bourassa, said that, sometimes, he felt like restoring the deportation act and sending back to their country those who spit on the Canadian flag.

I think that what my colleague just said is clearly included in these provisions. I believe that this is a direct consequence of what the minister said.

What is rather incredible is that the member for Bourassa made this judgment and today he is sponsoring a bill that will make it possible to implement what he believed in 1995. This is a concern for citizens who want to live here, to work here and to share our Quebec values.

• (1700)

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague from Rosemont—Petite-Patrie talk about the Civil Code.

With respect to this bill, my colleague did a very good job of explaining the legislative difference between Quebec and the rest of Canada. For the sake of those who are listening to us, I will say that the Civil Code is part of the history of Quebec. In the days of Upper Canada and Lower Canada, the Napoleonic Code was adapted for the Province of Quebec and became the Civil Code of Quebec. The law is not the same in Quebec. In Quebec, we do not interpret the law the same way as in the rest of Canada.

For decades now we have been trying to explain to the rest of Canada that Quebec is a distinct society. This is not new. It has been a distinct society since the beginning of the colonies. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, what we would like to see in Bill C-18 is a recognition of the Civil Code, as my colleague said, as well as of Quebec courts.

Under this bill, children adopted abroad will have to go through the whole immigration process. The Civil Code of Quebec provides that only a Quebec court can finalize an adoption.

In view of the importance of the Civil Code, the Government of Quebec is demanding that the federal government work bilaterally with the Government of Quebec to recognize the exemplary work done by Quebec courts. Quebec's procedure has resulted in more foreign adoptions, in absolute and relative numbers, than in the rest of Canada. Why should we change something that works well?

And why not recognize the Civil Code of Quebec, which is an inherent part of Quebec's history? This is what we would like the government to acknowledge. My colleague will introduce amendments and we will work to enshrine this recognition in the bill.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-18 amending the Citizenship Act. I think that my colleague has raised a lot of questions and one of the issues that we are particularly concerned with is the adoption of children abroad.

Government Orders

According to the present rules, measures will have to be taken so that we have guarantees to that effect in the act and it will not be very expensive for the government to do so. We insist on it and anyway, I do not see how the government could bypass the Quebec civil code. However, our colleague from Laval West will certainly want to propose an amendment to remove any doubt.

At the present time, a child adopted abroad has to go through the whole process required of any immigrant, the medical examination and all the steps that follow. But it is also true that the process is quicker for a child and can take less time than for a regular resident. Except that in Quebec, a young child cannot be declared a Canadian citizen until the Quebec court of adoption has given its ruling under the Quebec Civil Code. We therefore find it extremely important that this element be taken into account in the act.

As far as the adoption of children abroad is concerned, many countries authorize the adoption of their children. In those countries, it works for a while and then it stops working. But each one of these countries has a specific process for the adoption of children. It might be a good idea for the government to study the issue in view of making things a little more uniform, of making things less complicated for parents and helping them understand what to expect when they deal with county *x* or country *y*, so that the process is clear for everybody.

It is important to mention that Canadian parents—and I myself am godmother to a young Canadian adopted in Russia—live under a cloud of uncertainty as long as they do not have the guarantee that their child will be granted Canadian citizenship.

So, it is important that, when that day comes, everything is settled and done as it is nowadays. It is probably better to grant Canadian citizenship to the child right away, but it is obvious that citizenship will not be immediately granted if it is not done under the Quebec Civil Code which is, as we all know, the most important element to establish that the child can really reside in Quebec and in Canada.

Let us now turn to the citizenship oath that can be found in an appendix to the 75 clause bill. It says, and I quote:

From this day forward, I pledge my loyalty and allegiance to Canada and Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada.

What I find amazing is that the summary, where the most important elements of the bill are listed, says that the Citizenship Act will amend some things and provide for a modern citizenship oath. I do not see what is modern about pledging allegiance to Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, who is celebrating this year her 50th anniversary as Her Majesty the Queen of Canada. I do not think that when one pledges allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen, one is keeping up with the times.

• (1705)

We should perhaps use another term or make sure Canadian citizens no longer have to take an oath of allegiance to something the Deputy Prime Minister considers archaic. This is either archaic or modern. You cannot have it both ways.

For once, I would support a motion by the Deputy Prime Minister, and I would do so with great pleasure. Should the Prime Minister decide to introduce a motion to the effect that, when the queen is replaced, Canada will no longer have a queen or a king, then we

would be truly a sovereign country, something Pierre Elliott Trudeau wanted when he unilaterally patriated the constitution. He used to tell us it was high time Canada became independent and sovereign. If we want to be independent and sovereign, we should really do away with an archaic institution.

Like my colleague said, when I hear about the oath of allegiance in Canada, it calls up a number of memories. Before the last election, for example, the present Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, who was then the Secretary of State responsible for Amateur Sport, personally presided over a oath taking ceremony in Sherbrooke. We remember his statement well. He did not talk about an oath of allegiance to Canada. He asked these new citizens to remember which country had welcomed them, which country they were becoming a part of, and told them they should remember it on election day. He really went a bit too far.

If we want to talk about allegiance to Canada now, and if this is what the minister has in mind, it could also be a concern to take an oath of allegiance to Canada. However, the Bloc Québécois is not opposed in theory to the idea of Canadian citizens taking an oath of allegiance to Canada, because some day we will want citizens to take an oath of allegiance to Quebec when have our own country. This is perfectly acceptable to us. Except that we would not want ministers or commissioners swearing in new citizens to wax on about democratic values and faithfully respecting the law and fulfilling the rights and obligations of Canadian citizenship.

I will not rehash what my colleague brought up earlier about what the minister, who was not even a member at the time, said in reference to our colleague, Osvaldo Nunez, an immigrant from Chile, a Canadian citizen at the time of the comments, whose country of origin was Chile. Members of the Bloc Québécois have never attacked the origins of our colleagues, even though approximately one third of the members of this House were not born in Canada. For us, they are all Canadian citizens, and we have no problem with the fact that they may have been born in another country.

So, we spoke about adoption, and the oath of allegiance. I hope that this time around, there will not be any nasty surprises with this bill, because this is our third try at updating the Citizenship Act.

I have read the bill carefully. However, there is one thing that bothers me, and I will talk with my colleague to see if we might be able to introduce an amendment to the bill, to resolve the following matter.

• (1710)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry, but I must interrupt the hon. member, since the hon. government House leader has a point of order.

*Government Orders***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[Translation]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to apologize to the hon. member, but I see that the time is appropriate for moving the establishment of the Official Languages Committee.

An agreement has been arrived at by all parties. Some things could have been different today. However, this is the right time to move this motion.

