



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 138 • NUMBER 105 • 2nd SESSION • 37th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, May 26, 2003

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 26, 2003

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP) moved:

That this House call upon the government to take the necessary measures, including the drafting of legislation, to prevent medical conditions and illnesses caused by exposure to identifiable environmental contaminants.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to put forth my first motion to be debated and eventually advance to a vote. It is my hope and trust in this institution that my motion will be supported by enough members who are concerned about the future of this country, the current state of the environment and health as well as the legacy we leave for our children and our children's children.

I would like to acknowledge also that I have some relatives in the audience who are joining me today: Diana and Don Learn, my aunt and uncle from Ontario as well as my aunt, Carol Dembek, from Michigan.

My motion states:

That this House call upon the government to take the necessary measures, including the drafting of legislation, to prevent medical conditions and illnesses caused by exposure to identifiable environmental contaminants.

The motion is an environmental and health trigger for action. It promotes a concept that when identifiable environmental contaminants are linked to people's health, a process should start that will review and debate the matter. It will draw out the circumstances, the benefits, drawbacks and repercussions of taking action. Citizens will have a federal body that will ensure disclosure, an opportunity to institute corrective action and a debate throughout the parliamentary system of members elected in a democracy. They will in the end decide what course of action to take. It is about a body, it is about ability and it is about public confidence, and that is to what the motion speaks.

To put the motion in context of why it has been brought forth, I wish to break my comments into three segments. The first will relate to generalities of the content with specific attention to health, medical conditions and illnesses caused by exposure to environmental contaminants. The second will detail the genesis of the motion to particular circumstances from the community I represent, Windsor, Ontario and the Great Lakes region. In the third part I wish to emphasize a number of examples of citizens and groups who are taking the environment back. They are part of a new wave of public pressure which is advancing environmental and community interests with and without government assistance. They act as an example of how the motion can be of value for this country and beyond.

Identifiable environmental contaminants are more than a simple health issue. This is clear when institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development start to analyze and contribute to the discussion on this issue. In fact it has produced a 327 page report entitled "OECD Environmental Outlook" which describes the current environmental trends in the OECD's 30 member nations. This document was first prepared to investigate the potential state of affairs for OECD members related to evaluating the damage being done to the environment and what actions could be taken to ensure a clean, healthy and productive environment for future generations.

Interestingly cross-sectoral issues are examined, including human health and the environment. In its analysis the OECD estimates that environmental degradation causes somewhere between 2% and 6% of all human diseases in OECD countries and 8% to 13% in non-OECD countries. These percentages translate into approximately \$50 billion and \$130 billion per year. It is clear that we need to start to address this problem from the standpoint of quality of life and for the economics that it costs us in our general economies.

The genesis of this motion comes from a community movement in Windsor that equally applies across other parts of Canada. Specifically, Windsor was recently involved in a Canadian drama that included government deception of its population, investigative reports, whistleblowers, heroes, community outrage and galvanization of community resolve to build a better future.

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In the mid-1990s Health Canada, as part of the Canadian government's responsibility for implementing the Great Lakes water quality agreement, collected data and statistics for 17 areas of concern in the Canadian side of the Great Lakes. Health Canada's data included information related to the cases of mortality, morbidity and hospitalization for selected health outcomes, including cancers that might be related to pollution. Despite the results of this information being published in November 1998, it took a CBC investigative report to flesh out the issue, and the report was released to the public in November 1999.

The withholding of the data and report is significant in a number of ways. First, the public paid for a report with their tax paying dollars. Second, it undermined the confidence in a democracy and a bond of trust between citizens and the institutions they built and funded to serve them, not political interests of the day. The sheltering was based on the concern of community groups, environmentalists, health officials and the general public call for action, and would cost too much in funds.

That action is the responsibility of the government to work toward cleanup and improved health goals and let people decide what they want to do with their resources. The study and analysis of the situation was best articulated in the document "Community Health Profile of Windsor, Ontario, Canada: Anatomy of a Great Lakes Area of Concern", authored by Michael Gilbertson and James Brophy in the periodical "Environmental Health Perspectives". Both of these individuals are considered hometown heroes for exposing this dilemma and articulating it in a way that has been very beneficial for all of us.

• (1110)

This was an historically significant document for the community. It summarized the Health Canada study in relevance to Windsor, including reference to the social and historical context of the area. There was also a comparison of Windsor and Hamilton, as the areas had similar socio-economic, geographical and populations, to provide a comparison which was relevant.

Among the findings identified, and there is a series of summarizations, was that in seven years deaths for males were 8% higher than the provincial average. Deaths for females were 5% higher than the provincial average. As well, the hospitalization rate for males was 21% higher than the provincial average.

The mortality rate for cancer, for example, of lip and oral cavity capacity was 74% to 75% higher than the provincial average. The mortality rate for cancer of digestive organs was 10% higher than the average for males. For thyroid conditions, overall morbidity rate was 24% higher than the provincial average. Diabetes morbidity rate was 44% higher for males and 41% for females than the provincial average.

Sadly enough, there are issues of diseases of the blood, forming organs, the circulatory systems as well as congenital anomalies and infant mortality. I want to touch a little on those because we are talking about the future.

One thing we discovered was that females after they were born had some anomaly diagnosed within the first year, which was 25% higher than provincial average, and the votefemales who were born

without brains was 300% higher than the rest of Ontario. Heart defects among females were 56% higher and 93 females died within the first year; that was 24% higher.

I can go on about these different statistics, and there is more in detail but it is imperative that I move on in my discussions. I would like to point out that the information withheld, evaluated and then released created an outrage for our community. However like any strong community, we began to seek solutions. This is one of the reasons I believe my motion is valid and needs to be advanced by all members of the House. It is about repercussions and it is about taking responsibility.

The mere fact that the report has been withheld from our community and the delay for us to respond to it and to build on it are things for which this government needs to take responsibility. It needs to move forward more quickly with the tools so we can address this issue. That is the only way people can be recognized for the loss they have incurred. Any moment in time means deaths or illnesses. Corrective action needs to be taken. The year lost by the lack of information provided to the public by this deception needs to be corrected. The House can help do that.

However, like it is in any strong community, it was not about the negatives because we began to seek solutions. Hence, after an emotionally charged public meeting, a generous contribution was made by CAW local 444; \$100,000 to resolve and create a centre for environmental health. An exploratory committee was formed with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds. Included in the group were: CAW Regional Environmental Council; University of Windsor; district health councils; international joint commission; Windsor-Essex County Health Unit; Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers; Windsor District Labour Council, Sandwich Community Health Centre; Essex Region Conservation Authority; Great Lakes Institute; and some elected officials.

The exploratory committee was mandated to examine the feasibility of creating a centre to address the problems of environment and human health. It retained a consulting company that investigated four examples of environmental health institute centres. From this it developed the concept of an independent not for profit organization.

