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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, February 12, 2003

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

CONTENTS

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

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 12, 2003

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[*English*]

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

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

BASKETBALL

Mr. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand and recognize an exciting national sports event in my riding. The Breton Education Centre in the town of New Waterford once again successfully hosted the annual Coal Bowl Basketball tournament last week.

High school students from across Canada compete annually in the Coal Bowl. This year's winner was St. Pat's High from Halifax, Nova Scotia. Our hon. colleague, the Minister for ACOA, also participated in this tournament many years ago. I can state that he can still hit the hoop.

Under the leadership and direction of Breton Education Centre principal, Jim Kavanaugh, and his executive, the Coal Bowl tournament has grown to become one of the elite high school basketball events in the country.

I would like to commend all the dedicated volunteers and sponsors for their commitment to making this event a great success in the past 22 years.

The spirit and hospitality of the good people of the town of New Waterford is evident everywhere one turns. I congratulate them on a job well done.

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LIBERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, our world is once again being thrust into a very dangerous situation where the outbreak of war is possible. For many years, because of my own personal beliefs as a Christian, I have

found myself unable to support our country being a part of armed aggression.

Even though I feel this way, it is the right of every member of Parliament to have the opportunity to express not only his or her own feelings but also those of their constituents on this very crucial matter, and not only to express themselves in debate but to have a vote in the House before we decide to commit Canadian troops and resources.

Yesterday the Liberal government prevented the elected representatives of the people from doing that when it voted against our Canadian Alliance motion.

It is shameful to think that the Prime Minister and indeed his potential replacement, the phantom member for LaSalle—Émard, continue to block any democratic reform of our government institutions. The list is lengthy and includes closure on debate, overturning standing committee recommendations, not allowing private members' bills to be votable and the list goes on and on.

Surely Canadians are becoming as frustrated as I am about the lack of democracy in this country.

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LITHUANIA

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, February 16, the people of Lithuania and Lithuanian Canadians will be celebrating the 85th anniversary of the restoration of independence of Lithuania.

February 16 is and always will be a significant and meaningful date for Lithuanians. It is on that date in 1918 that Lithuania declared its independence from czarist Russia and re-declared its sovereignty again in 1990.

On this proud occasion of Lithuanians day of independence, I wish to express the hope that the excellent relations that exist between Lithuania and Canada will further strengthen and develop for the benefit of our two nations. The cultural and diplomatic ties between our countries have been fostered and strengthened over time through the twinning of cities, military co-operation through NATO's partnership for peace, as well as trade investment initiatives such as the Baltic express missions in 1998 and 2000.

I would like to offer my congratulations to President Adamkus, the Lithuanian parliament and to the people of Lithuania on this momentous occasion.

S. O. 31

[*Translation*]

RENÉ L. DORÉ

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that the Ottawa—Vanier community learned that it had lost René Doré, one of its own, last Sunday. René was a leading light in Vanier, as Denis Gratton wrote today in *Le Droit*.

Retired from municipal life after 32 years of service, and co-owner of a well-known corner store, René always took his community's interests to heart.

He was the chair of Action Vanier, which beautifies Vanier each summer. He worked to reopen the sugar bush, the only one in the city. My hon. colleagues are quite familiar with it. He worked on various community groups, including the Fondation Pauline-Charron, the Marie-Médiatrice church, the Knights of Columbus and Publi-Art. René was, without a doubt, a pillar of his community.

On behalf of my hon. colleagues and the people of Ottawa—Vanier, I want to send Diane, his wife, and all his family and friends, our sincerest condolences.

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[*English*]

CANADA CUSTOMS AND REVENUE AGENCY

Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Brampton West—Mississauga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the CCRA's approach to its clients is guided by its values of integrity, professionalism, respect and co-operation. Every employee strives to meet these high standards every single day.

CCRA seeks the views of Canadians on the service it provides. The latest CCRA baseline study indicates that at least three out of every four Canadians believe that the CCRA is professional, honest, efficient, fair and treats the public with respect while respecting the confidentiality of information.

In addition, almost three-quarters of Canadians believe that the CCRA is continually working to improve its services and that it cares about the needs of the public.

Fair treatment and a commitment to the rights of Canadians are fundamental to the relationship CCRA has with its clients. The fairness program and the independent appeals branch are tangible evidence of CCRA's commitment to provide Canadians with the timely and impartial review of contested assessments or decisions. It is committed to providing client centred services.

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FISHERIES

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the largest employer in Port Hardy had a major fire Saturday night at the fish processing plant. Fortunately no one was injured but 260 people were put out of work.

The Alpha Processing Plant supplies several hundred tonnes per week of north island fresh farm salmon for the Canadian and international markets.

North Vancouver Island has been under severe stress in recent years in the forest, fishing and mining sectors. It is reassuring to see

the broader community pull together after this tragic fire. Nearby fish processing competitors have agreed to co-operate to maintain capacity for processing during reconstruction of the plant. They will retain important market share and jobs on the water for the growers.

The workers, their families and the community at large are pulling together to rebuild the Alpha Processing Plant.

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[*Translation*]

EID AL-ADHA

Mr. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my best wishes to all Canadian Muslims on the occasion of Eid al-Adha or the festival of sacrifice, one of the most important Muslim holidays. It concludes the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Eid al-Adha lasts three days and commemorates Abraham's faith. Abraham was about to sacrifice his son when a voice from heaven stopped him and allowed him to sacrifice a ram in his son's place.

During the festival, families sacrifice a cow or a ram in memory of Abraham's obedience. They eat a portion of the meat and give the rest to the poor. This celebration reminds us of the importance of sharing what we have with those in need.

Canadians and the House of Commons are committed to fostering and treasuring Canada's diversity. We all benefit from the rich heritage of Canadians of different ethnicities.

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● (1410)

CLAUDE MONGRAIN

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Mauricie has lost one of its most famous sons, a major contributor to the sports scene in our area.

Claude Mongrain passed away on Sunday, to the sorrow of his family, to whom I offer my condolences, and to the sorrow of all those who have been involved directly or indirectly in amateur sports in Mauricie since the mid-1950s.

How does one sum up in just one minute the contributions of "Pit", as he was affectionately referred to by young people and the regional media. Listing his many accomplishments would surely be inadequate as a tribute; others who spent more time with him will do this better.

However, one thing is certain. Everyone thought the world of this big-hearted man who devoted more than 20 years to writing in the daily paper *Le Nouvelliste* about the exploits of our sports stars, but also about the small victories of those who would otherwise go unnoticed.

Mr. Mongrain deserves our recognition. We will long miss the man who was Mauricie's sports personality of the century.

[English]

PEARSON PEACE MEDAL

Mr. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to congratulate Alex Morrison, the founder of the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre on being named the 23rd recipient of the Pearson Peace Medal.

This medal is awarded annually by the United Nations Association of Canada to a Canadian who has made an outstanding personal contribution in international service and understanding.

Recipients of this award have dedicated their lives to humanitarian causes, including aid to the developing world, mediation of armed conflict, assisting refugees and peaceful change through international institutions.

During his 30 years in the Canadian forces, Alex Morrison commanded peacekeeping missions around the world and he was part of the Canadian mission to the United Nations.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating Alex Morrison.

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LIBERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we have read that parents of a grade one student want the word “gun” excised from all classroom literature. They must be Liberals.

We suggest there are other words Liberals will want to remove from textbooks. To begin with, there should be no mention of “corruption”. The word “rotting” should be removed because often the word “corruption” is used under “rotting”. “Conflict” will have to go, just before we excise the word “interest”. “Competence” will be removed, as will the words “reckless disregard for taxpayers money”.

Some letters should be removed from the alphabet. Letters like G, S and T. We should go back in the dictionary under F and take out the word “fraud”.

The former finance minister has a request. He wants the letters C and S and L removed, but only from Canadian books. “Cornucopia” will have to go because it reminds us of the word “corruption”.

We will rely on the minister for removing words from everyday use.

Finally, Jason Malett is a great Canadian.

* * *

CRICKET

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after a 24 year absence from the World Cup of Cricket, yesterday Canada's national team won its first game ever at the international competition in South Africa.

British odds makers had listed Canada as an 11 to 2 underdog against Bangladesh, but instead the team won the game with an amazing 60 run victory.

S. O. 31

Team captain, Joe Harris, called the win a golden moment for Canadian cricket.

Indeed, I think all members will agree that this is a huge and important step forward for the sport of cricket in Canada. This is a game with a long history here which is undergoing rejuvenation and revitalization at present. The team's next game is against Kenya on Saturday.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating team coach, Gus Logie, and the entire Canadian cricket team, and in wishing them good luck in their future games.

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MIDDLE EAST

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under the banner of “Prospects and Challenges”, the National Council on Canadian Arab Relations hosted a dinner last evening celebration of Eid El Adha.

Canada's foreign affairs minister, in speaking on Iraq, used the occasion to stress the importance of “upholding the integrity of a rules based international system” for resolving conflicts “justly and peacefully”.

Given the Liberal government's ever shifting and contradictory approach to Iraq, the council's president, Hussein Amery, took the opportunity to plead for a more consistent application of the multilateral rules based principle.

The foreign affairs minister aroused renewed concerns with his declaration of Canada's policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as one of “urging Israel to freeze all settlement activities in the occupied territories”.

Consistent application of the principle of rules based multilateralism would, at the very least, mean an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and a reversal of its settlement activities.

Nothing less, together with a two state solution and a cessation of violence, will assure lasting peace and justice for all people in this troubled region.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

COMMUNITY TELEVISION

Ms. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, community television makes an indispensable social, economic and cultural contribution to our regions.

Giving a local flair to information strengthens the sense of belonging in our communities. The quality of community broadcasting in Quebec is made possible thanks to the dedication and commitment by thousands of people who do their best to provide information.

Oral Questions

Among these builders and pioneers, who eagerly put their talents to work for their community, I have the privilege of welcoming Nicole Culis to Parliament Hill today. I would like to underscore her remarkable contribution to the development of our community television in the Laurentians.

I applaud your dedication, your diligence and your enthusiasm for quality information.

In congratulating you Mrs. Culis, I applaud all the men and women in Quebec who, like you, have a true gift for developing our regions.

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[English]

FOOD SERVICE INDUSTRY

Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of Canada's biggest and most dynamic industries has reached a significant milestone that I would like to recognize today.

[Translation]

The food service industry is a \$42 billion industry in Canada. It employs a million people, a figure not many industries can match.

[English]

According to a recent report from Statistics Canada, the food service industry hired its one millionth employee sometime in 2002. That person may have been a teenager stepping into his or her first job learning valuable skills, such as dealing with people, meeting deadlines and solving problems. Or maybe that person was a skilled chef, a human resource manager, a marketing expert, a CEO or an entrepreneur investing in bricks and mortar while creating dozens of new jobs.

With more than 63,000 restaurants, bars and caterers, the food service industry has invested in communities from coast to coast to coast.

It is my pleasure and privilege to acknowledge the industry's one million employees and its tremendous contribution to Canada's record of job creation and economic growth.

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, after the Auditor General's scathing report on the failed gun registry, the government hired KPMG to investigate spending improprieties. Then, to further sanitize and whitewash nearly \$800 million of wasted taxpayer money, it hired Ray Hession to investigate the registry, and especially the EDS database, which has cost the taxpayer hundreds of millions of dollars.

However there are two glaring problems with the Hession report. First, it was buried by tabling it on the same day that Colin Powell was speaking at the UN and the premiers were in Ottawa discussing health care. This was no accident.

Second, and even worse, we now know that Hession was a lobbyist for EDS from 1996 until 2000. The Liberals hired the same

person who helped sell them the failed database to investigate the same database. The fox was literally guarding the chickens.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, NATO is in its worst crisis since its foundation over 50 years ago. A member country, Turkey, has called upon its NATO allies to deploy to defend its border given the deepening crisis in Iraq. This government says that it supports Turkey's position but frankly this is irrelevant unless it is backed with some action.

My question for the Prime Minister is this. Has the government communicated to the governments of Germany, France and Belgium, in the strongest possible terms, that their position in blocking this request is unacceptable and is endangering NATO's credibility?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian position is well known because we have our ambassador, and NATO is working on this problem on a daily basis. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that Turkey is a member of NATO and it has the right to organize itself in case it has to face the consequences of a war.

We are supporting Turkey, and the French, Belgium and German governments are aware of our position.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that position. I wish we could have received that kind of clarity when we asked on Monday. We keep getting a lack of clear answers.

This is a government that says that it is against pre-deployment of troops in the Persian Gulf, yet it quietly is sending troops into the region. For months the Prime Minister said that we would require a second United Nations resolution to move on Iraq and yesterday he voted against that position in the House.

Is it really the government's position to straddle every fence it can find and to make Canada as irrelevant as possible in this crisis?

● (1420)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have made Canada extremely relevant because we were the first ones to speak about the need of a UN resolution.

Last summer the Americans and the Brits were talking about going to Iraq without the UN and we lobbied everybody to ensure that there was a resolution. There was a resolution, resolution 1441, and now Dr. Blix will be reporting on Friday. From there we will see what the Security Council members decide, and we will be on the side of the UN as we have always been in the past.

Oral Questions

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, but the question will be which side of the UN. If the world is waiting for leadership from this Liberal government, the world is in very deep trouble indeed.

Today the government is joining countries stepping up security alerts in light of the deteriorating international situation. Now this comes on the heels of the tape reported to be from Osama bin Laden urging solidarity between the al-Qaeda terrorist network and Iraq.

Does the government believe Canada may face serious security threats because of the deteriorating situation around Iraq?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government is always vigilant and we ensure that the Canadian people are protected. My ministers involved in these files are following the situation very closely. Probably at this time, I would recognize that, yes, there might be a higher level of danger because there is talk of a war, but our institutions are in place.

We have passed legislation in the House to ensure that we work to be ready in case of big problems, and I think that Canada is well prepared.

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FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, according to the lobbyist registration form, Raymond Hession was a registered lobbyist of the Department of Justice on behalf of EDS Canada.

EDS is the same firm that was paid \$227 million by the Department of Justice to design the gun registry system. Raymond Hession was the lobbyist during the period when these computer purchases were made. Despite these facts, the Minister of Justice hired Raymond Hession to write a report on what went wrong with the gun registry.

How can the Prime Minister justify this blatant and shocking conflict of interest?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they are getting lower and lower on that file. This is an important file for Canadians.

Mr. Hession is a highly respected business person. He is highly respected as well in the public sector, since he was a deputy minister. If the hon. member would read the report of Mr. Hession, in his 16 recommendations he recommended to move away from the EDS system.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that minister would hire a Groupaction employee to investigate Groupaction. It is probably beyond the grasp of the Prime Minister and his government but they should think about the need for justice to be seen to be done.

Raymond Hession, the lobbyist for EDS Canada; Raymond Hession, the lobbyist always welcomed with open arms in the Department of Justice; Raymond Hession, the lobbyist who was called in to review what went wrong with the firearms fiasco in the Department of Justice.

To the minister or the Prime Minister: is this what he meant yesterday when he rattled on about political cleanliness? Does he think this meets the clean smell test?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one more time, this is a cheap political comment. Mr. Hession is a highly respected business person with 40 years of experience.

Second, if they would read Mr. Hession's report, they would discover a fantastic piece of work, with 16 recommendations. Those recommendations will help the government produce a good plan of action.

What they do not like is that the government is heading in the right direction. We will keep gun control on behalf of public safety and to protect Canadians

* * *

[*Translation*]

IRAQ

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Bloc Québécois, which is giving—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. I know this is Wednesday, but we still need to be able to hear the questions and answers, and that is impossible with all this noise. The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie has the floor and we are going to listen to his question.

● (1425)

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was saying that, unlike the Bloc Québécois, which is giving peace every chance, the government is taking obvious steps in favour of military intervention against Iraq. In addition to dispatching Canadian officers to Qatar, the Prime Minister yesterday got two motions defeated in order to be able to send troops to the front without a second Security Council resolution or a vote in this House.

Will the Prime Minister admit that, if there is a conflict in Iraq, there will no longer anything hypothetical about Canada's participation, because his government is already preparing for war?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a totally gratuitous statement by the leader of the Bloc Québécois.

We are very actively involved with the countries on the Security Council in order to ensure that the matter is dealt with in such a way as to ensure peace and not bring about war. This has always been the government's position.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if it is true that the Prime Minister and Canada are working with the countries on the Security Council, might we know what the Prime Minister is telling them? Which camp is he in? Is he with France, Germany, Russia and China, who are in favour of peaceful means, or with Great Britain and the United States, who want war at any cost?

If he is talking to them, advising them, what advice is he giving?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am recommending that they wait, along with everyone else, for Mr. Blix's report, in order to find out whether Saddam Hussein has violated resolution 1441 in the past, or is doing so now.

The United Nations passed a resolution. They have given a very specific role to the inspectors, and Mr. Blix will be reporting to the entire world on Friday morning.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the American Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, has said that the American military plans to use banned chemical weapons in a possible war on Iraq. There is nothing hypothetical about Mr. Rumsfeld's statement.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that Canada will never ever agree to the use of banned chemical weapons, and can he also tell us what he thinks of such statements by the American Secretary of Defence.

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer to this question is clear. Canada is not using these things, which have been banned by the international community. That is clear.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said that he is convinced by the evidence presented by Colin Powell. While many observers considered this evidence rather weak, the Prime Minister has stated that he is convinced by it.

Mr. Rumsfeld's statements, on the other hand, are very direct. At the same time that the United States is condemning Iraq for having chemical weapons, it is threatening to use similar weapons in a possible attack on Iraq.

If the Prime Minister says that he does not wish to use these weapons, does he intend to publicly condemn the statements made by the American defence secretary?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would surprise me greatly if Mr. Rumsfeld had said that the United States intends to use chemical weapons. This is totally out of character for our staunch ally, the United States. It is not the type of policy they espouse and it is not the direction they are headed in as a world leader. I am certain that the hon. member is mistaken. In a situation as delicate as this, one must choose one's words very carefully.

[English]

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. I listened carefully to what he said in response to an earlier question. He talked about Dr. Blix reporting, and then he said that they would see what the Security Council did.

Am I to take from that answer that in the opinion of the Prime Minister it is up to the Security Council to decide what follows from Dr. Blix's report? Is it up to the Security Council and not to the independent or unilateral action of any other nation?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Security Council has voted on resolution 1441. Dr. Blix will report on what he has observed in Iraq and if Saddam Hussein has obliged. After that, members of the Security Council will have to pass judgment on it. I do not know if there will be another resolution.

I said that it would be highly desirable to have another one but there is no assurance that there will be one.

• (1430)

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is again for the Prime Minister. Whether that judgment on the part of the Security Council takes the form of another resolution or some other form, is it that judgment that the Prime Minister intends to live by?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will have to wait to see what happens on Friday. I am surprised to receive questions from members of that party who say that they do not want to do anything. They do not want Canada to fulfill its obligation as a responsible citizen of the world.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, United States experts told their senate armed forces committee yesterday that North Korea has an untested ballistic missile capable of reaching the western United States. Such a missile then would also be capable of reaching western Canada.

Could the Prime Minister tell us if his intelligence officers agree that North Korea has a missile capable of reaching western North America?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a question of security. At this moment, I cannot confirm or deny. There is some debate about it. I am happy that the leader of the Conservative Party is talking about North Korea. We think there is a very serious problem there and it needs attention at this time. It is not only Iraq. This is another very important problem.

We cannot confirm or deny. We are not in a position to confirm at this time the debate that occurred in the United States yesterday.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is curious that information is available freely to parliamentary committees in the United States and it is denied here to Parliament and the House of Commons.

Since shortly after September 11 Canadian security intelligence officers were part of the international search for Osama bin Laden.

I have two questions for the Prime Minister. First, do Canada's security agencies know where Osama bin Laden is? Second, do they believe—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. It is impossible to hear the question of the right hon. member. Could we have a bit of order, please. We have to be able to hear the right hon. member's question. The right hon. member for Calgary Centre has the floor. Perhaps some of these other conversations could take place behind the curtain.

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Speaker, my second question is this. Do Canada's security officials believe that the al-Qaeda network has regrouped and established itself in parts of Iran and Iraq?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. leader of the Conservative Party for his brilliant question. After question period, I will try to reach Mr. bin Laden by phone.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the former minister of finance created higher taxes for the resource sector than any other type of Canadian firm. This resource sector includes forestry, mining, oil and gas and fisheries. This discrimination must stop.

Will the current Minister of Finance pledge to put all corporate Canada on the same tax footing?

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that we have worked very hard to build a very competitive economy. It has resulted in us leading the G-7 countries in the creation of 560,000 jobs.

We are determined, as we were on the corporate tax rate, to make sure that we have a globally competitive tax regime, including for the natural resources sector.

* * *

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the resource sector will be very happy with that answer, but I want to go to something else. Canadians are rightly upset with the high prices at the gas pumps these days.

Thanks to the Liberals and the Kyoto accord, they ain't seen nothing yet. Ten cents out of every litre of gas go to the federal government in taxes. What is more, the former minister of finance increased gas taxes to eliminate the deficit.

Since the rationale for the increase is gone, when will the Liberal government give Canadians some hard earned relief at the pumps by drastically reducing gas taxes?

•(1435)

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is surprising that the opposition would be asking a question that is really the strength of the Liberal government. We were the government that reduced taxes by \$100 billion, including corporate as well as personal. It is clear to me that the economic plan of the government is working well and it is working well for Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IRAQ

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the Prime Minister says, Canada's actions so far lead us to conclude that it is siding with the United States by supporting, through its silence, comments made by U.S. Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, who wants to ignore NATO and the UN if it suits his purposes.

Is the Prime Minister aware that his silence is contributing to undermining international institutions and that this complacent attitude breaks with Canada's tradition of respecting major international institutions?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I firmly reject the suggestion that the Prime Minister has

been silent. On the contrary, he has been active, diplomatically. He has spoken with President Bush directly on several occasions. He has spoken with all world leaders. He is speaking here in the House.

Our position is clear. We have always encouraged and supported an approach that goes through the United Nations and through the Security Council. We have gotten here, in some measure, thanks to the efforts of the Prime Minister. He has never been silent, he has been active on the international scene and we are very proud of what he has done.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is proud of having taken his cues from others. That is what they have done.

Several countries are seeking a peaceful solution to the crisis in Iraq. They include France, Germany, and Russia. Canada, which says it supports peace, has not made any contribution to international discussions that are currently underway.

How can the Prime Minister keep claiming that he is working for peace, when the only actions he has taken support war?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they may be in opposition, but they must not exaggerate.

It is a well-known fact that we have worked for peace. We must work within an international system. This is a system that we have developed and have worked toward for years. We are there, we worked to build this system. This is the only chance for peace. We will continue our policy and our efforts, despite such statements that have nothing to do with reality.