Before doing so, I would like to indicate that the intention is that this committee be responsible for monitoring enforcement of the Official Languages Act. Therefore I move the following motion on which all parties in the House have come to an agreement. I move:

[English]

That the Standing Orders be as follows:

1. By deleting subsection (b) of section (3) of Standing Order 104 and by redesignating subsection (c) of section (3) of Standing Order 104 as subsection (b);
2. By deleting subsection (b) of section (4) of Standing Order 108 and by redesignating subsection (c) of section (4) of Standing Order 108 as subsection (b);

3. By inserting immediately after subsection (n) of section (2) of the Standing Order 104, the words "(o) Official Languages (sixteen Members)" and by redesignating subsections (o), (p) and (q) of section (2) of Standing Order 104, respectively, as subsections (p), (q) and (r);

4. By inserting immediately after subsection (c) of section (3) of Standing Order 108, the following:

(d) Official Languages shall include, among other matters, the review of and report on official languages policies and programs, including Reports of the Commissioner of Official Languages, which shall be deemed permanently referred to the Committee immediately after they are laid upon the Table;

and

That the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs shall prepare and report to the House within five sitting days after the adoption of this Order a list of Members to compose the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

• (1715)

[Translation]

To put it plainly, the purpose here is to establish the House Standing Committee on Official Languages, since there is now no joint committee following the actions of the other place.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I just need some clarification here. It seems to me that the government House leader has said that the members of the committee would be appointed within five days. But since the House does not sit next week, what about these five days?

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, according to this provision, they are sitting days. As in the case of all the other committees, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs will submit names to be approved by the House together with the report. Then, of course, the committee will be organized as usual at its first sitting.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Does the House give its consent for the hon. government House leader to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[Translation]***CITIZENSHIP OF CANADA ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, an act respecting Canadian citizenship, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. The member for Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis still has ten minutes.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was about to explain a situation for which I would like to find a solution. I spoke with my colleague about this case, but I am going to come back to it.

Here is the situation: several years ago, when he was very young, a constituent of mine set out to see the world. He ended up in Australia and, one fine day, he applied for Australian citizenship. An exceptional series of circumstances rekindled his desire to return to Canada.

On September 11, 2001, I was in Australia with a group of parliamentarians for the Commonwealth conference. As we were delayed for a couple of days, we asked someone at the hotel what was the best restaurant in town. When he heard people speaking French with a Quebec accent, a young waiter stopped near us and asked if we were from Quebec. He introduced himself and said he used to live in Rimouski.

He wanted to come back to Quebec and apply for a Canadian passport, but he learned that he was no longer a Canadian citizen. When he had applied for Australian citizenship several years ago, Canada did not allow its citizens to have dual nationality. Therefore, unbeknownst to him, he had been stripped of his nationality. He is no longer a Canadian citizen. If he wants to come back to Canada as a Canadian citizen and again have a Canadian passport, he must apply to immigrate to his own country.

Frankly, in my opinion, this legislation makes no sense. His father lives in Rimouski, his brothers and sisters live in Rimouski. He was born in the hospital in Rimouski. He is Canadian in origin and he is now being denied the right to have restored to him, through some sort of accommodation, the nationality of which he was stripped without his knowledge. How can an 18 year old roaming the world in 1975 be expected to have the required means of communication? We did not have the means of communication then that we have today. The fact that this happened without his knowledge seems quite normal to me; we cannot blame him for being ignorant of the law.

Private Members' Business

When a civil servant tells me: “Ms. Tremblay, ignorance of the law is no excuse”, that makes me think of the great sociologist, Jon E. Kolberg, who said there were eight levels of social development. When someone gives me this sort of answer, it corresponds perfectly to stage two, which is just a step above stage one. It is law and order. It is like those people who have been waiting for ten minutes for the red light to change, but who have not realized that the lights are not working and will not cross on the red light because that is against the law.

When I find myself up against someone who interprets the law so narrowly, I tell myself that it is really sad to think that in this country, there is someone who was born in Canada, who lived in Canada for the first 18 years of his life, but who, 30 years later, as he is approaching the age of 50, cannot come back to his own country. He must immigrate to his own country and go through the whole process.

He was in Canada and he was told “No, if you want to become a Canadian citizen, you have to leave Canada and go to another country. You must go to an embassy and meet someone to become a citizen, to regain your Canadian citizenship”. I think this is wrong. I hope the minister will listen to the arguments made by my colleague, and I intend to ask him to do something about this case.

• (1720)

I am quite sure that several young people, between 1947 and 1977, since that dates back to the time when the act was amended in 1977, were not informed individually of what would happen if they applied for another citizenship. Moreover, today it is possible to be a Canadian citizen and have dual citizenship. I really hope we will be able to do something to improve the situation.

Let us look at clauses 16 and 17 of Bill C-18. My colleague for Rosemont—Petite-Patrie already mentioned that even if we, in the Bloc Québécois, agree with the underlying principle of Bill C-18, we are quite concerned about the controversy that might arise if the bill is passed with clauses 16 and 17 unchanged. Clause 17 deals with definitions. Clause 16 lists the various ways one may lose one's citizenship. In my view it is open to abuse on the part of a government or a minister.

Again, when we recall what was said about Osvaldo Nunez, we think “Let us not be paranoid”. However, we believe there might be a risk and a danger that a government might put its words into action and deprive of his new citizenship a citizen who, after swearing allegiance to Canada, might decide to openly work, as Mr. Nunez did with us, to build a country he would find more interesting for himself and for his children than the one he immigrated to in the first place.

This is a problem for us. Some very clear explanations will have to be given to us for our concerns to be alleviated. We feel that this could cause real problems for citizens who might live in constant fear or decide to go underground in order not to be labelled as a member of a given party. It would not necessarily have to be a sovereignist party, simply a party that the government of the time would not like.

We look at what is going on today throughout the world. People thought that the war of 1914-18 had taught the world a lesson. The war of 1939-45 showed there was still cause for concern. Now, when

we thought the lesson had finally got through, we see that the 21st century is not very reassuring, with the continuing conflicts in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine and Israel. It is all very well for the United Nations to pass resolution after resolution to try to calm down the situation and get people to live in more peace and harmony, but we can see that this does not actually change much. People are still ready, for one reason or another, to fire on each other. To have a clause as permissive as this one in a bill can be a source of concern.

Citizenship is the most important thing to an individual living in a given country. Political citizenship and public citizenship are very important. When we think that citizenship can be revoked, however, that is problematic.

• (1725)

There are reasons for revoking citizenship, but when we read between the lines, some of these reasons may be extremely dangerous and make us think that it does not bode well.

Personally, I think that the government also made a cosmetic amendment in deciding that immigration judges would no longer be referred to as judges but as commissioners. I tried to look up definitions in dictionaries and would personally have preferred to continue talking about citizenship judges.