This new organization is starting to take shape. The University of Windsor has donated space in its faculty and a staffing announcement from other parties is expected shortly. The recommended mission statement for the centre for environmental health is, "To enhance community capacity to provide solutions for the prevention of environmental and occupational illnesses". It has also set out a series of objectives I wish to articulate because it is relevant to the culmination of why my motion is before the House.

First, it is to receive and analyze information from members of the community on suspected increases in the rates of diseases and other health conditions possibly related to exposure of environmental contaminants. It will actually create that database. It will collate and distribute this information to the public. It will communicate to industry, all levels of government and the community at large what it is finding and how this information is being assembled. It will commission broad research on health effects of specific environmental workplace and non-workplace contaminants. That can be of assistance. Lastly, it will influence, using evidence-based information, all levels of governments to make regulatory and legislative changes designed to prevent medical conditions and illnesses believed to be caused by exposure to identifiable environmental contaminants.

This motion is a specific request from my community which is hurting. That is where it was born. However the community is equally determined to face the reality and make decisions given the opportunity of due process. It is not alone in the struggle to produce real tangible improvements to our health and environment.

•(1115)

With that we can look to our own health care model, a health care model which is something Canada needs to be proud about and needs to continue to improve. It is also starting to recognize that there are peripheral health issues, such as environmental contaminants, that are affecting the way we deliver our health care model and also the expense of it.

We need to realize that prevention is an issue in itself and that expansion is something that will be imperative and supportable, I believe, by all members of the community and by all provinces. In fact in August 2000 the province and the federal government confirmed a commitment to promote programs and policies that extended beyond care and treatment and that made a critical contribution to the health and wellness of our citizens.

We know there are number of organizations in our community that work on general wellness and the principle of prevention. Once again this will provide some type of recourse and a dedication to move that issue forward for those organizations once they develop the linkages. It is important that it is scientifically based and it also evolves, and they will develop that.

A good example of the failing of our current system and why this motion would protect citizens, comes even from today's paper. The headline reads, "Data Shows Ontario Polluters unchecked". The province of Ontario data showed that 216 facilities were involved in 1,946 violations of Ontario's water and waste water laws in 2001, which is the latest year the information was available. While the number of detected violations showed a significant increase from the previous year, the province moved to prosecute only nine of the facilities, although many of the offenders in 2001 were not the same as those in 2000.

The Province of Ontario is not doing its job to protect its citizens. Despite the tragedy we witnessed at Walkerton and despite the healing process that community has gone through, there is no public confidence and resolve here. Of the worst of our four polluters, only Falconbridge actually faced prosecution. The province continues to allow companies like Chinook and Stepan to violate the law more

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than 300 times each year without repercussions, said one expert in today's paper.

This is the problem. Without the support from the federal government, we do not provide the tools and resources for people to identify and work toward the problem solving we know is affecting them with environmental contaminants and diseases.

While pollution causes environmental degradation and health costs, it is an immediate expense and a future liability. The delay in taking corrective action means we live with the liability for a greater period of time and pay the consequences of compounding the problem, extending the duration of time for victims caught in the negligence of neglect.

Quite frankly, we are not only passing the problem on to our children, we are killing their hopes and dreams by our selfish actions. We are simply taking out a mortgage for a very expensive home and passing it on to our future generations. We live beyond our means in this house, in the greatest of comfort, and destroy and contaminate the property. Long after we are gone, we force someone else to pay the cost to clean it up and the mortgage for a dilapidated home. This is not the way to go about our planet. This is not the way that we should be living ourselves right now. We need to invest the resources and, more important, the ability, the empowerment for groups and organizations to make the decisions about where they want their dollars to go.

Many people in the world are starting to question the political will and resolve to make the necessary changes before we lose the planet. In fact many citizens of the earth are starting to question why we are even fighting to save it for others. They are starting to realize that we have so much more to gain if we live on it with sustainability, as it affects our quality and longevity of life. If not just for egalitarian reasons, it is for selfish reasons that we need to rethink shortsighted gratification that leads to a reduction in our own lives and in the lives of other family members. Many of these groups are fuelled by practical strategies that include conservation, public awareness, scientific research and the use of litigation for the objective of improving our environmental health.

All these factors lead to the bodies necessary to provide meaning to my motion and the ability for it to take specific direction once correlations are determined between identifiable environmental contaminants and health itself.

There are groups, like the Waterkeeper Alliance. It has used litigation and public involvement, including a world action movement where 10 countries are involved in the actual process of protecting waterways and tributary systems. It is a good example of a group and an organization that uses litigation.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is actually the steward of this and the president of Waterkeeper. I had a recent opportunity to talk with him and hear him speak about the fact that many polluters are using the environment to subsidize their products. This is a practice we need to stop.

With that, I thank the House for hearing my first motion. I look forward to debate and also expansion of it. It is a motion that I hope will gain support and, more important, have some good input from other members.

Private Members' Business

• (1120)

[Translation]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Minister of Health to address Motion No. 399. This motion asks the government to take the necessary measures, including the drafting of legislation, to prevent medical conditions and illnesses caused by exposure to identifiable environmental contaminants.

Although the government recognizes the importance of the links between health and the environment, it is the government's opinion that passage of this motion would not be responsible. That may seem harsh. However, if we examine the undeniable facts in this matter, which I shall describe shortly, I believe that the hon. members will understand that passage of such a motion would duplicate the federal environmental and health protection programs already in place, and would waste resources without making any appreciable improvement in the health of the Canadian population.

Even though I sympathize with the concerns behind Motion No. 399, the government believes that it shows a lack of understanding of the scope and breadth of the current federal legislation that protects the health of all Canadians.

First, I would like to provide the hon. members with some historical details. It has been said that you do not know your subject unless you know its history. I am not about to deliver a lecture on the history of legislation related to environmental protection and health in Canada. Nevertheless, I do want to point out some significant stages in the evolution of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act of 1988, which led to the new Canadian Environmental Protection Act, passed in April 1999.

More than 40 years ago, the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* attracted a great deal of public attention to environmental pollution caused by the inappropriate use of pesticides. This book was the precursor to the ecology movement and helped push governments, in Canada as well as in the United States, to create departments of the environment and to create environmental protection legislation.

In Canada, responsibility for the Environmental Protection Act is shared by the Minister of Health and the Minister of the Environment, with the latter being responsible for implementation. The first environmental protection act passed in Canada was called the Environmental Contaminants Act, and it received royal assent in December 1975. It was intended to protect human health and the environment from substances which could contaminate the environment.

During the 1970s and 1980s, it became clear that the legislation needed to be reinforced and expanded. This process led to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act of 1988. This world-class legislation created an international precedent in that it determined that the Government of Canada would comply with various deadlines set out in the statute regarding the assessment of health and environmental risks associated with various substances, considered priority substances, in the environment.