* * *

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the former finance minister managed to accomplish something that no enemy force in Canadian history ever could. He has brought the proud Canadian Forces to their knees. He slashed \$29 billion from defence spending in the last nine years.

Will the current finance minister promise Canadians to start to undo the damage done by the former finance minister, the phantom from LaSalle—Émard?

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand where the member has been. What the government has been able to do is get this country out of a mess. In 1993 we were faced with a \$42 billion deficit. The IMF was knocking on our door. Now the situation has totally changed. We are leading the G-7 in economic growth and bringing about positive change to people's lives.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, what the former finance minister did is slash \$29 billion from defence spending. Now department sources say they are only going to get \$2 billion to \$2.4 billion over the next three years.

Oral Questions

That is not enough. Our forces need at least \$2 billion to be added to the base budget for next year to cover the \$1.5 billion military deficit and to start rebuilding our military to fight the war on terrorism.

Will the current finance minister invest enough in the next fiscal year to reverse the erosion of the Canadian Forces, or will he be satisfied to merely slow down the decline?

• (1440)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a funny kind of math. He claims a \$29 billion cut in defence spending when it was never that high to begin with. Is it negative? Aside from—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. John McCallum: Apart from this negative defence spending that those members are conjuring up, I think their case is belied by the fantastic performance of our Canadian Forces in the war against terrorism and in other places around the world.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Order. I know it is Wednesday, but it is very difficult for the Chair to hear the questions and the answers. Everyone would be horrified if they woke up tomorrow and read *Hansard* and found something out of order in it. I have to be able to hear in case somebody makes that kind of blunder. No hon. member would want the Chair to miss the questions or the answers. Let us have a little order this afternoon.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the vice chair of the Standing Committee on Industry acknowledged this morning that the increase in gas prices is not due to the international crisis, but rather it is because of a lack of competition and that it is up to the federal government to act. Yesterday the Minister of Industry turned a deaf ear to the requests of the Bloc.

Will he listen to us now that a member of his own party shares our opinion? Will he ask the Competition Bureau to intervene and conduct an investigation?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the Government of Canada, we are always very aware of competition with regard to petroleum products. We monitor the situation daily.

It is important to note that only the provinces have the power to regulate retail prices. In fact, two provinces, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, have already acted to put in place a regulatory system. This option is open to all the provinces.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister's problem is that his colleague goes even further. He maintains that too many people accept the oil companies' argument that the increases in gas prices are due to the possible war in Iraq. The vice chair of the Standing Committee on Industry maintains that it is because the refineries are not observing the rules of competition.

In light of this information, will the minister finally resolve to take action and have the oil industry investigated?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, frankly, I cannot accept the hon. member's suggestion that all powers be centralized with the Government of Canada. This is frankly unacceptable.

The division of powers is set out in the Constitution. The role of the provinces in this area must be respected. We intend to assume our own responsibilities but also respect the role of the provinces. That is clear.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are sick and tired of the candy store mentality this government adopts around budget time. Cabinet ministers get billions of dollars to spend, with no accountability whatsoever.

The environment minister is no different. Reports suggest that he is about to get \$1 billion plus to implement Kyoto even though he has no detailed plan.

Could the Prime Minister explain to Canadians the logic behind allocating money to Kyoto with no idea of how it is going to be spent?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, delighted as I am to have the support of the hon. member for large amounts of money for Environment Canada, I must point out that it is the Minister of Finance, not the environment critic for the Alliance, who will be making these decisions and announcing them on Tuesday next.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the \$1.6 billion the government has already wasted on Kyoto does not include the \$9.7 million it just spent advertising this non-plan.

Now we are told that the finance minister is ready to sign over another \$1 billion dollars plus, before the government even figures out how to waste it.

Rather than having four ministers all trying to get their hands into the Kyoto cookie jar, why does the Prime Minister not outline today his exact plan for spending the Kyoto money, before the budget comes down?

• (1445)

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will have to take up this matter with the Minister of Finance. He is clearly telling the hon. critic for the Alliance Party a great deal more than he is telling me.

If indeed the hon. member is right and large amounts of money are coming to Environment Canada for Kyoto measures, all I can say is, that is a very good cause and a very good way to spend money.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have recently read reports that Canada could be considering a return to Afghanistan. Could the Minister of National Defence please tell the House if this is true?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been approached by the international community for assistance in maintaining peace and security in Afghanistan for the UN mandated mission in Kabul. Canada is willing to serve with a battle group and a brigade headquarters for a period of one year, starting late this summer. We are currently in discussion with a number of potential partners.

* * *

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we have another example of the Liberals listening to the Alliance instead of listening to Canadians.

The so-called balanced approach of half the surplus going to social programs is more like a paltry 10% to social programs and everything else to debt reduction and tax cuts for the wealthy. So much for Liberal values.

The Liberals have missed their budget projections by \$80 billion, 130 times more than Enron over-reporting its revenues.

Why is the government hoarding its revenues instead of housing Canadians who desperately need it? That is the priority. Where is the investment in the social sector?

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that the government is very close to the fifty-fifty mark when it comes to spending.

Quite frankly I also think that the hon. member should look at the results of our economic plan, which has seen people's incomes rise and over 300,000 children get off the poverty roll.

We have seen immense examples of how life has been better with our economic plan. I do not understand why the hon. member cannot take joy in progress.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. I am not sure if he is still here, but in his absence my question is for the Minister of Health.

Last week the Prime Minister agreed that per capita health care funding is unfair to northern Canadians. Yesterday, though, the Minister of Health said she intends to implement this unfair formula in the health accord that territorial leaders recently rejected.

Will the Prime Minister or the Minister of Health assure northerners that they will support a new northern health fund of at least \$60 million that is not based on per capita funding and that fully responds to the critical health care needs of northern and aboriginal Canadians?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I said yesterday was that I am going to sit down with my territorial health colleagues on Monday, February 24, and I am going to listen to them about the challenges they face and will face in implementing the health accord agreed to by first ministers last week.

Certainly I am aware of the unique challenges that my northern colleagues face. I hope to be able to work collaboratively with them to ensure that they secure the benefits for their people which we know will flow from our renewed commitment to health care in this country.

* * *

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, gasoline and home heating oil prices have reached unprecedented highs. Ordinary Canadians are suffering. Last time this happened was just before an election and the then finance minister happened to find \$1.3 billion just like that.

Is the Prime Minister prepared to tell the current finance minister to help with a similar program or do we have to wait for another election?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I regret, the Prime Minister had to leave for some pressing engagements, but I would say to the hon. member, why does he not just wait until Tuesday and then he will see in the budget if all of his dreams come true?

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, just on the eve of the election the former finance minister promised relief to Canadians from high heating costs.

The program was badly managed and resulted in some deceased and incarcerated Canadians getting cheques, but with an unseasonably cold winter and a crisis in the Gulf, will the current Minister of Finance tell us, is there a risk of predatory pricing?

Since his government refused to get rid of the GST, would it consider removing the GST on home heating fuel for this fiscal year?

● (1450)

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope that the hon. member can be a little bit patient. There will be a budget on Tuesday and perhaps he will get his answer then.

*Oral Questions***GOODS AND SERVICES TAX**

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Revenue wanted some facts about GST fraud.

Here are some facts. On page 3.9 of volume two of the Public Accounts of Canada 2001-2002, under debts, obligations and claims written off, there is a figure of over \$1 billion for the CCRA and that is just for one fiscal year.

Can the minister tell us how much of that \$1 billion is written off to possible GST fraud?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I can be even more specific for the hon. member. I would like to tell him that in fact CCRA writes off in uncollectable funds, not only from fraud but also bankruptcies, 0.3% of the amounts that are actually collected.

I must say that this compares very favourably with anyone who deals with accounts receivable.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the numbers the minister continues to raise are confusing Canadians because she is not being clear. In the same public accounts at page 4.2 there is a listed sum of just over \$368 million as an allowance for doubtful accounts for the GST. Again, that is just for one fiscal year.

Can the minister tell us how much of that \$368 million can be attributed to possible GST fraud?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the member, as he knows, is that there are 78 cases presently before the courts. Yesterday he put forward some numbers and if we total all of those up they come to approximately \$80 million, but when the courts finally decide it could be less than that. That is because until the courts make a determination we can only allege certain fraud.

We know that the actual fraud over the last six years has been \$25.4 million. However here is some new information. There is \$13.3 million that was levied in fines and 57 years of jail time by the courts.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is preparing to present a budget which will include considerable amounts for a war described by the Prime Minister as hypothetical. Meanwhile, the spiralling prices of gasoline are hitting consumers hard.

If the government is capable of taking concrete steps in connection with a hypothetical war, what is keeping it from taking action on spiralling gas prices, and from letting us know what the budget will do to help consumers, in particular taxi drivers, truck drivers and farmers?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already stated, regulation of retail gas prices is solely under provincial jurisdiction.

All provinces have the option of regulating prices. Some, such as P.E.I. and Newfoundland, have already done so, in fact. My response to the hon. member is that this decision is up to the provinces.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, strange but true, on the eve of the election the government had a lot more imagination than it does now, when it announced that it would be sending heating oil cheques out to everybody, including people who were dead or in jail.

Does the government plan to be just as imaginative in finding some meaningful ways of helping people to cope with this rise in gasoline prices?

[*English*]

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that in fact we have taken measures to help people in the past. I just want to once again tell the hon. member, as I told the member who spoke earlier, that in fact the budget is coming up next Tuesday and so he should just be patient.

* * *

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the warden of Kingston prison suspended a guard for passing Paul Bernardo a copy of *Maxim* magazine, that is a men's magazine, because he said it contravened the policy that disallows it. The policy states, "sexually oriented material which promotes or encourages any form of a criminal act..."

Does the Solicitor General agree that this suspension was warranted and does the policy actually prevent potential criminal acts?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was wondering while the member was phrasing his question if he was suggesting whether or not that material was legitimate or not, whether it was proper reading material.

The fact of the matter is that within our prison system, prisoners are entitled to read materials and to view programs that are authorized by the CRTC. There are very strict rules within our corrections system to prevent the viewing of material that is considered pornographic.

● (1455)

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that is what I thought he would say. Then why is it that prisons are stocking library shelves with pornography?

Prisoners are subscribing to pornography at their discretion, for example: *Hustler* is in RRC on the library shelves; *Only 18* at Drummond; *Swank* at Warkworth; *Naughty Neighbors* at Fenbrook; and *Wet Dreams* at Mountain, just to name a few.

Could the minister tell me how this double standard is helping to rehabilitate sex offenders in Wayne's World?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the member opposite is promoting certain materials for the public or prisoners to read?

The fact of the matter is that within the corrections system inmates can only read material that is authorized by the prison system. There are certain conditions for some inmates for materials they cannot read within the system. The member opposite is trying to paint everybody with the same brush.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. Perhaps he could expand on the earlier reply by the Prime Minister.

As the minister knows, there is disagreement in NATO about the need for that alliance to provide assistance to Turkey if Iraq attacks in the event of military operations in the region.

What is Canada's position on this very important issue and why?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that excellent question.

As the member pointed out, the Prime Minister has clearly spelled out that Canada has been clear on this issue. We believe strongly that NATO is a defensive alliance. Turkey does run a risk of being attacked in the event that violence takes place in the region. We believe strongly that NATO should be taking prudent and preparatory measures together. My colleague the hon. Minister of National Defence was there and urged Canada's case.

There is no question about what our position is, NATO must be maintained. NATO is an important alliance for Canada. It is a defensive alliance and we wish to support it in this respect.

Mr. Andy Burton (Skeena, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are being prevented from obtaining their passports under the guise of increased national security. In the last six months my constituency office has been inundated by hundreds of angry constituents. Some have even been forced to cancel trips, costing them thousands of dollars, due to the incompetence of the government.

I have repeatedly raised their concerns with the passport department of foreign affairs to no avail. When the advertised processing time is 45 working days, why are my constituents waiting months for their passports?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was good enough in the introduction to his question to point out there is a problem in terms of new security measures and there is a great deal of increased flow of demands for passports. The passport office is making a serious and concerted effort to respond to these requests. I regret any inconvenience to the hon. member or to Canadian citizens.

I want to assure the House that we are taking measures. We have brought in people this weekend and we will be working around the clock to reduce and eliminate the backlog of requests. We have put in measures to enable people to get their passports more quickly and to deal with it more efficiently. I will be circulating to the hon. member, and all members, statements as to how the department is responding to this.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, his measures are not working.

Oral Questions

Along with a number of MPs from all parties I met with Kathryn McCallion, the head of the passport division on December 12, some two months ago. Despite assurances that the process would be improved, the situation has only gotten worse, much worse. Now constituents who have had to have their applications unduly delayed for weeks or months are being asked to cough up an additional \$70 to \$85 to supposedly fast track their applications with no guarantee their passports will arrive on time.

Why is the government now extorting additional fees for doing what should simply be its job?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian citizens recognize that providing a passport is a service that we have to offer and many citizens have expressed to us a willingness to pay additional money if they can have an expedited processing of their form. We are trying to serve the Canadian public as best we can.

I urge members of the House to look at the memorandum which they will be receiving. I believe that the backlog will be reduced. Within a very short period of time we will have a system in place where people applying for passports will be immediately informed whether their form is in proper shape or whether it requires rectification. Procedures are in place and the system will be reformed for Canadians.

* * *

● (1500)

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on December 10, *Le Devoir* ran a headline that read, "Ottawa is teaching the ICAO a lesson by making it wait", then added that the international organization will finally be able to take possession of its new offices provided by Quebec.

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs confirm that the International Civil Aviation Organization may now move into its new offices without calling into question all of the benefits that it and its 33 member states enjoy under agreements between Canada and the organization?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that this very complex issue is about real estate. There were negotiations between several parties, including the Quebec provincial government, the federal government and this international institution.

We will try to resolve the situation as soon as possible in order to keep this major international institution in Montreal to serve not only Canadians but the whole world.

* * *

[English]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

Speaker's Ruling

We all share a concern about the costs associated with the gun registry. Will the Minister of Justice outline how he will achieve a more client friendly and cost effective gun control program?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is talking about costs; therefore, he is talking about Bill C-10A.

Bill C-10A indeed talks about cost reductions with regard to the gun control program. It is a shame to see that the official opposition is trying to block that bill, which would save taxpayers money. That bill would be able to streamline the process. I look forward to the support of all members of the House.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Order, please. I would like to draw to the attention of all hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Pat Binns, Premier of the province of Prince Edward Island.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

PUBLIC SERVICE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Order, please. I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on January 29, 2003 by the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt concerning undue interference by senior public servants in his ability to carry out his duties as a parliamentarian.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt for having raised the matter, as well as the hon. government House leader for his contribution on the subject.

The hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt stated that on December 27, 2002 and from January 3 to 6, 2003 he attempted to conduct a survey of the views of public servants with respect to the impact of the government's bilingualism policy. He named a number of senior public servants from various government departments who he alleged had either forbidden their staff to reply to his survey, or indicated that the confidentiality of replies could not be guaranteed. These actions, he maintained, constituted undue interference in the conduct of his duties as a member of Parliament.

In response to the points raised by the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt, the hon. government House leader pointed out that there had been no attempt to interfere with the member's right to freedom of speech in parliamentary proceedings. Furthermore, he argued that an individual member's right to make inquiries on his or her own initiative should not be confused with the powers of inquiry vested in committees of the House. In concluding his remarks, the government House leader asserted that the manner in which the survey material had been presented had had a disruptive effect on many of the recipient government departments and their staff and that the managers in those departments were justified in taking the action complained of.

● (1505)

[*Translation*]

I have reviewed the facts relevant to the matter and wish to make several points.

First, it is quite true that the House has certain rights and privileges that are necessary to allow it to conduct its business in the Chamber and in Committee.

In his argument, the hon. Member for Saskatoon—Humboldt cited page 50 of Marleau and Montpetit, which states:

"Parliamentary privilege" refers more appropriately to the rights and immunities that are deemed necessary for the House of Commons, as an institution, and its Members, as representatives of the electorate, to fulfil their functions.

Marleau and Montpetit goes on to state at page 51 that:

The House has the authority to invoke privilege where its ability has been obstructed in the execution of its functions or where Members have been obstructed in the performance of their duties.

[*English*]

It is clear that the managers in certain federal government departments dealt with the disruption caused in their departments by the hon. member's e-mails by making various attempts either to prevent their staff from responding, to warn people of the risks that might be involved in responding, or to otherwise limit the negative impact on their networks and e-mail systems. The question before us is whether any of these actions constitute an obstruction of the hon. member's ability to perform his parliamentary duties.

In this regard, I would again like to cite Marleau and Montpetit at page 52, where the limitations of the application of parliamentary privilege to the individual member is described:

Privilege essentially belongs to the House as a whole; individual Members can only claim privilege insofar as any denial of their rights, or threat made to them, would impede the functioning of the House. In addition, individual Members cannot claim privilege or immunity on matters that are unrelated to their functions in the House.

Members do possess certain rights, privileges and immunities—freedom of speech, freedom from arrest in civil actions, exemption from jury duty and so on—but these are finite and apply only in context, which usually means within the confines of the parliamentary precinct and a "proceeding in parliament". In a 1971 ruling related to a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker Lamoureaux made the following point:

In my view, parliamentary privilege does not go much beyond the right of free speech in the House of Commons and the right of a member to discharge his duties in the House as a member of the House of Commons.

In presenting his case, the hon. member argued that the directives to staff from managers with regard to his survey infringed upon his right to obtain information from government sources. Members have an undeniable right to question and obtain information from the government in order to discharge their responsibility of oversight. This function is chiefly carried out in two ways: by asking questions of the government either during question period or by way of written questions, and through inquiries carried out by committees of the House. Both of these proceedings are protected by the full weight of parliamentary privilege. It is not the case, however, that the privilege to seek such information extends to every aspect of a member's activities.

Privilege

[Translation]

In a related case raised in November 2001, I was asked to rule on whether or not a breach of privilege occurred when the government ordered its officials not to appear before an ad hoc committee established by the hon. member and others.

I did not find that the situation constituted a prima facie question of privilege and made the following point:

I do not believe that any one of us has the right to call before us a government official and insist on answers to questions... (the hon. member) stated that the committee that he was chairing was an ad hoc caucus of members. It clearly was not a committee of this House.

[English]

In the case before us again, I cannot find that there has been any contempt or breach of the member's privileges. Had his survey been conducted in the context of a proceeding of this House or one of its committees, it would have been fully protected by privilege. Given the manner in which the survey was circulated and the fact that it was not carried out in relation to a parliamentary proceeding, parliamentary privilege does not apply.

I would urge the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt and other members to look to the other parliamentary options that are available to them in carrying out their duties. They will then be able to avail themselves of the full authority of the House in conducting their inquiries.

The House need not be reminded about the unprecedented difficulties that these mass e-mailings cause. The members will be soon, if they have not already been, informed of new guidelines to regulate this type of communication. In the meantime I know that I can count on the full cooperation of all hon. members to respect the guidelines in their future work.

* * *

● (1510)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 81(14) to inform the House that the motion to be considered tomorrow during consideration of the business of supply is as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the introduction of a national identity card offends the principle of privacy and other civil rights of Canadians and this House therefore opposes its introduction.

This motion, standing in the name of the hon. member for Vancouver East, is not votable. Copies of the motion are available at the table.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

FEDERAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

The Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to section 21 of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act to lay upon the table a certified copy of the report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for New Brunswick.

[Translation]

This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 34 petitions.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN FIREARMS PROGRAM

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the HLB report entitled "Canadian Firearms Program Review".

[English]

The Speaker: The Chair has received notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton and we will hear that now.

* * *

PRIVILEGE**FIREARMS PROGRAM**

Mr. Roger Galloway (Sarnia—Lambton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege arising from the justice minister's response to the question posed by the member for Huron—Bruce during yesterday's question period. I will be brief, as others may feel as I do that this is a matter of extreme importance to the House's overview and approval of public moneys, that is, the public purse.

The minister stated:

—up until the approval of the supplementary estimates, we were moving with what we call cash management.... The program is running at minimum cost but we are able to fulfill our duty.

That raises, I submit, an important question of privilege.

On Thursday, December 5 of last year, on a motion by the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, the House reduced by an amount of approximately \$72 million the supplementary estimates on votes 1a and 5a. The House agreed and voted on that reduction. The government has attempted to manipulate the public perception of this act by spinning the myth that it was the justice minister who withdrew those supplementary estimates.

That \$72 million had been dedicated to the national firearms program. That motion of reduction carried in the House. That motion was the unequivocally clear expression of this chamber to disallow those moneys to the minister. To state otherwise would be patently false and misleading. The record is clear.

Privilege

There is an unequivocal principle in our House that the estimates are the financial expressions of government policy. In brief, the approval of the estimates is the signal to bring on the adoption and consideration of the appropriation bill. In fact, Beauchesne's sixth edition, paragraph 968(1) states:

The concurrence by the House in the Estimates is an Order of the House to bring in a bill, known as the Appropriation Bill, based thereon.

By that December motion to reduce the Minister of Justice's estimates for the firearms program, the House laid down two principles. First, it ordered that no moneys for the national firearms program be included in the appropriation bill. Second, it clearly stated its disapproval, this chamber's disapproval, of the national firearms program. It repudiated the program by ordering no more money for it.

Furthermore it must again be emphasized that the estimates are the financial expression of the minister's policy contained in the national firearms program. The minister's usage of the phrase yesterday in his response of "up until the approval of the supplementary estimates" reveals his failure to accept that the House reduced to zero his estimates on December 5 just passed.

It was 112 years ago that the great commoner, Liberal William Gladstone, delivered a speech concerning public finance, specifically the financing of government by Parliament. That speech is printed in the 1892 book *The Speeches and Public Addresses of the Right Hon. W.E. Gladstone, MP*. Mr. Gladstone embodied the Liberal concern for Parliament's control of public expenditure, known as parliamentary control of the public purse. I am sure that hon. members opposite will want to hear what Mr. Gladstone had to say.

Remembering that the House denied the Minister of Justice \$72 million on December 5, I draw attention to Mr. Gladstone's remarks as set out on page 343:

I must remind you of that which is apt to pass away from recollection, for the finance of the country is intimately associated with the liberties of the country. It is a powerful leverage by which...liberty has been gradually acquired.... If the House of Commons can by any possibility lose the power of the control of grants of public money, depend upon it, your very liberty will be worth very little in comparison.

Mr. Gladstone continued a few paragraphs later:

No; if these powers of the House of Commons come to be encroached upon, it will be by tacit and insidious methods, and, therefore, I say that public attention should be called to this.

● (1515)

Yesterday in question period the Minister of Justice stated that the national firearms program was working. He has said that a lot recently. The minister does not seem to understand that the order, as contained in the December 5 motion to reduce the estimates, binds him. In short, he is obligated to obey that order. He maintains that the national firearms program is running at minimum cost and that he is fulfilling his duty. He fails to recognize that his duty is to the House and its orders.