Changing citizenship judge for citizenship commissioner appeared to me as a cosmetic change at first, but on closer reflection, a commissioner is much less important than a judge; commissioners cannot think as freely and are less independent, and I would fear greatly that they would have to play some kind of propaganda role to keep their jobs.

We can ask the question because it is written somewhere at the beginning if this is a bill to promote citizenship. The commissioner would then have to promote citizenship. Frankly, I am afraid the commissioner would be in a perilous situation.

In closing, this is a very important bill, and I hope the government will show flexibility in listening to the wish list of opposition parties and making the necessary changes.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1730)

[English]

SMALL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the recent census taken in 2001 confirms the significant momentum of population towards cities in Canada and given the negative impact this trend will have on smaller and rural communities, the government should take urgent steps to reverse this dangerous trend, namely: (a) changing immigration laws in our country; and (b) implementing a real economic development program for the provinces which are experiencing a real decline in population.

Private Members' Business

He said: Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to thank the seconder of my motion, the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River, and I know everyone will join me in saying hello to my wife Rosemary who is watching this debate and hanging on every word.

I moved the motion because I became alarmed when I saw the recent 2001 census, which indicated so much movement of our Canadian population to urban areas, specifically to four cities: Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver. Even within provinces there is a very dangerous and major trend toward living in urban areas, resulting in a decline in rural areas.

Many of us in the House represent rural areas and have experienced a decline in our population. In my view, this decline will make it impossible for smaller urban areas, smaller towns, smaller villages and smaller municipalities to maintain their infrastructure, their health care, their education and their highways. As for the urban centres that are increasing in growth, this movement of population will put a major burden on their infrastructure as well. This will put a burden on their health care systems and their educational systems and it will cause social problems that they are not prepared to meet. So even the urban areas that are getting the benefit of the increase in population will pay a price for this dangerous trend.

I want to refer to some of the actual numbers that I think will change the face of our country more than anything we deal with, more than even the Kyoto accord or the war on terrorism. This movement of population within the country is going to have a bigger impact than anything we ever have to deal with. I say that because in my own riding we have suffered a population decline in the county of Cumberland and in my own riding of Cumberland—Colchester. I checked the statistics a minute ago. The seconder of my motion, the member for Dauphin—Swan River, also suffered a decline in his riding. My colleague from Gander—Grand Falls has suffered a decline in population in his riding of 9.8%, an almost 10% decline from 1996 to 2001.

The situation is much worse than the numbers show because the decline involves mostly our young people. Our young people are going where the opportunities are. This is leaving a tremendous vacuum in regard to people starting new businesses, people buying houses and people taking over properties and maintaining our communities, as well as our volunteers. They are just not going to be there. As our older generation moves along, there will be no younger generation available to pick up the slack in our charitable organizations and community work. All these communities will suffer. In the end, the urban communities, which probably think this is a good thing in some ways, will end up with larger transition or transfer payments if smaller communities cannot deal with the problem.

I would like to home in on a couple of provinces from the Statistics Canada census. In Newfoundland, every single federal riding suffered a decline in population. It is hard to imagine that: Every single riding in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador suffered a decline. In my province of Nova Scotia, seven ridings suffered a decline while only four had an increase. Those four ridings are closely associated with Halifax, the capital of our province. This decline in population will make it difficult to maintain

the tax base, to maintain health care and to maintain education. There will be a smaller tax base.

Again, it is the people who are leaving now who would have increased the tax base, and not only by numbers. These are the people who would have built the businesses, built the economy and created the growth and wealth in our communities. We are losing them and the government has not recognized this fact. It has not even acknowledged this. It has not come up with a specific set of programs to deal with this issue.

Moving on to the province of New Brunswick, it had a decline in seven of its ridings. Only three ridings came out ahead. In Quebec, 27 ridings suffered a decline in population. Even Ontario saw declines. Many of the ridings in northern Ontario suffered a decline, so we can see that it is not only the provinces in Atlantic Canada that are suffering. The province of Manitoba had seven ridings with a decline in population. It did have seven that came out ahead. Saskatchewan was even worse, with 10 ridings suffering a decline in population and only four coming out ahead. Alberta is a completely different story. It had an overall population increase of 10.3%.

● (1735)

This is a very serious problem and it is not going to resolve itself. It will be resolved only if we take action. That is why I was moved to bring forth the motion today. My riding is a rural riding, like many ridings represented here today, and I believe that we must move quickly to protect these ridings.

There are two issues that I have identified in the motion. One is an immigration policy that will help direct immigrants to the rural areas rather than just the concentrated urban centres, which is what happens now.

The other issue I have raised is that of having an economic development program that is really focused on economic development. My observation is that the economic development programs we have across the country have lost their focus. They have lost their vision. They have lost their direction to really home in on real hard economic development. I believe they have lost their direction. They are involved with so many other issues, with park development, for example, and with many aspects other than economic development. These are important issues and they have to be dealt with, and while the economic development programs play an important role in regard to these issues, with the programs focusing on some of these other areas they have lost their direction or their goal of addressing economic development issues.

Let us consider the fact that 6 out of 13 provinces and territories have declined in population. That is how bad it is. Half of our country's provinces and territories have lost population. It is quite a scary number. Newfoundland alone lost 7% of the population. It will make it impossible for the provinces and territories to maintain their quality of life, their infrastructure and the standards they have now. Let me point out that the situation is not one that may happen or one that is a possibility: It is happening right now. Newfoundland is the worst case, with its loss of 7% of the population.

Private Members' Business

If we were operating a business with our market declining by 7%, it would be really difficult to survive and maintain our business. We would have to increase our market share dramatically just to offset the decline in market.

The provinces cannot do that. When the people leave, they are gone. There is no option. The provinces cannot increase their market share. They cannot increase tax revenue from any other source. They cannot replace it. It is just gone. This will put a tremendous stress burden on the provinces that are suffering a decline, and 98 out of 301 ridings, or 32%, have had a decline in population. The prospects due to the results of this decline are truly frightening: The infrastructure will just not be maintained.

How do we address this? We have some ideas. We are not the only ones who have ideas on this issue. I really want to raise public awareness of the problem. I want to raise awareness on the government side, too, so that it will recognize that this problem must be dealt with.

The first possible solution I want to talk about is an immigration policy that will address some of these needs. Since I proposed this motion many months ago, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has come up with some unique ideas. He has acknowledged that there is a problem. I am glad he has acknowledged it. He has come up with some ideas on how to encourage, or even more than encourage, immigrants who come to Canada to go to the rural areas.