Furthermore, this was very forward-looking legislation since the government, rather than reacting and remedying problems, decided

to take an anticipatory and preventive approach using strict provisions targeting new substances marketed in Canada. Under these provisions, the importing, manufacture and use of substances in Canada are prohibited, unless the government is convinced that they pose no danger to the environment or health. These provisions also require the industry to provide certain specific information to the government.

The legislation included a mechanism to guarantee that it would evolve over time, so as to take into consideration new realities and trends. This mechanism, provided for under section 139, obliged Parliament to undertake a full examination of the provisions and application of the statute in the five years following its passage.

Consequently, the new Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which came into force in 2000, gives us a much wider mandate. The purpose of this legislation is to contribute to sustainable development through pollution prevention and to protect the environment, human life and health.

One of the important components of this new legislation is part 5, "Controlling Toxic Substances", which is sometimes called the central component of the CEPA. If these provisions are key to the bill, the definition of toxic is vital.

A substance is defined as toxic under the legislation if it is entering or may enter the environment in a quantity or concentration or under conditions that, and I quote,

- (a) have or may have an immediate or long-term harmful effect on the environment or its biological diversity;
- (b) constitute or may constitute a danger to the environment on which life depends; or
- (c) constitute or may constitute a danger in Canada to human life or health.

• (1125)

This definition is very important, because it corresponds with what we consider a risk and it complies with the principles and practices set out for risk assessment and management. Once government scientists decide that a substance is toxic within the meaning of the legislation, the risk management process is initiated and the substance may be subject to regulation.

Under CEPA, the government took effective measures to control various substances that are hazardous to the environment and human health. Measures include the gradual elimination of substances that break down the ozone layer, furan and dioxin discharges from pulp and paper mills that use chlorine bleaching, and lead and sulphur in gasoline.

CEPA has another provision that is unprecedented at the international level, under which the government is required to control substances that are currently used for commercial purposes in Canada, to determine if they are hazardous to the environment or health and to classify them based on the results.

In conclusion, I believe that the members can see that the new Canadian Environmental Protection Act is a powerful and effective tool for protecting health and the environment. Although I understand the reasoning behind Motion M-399, this motion does not offer a responsible solution.

Private Members' Business

[English]

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to stand and address this important motion concerning prevention and human health. We must consider all aspects of the motion as we look forward in the 21st century to providing health care for a population that is very concerned about it.

We had a debate last year that raged, and rightfully so, because it is important that we discern how much our health care system is under stress and how we can work toward solving its problems.

The motion reads:

—to take necessary measures, including the drafting of legislation,...

It is interesting that we will actually be looking at drafting some legislation toward this. It goes on to read:

—to prevent medical conditions and illnesses caused by exposure to identifiable environmental contaminants.

That is a worthy and lofty goal. Who would say no to cleaning up an environmental problem when it comes to human health? From that aspect I actually applaud the hon. member for bringing it forward because it increases the debate around this whole area. That is to be commended.

In the health policy of the Canadian Alliance we recognize the important role of wellness promotion and disease prevention. We have and will continue to support the evidence based initiatives to safeguard human health as an alternative to the costly crisis management approach to health care that we have seen over the last number of decades.

Last year we put \$112.2 billion of Canadians' hard earned tax money into health care. That is up by 6.3% over the previous year. When it comes to public health expenditures, it is \$79.4 billion. That is up by 6.2% from 2001. We can see that the dollars continue to go into the health care system. The new money flowing from the health accord of February will be \$34.8 billion over five years. That will certainly increase those numbers that I just listed.

Our aging population will increasingly be users of the health care system. Looking after their health needs will put a strain on the system which will only continue to intensify. We have to look at that. We must take reasonable measures today to improve human health for tomorrow. The whole idea of crisis management in health care has been long overlooked. We have to look further upstream if we are to sustain the health care of Canadians over the long run.

There are a number of areas on which we should be taking action because they pay such dividends in the future. I would like to quickly mention a few of those. In Quebec, a number of people are addicted to tobacco smoking. It becomes a very serious concern. We will win on this whole area of tobacco, not by attempting to drive up taxes and with initiatives to warn people about it, but by drying up the demand for the product by educating individuals about how terrible, devastating and addictive tobacco is and what it can do to limit their quality of life. It is very important that we continue to look at prevention in that area. To that end I believe every member of the House is very concerned about it and should be, because we see the ravages and the costs of not dealing with it in our population today.

We also have to look at work and family related stress. The number one reason that we actually hospitalize people, at least it was the case when I was serving on a regional health authority and the figure astounded me, is not cancer or heart disease but actually mental illness or stress related conditions. It is a serious problem that has to be looked at. What is causing it? Maybe we need to do more than treat it with drugs. We need to look at why we have a nation that is so stressed and which lives in an environment that causes it serious complications. We have to look further upstream.

● (1130)

We could look at HIV-AIDS and the whole idea of what is going on there. We are going through a review of that in the health committee right now and we will be issuing a final draft report. This is a 100% preventable illness and 100% fatal. We must understand all the dynamics of this serious disease.

Witnesses have told us that the new drug therapies that are coming along for HIV will approach \$30,000 per patient per year. There are 4,000 new cases of HIV per year in Canada. When we look at what the costs of that will be in the future, it becomes astronomical.

Only 10,000 lives could be saved if we dropped the rate of infection by 50% over the next five year period. That would total a \$1.5 billion saving over a five year period. The idea of looking upstream to prevent people from becoming inflicted with these diseases has become much more important.

We look at obesity as a ticking time bomb in a nation that is overweight. We have a generation of children that are crowding the 30% rate by reaching the obese status in our schools. All of these are serious problems.

A recent study says that 2 million Canadians age 9 to 12 are so inactive and have such poor diets that when they hit their thirties they are at a high risk of serious heart disease and problems that we normally associate around the age of 60 and 70. These children and the impact that their health will have on our health care system will be phenomenal as we go forward.

It is interesting that we are still wasting time as a government by going through the initial stages. The government initiated a \$50 million study a few months ago that said we needed to find the causes of obesity. It is fairly well known that poor diet and a lack of physical activity has a lot to do with obesity. I do not think we need a \$50 million study to figure it out. Perhaps a \$50 million investment in doing something about it would be a much better use of those funds.

A targeted, effective wellness promotion and disease prevention effort will help improve the lives of Canadians and result in reduced health care expenditures in the long run. This must be looked at. I think that is where the motion is leading. It is saying that when it comes to the environment that there are some things in our environment that need to be checked and looked at.

The idea of identifying environmental contaminants and being able to do something about them, such as legislation, is a lofty goal. It all sounds very well and good. Who does not want to prevent medical conditions because of environmental contaminants? It goes without saying that we support the initiative.