For the minister to assert that it is a good policy, clearly is not consistent with the position the House adopted by motion, the most recent position of the House.

Again I say that the minister does not accept the very clear fact that the House repudiated his estimates. Again I say that the House repudiated his estimates, which are the financial expression of the

policy embedded in the firearms program. The House did not say anything about cash management when he asked more than two months ago for further funds. It said that the relevant estimates for the national firearms program were reduced to zero.

As a member of the House I voted on that motion. I, as did the House, indicated that such order of the House reducing the estimates would suspend the minister's ability to spend any more money for the national firearms program. That \$72 million, which the House removed, was the total appropriation in support for that program.

That the minister stated yesterday that the registry was working, that it was operating and that it was taking registrations, is contrary to the order of the House. On December 5 the House ordered no more money.

It is clear that order means nothing to the minister. He is simply not obeying the order.

In the nineteenth edition of Erskine May on The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament, it states:

Every question, when agreed to, assumes a form of either an order or of a resolution by the House.

By its orders the House directs its committees, its members, its officers, the order of its own proceedings and the acts of all persons whom they concern...

It has been more than two months since the House vetoed the appropriation for the firearms program. In parliamentary terms, such a denial to a minister of the crown is momentous.

The minister's response is a breach of my privilege and particularly the collective privilege of the House to control the public expenditure. The minister is breaching our privilege because of his disobedience to the order of the House and his refusal to comply with the Commons wish to deny him money.

I submit, based on the foregoing, that there is a prima facie case of privilege.

● (1520)

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I support the hon. member's question of privilege. I will bring forth a few quotes but first I will put this in perspective.

Approximately a week ago I raised a very similar issue which I am waiting for a ruling upon. This strikes at the very heart of democracy. It strikes at the very heart of what we do in this place. If we make decisions as a Parliament and those decisions are completely ignored and gone contrary to by a minister of the crown, that minister of the crown must be found in contempt of this Parliament. That is what is at the heart of this issue.

After reading the answer that the minister gave yesterday to that question, the first thing that occurred to me was, what is cash management. If we vote in the House to de-fund something, that program can no longer exist because Parliament has clearly indicated it no longer has confidence in that program when it no longer funds it. That program should have ceased. That did not happen, and that should be contempt of Parliament.

The minister is hiding money. He is deceiving Parliament by allowing a program to continue to be funded without explaining to us how that funding is taking place. Without this transparency the House cannot function and, by extension, democracy cannot function. The Canadian people are also being kept in the dark because we cannot get answers to these questions.

On page 141 of the nineteenth edition of Erskine May it states:

Conspiracy to deceive either House or any committees of either House will also be treated as a breach of privilege.

That is what we are talking about and that is one of the issues with regard to what is being raised here today.

I also would like to read from Erskine May's twenty-first edition. He describes contempt as:

...any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent for the offence.

That is what is happening here.

We have made a decision. We are trying to function as a House and the minister is thwarting that. He is going against the entire intention that the House clearly signalled when it did not fund the gun registry.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that you would rule in favour of the issue raised here. The minister clearly is in contempt of Parliament. I hope you will give this due consideration.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a rare occurrence when a member of the government stands on a question of privilege to challenge what a cabinet minister has done. Therefore, I believe it is something that warrants our investigation.

Based on what the minister said yesterday, that the program was running at minimum cost and "we are able to fulfil our duty", I presume he was speaking about fulfilling his duty to the program. However we have a procedural question being raised here today, a question of privilege, as to whether or not the minister is fulfilling his duty to the House in terms of the vote that took place December 5.

The government needs to disclose where those funds are coming from. If it is running this program at minimum cost, have other moneys been moved in, contrary to the vote that took place on December 5? The House made a very strong decision that \$72 million would not be approved and the government agreed to that. There is a question here as to how this program is now running at minimum cost, and whether or not other funds have been brought forward to continue the program.

It is important that there be a full disclosure because, surrounding the issue of the gun registry, there is also the matter of tabling of reports a couple of weeks ago and the fact that not all reports were tabled.

This is something of great concern to all of us in terms of abiding by the principles and the rules of the House to ensure that there is full disclosure and that when we vote on something we are voting on the basis that we understand what has been approved and there is not

Privilege

then a backdoor route to continuing something that has not been approved by the House.

• (1525)

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I also support the points that have been made already and that the member for Sarnia—Lambton has brought forward in an unusual way. It is unusual for a government backbencher to, in such a forceful way, outline the failings and the inadequacies of his own government and his own minister on this file in particular.

We are talking about a motion that I raised in the House back on December 5, 2002, in which \$72 million were taken away from this program by the unanimous consent of the House. All members of the House agreed that the firearms program should be reduced by that amount.

That does lead to questions as to: How is this program operating fully now? How is it that the government is continuing to fund this program? What are the sources of the funding that has continued?

The reports that have been brought before the House of Commons, the Hession report, also challenged the ability of the government to continue to fund this program without borrowing from other departments or borrowing from other areas.

The Auditor General also spoke of Parliament being kept in the dark, which is a substantial and damning statement to hear from the Auditor General.

We know that Bill C-10A was rammed through the Senate and will be coming back to us asking for more money for this particular program. The government is now scrambling to get this program fully funded through a piecemeal piece of legislation that has been picked apart in the other place and that will be sent back here. Now it is trying to shunt this issue to one side while millions more are going into the program.

Mr. Speaker, I want to specifically refer you to the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Marleau and Montpetit, where it states at page 741, and I would ask for the Chair's particular attention to this point:

Once adopted, the legislation will authorize the government to withdraw from the Consolidated Revenue Fund amounts up to,—

And I emphasize, Mr. Speaker, "up to":

—but not exceeding, the amounts set out in the Estimates for the purposes specified in the Votes.

We know, as a result of that December 5 motion, the government specifically reduced, unanimously, in the House, \$72 million from the budget to operate the firearms program.

How is it, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton and other members of the House ask, that this registry is still operating at full capacity? How can that be? The spirit of that vote is being violated by the Minister of Justice continuing to operate this program. The spirit and intention of the House in reducing the funds by \$72 million was obviously a signal that we were not supporting the continuation of the firearms program.

Privilege

I would suggest that the hon. member has made a very salient and relevant point when he asks: Where is the money coming from? How is it that Parliament is permitting this to continue? How is it that the minister is continuing to fund this program?

The new budget is supposed to be coming forth. There is no doubt in my mind that there will be an attempt to reduce by some other amount, whether it be a dollar or more, and back door this funding for the program as we have seen in the past.

I would suggest that now is the time to cut this off, to put an end to this ridiculous, retroactive use of taxpayer money to fund a firearms program that is not working, that is not protecting Canadians.

The Minister of Justice is being misleading when he talks about Canadians being for gun control. This is not gun control. This—

• (1530)

The Speaker: I think the member has gone well off the question of privilege that was raised, so we will move on to the hon. government House leader.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just want to re-establish a few facts.

First, the estimates were reduced at the request of the minister. It is at the request of the minister that the amounts were reduced, transmitted through me to other members of the House, and then later the amounts were reduced.

The Chair will remember how the motion was moved or allegedly moved by consent. Perhaps that is secondary, but what was alleged is factually incorrect.

With regard to the issue of the estimates, what has been reduced is the size of the supplementary estimates. No program has been cancelled. The House did not vote to cancel gun control. I never heard anyone say on the floor of the House “Mr. Speaker, I move that we cancel gun control and that program be annulled”. As a matter of fact, funds to forward the program were there long before, and continue, as we all know.

We did not cancel a particular program and no one ever suggested that we did. Proof of that is that hon. members across were asking questions about the gun registry program as late as a day ago. Would they logically have been asking yesterday in the House of Commons about a program that they knew had ceased to exist months ago? No, Mr. Speaker.

This is less than genuine. What we are hearing today is an allegation that the program was cancelled months ago. No such program was cancelled.

I think I speak for the majority of the members of the House and the majority of Canadians when I say that gun control, the registry of firearms in Canada, still enjoys the favour of the majority of Canadians. That is a fact.

The Speaker: I would caution the hon. government House leader, as he was keen to point out that the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough seemed to stray from the mark.

He appears to be straying away from the mark too. We are dealing with a question of privilege and I know he will want to stick to the point.

Hon. Don Boudria: Thank you for reminding me, Mr. Speaker. There is an allegation of a conspiracy to deceive. That is as well factually inaccurate. I am responding to what was raised previously. There is no such conspiracy on the part of the hon. Minister of Justice, nor do I believe anyone else in the government, to deceive anyone. The amount of the appropriation was reduced. That is a fact. This is the amount of an appropriation in a supplementary estimate, not the final amount of the overall year, not even the initial amount. This is the amount of an increase in a supplementary estimate and nothing else.

Then it was alleged by, I believe, the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough that Bill C-10A was going to increase the amount levied to pay for the firearms registry program. The bill in question, as just about everybody in the House knows, and I recognize why some hon. members being otherwise occupied would not know, reduces the cost of gun control by some \$3 million to \$3.5 million a month. How on earth does that constitute increasing the cost of gun control? It has nothing to do with it. That was nothing better than an editorial comment.

An hon. member: That is not the subject he is supposed to speak on. Why is he allowed to speak about anything, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry if the hon. member is a bit agitated.

An hon. member: I am not agitated.

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, the estimates in question, contrary to what was alleged, were carried. The estimates were carried. The appropriation bill was carried in the House of Commons. It was passed. It was passed by the other place and it became law, and it is to this day the law of the land. So in fact, the estimates carried and the appropriations carried.

It may be quite true that the first print of the bill was different from what finally passed, but it is not true to say that the minister's estimates were so-called repudiated. That is factually incorrect. The minister's estimates and the overall estimates of the government were carried by this House, the other place, and later proclaimed into law when Your Honour appeared before the bar of the Senate and I was there in my capacity as House leader to see the carriage of those estimates.

That is incorrect. In fact, the question of privilege that we have before the House today is not one. The minister did nothing that offends the privileges of the House. Quite the contrary, he has respected the House as he always does.

• (1535)

The Speaker: I am reluctant to hear more on this matter. Every party has had participation in the dispute, but if the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast is very brief and very relevant, I will hear him for a few minutes. I am not going to let him rattle on the way some other hon. members may have done.

Routine Proceedings

I will look into the matter and I will get back to the House in due course.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very important matter. I think the Speaker should be apprised of when this vote for the \$72 million was to take place in the House. The government House leader was correct. He did some negotiating around the table. It is not correct to say that one person's motion was why this was done. The minister wanted to take \$72 million out of his budget because he knew he would lose his whole budget if he did not do that. Members of his own party would not vote for his budget with that \$72 million in it.

This party could have played political games, and so could have others, and we said no, let us have it go to a vote and really disrupt the government. We decided we would help speed things up. We agreed and the House agreed to drop the \$72 million, so everybody assumed that we would see no new action in gun control.

Mr. Speaker, I do not need to read to you the question and answer of yesterday, but anybody who does read it will see that the minister is waffling. He does not tell Parliament how he has cut back the \$72 million that had to be in there for the gun registry. I would say to the House leader that this is not about gun control, it is about a gun registry, a gun registry that has run amok.

If we go back to look at what the Auditor General said about this department, which is what started this whole thing going, she said that the report deals with two issues of great concern: the need for Parliament to see full and accurate information from the government, and the government's ability to successfully manage its long term reform and issues. It is a long dissertation with which I will not bother you, Mr. Speaker, because I know you will want to look it up yourself to make sure you see all the details of this issue.

In the Auditor General's report, at page 10, she talks about this department and how it does not give Parliament full information. It would seem to me by the minister's answer to a member of his own government party yesterday that he is telling the House he is not listening to what is happening. He said that he was sure we will all go along when we see the supplementary estimates.

In the meantime, how can he maintain the program? He said from "cash". Which cash? Is it cash from another section of his department? I think the House made it very plain when it voted that day that there was to be no money in the minister's department for the gun registry until he could come back to the House with a plan that we could all vote on and see that it works. That is not what is happening. The government is still running it like it is a regular program.

I would hope that you will dig into all the details of this, Mr. Speaker, so that Parliament, including government members, can feel that the government does listen to parliamentarians when they vote.

The Speaker: I want to thank all hon. members who have participated in the discussion this afternoon for their contributions: the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton for raising the matter, the hon. members for Yorkton—Melville, Vancouver East, Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough and West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast for their assistance, and of course the government House leader for his assistance.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

TERRORISM

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to advise the House that the government has listed three more entities pursuant to the Criminal Code, bringing to 19 the total designated since last July under Canada's Anti-Terrorism Act.

The newly listed entities are the following: Abu Nidal Organization, Abu Sayyaf Group, and Sendero Luminoso organization.

This listing is a public confirmation that these entities are engaged in terrorist activity. The consequences are severe, not only for terrorists but for those who support them. It is now a crime to knowingly participate in, contribute to, or facilitate the activities of these entities. Any person or group that is listed may have its assets seized and forfeited. Those who deal with the property or finances of these entities are subject to severe penalties, including up to 10 years imprisonment.

The listing process was carefully designed to balance our collective right to security with individual rights and freedoms. We cherish these freedoms, but we must recognize as a reality that there are those in society and around the world who would use these very freedoms against us.

As I have said before, this list is a work in progress. I can assure the House that the assessment process for other possible listings of those who support terrorism is continuing.

Nearly a year and a half has passed since September 11. The events of that day galvanized us and many other nations to action. Since then we have acted swiftly and decisively. From the listing of entities to the freezing of assets to the signing and ratification of international agreements, our efforts to combat terrorism have been both comprehensive and balanced.

However, we are not done. Our anti-terrorism measures and capabilities will steadily increase as we continue with our long term anti-terrorism plan, as provided for in budget 2001. We shall continue to be part of the international effort to deny terrorists sanctuary, funding and a base of operations.

During the last year we witnessed new acts of terrorism around the world. Those who perpetrate these acts of terror must be confronted, pursued and brought to justice. This is a national and international challenge.

Routine Proceedings

We cannot consider ourselves immune. As a nation, our paramount duty is to ensure our safety and security, but this obligation does not stop at our borders. That is why we have been working more closely than ever before with the international community and in particular with our good neighbours to the south. We are committed to working together to protect our common beliefs in freedom, democracy and the rule of law, and while from time to time we may disagree on issues, we continue to make great strides toward achieving our common security goals.

We have accomplished a great deal, some of it by moving forward on our own and a great deal through teamwork. The smart border declaration is testimony to that. That is why we will continue to improve our law enforcement and security intelligence co-operation, which even before September 11 was, as United States Attorney General Ashcroft has noted, a model of co-operation and an example of how two neighbouring countries should conduct themselves.

Just last December I met with Attorney General Ashcroft to sign an agreement to improve the exchange of fingerprint information between the FBI and the RCMP. This spring we will meet again under the longstanding Cross Border Crime Forum to continue to fine-tune this co-operation. It is this type of collaboration, along with dedication and continued action, that will further strengthen our global offensive against terrorism.

These are indeed troubling times and this must be a time for vigilance and preparedness. We are determined and committed to making the right choices to safeguard the nation against terrorism and to protect our freedoms and our values.

• (1540)

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I welcome the opportunity to respond to the Solicitor General's statement regarding the listing of a further three entities pursuant to the Criminal Code.

In late November the Solicitor General stood in the House to announce the addition of six entities to the list initiated on July 23, a list that contained a meagre seven terrorist organizations.

On December 11 the Solicitor General rose again to announce that Hezbollah was finally being added to the list but only after enduring two weeks of relentless pressure from the official opposition and from the foreign affairs critic.

Since July 23, when the Solicitor General first announced the listing of terrorist organizations, the Canadian Alliance as well as many organizations and concerned citizens criticized the government for failing to list Hezbollah as well as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Tamil Tigers, all known terrorist entities as identified by the United Nations.

We have repeatedly condemned the government for the inordinate amount of time that it took to compile the initial listing at a snail's pace at which names were being added on an ongoing basis.

Bill C-36, the Anti-terrorism Act, received royal assent in December 2001. After more than a year, we now only have 19 entities listed as terrorist organizations while the United Nations has listed over 200. Furthermore, Jemaah Islamiah, responsible for the

largest terror attack since 9/11 in Bali, and FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Force of Colombia, are still missing from that list.

I therefore take great exception to the Solicitor General's contention that the government has acted "swiftly and decisively". This is not the case. The Subcommittee on National Security, a committee convened since 9/11, is a prime example of the government's lack of commitment. To date, that committee of which I am a member has only met five times. Since this past summer we have only had two meetings. Meanwhile the Senate committee on national security and defence has been travelling across the country. It has produced numerous reports. Most recently, it released a report on January 20, a report on security at Canada's airports.

The Senate committee has found that "side door and back door" security is extremely poor and much more needs to be done to tighten up security at Canadian airports. Effectively, the Senate committee is doing the work of the House, perhaps doing much of the work of this department.

I also take exception to the Solicitor General's statement that the government is working together with the United States to protect our common beliefs. An article in the *Globe and Mail* on January 31 said that the government was seeking a blanket exemption for Canadians from new U.S. rules requiring records to be kept on everyone entering and leaving the United States.

The article said:

The entry-exit issue is shaping up to be the next major irritant in Canada-U.S. relations.

I would suggest to the Solicitor General that rather than seeking exemptions, the government should emulate the United States security measures and immediately initiate an exit-entry control system in this country.

If, as we have said repeatedly, the government is truly committed to fighting the global war on terrorism, the Solicitor General should be doing so much more, such as identifying and listing entities at a much quicker rate for the security of the country. He should be significantly increasing the resources of CSIS. He should be significantly increasing the resources to the RCMP for the security of this nation. The Solicitor General, working with the transport minister, should be tightening airport and port security. Failure to take such action clearly threatens the safety and security of Canadians.

We would encourage the Solicitor General to speed up the process to assure that Canadians are kept adequately safe. That is the responsibility of the Solicitor General.

• (1545)

Mr. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to seek unanimous consent to ask the Solicitor General why he has not added to the list the murderous al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade responsible for hundreds of civilian deaths in the state of Israel.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Routine Proceedings

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, the Solicitor General added three new names to the list of terrorist groups under the Criminal Code, bringing the total number on this list to 19 since July.

As you know, the Bloc Québécois opposed the creation of such a list. Today, the Solicitor General has talked about the rule of law. We presented amendments to this list. Why? The law allows the Solicitor General to place these groups on a list of terrorist groups without legal authorization and without allowing them to have access to the evidence against them. And people are invoking the rule of law. It is hard to believe what we are hearing.

During this time of uncertainty, fear and violence, the Bloc Québécois believes that our commitment to liberty and democracy must be clearly reaffirmed. The measures resulting from the national security policies indicate otherwise. It is not true that Quebeckers and Canadians have voluntarily agreed to surrender their rights and freedoms. We do not want to fall victim to fear; we want our freedom to be unfettered.

This is truly a value that we must not only preserve but foster and develop further. I am concerned to learn that the groups added today managed to sabotage our freedom. Our rights have taken a back seat.

The government talks about reconciling collective rights and security with our individual rights and freedoms. I think this is not so much a case of reconciling, but of caving in.

The Solicitor General says that this is one simple step in a work in progress. He also says that this list has been carefully compiled. In the end, however, we Quebeckers and Canadians are the ones who are paying with the loss of our freedom. Where will this end?

I also find it troubling that the Solicitor General is not required to explain or justify the choice of these groups. Obviously, there are security issues, but there is also a fundamental principle. We are elected by the people to represent them. We therefore have the responsibility to question the government on its actions. So then, why are these groups on the list in question?

The Bloc Québécois believes that the actions of the government must not limit our rights and freedoms. We must not give up any more freedom out of fear. We must not yield to fear. Fear must not dictate our conduct.

The Bloc Québécois believes that we must follow the directives of the United Nations. This organization is qualified to guide us and we should listen to it. Are these groups on the United Nations' list? I would like the Solicitor General to confirm this.

• (1550)

[*English*]

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too want to say a few words in this debate before the House and respond to the minister. I do not consider myself to be an expert on any of these organizations, however I had a chance to do a bit of research on them. I know I cannot ask a question at this time but I will say it in sort of an interrogation kind of way.

The minister has announced today that he is putting the Abu Nidal Organization, which split away from the PLO in 1974, on the designated list. The first thing I noticed on the government website was the government already did that on November 7. If it was put on the list on November 7, why is it being announced today? There is a slightly different spelling on the website compared to what is in the minister's statement but it is the same organization. I do not know what that means.

If we check the government website, the Abu Sayyaf Group, which is the group in the Philippines, was listed on October 2. October 2 is quite a few months ago. Again, the spelling may be quite different, but the group is the same. Why is this announcement being made today when these organizations are on the government website as being listed in October and November?

I know sometimes the government across the way is not a very competent and efficient government in terms of organizing its work. These inefficiencies are noted in a number of agencies and departments. We saw that a few minutes ago when the member for Sarnia—Lambton talked about the overspending on the gun registry.

Although I know I cannot ask a question at this time, I do wonder about these things in terms of the minister across the way, who has been a long time friend.

I do not see any argument as to why these organizations should not be put on a designated list. As I said, I am not familiar in detail with all of them. They all appear to be organizations that are involved in violence and terror. I would like to know more details as to whether there is evidence of them operating in our country. What is that evidence? What have they done? What are they trying to do in terms of soliciting funds or other activities in Canada?

It becomes a very difficult thing to designate. We have seen that with the statement from the Bloc Québécois. Often one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. We have seen that throughout history.

I remember going to the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. I remember my history when the British considered Menachem Begin to be a terrorist. He was a freedom fighter to many of the Israeli people.

Nelson Mandela, one of my heroes and a tremendous freedom fighter in my opinion, was considered by some people, including a member of the House of Commons very recently, to be a terrorist.

I see that the member from Calgary is here. I know how he is a self-styled tax fighter. The Boston Tea Party for some was an act of terrorism. However, if the member from Calgary looked back on those days, and his ideology is still back in those days, he would not consider it an act of terrorism. He would consider it an act of patriotism in terms of what happened at that time.

The American revolution was an act of terrorism for some; an act of freedom and liberation for others.

Routine Proceedings

I want to throw in those precautionary notes to the Solicitor General. I know he is well aware of them. I hope when these organizations are put on a list, that they are very carefully looked at by the agencies of government to ensure that a mistake is not made and to ensure that the protection of our national security against genuine terrorism is the sole motivating factor as to why they should be put on a list.

I know that differs a bit from the Alliance position and the Bloc position. I believe those points have to be made. I would also appreciate an explanation sometime as to why these are announced today, when the government website listed them as being listed in October 2 and November 7.

• (1555)

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to hear the words of the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. He brings a practical, historical and sometimes hysterical perspective to the House.