I went to the minister with a pilot project proposal that actually came about as a result of an effort in my riding in the town of Truro, a very progressive and positive community. Truro wanted to bring five Korean families to Truro, five families at once. There is very little immigration as such to Truro, but an organization wanted to sponsor five Korean families to come to the town and make their home there.

The immigration rules would not allow them to come together. They had to come one at a time. Due to that rule, the first family would not take the chance and move to Truro and be the first ones there, the first ones and probably the only ones to speak the Korean language and share their culture, religion, language and their way of life. They would not come. That family went to Toronto instead. Then the second family went to Toronto when it was approved, and then the third one and so on.

Because the families could not come as a group to Truro, none of them would be the first to establish in a new area. This brought to our attention a situation in the immigration rules which discourages people from going to the rural areas. It results in people going to where there is already a community of their own nationality when they come to Canada.

The town of Truro proposed to the minister of immigration that he establish a pilot project to bring to Truro several families from another land. We do not know where they will be from yet, but we proposed that he consider bringing families to the town of Truro. The minister has agreed to at least consider this, and in fact I think more than consider it, because there is a tremendous amount of support for this in Truro. The mayor of the town of Truro, Bill Mills, the mayor of the municipality of Colchester, Mike Smith, several church organizations, social organizations, economic development groups,

potential employers and just interested people and groups have come together to say that they want to try this. They want to try bringing families to Truro in this pilot project.

● (1740)

There has been a tremendous amount of support for this. The minister will come to Truro in the next month or so and meet with this organization of organizations to see if we can come up with a formula that ensures that the immigrants who come to Truro feel welcome. It is a very positive community that looks forward and is innovative and has a positive approach to everything it does. Hopefully we will be able to put together a package which will ensure that the families that come to Truro will feel welcome and hopefully it will be very successful in encouraging immigrants to come to rural Canada.

I believe it would be a lot better than trying to force them or make them feel an obligation to stay for a certain period of time or whatever. If we can make them want to stay and make them feel comfortable, I think the chances of success are much better. I compliment the minister on allowing us to explore this pilot project. We are all very excited about it. Hopefully it will come together very quickly.

The second issue that I feel has to be addressed is economic development. This has been a very controversial subject for a long time. There have been several tries at it. ACOA was established to replace an organization that operated out of Ottawa. ACOA was set up to operate from Atlantic Canada. It is like FedNor and Western Economic Diversification and all the economic development programs that were established to put the decision making in the areas where the services need to be applied. However, in my view they seem to have morphed into something that they were never intended to be. They have lost their distinct focus on economic development. Somehow we have to come back to a very focused and driven economic development program to address these issues.

Those are two of the many components that I think should go into a strategy to at least slow down this incredible movement to urban Canada from rural Canada, because again, everybody is going to pay a price.

Urban Canada will pay a price and there will be a tremendous overburden on its infrastructure. Rural Canada will pay a price. We will not be able to survive and maintain our standard of living, health care, education, even highways, all the things we have come to enjoy. We will not be able to depend on such services as social services and so forth because the tax base will simply decline. The tax income will not be there for the municipalities and provinces. Even the federal tax base will decline in the rural areas.

I feel it is very important. The first step to solving a problem is recognizing it and realizing that it is an urgent problem. Many things with which we deal are problems that may happen. However this is a problem right now. From 1996 to 2001, the population in 6 of 13 provinces and territories decreased. Again this is not a potential problem. It is real and it is urgent. It will change the face of our country more than anything we deal with on a day to day basis.

I am thankful for the chance to raise this issue. Hopefully this will raise public awareness of the problem. Hopefully I have created an interest for the government side and other opposition parties to recognize that perhaps this is a problem and that we had better look at it. If we do not change this almost migration of population within our country, down the road it will be very expensive to fix.

• (1745)

Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma—Manitoulin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Cumberland—Colchester for his motion. Whenever we are concerned about rural Canada, a motion is always appropriate and always pertinent. I am sure his wife Rosemary is most pleased with his fine comments today.

I would like to first acknowledge that the census reports show that we are experiencing a shift in our population. It is not a simple thing to analyze because our country is made up of many different regions with unique characteristics and with a unique set of large and small communities. It is not just cities and the rest of Canada.

When we leave the boundaries of our major urban centres, we do not find a homogeneous rural area from that boundary and beyond. It is very different when we look at what is happening around our cities, what is happening further out in what we call the heartland areas and what is happening beyond that, in what we might refer to as our remote areas, such as the area that I come from in northern Ontario and beyond into the Northwest Territories and so forth.

I would like to just take a moment to say that we have a minister who is responsible for rural development in Canada. The minister has worked very hard to raise the profile with our urban neighbours. We need a strong rural Canada to have a strong country. I would like to emphasize that it is not a matter of urban versus rural. It never has been and never should be. It is a partnership. Each recognizes in the other that a healthy urban society is good for the country and a healthy rural society is good for the country.

I would like to just comment briefly on immigration. I have discussed with some of my mayors and reeves the notion of attracting immigrants from other parts of the world to our rural areas. For instance, the member for Cumberland—Colchester would like to see immigrants come to his neighbourhood.

He mentioned a pilot project in Truro. I was most intrigued about that, and I hope he will keep the House apprised of those developments. I am encouraged, and I am not surprised, that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is supporting that initiative to see if there are new ways and some different thinking that can be brought to the challenge of attracting immigrants to our non-metropolitan areas. I appreciate that he has raised the idea that Truro is trying to attract a group of maybe five families from one area of one country. It did not work out regarding the five families in Korea but that it is an excellent idea. That and many other ideas need to be tried.

I think he will find great support for good, new ideas that might help bring immigrants to the parts of the country that are not used to having immigrants come in large numbers. Our population decline is a complex thing but we need to have our share of new Canadians who will choose to make Canada their home. They invariably bring good skills and great economic wealth to the nation.

Private Members' Business

I would rather focus the rest of my time on the economic development side of things. In northern Ontario, in the area I represent, economic development goes right down to the grassroots. I noticed in the member's motion, and it may have been inadvertent, that it mentions that the federal government should have economic development strategies and programs for the provinces. I do not think he meant that we should tell the provinces what to do. By way of clarification, I think he really means that the federal government should show, by leadership and by example, its interest in economic development in the different regions of the country.

I can tell member that the government, while always willing to try new ideas, has already put in place numerous excellent measures to help local communities, where the ideas should come from, to develop good ideas. I am sure the member does not mean to suggest that bureaucrats or politicians in Ottawa or Toronto should tell local communities what is best for them.

• (1750)

In the case of northern Ontario, FedNor, and ACOA in his area in the Atlantic provinces, try to promote local partnerships to allow good local ideas to be supported in the hopes that the best ideas will grow and become those economic generators that we need.