Private Members' Business

The problem with the motion is that it is so open ended and vague that I have serious concerns about what is being said and asked for. The motion mentions necessary measures, but necessary measures to prevent medical conditions and illnesses could be carried to an extreme. It might mean the banning of perfumes in offices or perfumes all together if they are seen as an environmental problem, or pesticides and getting rid of pesticides completely. There is a move afoot to do that. Is this necessarily in the best interests of a population? Some people would say yes and others would say no.

An improvement here would be the replacement of the word necessary with reasonable. That would perhaps be a better way to take a look at the motion. Reasonable conditions might be more palatable. We also have concerns with the term identifiable environmental contaminants. These are identifiable by whom and using which criteria? These are some of the problems that we have.

What is exactly meant by environmental contaminants? Does it mean pesticides, industrial chemicals or naturally occurring toxins? It becomes an issue that we have a difficult time understanding. The whole idea of what we can actually do when it comes to legislation that would supposedly come out of this motion becomes confusing. It is often looked at in other legislation as was mentioned by the previous speaker.

Although the motion speaks to concerns that we have, I definitely have some concerns about the loose language. I encourage members of the House to investigate the motion, to vote freely on it, and I challenge them to look at whether the language is tight enough to be supported.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before discussing the motion per se, I would like to offer my best wishes to the hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm, who is today celebrating his 58th birthday.

Our colleague's motion is, of course, far from insignificant, since it concerns two subjects of great public concern: health and the environment. This is a motion on environmental health.

There is not a single parliamentarian who could be insensitive to these issues. I know that the member for Windsor West has introduced the motion with the best of highly positive intentions. He has also pointed out that it was made at the request of his fellow citizens. However, on examining its wording, we in the Bloc Québécois had a few questions I would like to share with members.

First, for those who may not have had the chance to hear what the member for Windsor West had to say, I will repeat the text of the motion:

That this House call upon the government to take the necessary measures, including the drafting of legislation, to prevent medical conditions and illnesses caused by exposure to identifiable environmental contaminants.

The motion is therefore based on the principle that it is basically the responsibility of the federal government to be concerned with toxic emissions in the atmosphere and the negative consequences of these various elements' circulating freely.

The problem is that it does not strike the Bloc Québécois as obvious that this is basically the responsibility of the federal government. I would like to see the hon. member for Windsor West analyze these elements. All the successive governments in the National Assembly, regardless of political allegiance, since there has been a department of the environment in place, have called for environmental management. In order to show just how relatively recent a concern this has been to legislators, I would point out that department was created by a Parti Québécois government.

The late Marcel Léger was the MNA for LaFontaine, a riding in eastern Montreal and a figurehead of the nationalist movement. Hon. members may have heard of him. He introduced René Lévesque to various fund raising approaches, taking a page from the way diocesan funds were being raised at that time. Hon. members will remember the religious heritage of Quebec and how important the Church was in the social organization of Quebec at that time, and what an expertise it had developed for collecting funds.

Marcel Léger convinced his cabinet colleagues to create a Quebec department of the environment, with many significant legislative and regulatory instruments. Moreover, just recently, the Bloc Québécois members reminded the government that Quebec has an environmental assessment act which is much more rigorous, specific and restrictive than the federal act. All this to say that, since the mid-1970s, every successive government in the National Assembly has called for management of the environment.

There is a problem with the motion put forward by our colleague, the hon. member for Windsor West, because it suggests that the federal government would be in the best position to battle all the problems of toxic wastes and environmental contaminants.

Naturally, I completely understand the argument that contaminants do not stop at federal-provincial borders. That is true. We are not saying that the federal government has no contribution to make. But the wording of the motion does not take into account the fact that, in the National Assembly, all successive governments since 1978 have called for management of the environment. Quebec is far from having a negative record in environmental management.

• (1140)

When it comes to reforestation, Quebec was the first province—I use the word province, but you know that that is not quite the right word—the first place to establish requirements for anyone destroying trees. For every tree that is destroyed, three more must be planted. In 1988, Quebec also set up a program to reduce industrial waste. It is relatively recent, but it does go back quite a bit nonetheless. It was Quebec's department of the environment that developed a strategy integrating all receiving environments. This strategy targets industry sectors that create contaminants and toxic waste.

That is not to say that every company in Quebec is perfect. Because of this, Quebec and the member for Gouin, an excellent environment minister in the previous government, have been very clear on Quebec's commitment to the polluter pay principle.

I listened to the member for Windsor West. I was very surprised to hear some of the figures he was used. I do not doubt their accuracy, but it is very worrisome. The member for Windsor West mentioned that inspections of 216 facilities in Ontario revealed 416 environmental violations.

The member for Windsor West is right when he says that we as legislators must be vigilant. Despite all of the legislation that exists in Quebec and elsewhere, there are still corporations and businesses that are not following the rules, that are disregarding and polluting our environmental heritage.

That said, what is most important is the jurisdictional issue. I feel that the member has not taken into account—and here I must agree with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health—the existence of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, specifically sections 64 to 103. Of course, this legislation is not doing the job. It has been reviewed before and there will be more reviews in the future.

Again, our colleague's motion was based on good intentions. He gave us the example of what was happening in the Great Lakes. This motion was sparked by the actions of his constituents and I know that all members of the House like to be attentive to what their constituents have to say. That is how democracy works best.

However, the Environmental Assessment Act has very clear provisions on toxic substances. There is a mechanism for investigation. There is even the possibility of conducting investigations and using various means to bring those who break the law into line.

In the Environmental Assessment Act, there is an entire section on toxic substances. Sections 64 to 103 set forth the legislator's intentions, which include establishing a deadline to react and take follow-up measures with regard to the requirements related to classification and tests for assessing the potential mortality, human health and environmental risks of all substances on the internal list.

I realized something. I do not know whether the parliamentary secretary will agree. When we were reviewing the Assisted Human Reproduction Act, a professor from UQAM explained to us that what we are doing to the environment causes endocrine defects, which is contributing to the growing infertility rate among Canadians. As we know, one in five couples has fertility problems. This was duly taken into account in the legislation the government introduced.

I will conclude by saying that we have to be concerned about environmental contaminants because they have consequences for every aspect of life, including the food chain.

• (1145)

Furthermore, we have to make sure that the legislation is being enforced by the right parties. And that means the provinces, especially when it comes to health. That is why, unfortunately, we cannot support the motion put forward by the NDP.

[English]

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to speak on this important issue. The motion put forward by the member for Windsor West reads:

Private Members' Business

That this House call upon the government to take the necessary measures, including the drafting of legislation, to prevent medical conditions and illnesses caused by exposure to identifiable environmental contaminants.

This is an extremely worthy and timely motion that is certainly needed in this place and I think it was brought forward with the best of intentions by the member for Windsor West. Certainly within the last few years we have seen an increasing amount of studies and public information published concerning serious threats to human health from exposure to toxic substances. Most recently, the media has been reporting on the effects of environmental contaminants on the health and development of children. This new evidence has created a new area of public health concern and that is indeed worth investigating.