I am pleased as well to see that this list has been expanded now to 19, as the minister has stated. I am concerned by the inefficiencies and the fact that many things the government does these days are a constant public relations effort to garner the most attention, and it announces things three or four times. However the addition of the entities is an indication of the depths to which we must now delve when seeking the security of Canadians, the very rights and freedoms that Canadians enjoy, and the fact that we can never take these issues lightly or take them for granted.

We are living in a brave new world, as the minister himself has indicated. There can be no doubt that the balance of our collective right to security along with the individual's rights and freedoms must be weighed, but in clear cases where the welfare of our citizens has been challenged, we must act. The minister talked about his government acting in a timely fashion. I could not disagree more. The minister stated that the addition of these three would have far-reaching implications. In that he is correct.

I am encouraged by the minister's announcement and glad to see that he is starting to listen to the concerns raised by the Progressive Conservative Party and others, and other Canadians, calling upon his government to react quickly and decisively when faced with information of this nature. Sadly that was not the case when it involved Hesbollah.

It seems that the government has been dragged, kicking and screaming in many instances, to come forward with the action that we see today. Given the extremely disturbing information of the past few days with a call to arms by Osama bin Laden to the people of Iraq to engage in further terrorism against our neighbours, we see how real the threat is. Terrorism is not going to go away and terrorist organizations are not going to cease. We must remain vigilant in the face of grave danger.

This recent announcement of three new entities, bringing to 19 the total that have been banned in Canada, is at least a step in the right direction. Any form of terror or threat to human life, safety or security must be condemned in the strongest of terms. What we are talking about here is the ability to fundraise and funnel money to terrorist acts.

The snail's pace with which the government has acted in the past is disturbing, Hesbollah being the most obvious example. These organizations operate in the shadows. Once money is collected there are often very few ways to track the money and see what it is being used for in the final analysis. The decision today to take action and combat these groups should be welcomed, however the minister's statement is that the government is working closely with the international community, and in particular our good neighbours to the south. This is a message I do not believe many Canadians will accept.

Under the Liberal government, Canada's place in the world has been devalued and diminished. Our relationship with the United States has been weakened by the government's policy of never missing an opportunity to criticize, waffle or belittle our most important and closest ally. The government has been anything but timely, diligent, comprehensive or balanced in its approach.

Americans and Canadians have seen what the Liberals have done to our military and our international reputation. Cuts to the police, coast guard and the armed forces, and the elimination of ports police are the real stories. They have starved the armed forces to the point where they are no longer taken seriously when most important decisions are made.

Canada has the 9th largest economy in the world, but in the year 2000 our defence expenditures represented 1.2% of gross domestic product, ranking us 17th of NATO countries, somewhere in the range of Luxembourg.

The government and its lacklustre performance has made Canada invisible on the world stage. Listing is a start but lagging along, waiting for public opinion, and for polls to crystallize is not the way in which Canada should be operating.

The government needs to do more than just spout rhetoric on how we deal with terrorism. While we welcome the action of the minister today, we must remain cognizant of the fact that the Liberal government has done little else.

* * *

• (1600)

ENERGY PRICE COMMISSION ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) seconded by the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest, moved for leave to introduce Bill C-353, an act to establish the Energy Price Commission.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my seconder, the member for New Brunswick Southwest, who is equally concerned about this issue.

The bill seeks to establish an energy price commission to regulate the wholesale and retail price of motor fuels: gasoline, diesel, propane and heating oil. The purpose of price regulation is to avoid the unreasonable increases that many Canadians are experiencing today which have a profound effect on the cost of living and a terrible effect certainly on small businesses.

Routine Proceedings

The proposed legislation would facilitate reasonable consistency in energy prices from province to province, also allowing of course for legitimate increases in production and distribution costs. The bill would further minimize the risk of collusion or price fixing in pricing and prevent dominant suppliers from setting unreasonable prices.

The bill seeks to link the issue of price control to competition and any investigation of an alleged offence under the Competition Act would be automatically referred to the new energy price commission. Such a commission would be made up of independent commissioners who would then deal with the matter and report back to the tribunal in the case of that type of complaint.

In setting prices for energy the bill would dictate that the commission must take into account as its primary concern the interests of the public in having energy available at reasonable and consistent prices for their personal, commercial or industrial use.

Everyone here knows that Canadians are fed up with the gouging and they want the federal government to take concrete steps to ensure stability in energy pricing across the country. The member for New Brunswick Southwest and I are proud to present this bill today.

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

* * *

●(1605)

[*Translation*]

INCOME TAX ACT

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-354, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (child care expenses).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to introduce my bill to amend the Income Tax Act in order to allow families in which one of the spouses operates a business or is self-employed and has a low income to deduct child care expenses on the income tax return of the taxpayer with the higher income.

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

* * *

BROADCASTING ACT AND INCOME TAX ACT

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ) moved for leave to introduce C-355, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and the Income Tax Act (closed-captioned programming).

She said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to amend the Broadcasting Act to require broadcasters to provide closed captions for their video programming.

We are also asking that the Income Tax Act be amended to allow a tax deduction for broadcasters for the purchase of closed-caption technology.

As 10% of the population lives with hearing problems, this is a very important issue.

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

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ) moved for leave to introduce C-356, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (waiting period).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to introduce this bill which would eliminate the two-week waiting period during which a claimant is disentitled from receiving employment insurance benefits. People who go on employment insurance could receive their benefits immediately.

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

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-357, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act, 2002 (Schedule I).

She said: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-357 seeks to amend Schedule I of the Employment Insurance Act. This schedule makes reference to the table of weeks of benefits.

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

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-358, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and another Act in consequence, 2002 (Employment Insurance Account and premium rate setting).

She said: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-358 seeks to amend the Employment Insurance Act and another act in consequence in two very important respects: the famous Employment Insurance Account—we do not think it should go into the government's consolidated revenue fund, especially the surplus—as well as the method for setting the premium rate. Those are the two objectives of this bill.

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

* * *

●(1610)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-359, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (determination of insurable employment).

She said: Mr. Speaker, for those who thought that this might take a while, I will reassure them by saying that this is the last bill I will be introducing today.

Bill C-359 seeks to turn responsibility for determining whether or not a job is insurable over to the Canada Employment Insurance Commission.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

PETITIONS

IRAQ

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am today tabling in the House a petition signed by residents of the Outaouais and Ottawa area calling upon Parliament to adopt a resolution against Canadian participation in a war against Iraq without the agreement of the United Nations.

[*English*]

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition on the subject matter of stem cells signed by a number of Canadians, including from my own riding of Mississauga South. These petitioners acknowledge, as I do, that human life begins at conception and want to point out to the House that Canadians support ethical stem cell research, which has already shown encouraging potential to provide the cures and therapies for the illnesses and diseases of Canadians.

They also point out that non-embryonic stem cells, also known as adult stem cells, have shown significant research progress without the immune rejection or ethical problems associated with embryonic stem cells. The petitioners call upon Parliament to focus its legislative support on adult stem cell research to find the cures and therapies necessary for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

THE DISABLED

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am today tabling a petition with more than 590 signatures, to go along with those already tabled by my colleagues with a view to sending a clear message to the government.

Any change to the financial situation of the disabled is a potential threat to their health. The petitioners are calling upon Parliament to oppose any plan to limit access to the disability tax credit and to ensure that the government does not pass any measure in the House of Commons without prior consultation of organizations representing the disabled and of health professionals.

[*English*]

CANADIAN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COLLEGE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of Canadians who live in Arnprior, Renfrew, Braeside, Kinburn and Pakenham.

The petitioners ask Parliament to recognize that the Canadian Emergency Preparedness College is essential to training Canadians for emergency situations, that the facilities should stay in Arnprior, and that the government should upgrade the facilities as promised in order to provide the necessary training to Canadians, especially these days when we are on the verge of war.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 98 will be answered today.

[*Text*]

Question No. 98—**Mr. Greg Thompson:**

Did the Royal Canadian Mint use an advertisement changing the words of the traditional Christmas carol “The Twelve Days of Christmas”, and if so: (a) what words were used; (b) why were the words changed; (c) is it the policy of the government to abolish government references to Christmas; (d) has the government instructed Canada Post to cease the use of Christmas postage stamps; (e) what other steps has the government taken to remove references to Christmas from its programs and publications; (f) is it the intention of the government to amend the Holidays Act to include Christmas; and (g) is it the intention of the government to introduce a motion in the House of Commons to amend Standing Order 28(1) to remove the reference to “Christmas Day”, as part of its modernization initiatives?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Insofar as the Royal Canadian Mint, the Department of Canadian Heritage, Canada Post and the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons are concerned, the Royal Canadian Mint is a commercial Crown corporation that operates at arm's length from the federal government.

With respect to (a) and (b), from November 15 to the end of the week of December 15, 2002, the Royal Canadian Mint aired a television commercial featuring animated characters, a beaver and a caribou, that sing along to the music of the “Twelve Days of Christmas” to promote the most recent new coin releases from the Mint.

The words to the traditional song “The Twelve Days of Christmas” were changed to “The Twelve Days of Giving” in its television commercial. The word “giving” was used to emphasize and reiterate that coins make ideal gifts. The change in words was not intended to be exclusionary of “Christmas”, but rather to be inclusive of the word “giving”. The change was made to build upon the Mint's ongoing marketing efforts of associating coins to the act of gift giving, a successful technique in use for a number of years.

While the Mint has received some feedback that was not positive, most Canadians enjoyed and responded to the commercial according to opinion polling and sales figures.

With respect to (c), the Department of Canadian Heritage has no policy to abolish government references to Christmas.

With respect to (d), Canada Post is proud to include stamps commemorating Christmas in its annual stamp program. The 2002 Christmas stamps display the works of three Canadian aboriginal artists that interpret the traditional theme of “mother and child”. The three works of art featured are the paintings Genesis, by Daphne Odjig, for domestic mail; Winter Travel by Cecil Youngfox, for U. S.-bound mail; and the walrus tusk and soapstone carving, Mary and Child, by Irene Katak Angutitaq, for international mail. The words “Christmas” and “Noël” are printed on each stamp.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

Eith respect to (e), there have been no steps to remove references to Christmas from any of our programs or policies.

With respect to (f), the Minister of Canadian Heritage is responsible for the Holidays Act which makes provision for Canada Day, Remembrance Day and Victoria Day. The Holidays Act by its nature and content, is a declaratory act. To give effect to its provisions, other legislation must be passed. In relation to legal holidays such as Christmas, those measures pertain to labour and commercial laws, and the jurisdiction over these are shared between the federal government and the provinces and territories. It is not the intention of the Department of Canadian Heritage to amend the Holidays Act.

The answer to (g) is no.

* * *

•(1615)

[*English*]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 35 could be made an order for return, the return would be tabled immediately.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Text*]

Question No. 35—**Mr. James Rajotte:**

Since 1996, what grants, contributions, contracts and/or loan guarantees made either through a crown corporation, department, and/or agency of the government did each of the following companies receive: Bombardier (and any of its subsidiaries), Power Corporation, and Milit-Air Inc., specifying the source and value of the grant, contribution, contract and/or loan guarantee, date made, reason(s) for providing the funding, and present status of the grant, contribution, and /or loan guarantee (whether repaid, partially repaid, or unpaid - including the value of the repayment—in the case of contracts please specify whether the contract is fulfilled, whether it was tendered and any reason for limiting the tender)?

Return tabled.

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended by 22 minutes.

[*English*]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

The House resumed from February 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act (political financing), be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to address Bill C-24, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act, specifically dealing with political financing. At the outset of my remarks this afternoon, I would like to say that never in a million years would I have thought that the Liberal government would discover the error of its ways, but here we are debating Bill C-24, which is at least an attempt on the part of the government to self-impose new rules to clean up its act.

The legislation would primarily do three things. Riding associations and leadership candidates would be included under the regulatory framework for registration and financial accounting under the Canada Elections Act. Allowable contributions to political parties, their riding associations and candidates would be more stringently limited. Corporations, unions and unincorporated organizations would be restricted to an annual donation limit of \$1,000 a year to riding associations or individual candidates, while individuals would be allowed an annual limit of some \$10,000 a year to a political party, riding association or individual candidate. Political parties would consequently be compensated for reduced corporate donations by overhauling financial rules and granting direct public financing.

After nine years of scandalous accusations and countless RCMP investigations, the Prime Minister expects that by tweaking the Canada Elections Act he can tell Canadians his scandal ridden government is a problem of the past. Canadians are very familiar with the ongoing troubles of the Liberal government. A number of ministers have been removed from their posts because of lucrative contracts being awarded to Liberal-friendly firms which have made liberal donations to their party.

In theory, eliminating corporate donations could possibly mitigate the problem, but it would not address the more serious problem of an ethically challenged Liberal government. For any major policy decision of a government, stakeholders should always be consulted to discuss any potential impacts. Corporations have always had an influence on government and they will continue to funnel money through their executive, board members or employees. The same obviously holds true for individual Canadians.

Government Orders

Stakeholders deserve to have a say on public policy matters affecting them. However, there comes a point when it no longer serves the public interest. When businesses need to make donations to a political party in order to be heard or to be considered for a government contract, it is indicative of a problem with the government, not the private sector. A responsible and an ethical government does not check a list of donors before deciding how much access they have to a minister of the crown.

I am reminded that a number of years ago there was a member in this place who got into quite a bit of hot water because he had actually refused to provide service to a constituent because he knew that the constituent had not voted for him in the previous election. I think that all members of Parliament from all parties at that time were appalled by that type of conduct.

The Liberal government, as I was saying, hit an all-time new low before the last election when the member for Scarborough Southwest refused to offer that assistance to a Canadian war veteran. The member's reasoning behind his decision was that because the veteran did not vote for him, he should not have to provide any assistance as a member of Parliament.

Quite rightly, this revelation shocked Canadians across the country, as it did members of Parliament from all parties. Even the most partisan politician recognizes that a constituent's political stripe has nothing to do with the services he or she is entitled to by his or her member of Parliament.

Yet if we outlaw large corporate donations from the realm of federal politics, would it fix the problem? That is the question we must ask. Eliminating financial donations would help, but what about other potential conflicts? We are not strangers to hearing about ministers staying at luxurious corporate chalets or ministers making policy decisions that affect their private interests.

We can pass laws and set restrictions to uphold the integrity of Parliament until we are blue in the face but it will do nothing if the government has no ethical standards to begin with.

• (1620)

During the 1993 election, the Liberal Party campaigned on upholding high ethical standards in order to restore integrity to the federal government. Of the many promises that were published in the Liberal red book, a whole chapter was dedicated to governing with integrity. That is what it was entitled.

I found the following interesting quote from the Liberal red book of 1993:

Yet after nine years of Conservative rule, cynicism about public institutions, governments, politicians and the political process, is at an all-time high. If government is to play a positive role in society, as it must, honesty and integrity in our political institutions must be restored. The most important asset of government is the confidence it enjoys of the citizens to whom it is accountable. There is evidence today of considerable dissatisfaction with government and a steady erosion of confidence in the people and institutions of the public sector. This erosion of confidence seems to have many causes: some have to do with the ethical behaviour of certain elected politicians, others with an arrogant style of political leadership.

Well, these words from the Liberal red book are probably truer today than they were back then. We have now sustained nine years with the Liberal government and I would argue that public cynicism of government is even now more widespread than it was in 1993.

The Prime Minister's misguided attempt at restoring public confidence in government will come at a heavy cost to taxpayers. With no corporate donations, all political parties would be compensated with direct public financing. At approximately \$1.50 per vote, every political party would stand to gain from this arrangement. However, it raises several serious concerns.

Although contributions from individual Canadians would be allowed to continue, political parties could become a little too comfortable I would argue, with a regular paycheque from taxpayers. Under this scheme, there is potential for a broadened disconnect, and I would argue that the disconnect is too broad already between the electorate and the respective political affiliation.

It is well known that each political party attempts to garner support from a particular spectrum of society. The NDP, for example, looks for support from left leaning or more socialist supporters by representing their issues in Parliament. For those who agree and identify with that philosophy, many will make a financial contribution in support of those efforts. This holds true for every political party inside and outside the House of Commons.

As politicians for our respective political organizations, if we do not represent and act on issues important to Canadians, we suffer financially as a result. If we were to receive an annual paycheque from the government—from the taxpayers I would argue—some parties could potentially become complacent and not work as hard to gather the support they need from the Canadian people. Furthermore, if taxpayers were to foot the bill for every eligible political organization in the country, every Canadian would be forced to have their hard-earned dollars go toward a party that may not represent their personal views. We currently see this with mandatory union donations.

The New Democratic Party has a strong affiliation with important Canadian unions that make large financial contributions to that party. Individual union workers are required to pay union dues and indirectly fund a political party that they may not choose to support. Under Bill C-24, all Canadians would be required to financially support political parties that they do not support.

I wish no offence to the Bloc Québécois members of the House, but there is a great majority of constituents in my riding of Prince George—Peace River who do not want any of their money going to the Bloc. I am sorry, but not very many Canadians wish to support a political party whose sole motivation is to see the separation of Quebec from Canada. No one should be forced to financially support a political ideology which goes against their own, but we soon may have no choice.

Another point I would like to make is in regard to political financing of new political movements in Canada. An important aspect of Canadian democracy involves Canadians working together to create a voice for their concerns in Ottawa. We have seen that happen throughout our history, from the Social Credit Party which is fading into history to the Progressives which joined with the Conservatives to form the Progressive Conservative Party, to even the Canadian Alliance predecessor, the Reform Party of Canada.

Government Orders

•(1625)

All of these organizations were created to better represent Canadians' views on federal issues. The legislation before us today severely hinders the ability of new political parties to acquire the financing necessary to establish themselves. With no votes, a new party is ineligible for the government subsidy, making it very hard for new political movements to take shape.

A new innovation of the Liberal government involves the use of government funds for political purposes. Canadians have never before been witness to such widespread government advertising purporting to show the benefits of the Liberal Party policy. The Liberal government has realized that as an incumbent party it can use taxpayers' hard earned dollars to advance its own political agenda. During the recent parliamentary debate on the Kyoto protocol, Environment Canada used every advertising medium to convince Canadians it was doing the right thing by voting in favour of ratifying the Kyoto protocol.

Recent inquiries made into the cost of the Liberals' advertising campaign came up with a total of \$9.7 million, almost \$10 million, not used to inform Canadians about government services or to provide better health care to Canadians, but wasted on promoting the interests of the Liberal Party of Canada, I would argue.

What are we dealing with here? The fact is that Bill C-24, I would argue, guarantees a tremendous advantage to the incumbent government, no matter which party that might be.

The idea is that we will have roughly \$1.50 for every Canadian who turns out at the polls to vote on election day, which will then go to political parties based upon the party for which they vote. I would call Bill C-24 a new Liberal head tax. That is what we are talking about. Every Canadian voter who turns out to vote will be taxed \$1.50. That tax will go to support a political party and, as I have said, a political party that he or she may not wish to support, whether it is the Bloc or the Canadian Alliance. Certainly a lot of people show up at the polls and do not vote for the Canadian Alliance, why, I have no idea, and I am sure they do not want to see their money support the Canadian Alliance. That is the reality.

I say shame on the government and shame on the Prime Minister for trying to bring in, as part of his so-called legacy, this new Liberal head tax.

Furthermore, Canada is currently experiencing the highest level of voter apathy since Confederation. Voter turnouts have been steadily dropping in the last three elections. I have done some research on this. During the 36 general elections since 1867 and up to the 2000 election, an average of approximately 73% of registered electors voted. Turnout has ranged from a low of 62.9% at the time of the June 1896 election to a high of 79% in three successive general elections between 1958 and 1963. More recently in our history it was averaging about 75%, until 1993, and it has been steadily dropping since then. In the November 2000 election it even beat the all time low. About 61% of Canadians bothered to turn out to vote.

I would suggest that the new Liberal head tax of \$1.50 will provide yet another deterrent or disincentive for Canadians to go out to vote. They will say they do not really know why they want to vote anyway. By their action of voting, \$1.50 will be taken in taxes to

to some political party. It might go to the political party beside which they marked their X, but it might not. The \$1.50 will just go to a political party.

I think there are enough reasons for Canadians to be apathetic and to be cynical about our political process without putting a \$1.50 head tax on everyone who votes. It will provide quite a discouragement.

•(1630)

I want to refer briefly to the remarks made by the Prime Minister only yesterday when he introduced Bill C-24. He gave quite a long speech, something that he does not normally do in this place. It was noted that for him to speak to it in the Chamber obviously this is something that he feels quite strongly about.

Specifically, in the latter part of his remarks he said, "Public skepticism is increasing...A lot of people have lost faith in our democratic institutions". Further on, he said, "This legislation will pass...".

By tying those three remarks together, we can see a bit of the problem. There was the Prime Minister standing up on the first day of debate on a piece of legislation and saying unequivocally that this legislation, Bill C-24, will pass. He referred to public skepticism increasing in our country. Why is that? I would suggest that he need only look at his own remarks. When he as Prime Minister states on the very first day of debate that this legislation is going to pass, it makes a farce out of democracy.

Why are Canadians staying home? Why are Canadians checking out of the democratic process, not taking out memberships in political parties and not starting new political movements? Because they do not believe that this is democracy. They do not believe that Parliament operates democratically, because whatever one man says goes. If he decides that this bill will pass it will pass, because he has the power to keep his backbenchers, his majority, in line, through either threats or inducements. He has the power to ensure that the legislation passes.

That is why we continually see amendments defeated after the hard work on the part of all members, even the Liberal backbenchers, and any members of the four opposition parties who work hard to try to critique legislation, improve it and bring forward amendments. The minister of the particular department that is sponsoring the bill then just decides that he is going to have all his colleagues stand up, so he goes to the Prime Minister and the whip of the party and the government defeats the amendments. It does not matter whether they are good or bad; it is just that the amendments are not the government's, not the department's, not the minister's, so the government defeats them.

That is why Canadians are checking out of the political process in Canada. That is why Canadians feel they are disenfranchised.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that nine years of Liberal political scandals and repeated allegations of influence peddling and conflict of interest have taken their toll as well. Generous donors to the Liberal Party coffers are often found at the centre of many government spending controversies, such as Shawinigate and the RCMP investigation of the public works sponsorship program, the now infamous advertising programs.

Government Orders

The outright ban of corporate donations to federal political parties will appear to some to clean up the mess the Liberal government is in right now, but it will not fix the problem. With no corporate or union donations, political organizations would need some sort of compensation. But what form it should take is up for debate. I suggest that it should be up for debate, that we should not have the Prime Minister stand up and say this will pass.

Perhaps a funding system linked to financial donations would be more appropriate. Either way, if we are to proceed with any public funding model we need to ensure that the Canadian taxpayers, who ultimately will foot the bill, are ultimately protected and, more important, consulted.

•(1635)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Before we go to questions or comments it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest, Health; the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas, Health; the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester, Persons with Disabilities.