I would just point out the many things that the government has already done. The Canadian rural partnership program, with a \$55 million investment, has done a lot to promote dialogue, to promote the information sharing and to promote the sharing of best practices at the local levels in rural Canada.

Under the telecommunications initiative, the government has committed to ensuring that broadband telecommunication is available to all of our communities by 2005 so that every community will have a door to the world when it comes to communications and access to the best of medicine and education. It will give our local businesses in those communities a chance to share in the worldwide marketplace.

The government not only continues to support our regional economic development agencies, but in many cases has improved that support and has allowed those agencies to be more flexible and more able to adapt to regional realities. In particular, I know in my area, and I would say in all areas in the country, our local Community Futures Development Corporations, our CFDCs, have done a marvellous job in ensuring that local ideas are supported.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the volunteers who make up the boards of these CFDCs. They provide the kinds of insights at the local level that we could never find from far away places. We appreciate that, and the federal government's support through the regional agencies for those local programs which is absolutely essential.

Private Members' Business

Under the Canada provincial-territorial infrastructure program, the Government of Canada recognizes the importance of improving infrastructure, not just in our urban centres but across the country, reaching out to the smallest of our villages and hamlets. In northern Ontario there are hundreds of communities. In my own area there are 40 to 60 smaller communities. Without the federal government becoming involved, they would never hope to improve their local infrastructures which are needed to create and foster a local environment of economic health and hope. We hope that in the future our young people will want to come home after they have received their college or university educations or after they have spent some years working somewhere else. We hope they will feel they can go home to their rural areas, their rural homes and build something for the benefit of all.

I could go on listing the many things that the government has done and continues to do. I will not even mention the initiatives to support renewable energies under the tax regime. Many of these initiatives emanate from rural Canada.

I want to underline that rural Canada is not a homogeneous set of villages dotting the country as soon as we leave the boundaries of a city. It is made up of generally three categories of communities.

First are those areas that are adjacent to metropolitan areas and that benefit from a spillover effect which is good for them.

Second are those communities that are in the heartland. The populations in this area are more or less stable. They suffer the challenges of competing, like all the communities do, with larger cities.

We really must recognize that they too differ from the third category, our more remote regions like northern Ontario, the far north of Canada, the northern areas of our prairie provinces and of Labrador and northern Quebec. These areas are so far from our metropolitan centres that the distance really counts for a lot when it comes to economic development.

• (1755)

I will conclude by thanking the member for Cumberland—Colchester for putting forward the motion. He does us all a service by making sure that this place recognizes the importance of rural Canada to the nation. That is indeed where this country started from. If we lose sight of the importance of rural Canada we will in fact lose sight of what it is to be a nation.

I am sure that rural Canada will continue to be strong and will carry this country into the future forever.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in debate on the motion by the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester. I understand Rosemary Casey may be watching the proceedings this evening.

The motion before us states:

That, in the opinion of this House, the recent census taken in 2001 confirms the significant momentum of population toward cities in Canada and given the negative impact this trend will have on smaller and rural communities, the government should take urgent steps to reverse this dangerous trend, namely: (a) changing immigration laws in our country; and (b) implementing a real economic development program for the provinces which are experiencing a real decline in population.

Let me say at the outset that I, and I suspect the vast majority of my colleagues in the official opposition, share the concern and the general sentiment that clearly lies behind the motion.

I, like many members of the House, grew up principally in a small rural community. For myself that was a little place called Wilcox, Saskatchewan, which has a population of just over 200 people. Growing up in a small community like that I have a strong affection for those who, in many ways, make economic sacrifices in order to live a simpler, slower and more communal life that is found in so many of our rural communities.

I, like many, feel a great sadness when I see rural communities on the Prairies, in outport communities in Atlantic Canada or in smaller communities throughout central Canada continue to decline in population as young people move away to seek economic opportunities in the cities and as economic opportunities decline in these smaller communities themselves.

It is sad to go back and see, what were once vibrant towns, becoming in some cases ghost towns; to see the mighty towers of the Prairies, those great old wooden grain elevators, coming down one by one; to see the stores and local services closed; and to see aging communities losing their hospitals, their schools and losing the capacity to provide essential social services to the communities.

I know this problem exists, not just in the rural Prairies but right across the country, a country which used to be in its history, essentially a rural nation. In the 1860s, at the time of Confederation, the population of Canada consisted of roughly 80% rural people and 20% urban people. Today, 130-some years later, we find that those figures have reversed to the point where roughly 20% of Canadians live outside of cities, and the number continues to decline.

The concern over this is not just simply a matter of nostalgia. Yes, nostalgia for many of us who have a history in rural Canada does play a role in it, but I believe that small rural communities are the moral and cultural foundation of a society insofar as they are communities where people are close to the land and where the virtues which make a society great are most easily cultivated; the basic ideas of strong, voluntary institutions of what Edmund Burke called those little platoons of civic virtue, like the family, like church and religious institutions, like real vibrant community organizations where the vast majority of the people in a community will be involved.

These institutions, which are found to have great strength and vigour in rural communities, are central to a nation's character. We often find that a hugely disproportionate number of successful people in all endeavours have come from rural communities because they learned a degree of personal responsibility, of work ethic and a sense of community that is really extraordinary. For that reason I agree with the general concern expressed by the motion.

Private Members' Business

•(1800)

However I am not sure that the general remedies proposed here are workable or effective. For instance, the member suggests that we change immigration laws to reverse the trend. I agree with the objective of increasing immigration to rural communities. I am not sure what government can do in that direction given the mobility rights enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I believe it is a problem when well over 95% of new immigrants who arrive in this country go directly to and stay in our largest cities, principally Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, other large cities like my own city of Calgary.

While we do and should welcome new immigrants to those large urban communities, it would be nice if we could find ways to encourage migration back to rural Canada.

The whole development of the country was one of immigration to rural areas, but that was for reasons of economic incentive. People homesteaded in the west. They originally founded the outport fishing communities of Atlantic Canada and the logging and mining communities of central Canada because there was a very real and direct economic benefit for them to do so. That economic benefit increasingly is not there. I do not know how we can create artificial incentives for new people who arrive in this country to go to a place where they may not find employment, where they may not have an infrastructure of family or community support immediately available to them.

I think this is a marvellous objective but I regret to say that I am somewhat skeptical about our ability to actually engineer a redirection of immigration patterns to rural communities.

Although I would be interested to hear of any concrete and workable proposals that have worked in other jurisdictions and that did not violate the mobility rights provisions of the charter, if there are such concrete ideas, and this is more than just a rhetorical exercise, I would be very interested to hear those proposals.