I would like to highlight two examples of environmental contaminants, the first being the chemicals commonly found in pressure treated wood and the second being the health risks directly associated with the Sydney tar ponds.

In January of this year, Environmental Defence Canada released the results of a survey of playgrounds in Toronto, Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Montreal and Halifax. It was literally from coast to coast. They took soil samples from playgrounds in each of the cities, and in 37 out of 58 cases the soil was found to contain arsenic levels higher than the federally recommended maximum of 12 parts per million.

Pressurized lumber was found to be the source of the arsenic in the soil. Pressurized lumber, as most people know, is created with a chemical compound, chromated copper arsenate, which is a chemical preservative that protects wood from rotting due to insects and microbial agents. It is used to pressure treat lumber for decks, playgrounds and other outdoor equipment. It has been around since the early 1930s.

Unfortunately arsenic can leach from this treated wood, leaving residues on the wood surface and in the nearby soil. Young children who play near or on these decks or on playground equipment made from CCA treated wood can get arsenic on their skin and into their bodies, especially if they eat or drink without washing their hands, and we all know that young kids typically do this.

This is a huge concern. It is one that has been raised by the Progressive Conservative Party a number of times in the House, and now we all know that as of the end of this year arsenic will no longer be used in treating wood to be used for decks, picnic tables, landscaping timbers, gazebos, residential fencing, patios, walkways, boardwalks and play structures. For example, in New Brunswick all wood containing CCA will be replaced by August and every school in New Brunswick is expected to meet these new provincial guidelines on this subject by that deadline. Alternatives to CCA treated wood are non-wood materials like metal and plastic, or untreated wood such as hemlock, cedar or redwood, which are naturally resistant to decay.

Private Members' Business

The Progressive Conservative Party was very vocal and pressured the government to ban CCA treated wood. I would encourage the government to look at other environmental contaminants, as mentioned in the motion, that are posing serious health risks to adults and children, and to legislate against these as well.

Another example, and typical of the way in which the government deals with serious issues, is the serious health risk concerning the contaminants in what is locally known as the Sydney tar ponds in Nova Scotia. The Sydney tar ponds is actually a tidal estuary that contains 700,000 tonnes of toxic sludge dosed with PCBs and PAHs. The health risk to residents is undeniable. In the proposed cleanup of the tar ponds, it has been suggested that the tar ponds sediment be incinerated on site in an approved facility or facilities designed to handle the PCBs.

• (1150)

At first glance this would seem to make good sense. We do not want to transport this material any further than we have to, but we certainly need to get rid of it and it looks as if incineration is the only way we can get rid of it. We do not want to send it to Sarnia; we would like to get rid of it. However, if this cleanup method as it is proposed now is approved, the local community in Sydney would be exposed to emissions for upwards of 11 years. We are in a very difficult position, between the proverbial rock and a hard place. We have a serious problem and we have to do something about it, but has the government taken the proper steps to actually do something about it?

Environmentalists claim that the hazardous waste incineration is being promoted by the government as a safe method of cleaning up the tar ponds even though the incinerators will be in direct violation, and I emphasize that, of the guidelines of the federal Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. These guidelines state that a hazardous waste incinerator shall not be located within 1,500 metres of schools, residences, et cetera. However, Harbourview Elementary School in Sydney, which houses 800 children, happens to be located 600 metres from one of the proposed incinerator sites when the federal guidelines say that it can be no less than 1,500 metres from the proposed site. There are residences, stores, businesses and an elementary school, all in the guidelines, that would be at risk.

Obviously there is not just a need but a desperate need for government to recognize its responsibility in protecting the health of Canadians when it comes to exposure to environmental contaminants. There has been a denial, I would say, on behalf of the Liberal government of recognizing the responsibility to deal with environmental contaminants. The Progressive Conservative Party supports this private member's bill and it is our sincere hope that the government will commit to protecting the health of Canadians. I do not think that is too much to ask. After all, let me say in closing that it would be a travesty if this were just another chapter lost in the toxic legacy of this Liberal government.

• (1155)

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think we have to put this motion in the historical context of where we find ourselves as a legislative body and where the country finds itself at this period in time. I believe that factually we have to recognize these two points: first, historically we have had numerous

contaminated sites, and contaminants have been allowed to get into our natural environment; and second, we have ongoing problems, where we know we are releasing contaminants that are dangerous to human health and to the natural environment or ecosystems. It is occurring on an ongoing basis.

What we are confronted with, and what this motion is to some degree attempting to face in building a framework to address these problems, is the reality that we have these sites and we have these contaminants. These are problems we already know about to some degree. We also have to recognize that on an ongoing basis we are going to have to build a process to deal with those types of problems, because given the current economic and legislative framework we work within, this is not a problem that is going to go away. It is not one that if we deal with it we will put it behind us. It is true that we have to do this, but we also have to recognize the fact that we are going to have to deal with these problems at least for some time into the future until we can build what I call environmental closed loops so these contaminants do not get out and damage human health or the natural environment.

I listened to the Liberal member who spoke earlier this morning and was trying to portray a rosy picture of how we already have a legislative and regulatory framework that deals with all these problems. I do not know what country he is living in, but that is not an accurate reflection of the reality in Canada at this time.

We heard from my colleague from Windsor West about the problems we have specifically in our home city of Windsor, Ontario. We heard from the member from the Progressive Conservative Party about the example of the Sydney tar ponds. I would add to that list, in terms of my experience, what happened in Walkerton.

In all three of those cases, I have done extensive work with the communities and it was very clear that our existing legislative and regulatory framework was greatly wanting in terms of dealing with the problems that those specific communities had to deal with, whether it was, as in Walkerton, contaminated water, or in Windsor, severe air pollution, or in the community of Sydney, Nova Scotia, the problem with having to deal with the contamination of its water sources and to some degree its air due to those ponds. In all three cases, in dealing with community members who had worked extensively on the problems, the message I saw coming out was, "This has occurred and it should not have happened, but what are we going to do about it and why do we not have a legislative framework and a governmental infrastructure to deal with this calamity our community is faced with?"

I met with the citizens' group in Walkerton and those citizens in particular had done a fair amount of analysis on the need for government to be in a position to react quickly, efficiently and sensitively to a community faced with that kind of crisis. I always remember one individual I spoke to. He said they felt that not one person at a governmental level, whether it was the local, the provincial or the federal level, had been able to respond in an efficient and sensitive manner to the community and that it was left to the local community to get things organized to respond to that tragedy.

Speaker's Ruling

●(1200)

We had a meeting in Windsor after the Gilbertson-Brophy report was issued and there was the same type of feeling in that room of 600 people. There was the feeling of fear, but a real demand on their part for the government to be there, to provide them with the security and protection the government is supposed to provide. We heard from individual members of the community that that was not happening.