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Prince George—Peace River for his speech.

I want to highlight something that stands out in my mind. One of the first things that happened when I was a new member here in 1997 was a situation where a Liberal fundraiser, whose name I believe was Pierre Corbeil, was charged and then convicted of influence peddling. Somehow this individual got hold of lists of companies in Quebec that were receiving government grants. He was shaking them down for a contribution to the Liberal Party of Canada of \$10,000 each. If they did not come up with the cash, surprise, surprise, they would not get the government grant for whichever particular area that happened to be.

In the last election in the year 2000 while the Shawinigate controversy was bubbling away, there was also this revelation that government grants in the Province of Quebec were being run through this parallel process of people within the Quebec Liberal Party as to who was going to get government grants. This was absolutely unbelievable.

Now the Prime Minister, on his way out the door, is trying to trumpet this piece of legislation as a way to clean up financing when really that is not what it would do at all. It would create all kinds of other difficulties, many of which were alluded to by my colleague.

I want to focus my question on one comment my colleague made, that being the cynicism that is created when \$1.50 per vote goes to each political party every single year based on its performance in the last election and how that disconnect would widen because of it.

Would the hon. member elaborate on that for me and give me his thoughts on how he sees the disconnect growing because of that movement in the bill?

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague alluded to a number of problems that preceded the bill, and dealing with scandals.

As I said at the outset of my remarks, the government came into power in 1993 at least partly running on the platform of cleaning up the image and restoring some integrity to government. It was a powerful selling point when the Liberals were door-knocking and campaigning in 1993.

Speaking from experience, I was a candidate in 1988 and again in 1993, and was successful in 1993. I know, from door-knocking in Prince George—Peace River, that constituents were very upset with the Mulroney government at that time. I would argue that government had been scandal ridden and had a lot of problems when it came to influence peddling. A lot of ministers had resigned.

When the Liberals came along and the current Prime Minister ran for the job of prime minister in 1992-93, they made these promises that they would clean up Parliament and government and that they would restore the people's trust, that sacred trust that must exist in a democratic country between the people and their government. It was a powerful incentive for people to vote Liberal in 1993.

As my colleague and I have alluded to, unfortunately the scandals have continued. I guess it is open to argument whether this government is better or worse than the one which preceded it. I would argue that they are both of a similar duration; nine years of the Mulroney Conservatives and nine years now of the current Prime Minister's Liberal government. We would have to tabulate how many scandals there have been, how many ministers have resigned, how many ministers should have resigned, how many fairly substantial allegations, whether proven in the end or not of influence peddling and that type of immoral or unethical activity, have been charged against both governments and do a balance sheet to compare them.

However I do know, and I think I speak for most if not all members in the House, there is a growing cynicism on the part of Canadian voters and it is reflected in those who increasingly do not bother to show up at the polls to vote. That is dangerous. In a small way I commend the Prime Minister for bringing forward Bill C-24 and for at least showing some willingness to begin to address that. However Bill C-24 will not do the job.

Restricting corporate donations to \$1,000 and replacing it with public money based upon a \$1.50 Liberal head tax for every Canadian who shows up at the polls to vote, will only further discourage people to vote. Corporations simply will find some other way to support the political parties or the candidates of their choices. The limit in Bill C-24 is \$10,000 if the donation comes from an individual. The corporation can turn over sufficient money to its board of directors, its executive, its CEO and his or her family, or the employees or whatever. There are other ways.

We have seen that in the United States. The Americans have some very tough laws dealing with political financing but it does not prevent it from happening. They just become a little more imaginative in how they funnel the money.

Government Orders

The bill does not address the problem of an unethical government. That is what I was trying to get at with my speech. We saw that in the Shawinigate scandal. We saw that a number of times in Parliament when different scandals were revealed either in question period or during debate. Ministers basically set their standard of behaviour according to the Prime Minister's standard of behaviour. When he intervened, for example, with the Business Development Bank on behalf of a constituent at a time, when I think most Canadians would be seriously concerned about a conflict in a situation like that, he argued in this place that he was just doing his job as a member of Parliament. That is how he viewed it.

• (1640)

That is where we have the problem. When a Prime Minister thinks that way, pretty soon all his ministers think like that and then everyone thinks like that. What does the public do? The public says if that is where the bar is, everyone will fall over it.

As I said, there is a real problem with voter apathy in Canada and it is incumbent upon all politicians of all political stripes to begin to address it and be serious about restoring the trust that has been broken between the Canadian public and their politicians and Parliament.

• (1645)

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about the cynicism in the Canadian electorate. I thought it was interesting that he pointed out that if people actually wanted to save tax money, they could do that by not voting. That is one of the strange byproducts of a bill that has been poorly thought out, that if people do not want to contribute their \$1.50, they stay home and are not counted in the head tax.

Presently if parties raise their own money, and some of it comes back to them in terms of rebates, or tax credits or those kinds of things, people are free to support the party they choose. We appreciate that.

The new system will have taxpayers paying for this entire system. I want my colleague to comment on two things. First, I do not think I have seen an issue that has stirred people so much since the gun registry issue came up in my riding. Would he comment on that? Second, does he think there is any connection with the fact that the other parties are carrying huge debts, have fallen in behind and are supporting this bill?

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I obviously cannot do these two questions justice in the time provided.

In reply to the second question, I believe all political parties, with the exception of the Canadian Alliance, are currently carrying some debt. I think that even a cursory examination of the funding that will flow to political parties when Bill C-24 passes, since the Prime Minister says it will pass, will increase their finances and help them deal with their debt. That may or may not be part of their motive in supporting the legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all those of us who are staunch believers in parliamentary reform and have fought for it, for an in-depth reform, are delighted that this bill will bring in one crucial component of that reform.

The issue of political party financing is at the very core of any parliamentary reform. There can be no true parliamentary reform, in fact, without it.

Any change to the financing of political parties is difficult. It requires changes to mentalities, traditions and habits.

I have had the experience of being a Quebec MNA. I must congratulate the government prior to mine, that is the Parti Québécois of René Lévesque, for its thorough reform of the financing of political parties in Quebec. There had been a long history of corruption and laxity, and the change of mentality that ensued is something to be proud of. The public has come to accept the fact that corporations, labour unions and institutions have no place in the financing of political parties and that, on the contrary, individuals play the key role. The ordinary citizen is the one with pride of place.

It has not been my experience that changing things and going from corporations to individuals has decreased the latter's participation. On the contrary, financing of political parties by individuals has brought in new supporters because more people were required to raise funds.

In addition, the fact that the legislation in Quebec made it possible to get additional funding directly to the political parties allowed the parties to worry less about funding and focus more on policy, research and groundwork with the voters. In fact, the party I belonged to had hundreds of thousands of members. It was always a lively and dynamic membership. There was no link between the legislation and decreased support in the party. On the contrary, it stimulated support within the party.

Today, I would say in all objectivity that no one in Quebec would want to go back to the previous legislation. I think this legislation is accepted by all political parties, regardless of their goals and ideologies, and I am glad of it.

What we are trying to do here is to all but ban contributions from corporations and unions and focus on the individual. Some have said that the \$10,000 ceiling is too high. Compared to the \$3,000 ceiling in Quebec, where the legislation dates back to 1977, and taking inflation into account, perhaps \$10,000 is not too much. If it is too much, it will be up to the House committee to look at it further, to check with other parties if this is the limit we need, or whether the limit should be lower. At that time, it could be adjusted accordingly when the committee reviews the bill.

• (1650)

[*English*]

I rejoice that the government has decided to help finance political parties by increasing election expenses from 22.5% to 50%. Admittedly, the 50% is based on election expenses, and maybe this will have to be reviewed by the committee as to whether a ceiling should be placed so as not to encourage political parties to spend taxpayer money needlessly knowing that the refund will be based on the expenses they undergo.

Government Orders

I would like to address the question raised by my colleagues from the Canadian Alliance as to whether the state should finance electoral expenses and political parties versus corporations and unions.

I have always been a strong believer that it is a small expense for the state. I believe the director of elections has said that to fully finance political parties would cost about \$104 million overall. One hundred and four million dollars to a state the size of Canada is a very small price to pay for electoral independence.

If we were to rely strictly on corporations, unions and institutions to finance political parties there would be a price to pay. To say that this money comes completely outside of the state treasury is a total exaggeration. These same corporations receive tax rebates, tax incentives and tax reductions for all the money they give. In effect, the state is involved anyway. The question is: at what level should it be involved?

I believe that if it costs \$100 million more or less for a government the size of the Government of Canada to finance political parties and to put electoral independence in place in a democratic system, that is a very small price to pay.

My colleagues from the Canadian Alliance spoke about \$1.50 per elector as being a new Liberal head tax. I found it amusing to hear them say that electors will not vote to avoid paying the \$1.50 Liberal head tax. What a joke. I have far greater faith in my electors and the citizens of Canada. I believe they would do their electoral duty regardless of \$1.50. Surely, the electorate of Canada would not be demeaned to the extent of saying that they will not vote because of a matter of a \$1.50 so-called head tax.

The reason there is dejection in the electorate, not only in Canada but in Europe, in the United States to a far greater degree, in Japan and elsewhere, goes far deeper than the so-called \$1.50 head tax or any superficial reason.

The fact is that Parliament, whether it be this one or another one, whether it is this system of government or another system of government, has become more estranged from the grassroots. It is certainly our fault as it is the fault of the French parliament, the German parliament or the U.S. congress. The cynicism of people in parliamentary systems and other government systems is not due to the type of political financing. On the contrary, the cleaner and more independent it is the more people will rejoice.

● (1655)

The causes are far more fundamental. They go back to the fact that we have isolated ourselves over the years from the daily lives of people. They do not find themselves in our debates, in the way we do things or in how we make our decisions. They increasingly want us to adopt free votes in the House of Commons. They want us to reform our systems. They want parliamentarians to be able to produce legislation freely. They want basic parliamentary reforms which go to the heart of democratic and societal openness. As we give them those things they will return to elections and to their political process.

I do not have any problems finding members for my party in my riding. I have a thriving association and people take part very readily and strongly in the political process.

Now that we have political reform through changing our financing of political parties, which is far more democratic, open and transparent, I think, contrary to what the Canadian Alliance was saying, people will accept this very readily and welcome it very strongly.

I heard the Canadian Alliance also say, as another item of objection to the bill, that it did not want the Government of Canada to finance political parties because that would be financing the Bloc Quebecois, a party that should not be financed because it is against the existence of Canada.

I disagree fundamentally with the objectives of the Bloc Quebecois, as it disagrees with me, but that is part of the democratic process. However the Canadian Alliance should know that individuals who give to political parties receive tax rebates. Corporations that give to political parties receive tax rebates. Does the Canadian Alliance believe that we should say that federalist parties should receive tax rebates for their donations but the Bloc Quebecois should not be allowed tax rebates?

Mr. Ken Epp: No, we never said that.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: No, you never said but the money—

Mr. Ken Epp: Come on.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Would you please allow me to speak and then you can stand up and ask me a question. I listened to you people very politely and I ask for the same courtesy.

The point made by the Alliance was that the Government of Canada should not give any money to political parties because, in doing so, we would include the Bloc Quebecois and the Bloc Quebecois has a different agenda from us.

If we start to discriminate on the basis of the ideology of a particular party, where do we start and where do we stop? Tomorrow there could be a Communist party here and then the Canadian Alliance would say that it does not want to finance communist parties. Who are we to decide what people want?

If the people of Quebec, in their given democratic rights, agree to vote for Bloc Quebecois members, I might disagree fundamentally with the ideology that the Bloc Quebecois proposes, but at the same time I respect the democratic right of all Canadians to finance and back any political party legally constituted, of their choice, regardless of what it is. And to say, whether it is the Canadian Alliance or another, "holier than thou, I am pure, you are impure so I do not give to you", is fundamentally wrong and undemocratic.

I guess I have hit a nerve on that side because I hear them shouting. They will not agree because they want to be selective. They are holy and the others are less holy. Who decides this in a society that is open, transparent and democratic?

● (1700)

I am glad that this proposed law will constitute registries for electoral districts or ridings so that associations will be accountable to the system and that is also democratic, transparent, open and right.

Government Orders

I am also glad that nominations involving candidates for eventual election will fall under the aegis of the law so that it will give people who do not have the means to spend unlimited funds, as has sometimes been the case, a chance to access the nomination process. This would include women who do not have a chance to perhaps go to work.

Mr. Ken Epp: That is demeaning to women. They can raise more money than you can.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, would you ask that kind gentleman to keep quiet for a little while and listen to his party. He will have a chance to ask me questions. He should stop interrupting all the time. I know he has all the answers. If he has the answers he will have time to speak for himself. I would like to speak for myself and ask him to be polite and listen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I know it is not the hon. member's usual way of doing things, of heckling. I see him smiling. I do not know if he is serious or not. However it can be very annoying for the main speaker when he is interrupted or bothered. Therefore I am asking the member to refrain from doing so. He will have plenty of time to ask a question or make a comment once the member who is speaking now has finished.

Mr. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would just point out that there is nothing the least bit out of order in heckling that does not disrupt the House, particularly when it is in response to a rhetorical question. I think that is the standard that we—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis was obviously upset at being heckled. As you know, he is not the type to heckle either. Therefore, please show respect for one another. There is plenty of time during questions or comments for members to give their views to the House.

• (1705)

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, I rejoice that nominations for new candidates would now be part of this new process. I rejoice that leadership contests would be part of it as well. If we were to seek a totally open, democratic and transparent society, and political system, then all these nomination meetings and leadership contests would be an essential part of the total system. The people who take part in them should also be accountable.

I hope that members will not see this bill as a partisan initiative. I heard during the question and answer session the member for Prince George—Peace River say that it was a rehash of so-called scandals, money lost here, millions lost there, and ministers who came and went. What has this to do with it?

Are we here to rehash different issues that have been raised time and again in question period and previous debates? Or, instead, should we, as members who want parliamentary reform, who talk about parliamentary reform every day, rise above and beyond, and decide that this bill may have its flaws and weaknesses, and this we concede, but that surely it is a step forward for a more transparent political system and that it should be given a chance to be debated fairly?

We may disagree with one section or part of it, or many parts of it, but let us keep the debate on the essence of the bill itself, not use it as

an excuse to bring up all kinds of ancillary issues, so-called scandals and so forth, that demean the debate.

I would suggest that we give this bill a chance to go forward to committee. If there are weaknesses, and I believe there are some in this bill that need to be examined, then the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs will have all the time necessary to look at it in depth, to change what is weak, and to strengthen what needs to be improved.

I think this is a huge step forward and I welcome it. I wish to thank the Prime Minister and I congratulate him for the courage to bring it forward.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have tremendous regard for the member for Lac-Saint-Louis. However, I want to correct a misapprehension that he expressed in his remarks. He spent some time suggesting that the official opposition's view was that some parties should licitly receive public financing while others should not, based on what he described as some arbitrary criteria which would be imposed.

I want to be absolutely clear that his comment is not the position of the Canadian Alliance, the official opposition. I have never heard any member of my party, publicly or privately in the House or outside the House, suggest anything remotely of that nature.

The member for LaSalle—Émard, the former finance minister, was apparently quoted last week in the media as saying that Canadians would not want to finance the Bloc Québécois. I have not heard a similar remark from members of my party. The position that is held by, and articulated by—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Jason Kenney: I know my colleagues in the Bloc are looking for another humiliation, but they will not find one here.

The position of our party is based on a liberal democracy, an early foundational principle of liberalism as expressed by Thomas Jefferson in the preamble to the Virginia statute on religious freedom. He said:

That to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors, is sinful and tyrannical

The idea is that it is problematic in a pluralistic democracy to compel somebody through the coercive power of the state to finance views which he finds abhorrent. That is the position that we take, that we do not find it pleasant to compel members of the New Democratic Party to finance the propagation of our views.

However, no one in our party would suggest that we should be selective about which parties receive public support. We believe that, in principle, no parties should receive public support and that the free market of ideas should work when it comes to financial support for political parties.

Government Orders

• (1710)

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, with due respect to my colleague for whom I have much esteem, I would ask him to look at the blues today. He will see that his colleague for Prince George—Peace River clearly said that one of the reasons why he felt that contributions by the state were unacceptable to him was that they would go to finance the Bloc Québécois which has an ideology of breaking up Canada.

I will say this very frankly to my colleague, if the member for LaSalle—Émard were to say the same thing I would have to disagree with him. This is what democratic thought is about. We do not accept things we do not agree with. However, I clearly heard it and this is why I raised the issue. It goes fundamentally to the debate. I happen to agree with what my previous colleague just said, that democratic life should not discriminate or select.

This is why I raised the issue. I think we should put this away. We should agree to tolerate people that disagree with us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Saada (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot listen to the comment made by the member opposite regarding statements made by the member for LaSalle—Émard without correcting the record.

Clearly in the interview in question—which, incidentally has been made public, including subsequent interviews that were given to respond to this interview—an example of a political party was given in comparison to another, which would or would not receive support.

I categorically reject all allegations by the Alliance member opposite. I reject the allegation attributing motives that are not true to someone who is unable to respond directly to them. Like the members for Lac-Saint-Louis and LaSalle—Émard, I believe that democracy speaks and that a party that is elected to this House has the same rights as any other political party.

That is my philosophy, that is his philosophy and that is the philosophy of the member for Lac-Saint-Louis, and I will not allow the comments made by my colleague from LaSalle—Émard to be misrepresented.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if there was a question, but I would be very happy to respond to my colleague.

I think that I made myself perfectly clear. I thank the member for the correction that he made regarding comments made by the member for LaSalle—Émard.

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to my colleague across the floor for whom I have a great deal of respect, one of the criticisms of the legislation is that it does not make provisions for a new party that may be developing and coming on the scene.

I wonder if my friend, with all the years of experience that he has had, has any comments or suggestions on how the bill might be improved to deal with that type of a situation?

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, I go back to the Quebec experience. A new party came on the scene, such as the ADQ, which is now riding very high in the polls. It is in fact almost as high as the

other established parties. It came on the scene with just one member. It has been financed out of state funds to the same degree as the other parties. Today it has been enabled to function as a fully fledged party.

We should look at this carefully in committee. Right now the basis of funding existing parties is through previous electoral results. We should look at the whole issue of new parties. Certainly fairness will demand that we do this. The law would have to make this clear, that if a new bona fide party comes on the scene it would have to receive fair treatment and a treatment that would enable it to evolve and thrive just the same as the ADQ in Quebec has done in a few short years.

• (1715)

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, democracy is not just marking an X on the ballot paper every four or five years. It is much more than that.

I think free votes in the House, free expression, and free debate are all components. However, during any election there should be an equal and fair opportunity for any candidate or political party during the election.

The last time we debated the Canada Elections Act in the House, the government tried to abuse its majority in a way by putting components in the bill which would favour the majority. Bill C-24, which we are debating, would give the majority party a tremendous advantage in the future. For example, the allocation of funds would be in proportion to the votes or in proportion to the number of seats it has, so if that always continues, smaller fringe parties or fringe candidates would not have the opportunity to raise enough money in comparison.

How would the member respond to the fact that this bill is not favouring his party more than any other political party, smaller candidate or smaller party in forthcoming elections?

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague that in a recent historical experience I recall the Progressive Conservative Party going from 208 seats to 2. So, results come and go; majority parties become minority parties. At the same time he has made a point that needs to be examined.

We must ensure that the distribution of state funds is fair. Whatever the members in committee, after reviewing all these questions with objectivity, recommend as a fair formula, that is what should be adopted. Maybe it is not the formula that is in the bill now. Maybe it needs to be improved, but I do not think we should say that because the majority party has so many seats today it is entrenched in time.

Today it has 175 seats, tomorrow it could have 50. This has been the history of political parties on a consistent basis. However, I agree with my colleague. We must give deep thought to all these questions and review them closely in committee.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned earlier that there were two sources of donations to parties: corporation and union dues, and taxpayers.

Our party would like to offer a third alternative, which is individual donations. Why is his party incapable of raising funds from donations from individuals. In our party the majority of donations we receive are from individuals.

That seems to be the forgotten part of the legislation that we could restrict corporate donations, but then parties could turn to individuals and have the individuals, who believe in the party, support them rather than turning to taxpayers. We saw this afternoon the emotion that comes out as soon as people start talking about having to support parties they do not believe in.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, there is a contradiction there. I heard for instance that we do not want to turn to taxpayers. I heard the same member saying maybe taxpayers want one vote because we are going to have a \$1.50 so-called head tax. At the same time he would want us to put all the load on individuals to finance the whole political and electoral system. That is a complete inconsistency and contradiction there.

Individuals can only do so much. Any government, when we think of our budget here of \$175 billion a year, surely can afford \$100 million to keep political parties in funds so that they can devote time to research and do the things that they should be doing, which is politics, rather than going out to raise funds all the time. This experience is working very well in Quebec. It is now working in Manitoba and I hope it works here as well.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

To begin my presentation on Bill C-24, I feel like saying, "Finally". Finally, the government got it. Finally, there will be, at the federal level, legislation to clean up election financing.

Sometimes in the House, people do not like us bringing up things that are being done in Quebec, good things that work. I will point out that we have had political party financing legislation in Quebec since 1977. It was one of René Lévesque's greatest legacies.

I will also point out that those members of the Bloc Québécois who were in this House when our party was founded started off as independents. In 1993, these members were elected to form the official opposition. Others joined the Bloc Québécois in 1997 and in the 2000 election. More recently, we enjoyed two great victories in the ridings of Berthier—Montcalm and Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay.

Since 1994, Bloc Québécois members have been demanding that the federal government pass such legislation. The Bloc Québécois readily supports the principle of the bill on political party financing. It welcomes these major steps forward in terms of financing by individuals and believes that, while imperfect, this bill will help democratize the financing of federal political parties.

I would like to review briefly a few important aspects of the bill. The limit for contributions by individuals is \$10,000 per party per year. I will have an opportunity to comment on this. Members will

Government Orders

recall that I said earlier that the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of the bill.

Corporations, trade unions and other associations may make contributions up to a maximum of \$1,000 annually. Surveys will become admissible refundable election expenses, and the limit for election expenses will be raised accordingly.

This bill will come into force on January 1, 2004, or six months after royal assent, whichever is the later. I will have a comment to make on that.

Riding associations, nomination contestants and leadership contestants will have to register with Elections Canada and provide financial reports. Disclosure requirements are being extended for leadership races. Campaign expenses for nomination contestants will be set at 50% of the contestant's maximum allowable expenses during the previous election campaign in their riding.

The percentage of each party's election expenses that can be reimbursed will increase from 22.5% to 50%. The minimum percentage of votes for parties to be eligible for reimbursement of expenses, meaning the minimum percentage to be eligible for expenses, will decrease from 15% to 10%.