In terms of the suggested remedy of implementing a real economic development program for the provinces that are experiencing decline in population, of course everybody is in favour of economic development in rural Canada and all parts of Canada, but I think some of us can be justifiably skeptical about the efficacy of government when it comes to government driven economic development. Economic development programs of this nature have been tried again and again for the better part of 40 years in economically depressed regions of the country and in rural Canada and they have failed again and again. There have been countless government programs, tens of billions of dollars spent and tens of thousands of bureaucrats hired to administer them, with the objective of promoting economic development in rural Canada. However I do think those programs demonstrated a patina of success in turning around the gradual economic decline of rural Canada.

I think that the best recipe for economic growth in rural Canada is the same as for Canada as a whole; that is to say, for us to become a more productive economy, with greater incentives for people to work, save and invest, which attracts capital and investment, investment which inevitably will go to and benefit many rural communities.

However for us to create yet another program where bureaucrats will hand out grant dollars to people because they might locate businesses in rural communities has been tried and it has failed.

Let us try a new approach. Let us try the approach that has succeeded in many rural communities that I know of, practically speaking, in the west. I think one would find that the smaller towns and rural communities in Alberta have had more success in economic development, and in retaining and growing their population than any other province in Canada because there is a vibrant private sector economy in that province. We do not look to government to create jobs in those communities. We look to the private sector to do so. With a low tax and regulatory regime, and a diversified and productive economy, rural communities are doing reasonably well compared to the rest of the country. I propose that is a good model for economic development in rural Canada.

I close by commending the member for bringing the motion forward.

•(1805)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on the motion by my colleague from Nova Scotia. This motion reads as follows:

—the recent census taken in 2001 confirms the significant momentum of population towards cities in Canada and given the negative impact this trend will have on smaller and rural communities...

It is not the first time I speak about this in the House. In my remarks, I would like to focus on the solutions advocated by my colleague. However, I might have some problems in fully endorsing his proposals.

First, let us talk about rural policy or the regional and rural policy of the federal government. First of all, what policy? This is what I have been wondering about, since the funds invested in this policy absolutely do not meet the expectations of rural Canada.

In Quebec, we already have a rural policy. It is a first step. We are now working toward strengthening regions. Through various organizations, the government is trying to provide the necessary tools and means to enable regions to regain some strength.

What is happening in the maritime provinces? As my colleague was saying, that region is also greatly affected by this exodus of people. It is often young people who leave rural regions. We see this throughout Quebec; the population is getting older and there is no new blood.

My colleague talks about changing the immigration legislation in the country. We know that the Quebec government has been working for a long time to reach a consensus and to make gains to ensure that immigration policies are shared responsibilities. We finally reached an agreement whereby some responsibilities are now under Quebec jurisdiction, while others are under federal jurisdiction.

Private Members' Business

If the government wants to change immigration legislation in the country, it should make these changes in cooperation with the provinces and, in particular, with Quebec.

A partnership has been established on immigration. A proposal to rectify a situation should not create another injustice. If the government introduces a national, coast to coast policy, and this national policy does not respect the policies that are already in force in the provinces, once again, we will have to deal with some difficult situations.

I say to my colleague that I agree with changes to immigration, but in cooperation with the provinces. If ever these changes are made, I really hope that the federal government will make them in cooperation with the Quebec government.

I would now like to talk about one of the causes of this exodus. The exodus of people from rural regions to cities, particularly young people, is a growing problem. The federal government is largely responsible for this exodus by refusing to loosen employment insurance rules.

In the Maritimes, as in Quebec, Ontario and western Canada, everyone is suffering as a result of the employment insurance legislation. The legislation is very strict, it has no flexibility and it pays no regard to seasonal workers. It does not meet the needs of rural regions. What we do know is that it prevents people from settling in regions or rural areas. Here is an example.

A young person moves to a region and gets a seasonal job. He gets a job in a unionized plant where there are seniority lists. Before being eligible for EI benefits, he must work 910 hours. Think about it, 910 hours.

If there is an economic downturn, or a period where the seasonal work ends, this young person is unable to qualify for EI benefits. What does he do? He turns around and looks for a job, and ends up moving to an urban centre where he will be able to find more permanent employment that allows him to get his 910 hours.

● (1810)

We all know that when a person leaves a region and begins to feel at ease in a large city, that person does not go back to his region. This happens all the time.

In my riding, I often see young people who are attending CEGEP or university, and they do not necessarily come back to the riding of Lotbinière—L'Érable. This situation may also explain why, when a young person leaves his or her region, that person does not necessarily come back to work there. This is truly an unfair situation, a glaring injustice to the new generation.

If we want to revitalize regions and rural communities, it is essential that young people remain there. Then, once we have managed to keep our young people in our ridings, we can go ahead with the proposal put forward by the hon. member from the Maritimes and change immigration laws in our country to repopulate these regions, but always with the agreement of the provinces. This is done in Quebec, with the provincial government.

Personally, I think that, in the immigration sector, we have established a kind of partnership between the provincial and federal

governments and we must continue in the same direction, so that the gains made by the Quebec government can be maintained, regardless of the changes made to the Immigration Act.

When we talk about economic development, again it is a rather broad notion. Everybody is involved with economic development, but there does not seem to be a common ground between the provinces and the federal government where they talk to one another and create a true economic program aimed at the regions and rural areas.

When I see the way the federal government believes in the regions and rural areas, and the crumbs it is giving the Secretary of State for Rural Development, I understand why people in the regions are starting to wonder. They are starting to really question how serious the government is with regard to the regions and rural areas.

If the federal government wants to send the clear message that it is ready to support the regions and rural areas, it is all fine and good to philosophize, make fine speeches and have lofty principles, but there has to be a commitment to real action. This means that the Throne from the Speech must contain concrete measures for the regions and rural areas.

When the Minister of Finance makes a budget statement, as he did in Halifax, he must signal that his government believes in the regions and rural areas. But through the years—I have been here since 1997—I have seen no real intent on the part of the current government to send a real message that it will help the regions and rural areas and support the efforts by communities to see to their own needs. Communities were so hard hit by cuts in government programs that they need support and encouragement.

I believe the federal government should take this issue seriously and send a clear message, namely that the minister of Finance or the Prime Minister will commit money and resources to encourage people. This, way people will be able to say that the federal government is doing its job.

● (1815)

[*English*]

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in this debate. I commend my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester for putting forward this private member's business. It should probably should be the subject of a take note debate in the evening because this is a subject of interest for all of us who come from rural Canada.

I listened to my Bloc colleague and he is correct in saying that it is long overdue for action. We talk about it continually. A lot of us here cut our teeth at the municipal level and from our own experience it is very frustrating when we see population decreases.