The motion my colleague from Windsor West has brought forward is a very clear attempt to build a structure and a process so that when a contaminated site or contaminants that are damaging human health were identified as being in the environment, the government would have a process and infrastructure with which to respond. The process would be efficient and sensitive to the needs of the community. It would need flexible elements because each community would need a somewhat different response.

The government states it has emergency legislation, which is true. In most cases that legislation does not get triggered when dealing with contaminants in the environment that are damaging to human health in particular. When an issue like this comes up, we need to have a system whereby we know that the government infrastructure will kick in. A triggering mechanism would be needed within the legislation or the regulations. That triggering mechanism would produce a process that would respond to the needs of the community. That process would be necessary so that the contaminant could be identified.

It has been interesting to hear the recurrent announcements made by the government. We have identified 135 hot spots in the Great Lakes. These are sites which over the last century have become contaminated with all sorts of toxic materials such as mercury, asbestos, benzene and PCBs. It is all there. I have heard members of the government announce over and over again funding to clean up these sites. The government announced funding for a site cleanup in the Windsor area five times and it is still not cleaned up. That site is still contaminating the water system in our area.

Sites have to be clearly identified, as well as the extent of the danger they pose. The infrastructure would then develop remedial action. Part of that action would be the actual physical cleanup. There are all sorts of ways of doing it, but it has to be done quickly.

I could not get over the level of frustration of the local community in Sydney for the length of time the process took in trying to deal with the tar ponds. It still has not been accomplished. It became both a bureaucratic and an academic nightmare for that community. There were numerous discussions and proposals, but the process itself was flawed from the beginning. In particular I think it was flawed because it did not involve enough of the community in the decision making process. That came too late and even then it was too little.

We need to look at having a process and the process has to be as good as possible. It has to have a triggering mechanism. It needs financial resources behind it. The process itself is what we need to study, develop and implement.

●(1205)

The Speaker: Order. The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the questions of privilege raised by the hon. government House leader on May 12, 2003 and on May 16, 2003 arising from a decision of the British Columbia Court of Appeal in respect of the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, and a decision of the Ontario Superior Court in respect of the hon. member for Ottawa South, where the court in each case has set aside the parliamentary privileges of the hon. members and has required them to testify pursuant to a subpoena issued by the court.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the hon. government House leader for having raised this important issue, as well as the hon. members for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Roberval, Vancouver East and St. John's West for their comments on May 12th when this point was first raised.

The hon. government House leader when first raising this point indicated that, while he had informed the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard of his intention to raise this question, he was not doing so on the latter's behalf but out of a concern for the privileges of House.

The hon. member drew to the attention of the House that, in a ruling delivered by the British Columbia Court of Appeal in the Ainsworth case on April 23, 2003, a finding of contempt had been made against the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard as a result of his failure to appear before the Court when summoned.

[*English*]

The hon. government House leader went on to point out that as Joseph Maingot indicates on page 161 of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, members of Parliament are exempt from being subpoenaed while the House is in session and for 40 days both before and after a session. The British Columbia Court of Appeal, on the other hand, claimed it could find no support for the 40 day rule and held that the privilege was restricted to days when the House was in session.

The hon. government House leader emphasized the importance of the independence of the House and its right to insist on the attendance of its members, and that it is this House, and not some outside body, which must determine the interpretation of the rights and privileges of this place.

The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, in his intervention, while recognizing the need for parliamentary privilege, pointed out as well the need for an even-handed application of privilege with respect to the rights of other Canadians. He suggested that it might be appropriate for the House to revisit its current interpretation of the immunity that its privileges provide.

Speaker's Ruling

[Translation]

Recognizing the special requirements of the House which make privilege necessary, both the hon. member for Vancouver East and the hon. member for St. John's West spoke of the need to ensure that other citizens are not adversely affected by those privileges. In particular, they expressed concern that the blind application of the right of members such as the right not to be compelled to appear before a court as a witness might interfere unduly with the rights of others.

At the same time, they shared the view expressed by the hon. member for Roberval that privilege is a matter of fundamental importance to the House and that it is here, and not elsewhere, that these issues should be decided.

● (1210)

[English]

In his point of privilege on May 16, the government House leader characterized the decision of the Ontario court as an attack on the privileges of hon. members more serious than the earlier court decision in British Columbia. The Ontario court's decision, according to the government House leader, was "an intrusion by the courts in improperly attempting to define what is parliamentary privilege" and that he did not think it "appropriate for a court to define what is parliamentary privilege in our country".

The privileges of Parliament are fundamental to the standing of this House as the democratically elected chamber representing the interests of Canadians from sea to sea to sea. There are several privileges and the privilege at the heart of the issue raised by the government House leader is the privilege that holds members of Parliament free from civil arrest or summons during the sessions of Parliament including a period of 40 days before and 40 days after a session. These privileges have their origins in British parliamentary law.

The well known British parliamentary text, Erskine May's *Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, the most eminent authority on parliamentary procedures and practices, including parliamentary privilege, first published in 1844 and now in its 22nd edition, explains parliamentary privilege and provides numerous authorities that have affirmed the privileges of members of Parliament as a matter of English parliamentary law. According to this learned text:

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament, and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions, and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals. Thus privilege, though part of the law of the land, is to a certain extent, an exemption from the general law. Certain rights and immunities such as freedom from arrest or freedom of speech belong primarily to individual Members of each House and exist because the House cannot perform its functions without unimpeded use of the services of its Members. Other rights and immunities such as the power to punish for contempt and the power to regulate its own constitution belong primarily to each House as a collective body, for the protection of its Members and the vindication of its own authority and dignity.

It is interesting to note that just as a court has an undoubted right to cite persons in contempt who obstruct its proceedings or offend the dignity of the court, the same power is necessarily available to the Houses of Parliament. According to the Erskine May text:

The power to punish for contempt has been judicially considered to be inherent in each House of Parliament not as a necessary incident of the authority and functions

of a legislature (as might be regarded in respect of certain privileges) but by virtue of the *lex et consuetudo parliamenti*.

The Latin phrase could be translated as the law and custom of Parliament.

The Erskine May text provides a number of 19th century judicial considerations affirming parliamentary privilege which I need not cite here as it seems to me inappropriate to do so for the very simple reason that parliamentary privilege has not been a matter determined by the courts, but rather by assertion of parliament. The history of conflict between the English House of Commons and the Crown in the 17th century where the King arrested some members of Parliament, shows clearly that parliamentary privilege had its origins in assertion by the House of Commons against the Crown and not by any rulings of judges who are, after all, officers appointed by the Crown. With Confederation in 1867 this House became both the heir and beneficiary of this history.

The parliamentary privilege challenged by the two recent court decisions, that is, the immunity from testifying in court during a parliamentary session, is a personal privilege enjoyed by individual members of Parliament, not for their personal benefit but for the benefit of the House and, according to the parliamentary law texts, is treated the same as the freedom from civil arrest during a session. In this regard, the Erskine May text says the following:

The privilege of exemption of a Member from attending as a witness has been asserted by the House upon the same principle as other personal privileges, viz, the paramount right of Parliament to the attendance and service of its Members.