Political parties will be entitled to a quarterly allowance of 37.5¢ per valid vote. The maximum tax credit for donations to political parties will be set at \$650 per year. The first \$400 will be subject to a tax credit of 75%.

I was saying earlier that, in the early days of the Bloc Québécois, following Quebec's example, it passed a provision in its founding statutes and manifesto that prohibited contributions from companies, even if federal legislation on political party financing permitted such contributions.

• (1725)

During our 2000 convention, this was democratically expressed by the party faithful, not by the party leadership or a financial institution, nor dictated by the big banks or by the oil and gas companies, as is the case for other political parties.

We know why the government does not seem to want to do more than pay lip service when it comes to the price of oil and gasoline, whether we are talking about gas at the pump or heating oil. This is quite simply because these big companies, these oil and gas companies are stuffing the pockets of the Liberal party. It is hard to bite the hand that feeds you. That is why the Minister of Industry's answers are so lacking in substance and why he is refusing to intervene.

Fortunately, the member for Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge rose and said that there is in fact a competition problem when it comes to gas prices. That is another matter altogether; I will come back to the bill.

Government Orders

It is important to understand why people were against amending legislation on political party financing. On April 4, 5 and 6, the Bloc Québécois will have another convention where supporters will be able to have their say, whether it be on the issue of ridings or on regional issues. However, during our convention in 2000, our supporters told us, "in order to put us on an equal footing with the other parties, we are asking you, as your supporters, in the mandate you received in the parliamentary wing, to change this rule". That is why the party executive changed the Bloc Québécois' financing rules.

Our supporters only resigned themselves to this after observing our inability to have federal political party financing rules changed. We do not have a time machine. If Bill C-24, as it now stands, had been introduced before our 2000 convention, our supporters would have seen that the government was starting to yield to reason and that the needed changes would indeed be implemented. That is why supporters asked that we change the party's constitution.

Since its creation, the Bloc Québécois has called for changes to the Canada Elections Act so that only contributions from individuals be accepted to finance political parties.

In 1994, our colleague, the member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, moved a motion to that effect, under private members' business. I will read the motion he moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should bring in legislation limiting solely to individuals the right to donate to a federal political party, and restricting such donations to a maximum of \$5,000 a year.

I would remind members that this motion was defeated in the House and that the Liberal members, with a few exceptions, voted against it, including the member for LaSalle—Émard.

In closing, I would say, as we were saying at the beginning, that even though the bill is a step in the right direction it does contain some flaws, such as the \$10,000 limit per party per year per individual. We feel that this is too much, when compared to the \$3,000 limit set by the Quebec legislation.

The other point being that corporations, unions and other associations are allowed to make contributions up to a total of \$1,000 each year. We believe that the bill could have prohibited this type of financing, as is the case in Quebec.

I would suggest that increased funding from the public is a necessary counterbalance and that this legislation should encourage the possibilities of increasing funding from the public so that political parties can remain independent and so that we do not have to owe our election to big corporations, but to average citizens who donated \$2, \$5, \$10, or \$20 and said "I would like you to represent me in Ottawa". That is what we are asking for.

• (1730)

Although the Bloc Québécois welcomes the new provisions of the bill as they relate to leadership races, we think it is a shame that everything possible was done so that the proposed provisions would not apply to the current Liberal leadership race, since the bill is scheduled to come into effect on January 1, 2004 at the earliest. It is clear that some people did not want the provisions of this bill to apply to the current Liberal leadership race.

As we said in the introduction, despite the loopholes that we have uncovered, the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of this bill on political party financing, but we will wait to make a definitive statement until we have seen the results from the work done in committee.

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to congratulate the hon. member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans for his comments. While he may have found his speech brief, it was certainly interesting and very enlightening as regards this bill.

I too agree with the principle of the bill, that is the democratization of the political party financing process. Earlier, a member opposite got himself all worked up when he claimed that the member for LaSalle—Émard had never said that Canadians would be surprised to see the Bloc Québécois being funded with taxpayers' money.

Before putting my question to my colleague for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, I wish to point out to that hon. member that Quebeckers, who elected the Bloc Québécois members, also pay federal taxes. Therefore, they have a fundamental right to be represented, if it is their wish, by Bloc Québécois members, and the latter should enjoy the same benefits as the members of the other parties.

I want to ask my colleague whether it is true that the member for LaSalle—Émard made such comments.

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, earlier, there was an exchange between the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis and some Canadian Alliance members. In any case, the blues exist and *Hansard* will be official tomorrow. We will then be able to confirm that the member for Prince George—Peace River did say these things in the House.

However, I would like to make a correction to the comments made by the hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie. When the hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie talks to us, he always poses as the holder of the truth. But I want to set the record straight regarding the comments that he made.

I have with me the statement made by the member for LaSalle—Émard to the media, at the world economic forum in Davos, Switzerland. It is from an article published in the *National Post*, on January 25, 2003. I will read the quote in English. This is the member for LaSalle—Émard speaking to the media.

[*English*]

I agree that the system should be open and transparent. That's what this is about, [but] the questions that have to be answered are how does a new party start up [if you can't raise money from private sources]? Another question is how do Canadians feel about their taxes being used to fund the Bloc Québécois?"

[*Translation*]

So, this comment was made to journalists at the world economic forum, in Davos, on January 25, 2003, by the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure the member and all of the Bloc members that I totally support their presence here in the House of Commons. They campaigned and either persuaded the electors to their way of thinking or their electors already thought a certain way and they expressed what their electors were thinking and said, "Send me to Ottawa and I will present your point of view". I support their being here 100% if that is what happened.

However, with respect to this bill, the offensive part of it being that taxpayers, voters, are being asked to fund political parties with which they do not agree, I think it is a violation of a fundamental freedom. For example, in 1993 when I first became involved, many individuals gave voluntary donations to our campaign and I won. That was the money I used for campaigning. Had someone come to my door and asked if I would give a donation to the Progressive Conservative Party to help it, I would have respectfully declined. Similarly I would have declined had someone from the Liberals, the NDP or the Bloc asked. My own personal freedom says I am not going to donate my money to support that in which I do not believe. That is a fundamental freedom in this country.

I want to assure the member that if the rules apply equally to all of the parties, they have as much right to be here as I do, and certainly as much right as those spineless Liberals on the other side.

• (1735)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, when the member for Elk Island says that he totally supports our presence in the House of Commons, I would respectfully say to him that he has nothing to do with our presence. He does not have to support it or to oppose it.

We were elected by the people who decided to send us here to represent them. Even if I said that I did not support the presence of any of the members across the way, I am not the one voting in those ridings. Is the member doing us a favour by saying that he supports our presence? He has no say on that.

I would say to my colleague from Elk Island that the Canadian Alliance's position in this matter is rooted in hypocrisy because, under the existing rules, when a corporation or an individual is eligible for a tax credit because of a contribution that was made, that tax credit is funded by taxpayers.

I will conclude by saying to the member for Elk Island that my fellow Quebecers do not agree with the fact that 24% of their federal taxes are used for Stornoway, among other things. That would be a good example.

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am always pleased to rise to speak in this House, but today even more than usual, because this government bill is, in a way, almost a gift to us Quebecers. It is truly an unexpected surprise.

Once recovered from that surprise, we are nevertheless obliged to admit that we agree with the spirit of this bill.

It bears a considerable resemblance to Bill 2, enacted by the Quebec National Assembly in 1977, which has had time to prove its

worth. This bill limits contributions to \$10,000, a point on which we are not fully in agreement. We in the Bloc feel that \$5,000 is ample.

It also allows companies, corporations, unions or not for profit organizations to contribute \$1,000. We understand that the intent here may be to remedy an abuse that has existed in the past, but at the same time, out of principle, we prefer the way the Quebec political party financing legislation bans any contribution by a corporation, organization or company.

In practice, if the figure of \$1,000 were selected, it would be very difficult to monitor. During an election campaign, for instance, a candidate for a given party could receive \$900. Since some companies are located in two adjacent ridings, the candidate in the other riding could only receive \$100.

What, however, is to prevent that same company—for example the Banque nationale or some other bank—from making another contribution in a far distant part of the region, the province or the country, to another candidate at the same time?

It is my impression, in this connection, that even a well-meaning candidate or election committee is not in a position to provide an immediate answer as to whether or not they can accept a contribution from a given company, without knowing where else it might have made a similar contribution.

That is the practical aspect. Because of this complication, and in order to be true to the principle, I feel it would be far wiser and far simpler and consistent, far more transparent as well, to ban contributions from companies, not for profit organizations, labour unions and others.

My hon. colleague from Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans responded to a Canadian Alliance member on behalf of the Bloc Québécois. I do not wish to repeat everything he said, but that is not all we should tell him. The member said he supported us. He must have meant to say tolerate, because I do not think that he supports us in the sense of making financial contributions to our party. Not that we would ask him to either.

We are grateful that he supports our presence, but as my colleague, the whip for the Bloc Québécois indicated, there is no need for that. The people who elected us have spoken. But he was talking about rights. Can a woman be a little pregnant? That is always the example that is used. Either she is pregnant or she is not. If we have the right to exist or to be supported by him, the member should let us enjoy the same rights as other political parties. Otherwise, there is no right, and we are just being tolerated. A right is a right, which is different from being tolerated. This is another aspect.

I would like to give an example, because this issue of new parties in this House has been raised. In 1993, the Bloc Québécois was not a recognized party, as it lacked the required number of members, in spite of the fact that it already had seven elected members before the 1993 election. There were resignations both from the Liberal Party and the Progressive Conservative Party, and our current leader got elected in Laurier—Sainte-Marie. Yet our party was not recognized and therefore did not benefit from tax credits until the elections were called, at which time it put up a minimum of 50 candidates.

Government Orders

●(1740)

I think it is wise to learn from experience here. We can always talk about the number of members necessary; that is another issue. We know that here, there have to be 12 members. But that is a whole other issue that we could look at in another debate.

I think we should applaud the idea, which apparently comes from the Prime Minister. In pondering his political legacy, he thought about this issue and remembered that 26 years ago this bill was the first bill adopted by the Parti Québécois after it was elected, even if it was Bill 2, since the first bill was on language. He said “There is a good idea” and ran with it.

It took him a while, because he has had a long career that started even before 1977. One could say that he could have thought of this much sooner but—

Mrs. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold: Better late than never.

Mr. Antoine Dubé: As my colleague from Jonquière says, better late than never.

However, in the current context where the Prime Minister is leaving, there is a leadership race in his own party and he is being observed and criticized from all sides, I think he did not dare make a certain move.

He made one by indicating that the bill would come into effect on January 1, 2004, which is after the Liberal party leadership race. I think the Prime Minister was forced to do this. He did not dare do more, perhaps for fear of seeming mean-spirited towards a certain candidate in the Liberal leadership race, the person who may be his successor.

I would like to do him a favour and tell my colleagues in all the parties that we should acknowledge that the Prime Minister, albeit a little late, had a good idea, that he introduced a good bill and that we agree with it.

However, he did not dare go that far. We all know the legislative process: the bill is sent to committee before receiving royal assent and so forth. Normally we could expect all this to be concluded at the end of June or during the summer. This bill could come into effect as early as this fall, but the Prime Minister did not have the courage for that.

I think that if it comes from another party such as the Bloc Québécois—I have not had the time to consult my hon. colleagues on this matter; there are some around me—it might be a good idea to give some thought in committee, at the report stage or at third reading, to having the bill take effect when it receives royal assent, as with all other bills.

I think that this would be generally acceptable. There should not be a feeling that this is not in his party's interests. I think that, at the end of his political career, the Prime Minister had wanted to make a nice gesture. I would like to help him out by saying that it will not come from him but from someone else, an opposition member, seconded by the member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

I was listening earlier, and I must say that he made a very good speech today. It is obvious that he is a man of democratic principles.

He was a member of the National Assembly of Quebec and saw the good side of this legislation, which, even if the Parti Québécois was defeated, was retained by Premier Robert Bourassa during two mandates and is still in effect today.

To my knowledge, no political party in Quebec wants to change this, since the results have proven positive.

Let us go over these results. The Chief Electoral Officer of Quebec reported some interesting data. All in all, in 2001, the recognized political entities at the provincial level in Quebec received 58,082 contributions; 82% of them, that is 47,806 contributions, were of \$200 or less. So, we are talking about small contributions.

●(1745)

The average amount of the contributions was \$171. On average, the contributions of \$200 or less were of \$67; 8.6% of the contributions were over \$400; 1.2% of the contributions were between \$2,000 and \$3,000. Therefore, I think that a \$5,000 limit is quite reasonable.

What is great about legislation on political party financing is that it is based on transparency. The second goal is that members of the House of Commons, whatever their political stripes, will feel more independent—and I did not say *indépendantistes*—and will not be subjected to pressure coming from right and left. When 1,000 individuals contribute \$5 each, you know that it is not the same as if one individual made a contribution over \$5,000, for which he will expect meetings and favours. I think that members of this House would breathe easier and be able to work more freely.

We do not do it often, but I think we should give credit to the Prime Minister for bringing forward such a bill at the end of his political career.

[English]

Mr. John O'Reilly (Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the member's speech. I want to ask him to deal with the specifics of the bill that are contrary to or that he feels would be an improvement over the present legislation that exists in Quebec. I know that he has made a couple of comments about the similarities of the bill with the legislation of Quebec and Manitoba.

I would like to hear him expand on just exactly what it is he is looking for in regard to improvements in the bill so that we might have some idea on how he feels that this particular legislation could be improved upon.

●(1750)

[Translation]

Mr. Antoine Dubé: Mr. Speaker, there are a number, but let me talk about the main one, the complete ban on contributions from businesses, corporations, non-profit associations or unions.

I said it earlier, but I will repeat it, on principle, it must be individuals and not groups that finance political parties. Second, from a practical standpoint, in an election campaign, how are we going to prevent a business from contributing more than \$1,000 when there are 301 ridings?

Let us presume that I agree with this, and receive a \$800 cheque in my riding, and the member opposite receives an identical contribution from the Royal Bank. The same could happen to the member for Lac-Saint-Louis. One company could contribute to all of the parties. In my opinion, this is unenforceable.

I think that if we were to make an improvement, this would be the main one.

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Income Tax Act requires that all Canadians or Quebecers pay income tax. This tax is managed by the federal government. If the federal government passes legislation, it must be fair for everyone. The Canadian Alliance has made some demands. The Canadian Alliance does not have any members of Parliament from Quebec, nor in a number of Canadian provinces. Yet, all of these people pay taxes and income tax to the federal government.

We know what the Alliance did on the issue of members' pensions. Yet, today, they are all eligible. Would the member accept having a double standard in the House, by having one party, because it promotes Quebec's sovereignty, penalized by Canadian legislation?

Mr. Antoine Dubé: Mr. Speaker, in my mind, a right is a right is a right. You cannot give a right only to some people or to one group. There should not be a double standard. This is a principle we should all respect.

My hon. colleague talked about the Income Tax Act. I think we could also improve the way this legislation deals with students and those who do not pay income tax. For instance, it could be amended to ensure that the people who do not pay income tax are entitled to the tax credit on political contributions. Then, these people would be able to make political contributions if they wanted to.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:52 p.m., the House will now proceed to consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

ARMENIA

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 137

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should: (a) recognize the genocide of the Armenians and condemn any attempt to deny or distort this historical truth as being anything less than genocide, a crime against humanity; and (b) designate April 24th of every year hereafter throughout Canada as a day of remembrance of the 1.5 million Armenians who fell victim to the first genocide of the twentieth century.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the debate this evening is about truth. The debate this evening is about honesty. The debate this evening is about telling the truth about one of the darkest stains on the history of the 20th century, the first genocide, tragically not the only genocide, but the first genocide of the 20th century, the genocide of the Armenians, the 1915 genocide of 1.5 million Armenians who died when they were forcibly deported from eastern Turkey by troops of the then Ottoman empire.

Private Members' Business

Today we are seeking not compensation but an affirmation of the historical truth of what took place, an affirmation that indeed this was genocide. I have raised this issue in the House on a number of occasions, as have a number of my colleagues. I want to pay tribute to those members on all sides of the House who have supported this principle of recognition.

I speak today on this motion on behalf of all of my colleagues in the New Democrat caucus and our leader, Jack Layton. I particularly want to acknowledge the extraordinary dedication and commitment of the member for Halifax, our spokesperson on international affairs, who has done so much to keep this issue alive, this issue of the recognition of the Armenian genocide.

Many members of the House were present at a recent screening at the National Gallery of the magnificent film by Atom Egoyan, the film called *Ararat*. It was a powerful, graphic and deeply moving film about the lives of people who were touched and affected by the genocide. It also depicted the horrors of that genocide. I want to thank Atom Egoyan and all of those who were responsible for the creation of that magnificent film for helping to bring the reality of the Armenian genocide into the homes and hearts and onto the movie screens of Canadians. I want to also pay tribute to the magnificent actors who starred in Egoyan's film *Ararat*.

Indeed, the struggle for recognition of the Armenian genocide has been going on from the time of the genocide itself. It would not have been kept alive without the leadership of people in the Armenian National Committee of Canada. I want today to pay tribute to them as well, people like Girair Basmadjian, Aris Babikian, Rouben Kouyngian, Sylvia Baronian, Giro Manoyan, and many others from coast to coast in Canada. I have had the great privilege of having been able to work closely with these people over the years in their efforts to persuade our government to do the right thing, to recognize this historical truth.

Since this issue was last debated in the House, there have been a number of significant steps, both in Canada and internationally, on the road to recognition of the genocide. On June 13 of last year, the Canadian Senate voted almost unanimously, by a vote of 39 to 1, for a motion proposed by Senator Shirley Maheu, seconded by Senator Setlakwe, and amended for clarity by Senator John Lynch-Staunton. That motion passed in the Senate was in the identical terms of this motion before the House today.

• (1755)

So I will not repeat the motion. The Speaker read out the motion at the start of these proceedings. It is a motion calling for recognition of the genocide and the designation of April 24 as a day of remembrance for the Armenians who died.

If the Senate of this Parliament can take that important and courageous and, indeed, long overdue step, surely we as elected representatives of the people of Canada can do the same thing.

Indeed, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade did pass a motion some months later, in November of last year, albeit not unanimous. The official opposition members on the committee were split.

Private Members' Business

I am pleased to see the member for Calgary Southeast in the House today. He has been a strong supporter of the call for recognition of the Armenian genocide. Indeed, he supported this motion when it came before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The motion was passed in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs as well. Again I remind members of the House that this is a committee which includes representatives from all sides of the House. I see the parliamentary secretary in the House today. I have to sadly report that she was among the Liberals who opposed the recognition of the Armenian genocide in that committee vote.

Indeed, the Minister of Foreign Affairs himself refuses to acknowledge and recognize the Armenian genocide. When I put a question to him last fall with respect to the adoption in the Senate of that historic and virtually almost unanimous motion calling for recognition of the genocide, he could not bring himself to say, yes, let us tell the truth.

Instead, he talked about a terrible tragedy. Of course it was a tragedy, but it was much, much more than a tragedy. It was genocide and we should certainly be calling it for what it was. That is the least we can do to honour the memory of those who died and in many cases died in such terrible, tragic and appalling circumstances. The least we can do is tell the truth.

We would not be alone in doing that. As I mentioned earlier, there has been significant progress on this front in a number of areas. Indeed, over 20 years ago, in March 1980, the Ontario legislature adopted a motion officially recognizing and condemning "the atrocities committed by the government of Turkey upon the Armenian people who were victims of persecution and genocide..."

● (1800)

[Translation]

On April 10, 1980, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously passed a motion condemning the Armenian genocide and urging Quebecers to commemorate this event on April 24. The motion was as follows:

That, on the 65th anniversary of the Armenian genocide carried out in Turkey, on April 24, 1915, the Assembly take the opportunity to condemn this barbarous act against this unfortunate people, which violated the very principles of collective and individual human rights, and that the Assembly invite all Quebecers to commemorate this event, on April 24 of each year, as a show of solidarity toward the Armenian community.

This motion was passed by the Quebec National Assembly almost 23 years ago.

[English]

If the National Assembly of Quebec, the legislature of Ontario and national parliaments around the world in countries such as Argentina, Belgium, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States House of Representatives twice, in 1975 and 1984, can take this important step, why on earth will our government not do the same?

Lest there be any doubt about the nature of genocide and whether the events that took place in 1915, the slaughter of 1.5 million Armenians in Ottoman, Turkey, fit the internationally accepted definition of genocide, I point to an international study that was

released just a few days ago. This study was conducted by the International Center for Transitional Justice, a very respected New York-based human rights organization. That body came to the conclusion that without doubt, the 1915 mass killings and deportations of Ottoman Armenians met the four basic criteria laid out by the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. It pointed out that the massacres included all the elements of the crime of genocide as defined in the UN convention. That conclusion has been drawn by many other distinguished scholars as well.

What is preventing the government from doing the right thing? I suggest that unfortunately and sadly it is its desire not to rock the boat with Turkey, one of our allies in NATO and important in our economic relations and trade relations. Shamefully that relationship has silenced our government from speaking the truth.

We know the Turkish government has for too long shown contempt for international law in a whole range of areas, whether it be its ongoing disputes with Greece, its continued illegal occupation of Cyprus, its profound violation of the human rights of the Kurdish peoples in Turkey, its lack of respect for the human rights of Turkish people and its lack of respect for journalists. One of the worst records of brutal suppression is the killing of journalists in Turkey, and the continued imprisonment of Leyla Zana, an elected representative whose only crime was to speak out on behalf of the Kurdish people.

We know the Liberal government is not prepared to stand up for basic human rights and for the truth. Just this week we saw the extent to which our government was prepared to get into bed with George Bush to respond to Turkey's request for advanced deployment of NATO troops and equipment. Thank God some countries like France, Germany and Belgium were prepared to say no. Canada is ready aye ready with George Bush. I suggest it is that same agenda, that same destructive kowtow for economic reasons, that has led to our government being prepared to deny the truth.

We hear talk of Holocaust denial. This is genocide denial. It is just as shameful. Elie Wiesel, a past U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council chairman, said:

Before the planning of the final solution, Hitler said, 'Who remembers the Armenians?' He was right. No one remembered them, as no one remembered the Jews. Rejected by everyone, they felt expelled from history.

I am here today to plead with my colleagues on all sides of the House not to forget that genocide, to tell the truth about what happened, to honour the memory of those who perished and to give some sense of closure to the families of those who died. I met with a number of those family members at the screening of *Ararat*. They had tears in their eyes as they spoke of their anguish and the pain they felt that their government was not prepared to tell the truth about the genocide.

● (1805)

In closing, I want to once again urge all members of the House to support this motion, and in view of the fundamental importance of this issue and the fact that the Senate has spoken on it as well, I would like to at this time seek the unanimous consent of the House to have a vote on this important motion at the conclusion of the debate today.