Private Members' Business

My riding of Dauphin—Swan River has lost about 8% of its population. We are very much an agriculture based community. We are basically primary producers. We are not like Ontario which gets the benefit of the production of the farms in rural Ontario. In Ontario the farmers benefit from the farm gate to the kitchen table. They have it all and they get all the jobs that come with it. Where I come from the poor farmer just grows the crop, the grain disappears, the product disappears and there is no value added.

We have talked about this for years. It is pathetic that not more is being done. I disagree with the Alliance member who said it is time to do things differently, that they do not believe in grants. That is right; they do not believe in grants or transfer payments, but they speak from the point of view of a province that is oil rich. It has population growth and lots of jobs. I am speaking from the point of view of a province which is population poor. I would not say it is resource poor, but it is population poor. We tend to lose all of our population. Manitoba and Saskatchewan are very similar.

The only way to reverse the trend of depopulation of communities in rural Canada is to have jobs. People need a reason to go back to rural Canada. It has to be more than the phenomenon I see in southern Ontario where people live around the cities. They work in the cities on weekdays and on weekends they rush out to Ontario's cottage country. That in itself creates other problems in terms of infrastructure and resources.

Depopulation will literally kill our small communities. We are losing all of our students to the larger centres. Students from rural areas are disadvantaged because they have to pay for room and board besides their tuition fees when they go to universities in the larger centres. One solution would be for rural students to be educated at home. Certainly with the Internet and other technology, that should be available. I do not think it is an unreasonable expectation. Even if they were educated at home, what would come next? If there is no work, what else could they do?

I believe the depopulation has continued because of governments, provincially and municipally to an extent. For example, I was at a business opening last week and the mayor of the small community said it was the first time that a new business had hung up a shingle in his community in over 20 years. His community's population is relatively small.

The other irony is that most small communities try. They have economic development officers. The Secretary of State for Rural development and northern development in Ontario tries hard. He has had conferences and meetings throughout the country. He has met with people from the municipal level. I have even sent representatives to some of these meetings. But it is time to stop talking. It is time to put our money where our mouths are.

My party disagrees with the Alliance. We believe that government intervention is necessary because we do not have the same resources. We need value added manufacturing. My riding is probably the hemp capital of Canada, not the kind that is smoked, but the kind that is grown, pressed and made into environmentally friendly material. There is the automobile industry as well. However, the problem again is money.

● (1820)

There are infrastructure needs which require help from all levels of government. We need government assistance to make rural Canada attractive to bring industry into those areas so that they have a reason and a purpose to be there.

The irony is that lifestyle is a big issue today. Most people do not want to live in cities. Most of us want to live in an area where we can walk to a park and perhaps be involved in outdoor recreation within a 10 or 15 minute drive. We want to have a better lifestyle rather than living in an environment of concrete and steel. Overall the country would benefit if we reversed the trend and moved people further away from the cities.

In my province of Manitoba, the only place that is growing is around the city of Winnipeg. Unfortunately the city of Winnipeg takes in about 60% of the population of the province, but most of the growth is within an hour's drive of the city of Winnipeg. The province is a lot bigger than an hour's drive outside the city of Winnipeg.

We have to move the boundaries further north and west. Small communities and municipal leaders need help not only from the federal government but certainly from the provincial government as well. It is long overdue. The municipalities need to have more say. They need to be at the table.

One idea that came up in the last couple of weeks with the immigration minister was having new immigrants move to rural areas. I agree with him and I applaud him for that. My concern is that in the short term it may work, but after three years they will probably end up back in the cities where most of them are today. As members know, 85% of Canadians live in big cities.

The immigration minister needs to enhance and enlarge the provincial nominee program. It already is successful, but the missing segment is to get the municipalities to sit at the table and become main stakeholders. Those are the concerns I have representing the rural riding of Dauphin—Swan River.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this issue. It has been very helpful to me. I have been keeping score tonight and I will go down the list of members who have spoken.

My riding had a decline in population of 1.4%. Then the member for Algoma—Manitoulin spoke, and his riding has suffered a decline in population of 2.3%. We then heard from the member for Calgary Southeast and his riding's population is up 19%, just for emphasis. The member for Quebec's riding is down 1%. The member for Dauphin—Swan River's riding is down 3.2%. So 80% of the speakers tonight have had a decline in their riding's population. That just goes to show how serious this is. The riding that had the increase was up 19%. It is hard to imagine what it must be like to have to deal with that.

Private Members' Business

I even checked your riding, Mr. Speaker, and your riding is down 1.6%, but the people are so well represented I am sure everything is okay. I also want to point out that the riding of Gander—Grand Falls is down 9.8%. They are fortunate to have such a dynamic and extraordinary member to represent them because they are going to need all the help they can get.

It emphasizes my point. Eighty per cent of the members who spoke tonight have had a decline in population. Does that mean we are a growing country? I do not think so in those areas. It emphasizes my point and I hope that the government takes note of this.

We did not solve the problem tonight. We did not even come up with any specific solutions. We had some good ideas and suggestions, but my goal tonight was to at least raise awareness of the problem. By virtue of the fact that four out of five speakers have suffered a decline in population, it does bring that home.

From a rural Canada perspective, from one who is really proud to be from rural Canada, who loves to be from rural Canada and cannot

wait to go home tomorrow to rural Canada, it is a critical issue. This migration of population within our country is going to change the face of our country more than any other single thing we deal with.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly will be glad to help you with your population decline if I can. This is a serious issue and if I can, help I will.

• (1825)

The Deputy Speaker: I will not comment on the generous offer from the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester. 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.

[*Translation*]

It being 6:26 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

(The House adjourned at 6:26 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, November 7, 2002

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Performance of Departments and Agencies