● (1215)

The discussion in May illustrates how ancient is this privilege as it harks back to a citation in Hatsell, on page 170, which states:

On the 13th of February, 1605, Mr. Stepney [a Member of Parliament] complains that seven days before this Session, he was summoned upon a Subpoena in the Star Chamber: On the 14th this matter is examined into, and referred to the Committee of Privileges; on the 15th, it is ordered, "that Mr. Stepney shall have privilege, and that Warren, who served the process, be committed to the Serjeant for three days".

[Translation]

British parliamentary privilege came to Canada with enactment of the British North America Act of 1867. Section 18 of the 1867 Act gave the Parliament of Canada all the privileges then possessed by the British Parliament. It reads, in part:

The privileges, immunities, and powers to be held, enjoyed, and exercised by the Senate and by the House of Commons, and by the members thereof respectively, shall be such as are from time to time defined by Act of the Parliament of Canada.

[English]

The Parliament of Canada Act, in section 4, provides as follows:

The Senate and the House of Commons, respectively, and the members thereof hold, enjoy and exercise

(a) such and the like privileges, immunities and powers as, at the time of the passing of the Constitution Act, 1867, were held, enjoyed and exercised by the Commons House of Parliament of the United Kingdom and by the members thereof, insofar as it is consistent with that Act; and

(b) such privileges, immunities and powers as are defined by Act of the Parliament of Canada, not exceeding those, at the time of the passing of the Act, held, enjoyed and exercised by the Commons House of the United Kingdom and by the members thereof.

Speaker's Ruling

Thus it is clearly established that the parliamentary privileges forming part of the parliamentary law and custom of England came to be part of the parliamentary law of Canada today. This was confirmed in 1993 by the Supreme Court of Canada, in the case of *New Brunswick Broadcasting Co. v. Nova Scotia* (Speaker of the House of Assembly). Madame Justice McLachlin, as she then was, speaking with the majority on the decision, spoke of the:

manifest intention expressed in the preamble of our Constitution that Canada retain the fundamental constitutional tenets upon which British parliamentary democracy rested. This is not a case of importing an unexpressed concept into our constitutional regime, but of recognizing a legal power fundamental to the constitutional regime which Canada has adopted in its Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982. Nor are we here treating a mere convention to which the courts have not given legal effect; the authorities indicate that the legal status of inherent privileges has never been in doubt.

More importantly, Chief Justice McLachlin, as she now is, affirmed the necessary independence of the legislative branch of government when she also said in her judgment in this case:

It has also long been accepted that these privileges must be held absolutely and constitutionally if they are to be effective; the legislative branch of our government must enjoy a certain autonomy which even the Crown and the courts cannot touch.

[*Translation*]

The B.C. court allowed the 40 day periods at the beginning and end of each session with respect to freedom from civil arrest but not with respect to freedom from testifying in court. This distinction is not supported by the parliamentary authorities.

[*English*]

The Ontario court did not see the distinction between a session and a sitting of the House and seemed to believe that between sittings, that is, during adjournment periods, members of Parliament were, if you like, on holiday. The court relied on a dictionary definition of "in session" which included the meaning "not on vacation" and the judge emphasized this by underlining. From this, the judge felt members of Parliament were available for other matters, such as court appearances. The court's confusion of a session with a sitting, on the one hand, and its idea of a parliamentary holiday, on the other, are clearly contrary to the parliamentary authorities.

The House requires the availability of its members throughout an entire session as well as for the traditional 40-day period before and after the start and end of a session. Erskine May points out that the immunity from subpoenas is based on the same principle as other personal privileges; that is, the paramount right of Parliament to the attendance and service of its members.

The May text recounts as the general opinion of the British legal authorities, founded on ancient law and custom, that the privilege of freedom from arrest remains with a member of the House for 40 days after every prorogation and 40 days before the next session and that this extent of privilege has been allowed by the English courts of law on the ground of usage and universal opinion.

Canadian parliamentary authorities, such as the Maingot text on parliamentary privilege, reflect these same views with respect to the parliamentary law of Canada. And the Supreme Court of Canada has said that parliamentary privilege forms part of the constitutional law of Canada.

We have parliamentary privileges to ensure that the other branches of government, the executive and the judicial, respect the independence of the legislative branch of government, which is this House and the other place. This independence cannot be sustained if either of the other branches is able to redefine or reduce these privileges.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

It has been my clear understanding that periods of 40 days at the beginning and at the end of a session were included in the sessional period to which this privilege applied. I recall for the House a 1989 ruling in this House, which both courts seem to have completely overlooked or blindly ignored, where Mr. Speaker Fraser asserted this privilege:

Let me state for the record that the right of a Member of Parliament to refuse to attend court as a witness during a parliamentary session and during the 40 days preceding and following a parliamentary session is an undoubted and inalienable right supported by a host of precedents.

Mr. Speaker Fraser did not treat this matter lightly when he added in his ruling:

I take a serious view of the action of a member of the legal profession in questioning the right of a Member of Parliament to claim immunity from appearing as a witness and alleging that a court, and not Parliament, had the power to make a determination in such a case.

[*English*]

In my view, Mr. Speaker Fraser correctly defended this privilege, and it is my duty and privilege to do so again today. The privileges of this House and its members are not unlimited, but they are nonetheless well established as a matter of parliamentary law and practice in Canada today, and must be respected by the courts. Judges must look to Parliament for precedents on privilege, not to rulings of their fellow judges since it is in Parliament where privilege is defined and claimed.

Accordingly, I find there is here prima facie evidence of two breaches of the privileges of the House and I invite the government House leader to put his motion.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That the question of the immunity of Members of the House from being compelled to attend court during, immediately before and immediately after a Session of Parliament be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Supply

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to confirm to the House, even though I have done so with House leaders last week, that tomorrow evening, May 27, the House will be in committee of the whole on the main estimates. This had been stated to other House leaders, but I do not believe I had expressed it on the floor of the House.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1225)

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance) moved:

That this House, acknowledging that health issues transcend political borders as seen with the recent outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), express its support for the admission of Taiwan as an Observer to the World Health Organization and call upon the government to actively urge other member states and non-governmental organizations to support this goal.

He said: Mr. Speaker, Canada is in the middle of severe acute respiratory syndrome, SARS, West Nile virus, and mad cow disease and its possible spread to humans, just to name a few of the current challenges.

Canadians are dealing with these problems, but we are not an island. We are citizens of a world of billions and billions of people, each one of us susceptible to be plagued by disease. As a developed nation Canada has serious responsibilities.

The World Health Organization, WHO, a specialized agency of the United Nations, formally came into existence in 1948. Two of the basic principles of the organization are:

The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.