Private Members' Business

The Deputy Speaker: Is there the unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed

Some hon. members: No

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in debate on this motion because history does matter and as we know those who do not learn from the lessons of history are bound to repeat them.

Unfortunately, that is the sad history of the 20th century, what Pope John Paul II has called the century of tears. It was a century when ideologies of nationalism and totalitarianism, ideologies of hatred, conjoined with the technology of mass killing, brought about genocides through the last century which resulted in unimaginable human suffering. The first instance of which was the Armenian genocide of 1915.

I spoke last year in favour of a similar motion and outlined the historical record regarding the Armenian genocide, which I believe is largely beyond any serious historical question. There are those unfortunately, from the Turkish community and the Turkish government, who claim that what happened in 1915 and 1916 was the tragic result of the fog of war, the chaos of the first war in the Anatolian peninsula, that tragedies happened on both sides and that there were moral equivalents all around.

However this just does not square with the facts. It is unfortunate. One thing I would like to disassociate myself from the member for Burnaby—Douglas is that I believe the Turkish people and the Turkish government today are striving mightily to adopt standards of human rights and democracy which we ought to applaud and support. I strongly support our Turkish friends as an ally within NATO, defending our common values. To point out the reality of the genocide of 1915 is not in any way to diminish our contemporary friendship with the people of Turkey, Turkish immigrants to Canada and the Turkish state.

Rather than going back and quoting historical sources, about which there is unfortunately endless debate, I have chosen instead to spend a few minutes quoting from contemporary Canadian media at the time of the Armenian genocide. I want to put ourselves in the minds of people who sat in this House 85 years ago as this tragedy occurred. I want us to imagine how we might respond if we were faced with the kinds of headlines that I will present tonight. I will be quoting directly from not redactions but from actual photocopies of newspaper articles from the major Canadian media based on firsthand, eye witness, confirmed, verified accounts by western media outlets operating in and around Turkey in 1915 and 1916. This is a random selection which gives us a true sense of the historical flavour, not the opinion of historians, not the opinion of Armenian apologists, not the opinion of myself, but the actual historical record as presented to Canadians in Armenia at the time.

From *Le Droit*, July 19, 1915, "Chrétien massacrés", is a story about the massacre of Christians. In August 4, 1915, "Le Massacre des Arméniens" is another story detailing the beginning of the genocide. September 1915, from *L'Action Catholique*, "Le Massacre des Arméniens". It states:

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

Horrible scenes of carnage are taking place in inland Turkey. Help has been sought from the Greeks. The Turks have started systematically exterminating the Armenians again, throughout their Empire. Reports of horrific scenes of carnage have reached us. Women have been raped or sold as slaves, men have been slaughtered.

La Presse of Montreal, on September 21, 1915, reported as follows:

Massacre of 100,000 Armenians. The convention of the Swiss Protestant Church, currently in session here in Nuptal, has decided to send United States President Wilson a telegram asking him to intervene to protect the Armenians against the Turks. Armenian refugees in Switzerland estimate that 100,000 of their fellow citizens have already been massacred.

Le Canada, on September 22, 1915, under the heading "Unspeakable Atrocities", reported the following:

Viscount Bryce, a former British ambassador, spoke of the vile acts committed by the Turkish government to exterminate Armenian Christians. Men of military age have been slaughtered in cold blood. Younger Armenian women are being abducted and taken to Turkish harems. The remainder of the population, older women and children, are taken to places unfit for humans in Asia Minor, and others to the desert between Syria and the Euphrates River. Many are killed along the way; and all die sooner or later.

Le Devoir, in October 1915, under the heading "Armenians Massacred", said:

Viscount Bryce estimates that some 800,000 were killed in Armenia. This is deliberate and premeditated extermination by the Turkish government.

L'Événement, in October 1915, stated:

The Turks are wiping out the Armenians.

[*English*]

I will switch to some of the English clippings from that time. The *Vancouver Daily Province*, of February 23, 1915, said, "Done to death by the Turks. Hundreds of Armenians were massacred in Trans-Caucasia. Corpses left in the streets for dogs to devour".

The *Toronto Daily Star* of April 26, 1915, stated, "Terrible tails of Armenian slaughter. Ten villages wiped out in massacres by Mohammedans. Pools of blood seen. Mothers threw their babes in river to save them from death by hunger".

The *Ottawa Evening Journal* of July 1915 stated, "Turks drag 10,000 Armenian Christians to Tigras, shoot all and throw bodies into river".

The *Winnipeg Free Press* of August 20, 1915, stated, "Massacre by Turks. Frightful outrage is perpetrated upon Armenians in Biblis". It talked about 1,000 women and children being slain.

The Globe, the predecessor to the *Globe and Mail* on August 26, 1915, stated, "Turks slay 14,000 in one massacre. Blackest page in Ottoman history revealed by former Italian consul who said, "The results of the proclamation was carnage on a big and bloody scale. Out of 14,000 Armenian Catholics and Protestants residing in Trezibond, only 100 escaped".

It goes on and on. The *Montreal Daily Star* of September 1915 stated, "Correspondents confirm the reports of the wiping out of Armenians. Christian cities cease to exist as such and inhabitants are driven far from home".

Private Members' Business

The *Globe* on September 24, 1915, stated, "Armenian men are systematically murdered. Extermination, the watchword".

The London *Evening Free Press*, on September 23, 1915, stated, "A slaughter of Armenians is growing worse".

The Toronto *Daily Star* on September 30, 1915, stated, "Nothing in the whole range of human history, ancient, medieval or modern, will begin to compare with the systematic, diabolism of the process of extermination to which the Armenians are at present subjected—the sudden destruction of a whole people in the name and by the methods of ordinary civil war would be bad enough, but the method used by the Turks to get rid of Armenians is immeasurably worse".

The Ottawa *Evening Telegraph* on Tuesday, October 5, 1915, stated, "Not since the dark middle ages a thousand years ago have such barbarous practices been witnessed. The crimes now being perpetrated upon the Armenian people surpass in their horror and cruelty anything that history has recorded during the past 1,000 years. The educated and the ignorant, the rich and the poor are all being subjected to every form of barbarity and outrage".

The stories go on about people being burned or skinned alive, parents watching their children being dismembered and disembowelled. This is not a question of historical debate. These are contemporary, verified firsthand accounts which appeared in the Canadian media.

When people ask why then should the House take a position on historical debate, it is precisely because history matters. Let me close by quoting from our esteemed colleague for Mount Royal.

He wrote, "The Armenian genocide provides us with two important and enduring lessons. First, the danger of crimes of indifference, of conspiracies of silence. Indeed, we have witnessed an appalling indifference to ethnic cleansing in the early part of the century, the unbearable genocides of the past 50 years to the unspeakable genocide of Rwanda.

It is our responsibility, then, to break down the walls of indifference, to shatter the conspiracies of silence wherever they may be. In the case of the Armenian genocide the indifference not only existed at the time but since, and so Hitler's famous dictum, itself a commentary on the dangers of indifference and silence. As Hitler arrogantly put it, who remembers the Armenians?

Is that the indifference to memory as well as to the killing itself that paves the way for the next killing fields?"

We all at this time and in this place of history, remember the Armenians. Let us do so by passing this resolution.

•(1815)

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas for expressing his views. As well I listened to those just expressed and the litany of newspaper articles.

The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas has expressed his views of the tragic events of 1914 to 1925, which was the time of the collapse of the Ottoman empire. Indeed it claimed so many lives and had such a profound effect on the Armenian community as well as on other communities in the region. Statements have also been made

by other members of the House during previous debates on the subject.

That part of the world without a doubt experienced a particularly horrific period in history, marked by numerous atrocities and great suffering.

Whether it be through the Prime Minister's messages to Canadians of Armenian descent on the anniversaries of the Armenian tragedy of 1915, or during previous debates in the House, or in response to questions asked of the Minister of Foreign Affairs during question period, the government has expressed its heartfelt sympathy and compassion for the suffering experienced by the Armenian people during the period in question. The government has stressed the importance we attach to ensuring that the memory of this human tragedy is preserved in our collective consciousness.

I would particularly like to point out that during the debate on the Armenian tragedy in 1996 the House adopted a motion recognizing the week of April 20 to 27 each year as a week of remembrance of the inhumanity of people toward one another.

We will also recall that on June 10, 1999 following comprehensive consultations, the position of the Government of Canada with regard to these events was set out in a statement made in the House by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the hon. member for Halton, who spoke on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The hon. member stated:

We remember the calamity afflicted on the Armenian people in 1915. This tragedy was committed with the intent to destroy a national group in which hundreds of Armenians were subject to atrocities which included massive deportations and massacres. May the memory of this period contribute to healing wounds as well as to reconciliation of present day nations and communities and remind us all of our collective duty to work together toward world peace.

Canada is a land of immigrants. As such it promotes tolerance and respect for diversity in international organizations and in the development of effective multilateral tools that embody our ideals and our values, including tolerance, respect for human rights, democracy and rule of law, to prevent any recurrence of the tragic events of the past, such as the one which took such a terrible toll on the Armenian community.

Unfortunately we cannot change the past. What we can and must continuously do is work very hard to build a future of peace and tolerance for all people. For example, our peacekeeping missions in various regions of the globe reflect our desire and our willingness to provide concrete help in creating environments that foster reconciliation and tolerance.

By our Canadian example we show the rest of the world not only that it is possible for people of different cultures to live together in harmony and to flourish, but also that in doing so it is a remarkable, enriching and fascinating experience for us as individuals and as a nation on a cultural as well as on an economic level.

Canada seeks to establish positive, comprehensive and productive relations with all the countries of the region, including Turkey and Armenia. Indeed a reconciled stable and prosperous region will generate positive developments beyond the immediate borders of the countries concerned. Everyone stands to gain, including Canada.

In closing, let me repeat what we have already said, because in our eyes it is still essential, even fundamental, and we will all have to continue to devote our energy and efforts to it.

• (1820)

The tragic events of 1915 underscore and remind us of the importance of promoting tolerance and respect through diversity among peoples to ensure that the tragic events of the past, such as the ones which took a terrible toll on the Armenian community, are not repeated. We also invite the parties concerned to look to the future because the events of the past should not stand in the way of reconciliation.

In closing, the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas said that the stand of this government is about not wanting to rock the boat with Turkey, but that is not what this government's position is. It is about refusing to be divisive. It is about refusing to inflame old hatreds and refusing to reopen old wounds as he continues to do. It is about building a nation of tolerance and healing, looking to the future and building the kind of relationships abroad and here within Canada which move us forward and not to act from political motivation to reopen and create the hatred and divisiveness. I am very proud of this government's stand which shows considerable courage in the road we continue to take.

• (1825)

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I hope to convince the parliamentary secretary to try to change the government's position on this.

First, I want to say that I am proud to rise, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, to speak to this motion, which we support. I must point out that the member for Laval Centre brought forward a similar motion in the House. That motion was debated on two occasions. It read as follows:

That this House recognize the Armenian genocide of 1915 and condemn this act as a crime against humanity.

I will remind members that Mr. Daviault, who was the member for Ahuntsic—I can refer to him by name since he is no longer with us—had also brought forward such a motion, which was debated in the House in 1995 and 1996.

A lot has been said in the House in support of recognition of the Armenian genocide. I would not want to repeat everything, but I do want to talk about an article that I read and that I must share with my colleagues.

This article is at the heart of a new trend that emanates from Turkish and Armenian historians who do want the recognition of the genocide, and again I draw the attention of the parliamentary secretary to this most important issue, but who also want to go beyond that and to promote dialogue between the two communities and between the two countries as well.

I remember going through Armenia and Turkey. Armenia greatly needs Turkey. And people in Turkey would come to realize that things would be better if they had more contact with Armenia.

The author that I will be talking about is Taner Akcam and he currently works, from what I understand, out of the Zoryan Institute,

Private Members' Business

in Toronto. A Turkish historian, he has published and is still publishing reports on his work at the Zoryan Institute.

In July 2001, the prestigious *Monde diplomatique* published one of his articles entitled “Turkey's carefully forgotten history”. I want to point out to the parliamentary secretary that the article was written after France got into serious trouble with Turkey following the recognition by the French Assembly and Senate of the Armenian genocide.

The author reminds us that the French Ambassador was summoned to Ankara by the Turkish government. Demonstrations were held and French products were boycotted. “The recognition by Paris of the Armenian genocide led to official reactions and popular backlash”, he said. I remember seeing and reading that.

Mr. Akcam also said, “In fact, for Turkey to acknowledge this bloodbath would force it to recognize that some of the heroes who helped build its modern State were also killers. The whole vision of the country would then crumble”.

This is what he explains throughout his article.

• (1830)

He writes:

Regardless of the decision by France, it cannot serve as a pretext for once again covering up what was done in 1915-17 by the party forming the Ottoman government, the majority of which was Turk, to the Armenian population.

He goes on:

There are many instances that support the view that the reaction against France is intended to conceal the facts and not as defence against a false accusation. One of the most telling of these might be these inflammatory words by a journalist, “Let it be made clear for world public opinion, in the past we chastised all those vile mixed bloods who, not content just to take over our lands, also moved against Turks' assets, lives and honour. We know our forefathers were right, and today, if such threats were to recur, we would do what was necessary, without a moment's hesitation”. There is nothing exceptional about these words, said in a moment of great anger. There have been works with a claim to a scientific nature that have said something similar.

He follows with an important question in an attempt to guide us in the response:

Why such anger in reaction to the term “genocide”? Such a reaction is all the harder to grasp when Turkey could, if it wanted to, acknowledge that such massacres did take place while declaring its non-responsibility. Mustafa Kemal, the country's founder, spoke dozens of times on this matter, condemning what he termed the infamous massacres, and calling for punishment of the guilty parties. The leaders of the Ottoman Ittihad ve Terakki (Union and Progress Party) who organized the massacres were judged in 1926, although the proceedings addressed other crimes. A number of them were executed. In light of these facts, Turkey could have regretted the crimes committed against the Armenians and explained that they were acts committed by the Ottoman state and not the Republic.

Why? The historian in him responds, by saying the following:

The collective amnesia from which the country suffers is one of the major obstacles to any public debate. This shared loss of memory comes of the fact that the historic conscience of the Turks has been paralyzed for decades. The founders of the Republic have literally broken the country's ties with its past.

Private Members' Business

This is interesting, because it brings up Turkey's history. In creating a new modern republican state almost from scratch, Kemal Atatürk and those with whom he founded the country had to make it forget 600 years of its history, or so the historian tells us. The creators of this new Turkey are so important in present Turkish history that they are considered heroes. Kemal Atatürk is a great hero. If you go to Turkey, you will see pictures of him everywhere, and everyone speaks highly of him.

It is said that he could not have built the country surrounded by criminals. That is what the author tells us, meaning that it was better to forget the past than to acknowledge the crimes committed.

I think that the idea is clear. I believe that our debates can be useful not only because they will afford Armenians from the diaspora or from Armenia some small measure of solace, but because, by calling on people such as Mr. Atcam, they will also foster a rapprochement, which is what the parliamentary secretary said she wanted.

Mr. Akcam also said:

Eighty-six years of forgotten past have not produced the yearned-for democracy in Turkey. Quite the opposite.

• (1835)

So, he is proposing, and this is what I am working toward, that the genocide be acknowledged and that, at the same time, an effort be made to understand and help the Turks to see their history in a different light, in all humility. Similarly, we still hope that the House will recognize the wrongs done to the Acadians in 1755.

[English]

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this issue again. It comes up quite often. In fact, it recently came up at our foreign affairs committee when there was a motion moved that we supported. The motion was to bring the debate on the Armenian genocide to the House of Commons so we could all discuss it. Actually the motion passed at our committee and then, for some reason or other, the Liberal members of the committee voted to not report it to the House.

I want to respond to the parliamentary secretary, for whom I have respect. She just said that we are a nation of tolerance and understanding. However I cannot understand why that motion could not come to the House for debate, in the same way I cannot understand why the Liberals voted last night to not allow the House to vote on whether we would send our military to war or not, in the same way I cannot understand why the Liberals did not allow our foreign affairs committee to invite officials from Iraq and the United States to come and tell us firsthand their position on the potential war in Iraq. I do not understand these things. Only the Liberals understand these things, such as why we can go to war against a people but we cannot talk to them, cannot have a debate with them and cannot ask them questions, but I guess that is the Liberal way.

We have a great deal of sympathy for all the people who died in this horrible event that happened about 88 years ago. We wish it could have come to the House for a full debate by everyone and a vote but that did not happen because of the Liberals.

However it is important that we discuss these issues and it is important that we continue to discuss them in a peaceful way. This is

a very volatile issue which raises very strong feelings on behalf of everybody. In Canada, our way of dealing with these issues is in a peaceful way.

I want to take this opportunity to raise another issue I have been thinking about lately. It seems that this past event highlights current events, or a convergence of current events really, and I would like to bring those together.

One issue has to do with the Statistics Canada report that said that Canada needed much more immigration. It stated that we needed immigration to maintain our labour force and maintain our momentum in the economy because, through natural resources, our population would not be able to supply the workers, the imagination and the entrepreneurs.

I think we all agree that immigration adds a tremendous flavour to our country, brings new ideas and allows us to be part of the world. However, at the same time, it also raises issues about how we deal with problems. When immigrants come to Canada and bring all their treasures, their assets, their ideas, their qualities and their abilities, we also want them to bring the issues that are of concern to them, but we want to maintain the way we solve our problems, which is through debate and discussion.

Just in the last few days we were reminded of Air India flight 182, where an issue between two groups of people in another land was imported to Canada. This is not the way we resolve issues in Canada. We welcome immigration absolutely, but if we are going to discuss issues, we must discuss them and leave the violence somewhere else. That is what Canada is all about: non-violent solutions to problems, peacekeeping and trying to solve problems.

It is important for us to make it very clear that we have the right to discuss and debate any issue, and to take any side on any issue, whether it is the Armenian issue, the Palestinian-Israeli issue, the Iraq issue, the Sikh issue with India, or whatever, but violence in Canada, no. Violence must be left elsewhere. That is what Canada is about. People should come to Canada because we have this approach to problem resolution, and it is important that we do that.

A few months ago we had a situation at Concordia University. A former Israeli prime minister was to speak at the university but his speech was prevented because of minor violence. Nevertheless, it was not debate nor discussion and it was not the way we resolve issues here. Everybody should have the right to speak in Canada. Whether we agree with them or not, they should have the right to make their presentations and to be heard and then the other side can make their presentation.

Private Members' Business

● (1840)

Again, the Canadian way is the non-violent way, the peaceful way and no one gets hurt. We discuss our issues in the same way that we are discussing this issue today. However, because of the changing population in Canada, after 88 years that issue is here on the floor. Our percentage of immigration is increasing which brings new challenges for our country. We should always welcome immigrants. We need them and want them, but we want them to leave their violence at home. If that is their way of resolving issues we do not want them here. We want to discuss and debate issues, which is exactly what we are doing in the House.

Those are the issues I wanted to raise. We in the foreign affairs committee supported the motion to bring this question to the House of Commons. I voted in favour of it and it passed. Unfortunately it will not be voted on here tonight. It should have been. It should have come to the House after the foreign affairs committee passed the motion which, by the way, was put forth by a Liberal. However the Liberals voted it down so we will not vote on this issue. We do have the opportunity to speak to it but it will not go any further than that because the Liberals have denied us that right.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have enjoyed looking into the history and the background on the events leading up to the collapse of the Ottoman empire, and whether genocide was perpetrated against the Armenian Ottoman citizens in eastern Anatolia. The short answer to that one is no.

I will sketch some of those reasons, but there are numerous sources in books et cetera on both sides of the issue that help to get at some of the facts.

A century of ever increasing external and internal conflict began roughly in 1820 and ended with the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Millions of people, Armenians, Turks, and other members of other ethnic groups, perished in eastern Anatolia during that period of time, during the collapse of this colossal 700 year old empire as a result of inter-communal warfare, relocation, famine and illness.

We do not want to deny the human tragedies of eastern Anatolia in the early parts of the last century, but to rewrite history and to paint these tragic events as a genocide of one affected ethnic group is an injustice to the millions of people who died in the area over that period of time.

The allegation of Armenian genocide falls short of the minimum standards of proof required by the 1948 United Nations convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide. In fact, a number of the Ottomans were tried by a tribunal because of the allegations of genocide back at that time and were acquitted.

After the Ottomans lost World War I the British convened the Malta tribunal to try Ottoman officials for alleged massacres and crimes against Armenians and allegations of genocide. Despite the fact that the Ottoman empire was under allied occupation, the British and the Americans, and any required evidence would be fresh and readily accessible the tribunal acquitted all of the accused for lack of proof. In fact, the one who was gathering the research and documentation was an Armenian himself. Finally, the prosecutor

said there was not enough evidence and he could not proceed. It failed for lack of proper evidence. All 144 detainees were acquitted, exonerated, and released after two years and four months.

I need to also make a point of referring to some of the dubious and prejudicial sources that have been quoted in the House today. Some of these journalists were not on site over there and the source of their information was somewhat skewed, in particular Ambassador Henry Morgenthau who is often cited. He was an individual who was really over there at the behest of President Wilson. His correspondence with President Wilson reveals that his intent was to uncover or manufacture news that would goad the U.S. into joining in the war. It was really more political, and not for humanitarian aims, as to why he was over there.

We could get at the numbers that are bandied about here. It is probably some tragic 600,000 Armenians who were killed in that period of time, but nowhere near the 1.5 million that is often postulated. In fact, historian and demographer Dr. Justin McCarthy makes it plain that it was less than 600,000. Not to get into debate on the figures though, but it is grossly exaggerated with respect to the numbers.

I want to draw attention to a quote often referred to as supposedly having come from Hitler, but in fact it is a fabricated and fraudulent quote. It is not in the Nuremberg transcripts. They do not contain the alleged quote. It is attributed to the AP's bureau chief during World War II, so it is not an authentic source at all and in fact often repeated again and again.

Suffice to say that it was a tragic period of time, but we do not agree with the basis of it. There were in fact the terrorists, the Dashnak and Hunchak guerillas and civilian accomplices, who admittedly organized revolutionary groups and waged war against their own government. They were in a violent political alliance with the Russian forces which rendered those in the war zones subject to relocation.

There was relocation and some awful things otherwise happened, but we cannot call it genocide. I think we fall short of the criteria in the United Nations conventions with respect to this.

● (1850)

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Calgary Southeast and the member for Mercier for their support.

I listened with care to the speech of my friend from New Brunswick who spoke on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party. It is still not clear to me what position that party takes on the substance of this motion. I would welcome some elucidation and clarification on that point.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Nova Scotia.

Mr. Svend Robinson: I am sorry, from Nova Scotia of course. I will welcome in the future clarification of that party's position on this important issue.