Ms. Robillard 1419

Committees of the House

Justice and Human Rights

Mr. Cauchon 1419

Canada Customs and Revenue Agency

Ms. Caplan 1419

Committees of the House

Citizenship and Immigration

Mr. Assad 1419

Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Regan 1419

Committees of the House

Procedure and House Affairs

Mr. Regan 1419

Motion for concurrence 1419

(Motion agreed to) 1419

Petitions

Child Pornography

Mr. Gouk 1419

Justice

Mr. Fontana 1419

Child Pornography

Mr. Fontana 1420

Mr. Peric 1420

Mr. Ritz 1420

Stem Cell Research

Mr. Ritz 1420

Age of Consent

Mr. Ritz 1420

Child Pornography

Mr. Hilstrom 1420

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Regan 1420

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Citizenship of Canada Act

Mr. Coderre 1421

Bill C-18. Second reading 1421

Mrs. Ablonczy 1423

Ms. Dalphond-Guiral 1426

Ms. Wasylcyia-Leis 1431

Ms. Dalphond-Guiral 1433

Mr. Desrochers 1433

Mr. Mark 1434

Mr. Telegdi 1436

Mr. Mark 1438

Ms. Dalphond-Guiral 1439

Ms. Meredith 1439

Ms. Dalphond-Guiral 1440

Mrs. Hinton 1441

Mr. Bryden 1442

Mr. Peric 1442

Mr. Bryden 1443

Mr. Schmidt 1444

Ms. Dalphond-Guiral 1445

Ms. Lalonde 1445

Mr. Rocheleau 1446

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Senior of the Year

Mr. Peric 1447

Afghanistan

Mr. Day 1447

The Queen's Jubilee

Mr. Savoy 1447

Fisheries

Mr. Cuzner 1447

Minority Official Language Communities

Mr. Binet 1447

Project Red Ribbon

Mr. Cadman 1448

Veterans Week

Mr. Pratt 1448

Izzy Asper

Ms. Gagnon (Québec) 1448

Bette MacDonald

Mr. Eyking 1448

Child Pornography

Mr. Thompson (Wild Rose) 1448

Order of the Legion of Honour

Mr. Bélanger 1449

Ramadan

Mr. Comartin 1449

Child Poverty

Ms. Guay 1449

Mayor of Vancouver

Ms. Fry 1449

Canada-U.S. Border

Mr. Mark 1450

Terrorism

Mr. Cotler 1450

Queen's Jubilee Medals

Mr. Schmidt 1450

Education

Ms. Phinney 1450

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**National Defence**

Mr. Harper 1450

Mr. McCallum (Markham) 1450

Kyoto Protocol

Mr. Harper 1450

Mr. Anderson (Victoria) 1451

Justice

Mr. Harper 1451

Mr. Cauchon 1451

Coast Guard

Mr. Cummins 1451

Mr. Thibault 1451

Mr. Cummins 1451

Mr. Thibault 1451

Government Contracts

Mr. Gauthier 1451

Ms. Copps 1451

Mr. Gauthier 1451

Ms. Copps 1452

Mr. Lanctôt 1452

Mr. Goodale 1452

Mr. Lanctôt 1452

Mr. Goodale 1452

Criminal Code

Mr. Blaikie 1452

Mr. Cauchon 1452

Mr. Blaikie 1452

Mr. Cauchon 1452

Government Contracts

Mr. Clark 1452

Ms. Copps 1452

Mr. Clark 1452

Mr. Goodale 1453

National Defence

Mr. Benoit 1453

Mr. McCallum (Markham) 1453

Mr. Benoit 1453

Mr. McCallum (Markham) 1453

Government Contracts

Mr. Guimond 1453

Mr. Goodale 1453

Mr. Guimond 1453

Ms. Copps 1453

National Defence

Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca) 1453

Mr. McCallum (Markham) 1453

Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca) 1454

Mr. McCallum (Markham) 1454

Government Contracts

Mr. Gauthier 1454

Mr. Boudria 1454

Mr. Gauthier 1454

Mr. Collenette 1454

Terrorism

Mr. Day 1454

Mr. Easter 1454

Mr. Day 1454

Mr. Easter 1454

National Defence

Ms. Thibeault 1455

Mr. McCallum (Markham) 1455

Border Security

Mr. Comartin 1455

Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale) 1455

Mr. Masse 1455

Mr. Rock 1455

Kyoto Protocol

Mr. Herron 1455

Mr. Anderson (Victoria) 1455

Mr. Herron 1455

Mr. Anderson (Victoria) 1456

Border Security

Ms. Meredith 1456

Ms. Caplan 1456

Ms. Meredith 1456

Mr. Coderre 1456

Agropur Plant in Chambord

Ms. Girard-Bujold 1456

Mr. Drouin (Beauce) 1456

Ms. Girard-Bujold 1456

Mr. Drouin (Beauce) 1456

Border Security

Mr. Kenney 1456

Mr. Coderre 1456

Mr. Kenney 1457

Mr. Coderre 1457

Marriage

Mr. Duplain 1457

Mr. Cauchon 1457

Grain Transportation

Mr. Hilstrom 1457

Ms. Bradshaw 1457

Mr. Hilstrom 1457

Ms. Bradshaw 1457

Foreign Affairs

Mr. Crête 1457

Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale) 1458

Kyoto Protocol

Mr. Harb 1458

Mr. O'Brien (London—Fanshawe) 1458

Iran	
Mrs. Hinton	1458
Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale)	1458

Child Poverty	
Mrs. Tremblay	1458
Ms. Folco	1458

Income Tax Act	
Mrs. Desjarlais	1458
Mr. Bevilacqua (Vaughan—King—Aurora)	1458

National Defence	
Mrs. Wayne	1458
Mr. McCallum (Markham)	1459

Public Service	
Mr. Pankiw	1459
Ms. Robillard	1459

Cuba	
Mr. Price	1459
Mr. Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi)	1459

Business of the House	
Weekly Statement	
Mr. Reynolds	1459
Mr. Boudria	1459
Parliamentary Reform	
Mr. Boudria	1460
Motion	1460
(Motion agreed to)	1460

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Citizenship of Canada Act	
Bill C-18. Second reading	1460
Mr. Dubé	1460
Ms. Folco	1461
Mr. Bigras	1461
Ms. Folco	1462
Mr. Bigras	1464

Ms. Girard-Bujold	1464
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	1465
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	1465
Mr. White (Langley—Abbotsford)	1466
Mr. Laframboise	1468
Mr. Szabo	1468
Mr. Masse	1468
Mrs. Desjarlais	1470
Mr. Bigras	1471
Mr. Bigras	1471
Ms. Girard-Bujold	1473
Mr. Laframboise	1473
Mrs. Tremblay	1473

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Committees of the House

Official Languages	
Mr. Boudria	1475
Motion	1475
Mrs. Tremblay	1475
(Motion agreed to)	1475

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Citizenship of Canada Act	
Bill C-18. Second reading	1475
Mrs. Tremblay	1475

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Small Communities	
Mr. Casey	1476
Motion	1476
Mr. St. Denis	1479
Mr. Kenney	1480
Mr. Desrochers	1481
Mr. Mark	1482
Mr. Casey	1483

MAIL  POSTE

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

Lettermail

Poste-lettre

**1782711
Ottawa**

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:

Communication Canada - Publishing
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S9

En cas de non-livraison,

retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :

Communication Canada - Édition
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S9

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

Also available on the Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire at the following address:

Aussi disponible sur le réseau électronique « Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire » à l'adresse suivante :

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Additional copies may be obtained from Communication Canada - Canadian Government Publishing, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S9

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Communication Canada - Édition, Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S9

**On peut obtenir la version française de cette publication en écrivant à : Communication Canada - Édition
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S9**