Adjournment Debate

I must say that I was astonished to hear the speech of my colleague from Saskatchewan on this issue. We have had the opportunity to work together on some issues, particularly on the issue of Sudan. We have not always agreed on other issues, but his speech today was, frankly, historically wildly inaccurate. I would suggest, with respect, that he go back to the history books and then he will recognize that much of what he has said has no foundation whatsoever in truth or in historical accuracy.

As for the parliamentary secretary's comments, one can only hope that she would recognize that it is important that the truth be told and that we take the step that her colleagues in the Senate took. Senator Maheu and a number of other distinguished senators on both sides of the Senate voted overwhelmingly for recognition of this historical fact of the reality of the genocide. It was not just a tragedy. It was genocide and the House should have the courage, the integrity, and the honesty to call it what it was.

Mr. Speaker, while this debate may collapse today, I want to assure you and, through you, those who are watching the debate that we will continue to speak out on this fundamentally important issue until both Houses of the Parliament of Canada have recognized the genocide of 1.5 million Armenians for what it was.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. As the motion has not been designated as a votable item, the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am up on a general question that I put to the Minister of Health before Christmas regarding health care funding. The Romanow report had been published, we had time to look it over, and we expected the government to respond favourably to it.

Since then we know that the Prime Minister truly hammered out an agreement with the provinces. I think the word hammer is probably the right word because he sort of bludgeoned them to death, simply dictated how much money would be going into health care and walked out on the premiers, stormed out on the premiers, and some of the territorial leaders did not even sign on.

In fact, none of the premiers did. Usually in an accord, technically one does not have to sign on, but usually there is a formality, there is a press conference, there is agreement, handshaking and backslapping, and all that goes with those types of agreements. It did not happen this time for very good reason.

The reason of course is because of the heavy handed approach the Prime Minister took on this issue. I have often said in the past that we know the Prime Minister's career is winding down and this was a

perfect opportunity for him to leave a legacy in health care after having taken a wrecking ball to it.

One of the questions that I put to the minister at the time was on the report card system that had been part of the previous agreement with the provinces on funding in the year 2000 and basically how that report card system was working. The point that we are making is that there must be accountability in the system, accountability on behalf of the federal government, and certainly on behalf of the provinces. None of us are arguing that. I do not think we need artificial restraints on the provinces and they all agree on that point.

We do not mind strings attached and I do not think the provinces do either. Rules must be attached to any funding mechanism. None of the premiers disagree with that, but they do not want the straitjacket approach or being put in handcuffs by the federal government in terms of spending. We believe the provinces are the primary deliverers of health care and they know best where that money should be spent. However, there has to be an accounting process.

One of the difficulties that we have had, and this is one of the things that Romanow recognized, was on the accountability side of the equation. I am referring to the federal government health transfer. We should do away with the Canadian social transfer where the moneys can be spent on education, welfare and health.

We and the provinces must know exactly how much money is being transferred to the provinces. That is the point we are making. It is the point that Romanow made and we are hoping that the federal government will follow that recommendation so that all Canadians will know how much money is being transferred precisely for health care from the federal government to the provinces.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague gave a good speech; it was very interesting. However, his question of November 28 dealt specifically with report cards. I will attempt to shed some light on this issue.

This accord was reached between the first ministers in September 2000, and laid the foundation for the recent reports by all 14 jurisdictions, federal, provincial and territorial, on comparable health indicators.

All of the 14 reports were released, as scheduled, on September 30. They have been referred to in some press reports as report cards.

The mandate provided by the first ministers to their health ministers was clear: begin a process of comprehensive and regular reporting to Canadians. This reporting is to not only inform Canadians about their health and health system, but also to provide valuable information for governments and health care providers, allowing them to make better informed choices.

These reports were reviewed independently by the various auditors general, in order to ensure that the information was as reliable as possible.

Before mentioning a few of the highlights of those reports, I want to underline the very high degree of cooperation between all jurisdictions in producing these reports, the first of their kind.

Adjournment Debate

This is a spirit of cooperation of a different kind, to ensure greater accountability to the people of Canada, so that they know what public funds are used for.

These reports represent a crucial step forward in creating greater transparency, which will again allow Canadians to participate more actively in the ongoing debate on our health care system.

What have we learned? On health, the federal report shows that Canadians are living longer than ever, and have one of the highest life expectancies in the world. Life expectancy for Canadians reached 79 years in 1999, compared to less than 75 years in 1979.

What about health outcomes? Potential years of life lost due to heart attack and unintentional injury have declined significantly. This is becoming very valuable information for health care providers, those who work in the field as well as for governments and health departments.

I recommend the full report to the hon. member. I think it is very informative.

The process to carry out this complex undertaking was set in motion immediately following the first ministers' meeting in the fall of 2000. An outcome indicator reporting committee was established.

It is in this spirit of cooperation and collaboration that we are trying to have indicators that would enable us to compare how things are going in health care across the country, from one province to the next, and in the territories. The accord signed recently with the provincial premiers was put together in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration.

•(1855)

[*English*]

Mr. Greg Thompson: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, I will not take offence at anything the parliamentary secretary said, but the fact of the matter remains that there is a lot to be done on the health care file, particularly by the federal Government of Canada. It imposed financial restraints on the provinces that arbitrarily took money away in the mid-nineties. Basically it starved the provinces of money for so long that for them to play catch-up now requires even more funding.

However, the point I will come back to is that I do not think the provinces want to be dictated to by Ottawa in terms of where money should be spent. I guess we can all agree that there will never be enough, but I think the provinces need flexibility for some of the successes they have enjoyed. Let them enjoy those successes. Let the other provinces follow those models that they have developed on their own. I will leave it at that. I look forward to the parliamentary secretary's reply.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay: Mr. Speaker, I agree with what the hon. member has said. I want him to understand that we have been working with the provinces, in this same spirit, to try to establish common goals and to reach agreement so that we will be comparing apples to apples and oranges to oranges.

The question is whether we are getting a better return on our health dollars compared to previous years. It is with this in mind that we want to renew the health care system.

I do not think that pointing fingers, accusing one other and continuing to live in the past is going to get us anywhere. I would prefer to move forward, not backward.

I believe that we must keep this in mind, as we work with the provinces and the territories. I thank my hon. colleague for having listened to my answer, and I am convinced that he is very clear about where we want to go.

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was on October 24 of last year that I rose in the House to put a question to the Deputy Prime Minister, pointing out that there had been a number of studies prepared for the Romanow commission that looked at the potential impact of trade deals like NAFTA and the GATS on the expansion of medicare to include a national plan for home care, pharmacare and dental care.

In my question I asked the Deputy Prime Minister what steps the government was prepared to take at that time to prevent any further privatization in the health care field, to prevent private, for profit health care companies from claiming massive compensation under NAFTA and GATS. I asked at that time whether the Deputy Prime Minister and the Liberal government were prepared to stand up for public health care in Canada.

It was the parliamentary secretary who answered the question. I use the word answer very loosely because in fact he did not answer the question at all. He went on to answer something that was asked perhaps by another member but certainly not by this member.

Last week, we saw that in fact the government did answer the question. The answer to the question was that the Liberal government was not prepared to stand up and make it very clear that these trade deals, whether it be NAFTA or GATS or the proposed FTAA, must not be allowed to threaten Canada's public, not for profit health care system. In fact, there was not a single word in that health accord about the threat of private, for profit health care providers to our universal medicare system.

One of the gravest threats is the fact that under the provisions of NAFTA, for example chapter 11, once one of these big, multi-national health care companies like Extencicare or MDS get a foot in the door, we cannot, in many respects, reverse that attack on our public health care system. If in the future a progressive New Democrat government under prime minister Jack Layton wanted to move ahead, for example with a national pharmacare plan, we would be told that we could not do that. The big health insurance companies like Liberty Mutual would tell us tough luck and say that we could not do that because under the provisions of chapter 11 of NAFTA we would have to compensate them.

I am calling upon the parliamentary secretary and the government today to make it clear to Canadians that they will listen to the concerns of Roy Romanow as expressed in his report. He noted in his report:

Adjournment Debate

In almost every one of the Commission's public hearings, as well as the regional roundtables, concerns were expressed by experts and citizens alike that Canada's health care system should be protected from the impact of international trade agreements.

Two of his key recommendations, recommendations 44 and 45, clearly stated that this protection must be there. I am calling once again upon the government to make it clear that our public health care system is not for sale and that trade deals will not be allowed to be used to weaken universal medicare.

● (1900)

[Translation]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and am very pleased to work with him on the Standing Committee on Health. As a new committee member, he will I am sure come to know us more and to realize that sometimes a person has but a few seconds to answer a question, not time to finish one's answer properly, which is likely what happened when this question was asked.

Now, I shall attempt to give a little more detail on our position as a government. I must, however, point out that the government's commitment has always been, and always will be, to protect the health system in Canada, and we will not put health services on the list of subjects for discussion in trade negotiations, whether now or later. Canadian governments possess the necessary flexibility coupled with control to administer the Canadian health system and to decide what is best for it.

The first ministers now have an accord on one way to renew health care. The next stage is to decide on the best way of implementing the reforms. Under GATS and NAFTA, Canada has certain obligations with respect to private health insurance providers. These are allowed to provide extended health insurance coverage.

It is too early to speculate on the possible trade implications of a proposed policy change. However, these implications, should they arise, would not require Canada to review the health care system. The Government of Canada is committed to working in close cooperation with the provincial governments and deciding on the best way to implement the changes.

I would also like to direct the House's attention to a conclusion taken from a research document prepared by Jon Johnson, of the Romanow Commission, which reads as follows:

It is easy to invent NAFTA and WTO worst-case scenarios but the actual impact of these agreements must be assessed realistically. An expansion of the public component of the health care system into new areas, with the resulting exclusion of private interests, would result in NAFTA compensation claims or WTO challenges only if the private economic interests adversely affected were significant. If these interests are non-existent or insignificant, the risk of claims or challenges is negligible.

There are more national insurance providers for home care and drug plans in Canada than foreign providers.

Consequently, I will back Mr. Johnson's comments, according to which we must look at introducing changes to health policy in a realistic manner, by saying that this must be achieved both nationally and internationally.

In terms of the General Agreement on Trade in Services, I would like to underscore the fact that the agreement expressly recognizes the right of governments to regulate services to meet national policies and objectives. The GATS also specifically excludes service delivery under government authority. It also states that freer trade must occur in respect of the objectives of national policies.

I can assure you, once again, that it is out of the question for us to negotiate the Canadian health care system through NAFTA or the World Trade Organization.

● (1905)

[English]

Mr. Svend Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I too look forward to working with the hon. member on the health committee. I am very excited about the challenge of my new responsibilities as health critic for the federal New Democrats and I welcome that opportunity.

Just briefly in response to the parliamentary secretary, I want to point out to him that Canada and the Canadian government have already exposed health insurance to threats under GATS. We know that there is a critical opportunity coming up next month. Canada is going to be asked what sorts of services will be negotiated and included under the GATS. I want to ask the hon. member for a guarantee that our government will not engage in any negotiations on trade in health care services in the upcoming GATS negotiations next month: no trade whatsoever in health care services.

[Translation]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay: Mr. Speaker, again, according to the information that I have, Canada has no intention of putting its health care system on the table in the next NAFTA or GATS negotiations.

[English]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, on October 24 I asked a question about the disability tax credit. I seem to get an awful lot of inquiries from people who have been turned down for the disability tax credit after having qualified for years and years.

My question quite simply was that the government demands that disabled people in Canada get a doctor's report and is it a doctor who overrules the report when it is overruled? It seems very sensible to me that if a disabled person is required to get a doctor's report, only a doctor should be able to overrule it. That was my question and I did not even come close to getting an answer.

I asked the question after experiencing people coming in to my office and asking questions. I put in an access to information request. I found out that 106,000 disabled Canadians, who had always qualified for the tax credit were asked to reapply. Out of the 106,000, 58,000 were brushed off the disability tax credit rolls because they did not respond or they were denied. Fifty-four per cent of them were denied the disability tax credit.

I put in a second access to information request and I just got the answer. I wanted to find out if people appealed a disability tax credit refusal, how many were overturned. I was amazed and startled. The access to information report said that the number of objections received that were reassessed was 6,864. The number of objections received that were approved was 6,479. That is a 94% reversal. That means 94% of the decisions of those who were reassessed were changed.

Imagine what would happen if a judge had 94% of his decisions overturned on appeal, or a goal judge had 94% of his decisions overturned. It just seems that the government is playing games with the disabled, but it is not a game.

Yesterday I received a letter from a man. I was really concerned about his welfare. I was concerned that he was threatening suicide because of the frustration with the disability tax credit system and also the disability pension plan. Mostly it was the disability tax credit issue that he was dealing with.

I talked to my staff about how often we hear this. They mentioned a person they knew who had committed suicide because of his frustration in not being approved for the disability tax credit because the government did not believe his doctors. This man, Ralph MacEwan, suffered from chronic paranoid schizophrenia. The doctor said he was totally disabled. The reports were very clear, but the clerks at CCRA refused to accept the doctor's assessment and said Mr. MacEwan was not disabled and was completely able and okay. Out of frustration Ralph MacEwan took his own life in Brampton.

It is amazing how often we run into discussions of this issue. I urge the government to take this issue seriously. When somebody has a physical disability it always ends up in an emotional disability one way or another, either a minor disability or a major disability. It is a very serious concern.

I ask the parliamentary secretary, will medical practitioners make every decision when an application is overruled? When a doctor's report is overruled, will it be done by a medical practitioner and not a clerk?

•(1910)

Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by emphasizing that the confidentiality provisions of the Income Tax Act prevent me from commenting on individual cases. Nonetheless, I will gladly discuss the disability tax credit in more general terms.

The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency's responsibility is to administer the disability tax credit, DTC, in accordance with the legislation. The Income Tax Act requires that if someone wants to claim the DTC, a medical practitioner must use the prescribed form to certify that person's severe and prolonged impairment. From time to time CCRA needs clarification and has to request additional information from the medical practitioner.

CCRA does not question the diagnosis or the medical practitioner's expertise. Rather, CCRA is attempting to fulfill its responsibility for ensuring that the legislation's specific eligibility criteria for the DTC are met.

Adjournment Debate

As the hon. member is aware, the CCRA has been conducting a review of DTC claims for the period between 1985 and 1996. During that 12 year period, clients who applied for the DTC were accepted when their tax return was assessed. A small percentage of DTC claims were later selected for indepth review.

Our procedures have changed since 1996. Every new application is now reviewed right away to make a clear determination of the client's eligibility right up front.

The review of claims prior to 1996 is not about denying this tax credit to people who have a legitimate right to it. Instead, the review is about discontinuing payment to people who do not meet the DTC requirements. Our review of pre-1996 claims is finding many people who should not have been approved in the first place, as well as people who should have been approved for only a temporary period.

When a DTC claim has been denied, a person can request an impartial review of their eligibility by filing a notice of objection with the CCRA. If the claim is still disallowed, the next recourse would be to file an appeal with the Tax Court of Canada.

The CCRA is responsible for administering the DTC and other tax programs in strict accordance with the existing legislation. This type of responsible enforcement activity is an essential element of the CCRA's mission to promote compliance with Canada's tax, trade and border legislation and regulations.

Let me once again emphasize that the special review of older DTC claims is not designed to limit the number of people who benefit from this tax credit. Instead, the review is about ensuring that all DTC claims have undergone the same level of review for eligibility. That means fairness and equity for everyone.

Mr. Bill Casey: Mr. Speaker, that was a long answer but it did not come close to answering my question. I ask the parliamentary secretary to simply answer the question, please.

CCRA requires a disabled person to have a doctor's opinion. When CCRA overrules that opinion, will she absolutely commit that it will only be done by another doctor?

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: Mr. Speaker, when the member asked his question, I was quite concerned about the case he cited. I believe it is from my riding. I was not aware of this case prior to this evening.

We do a lot of DTC cases as well. It is my understanding that only a medical doctor can overrule. However, I will check that and get back to the member on this.

•(1915)

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 7:15 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Wednesday, February 12, 2003

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Basketball	
Mr. Eyking	3459
Liberal Government	
Mr. Elley	3459
Lithuania	
Ms. Bulte	3459
René L. Doré	
Mr. Bélanger	3460
Canada Customs and Revenue Agency	
Ms. Beaumier	3460
Fisheries	
Mr. Duncan	3460
Eid al-Adha	
Mr. McTeague	3460
Claude Mongrain	
Mr. Rocheleau	3460
Pearson Peace Medal	
Mr. LeBlanc	3461
Liberal Government	
Mr. Reynolds	3461
Cricket	
Mr. Adams	3461
Middle East	
Ms. McDonough	3461
Community Television	
Ms. Guay	3461
Food Service Industry	
Mr. Cullen	3462
Firearms Registry	
Mr. Keddy	3462

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Harper	3462
Mr. Chrétien	3462
Mr. Harper	3462
Mr. Chrétien	3462
Mr. Harper	3463
Mr. Chrétien	3463
Firearms Registry	
Mr. Reynolds	3463
Mr. Cauchon	3463
Mr. Reynolds	3463
Mr. Cauchon	3463

Iraq	
Mr. Duceppe	3463
Mr. Chrétien	3463
Mr. Duceppe	3463
Mr. Chrétien	3464
Mr. Bachand (Saint-Jean)	3464
Mr. McCallum (Markham)	3464
Mr. Bachand (Saint-Jean)	3464
Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale)	3464
Mr. Blaikie	3464
Mr. Chrétien	3464
Mr. Blaikie	3464
Mr. Chrétien	3464
Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Clark	3464
Mr. Chrétien	3464
Mr. Clark	3464
Mr. Chrétien	3464
Taxation	
Mr. Penson	3465
Mr. Bevilacqua (Vaughan—King—Aurora)	3465
Gasoline Prices	
Mr. Penson	3465
Mr. Bevilacqua (Vaughan—King—Aurora)	3465
Iraq	
Ms. Lalonde	3465
Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale)	3465
Ms. Lalonde	3465
Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale)	3465
National Defence	
Mr. Benoit	3465
Mr. Bevilacqua (Vaughan—King—Aurora)	3465
Mr. Benoit	3465
Mr. McCallum (Markham)	3466
Gasoline Prices	
Mr. Crête	3466
Mr. Rock	3466
Mr. Crête	3466
Mr. Rock	3466
The Environment	
Mr. Mills (Red Deer)	3466
Mr. Anderson (Victoria)	3466
Mr. Mills (Red Deer)	3466
Mr. Anderson (Victoria)	3466
National Defence	
Ms. Neville	3467
Mr. McCallum (Markham)	3467
Government Spending	
Ms. Davies	3467
Mr. Bevilacqua (Vaughan—King—Aurora)	3467

Health	
Mr. Robinson.....	3467
Ms. McLellan.....	3467
Government Spending	
Mr. Borotsik.....	3467
Mr. Collenette.....	3467
Mr. MacKay.....	3467
Mr. Bevilacqua (Vaughan—King—Aurora).....	3467
Goods and Services Tax	
Mr. Jaffer.....	3468
Ms. Caplan.....	3468
Mr. Jaffer.....	3468
Ms. Caplan.....	3468
Gasoline Prices	
Mr. Paquette.....	3468
Mr. Rock.....	3468
Mr. Paquette.....	3468
Mr. Bevilacqua (Vaughan—King—Aurora).....	3468
Correctional Service Canada	
Mr. White (Langley—Abbotsford).....	3468
Mr. Easter.....	3468
Mr. White (Langley—Abbotsford).....	3468
Mr. Easter.....	3468
Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Cullen.....	3469
Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale).....	3469
Mr. Burton.....	3469
Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale).....	3469
Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River).....	3469
Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale).....	3469
International Civil Aviation Organization	
Mr. Laframboise.....	3469
Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale).....	3469
Firearms Registry	
Mr. Myers.....	3469
Mr. Cauchon.....	3470
Presence in Gallery	
The Speaker.....	3470
Privilege	
Public Service—Speaker's Ruling	
The Speaker.....	3470
Business of the House	
The Speaker.....	3471

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission	
The Speaker.....	3471
Government Response to Petitions	
Mr. Cuzner.....	3471
Canadian Firearms Program	
Mr. Cauchon.....	3471

Privilege	
Firearms Program	
Mr. Galloway.....	3471
Mr. Breitzkreuz.....	3472
Ms. Davies.....	3473
Mr. MacKay.....	3473
Mr. Boudria.....	3474
Mr. Reynolds.....	3475

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Terrorism	
Mr. Easter.....	3475
Mr. Sorenson.....	3476
Mr. Lanctôt.....	3477
Mr. Nystrom.....	3477
Mr. MacKay.....	3478
Energy Price Commission Act	
Mr. Martin (Winnipeg Centre).....	3478
Bill C-353. Introduction and first reading.....	3478
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	3479
Income Tax Act	
Ms. St-Hilaire.....	3479
Bill C-354. Introduction and first reading.....	3479
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	3479
Broadcasting Act and Income Tax Act	
Ms. St-Hilaire.....	3479
Bill C-355. Introduction and first reading.....	3479
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	3479
Employment Insurance Act	
Mrs. Tremblay.....	3479
Bill C-356. Introduction and first reading.....	3479
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	3479
Employment Insurance Act	
Mrs. Tremblay.....	3479
Bill C-357. Introduction and first reading.....	3479
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	3479
Employment Insurance Act	
Mrs. Tremblay.....	3479
Bill C-358. Introduction and first reading.....	3479
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	3479
Employment Insurance Act	
Mrs. Tremblay.....	3479
Bill C-359. Introduction and first reading.....	3479
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	3480
Petitions	
Iraq	
Mr. Proulx.....	3480

Stem Cell Research	
Mr. Szabo	3480
The Disabled	
Mr. Asselin	3480
Canadian Emergency Preparedness College	
Mrs. Gallant	3480
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Cuzner	3480
Questions Passed as Orders for Returns	
Mr. Cuzner	3481
Motions for Papers	
Mr. Cuzner	3481

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Canada Elections Act	
Bill C-24. Second reading	3481
Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	3481
Mr. McNally	3484
Mr. Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	3485
Mr. Lincoln	3485
Mr. Kenney	3487
Mr. Saada	3488
Mr. Comartin	3488
Mr. Grewal	3488
Mr. Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	3488
Mr. Guimond	3489

Mr. Roy	3490
Mr. Epp	3491
Mr. Dubé	3491
Mr. O'Reilly	3492
Mr. Asselin	3493

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Armenia	
Mr. Robinson	3493
Motion	3493
Mr. Kenney	3495
Ms. Carroll	3496
Ms. Lalonde	3497
Mr. Casey	3498
Mr. Vellacott	3499
Mr. Robinson	3499

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Health	
Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	3500
Mr. Castonguay	3500
Health	
Mr. Robinson	3501
Mr. Castonguay	3502
Persons with Disabilities	
Mr. Casey	3502
Ms. Beaumier	3503

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