And:

The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent upon the fullest co-operation of individuals and States.

Unlike the United Nations proper, which recognizes political states, the WHO set out to address the common issues of health and disease, issues that relate to all persons without reference to geographic location or political affiliation.

Article 1 of the WHO constitution defines the organization's objective as "the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health".

Communicable disease, the incidence of which has been increasing alarmingly in recent years, led Nobel laureate Joshua Lederberg to state:

The world really is just one village. Our tolerance of disease in any place in the world is at our own peril.

Canada has historically taken its leadership role in the WHO seriously. Canada was a charter member in 1948. A Canadian, Dr. Brock Chisholm, was elected the first director-general. Our commitment has continued to be evident in the fact that, since 1948, Canada has been elected to nine three-year terms as a member of the WHO executive council.

The WHO does not share common membership with either the UN General Assembly or with other specialized agencies. The universal health care mandate that it administers has prompted it to include as members over the years states that do not belong to the UN, as well as giving certain entities observer status with the right to participate in the WHO world health assembly.

For example, two states that belong to the WHO that are not UN members are: Niue, a tiny island with an estimated population of 2,100; and the Cook Islands with an estimated population of 21,000.

However, Taiwan's application has been continuously opposed by the People's Republic of China. The refusal to admit Taiwan as either a full member of the WHO or to accord it observer status is patently contrary to the universal intentions of the WHO constitution, and is arguably illegal under the terms of that constitution. Taiwan, with a population of 23 million, is larger than 148 sovereign countries in the world. It is certainly larger than the 2,100 residents of Niue.

Taiwan is the only remaining sizeable territory in the entire world whose people are denied the benefits that accrue from WHO engagement. As the world has cooperated fighting the international outbreak of SARS, Taiwan's exclusion from even observer status in the WHO is not just an affront, but a grave peril to the health of the population of the entire world.

Let us review what has happened. SARS broke out in November 2002 in Guangdong province in China. Fast forwarding to March 10, 2003, China disclosed the epidemic four months after the outbreak and asked the WHO for help in identifying this unknown disease.

March 14, SARS broke out in Taiwan. Taiwan immediately informed the WHO of its first suspected cases, but the WHO ignored the information and did not list Taiwan's SARS cases.

March 16, two American CDC epidemiology experts arrived in Taiwan to study Taiwan's SARS cases and to determine their relationship to others around the region.

March 18, the WHO listed Taiwan's SARS information but politicized the issue by categorizing Taiwan as a province of China, like Guangdong or Hong Kong.

March 28, Canada listed Taiwan on its travel advisory. On that date Taiwan had only 10 reported cases and no deaths. Health Canada explained that Taiwan was geographically close to Hong Kong, with 425 reported cases and 10 deaths, and mainland China, at that time with 806 cases, 34 deaths, and that there were 20 flights between Taiwan and Hong Kong daily.

Supply

•(1230)

April 7, China finally admitted entry to a WHO team sent to hunt down the source of SARS in Guangdong. When the team arrived in Hong Kong one of its members, Dr. James Maguire, was interviewed by Hong Kong *Wen Wei Daily*. Dr. Maguire said that if Taiwan wanted to invite WHO's experts to come, it would have to go through Beijing and that Taiwan cannot deal directly with the WHO.

May 3, the WHO dispatched an ad hoc team of two officials to Taiwan. They stayed for one week to investigate the situation. This is important. During their stay in Taiwan the WHO inspectors made no public statement, nor did they meet with the Taiwanese health minister.

May 14, Taiwan's SARS situation had increased to 238 reported SARS cases with 30 deaths and was continuing to worsen when on May 18 last week Taiwan reported a record daily rise of 65 probable cases, for a total of 483, the third highest in the world after China and Hong Kong.

The People's Republic of China says that there is no need for Taiwan to participate in the WHO because, in part, the PRC looks after Taiwan's health interests. It says:

The Chinese central government is always committed to the health and well-being of people from Taiwan... Taiwan, like any other Chinese province, has full access to [the] WHO's health information including that of the early warning of global epidemics and can benefit from the progress made by [the] world in the health field.

That statement is simply untrue. The PRC has never cared for Taiwan's health needs.

Since 1949 Beijing has never exercised jurisdiction or control over Taiwan, not for one single day. The PRC has never exercised any authority or jurisdiction over Taiwan's health care system, nor has the PRC contributed its national budget in any way to the health needs of Taiwan.

Globalization has vastly increased cross-border flows of goods and services and peoples. Consequently, it has also facilitated the spread of infectious diseases across the world. Any loophole in a global health network presents a danger for the entire world. Taiwan's exclusion from the WHO creates such a loophole.

Taiwan is a major transportation hub linking northeast and southeast Asia. In 2002 Taiwan registered almost 8 million outbound travellers and 2 million inbound travellers. By the end of 2002 over 300,000 migrant workers from Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam were living and working in Taiwan. Taiwan is at the crossroads of any infectious disease outbreak in the region.

Given the increasing economic and people to people ties between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China, Taiwan is on the front line of any cross-border epidemic originating in China or its neighbours. When the "bird flu", known as the A influenza, re-emerged in Hong Kong and mainland China, it underscored the danger that Taiwan's exclusion from the WHO creates. The WHO quickly offered its support to the authorities in Hong Kong and China through the global influenza surveillance network, yet if such an outbreak originated in or spread to Taiwan, the WHO would be helpless to respond.

Taiwan must be allowed to participate in the WHO because the health authorities of Taiwan are the only ones possessing the information and the data permitting the WHO and the world to be informed of and respond effectively to an outbreak of any epidemic on the island that could threaten global health.

Taiwan is excluded from the WHO's global outbreak alert and response network. Through this mechanism, the WHO transmits reports of current outbreaks to and receives important health data from public health professionals and global surveillance partners worldwide. This network permits the member states of the WHO to take appropriate protective measures.

A clear example of the dangers that Taiwan's exclusion from the WHO creates is the enterovirus epidemic that struck Taiwan in 1998. Having spread to Taiwan from Malaysia, this virus infected over 1.8 million Taiwanese people, hospitalized 400, caused 80 deaths and resulted in over \$1 billion U.S. value in economic losses.

Taiwan's observer status in the WHO would also enable Taiwan to contribute to the global community more effectively.

Taiwan has special experiences, resources and achievements that it can share with the world. In 2000 the economist intelligence unit of the United Kingdom rated the medical practice in Taiwan as being second among all the developed countries and newly industrialized countries, next only to Sweden.

•(1235)

Taiwan has established a universal health care system, the first in Asia, with 97% coverage.

In 2001 there were 18,265 health care institutions in Taiwan, one physician for every 649 people, one dentist for every 2,570 people, one nurse for every 280 people and 30 hospital beds for every 10,000 people. Taiwan has established a respectable network of disease treatment, reporting and medical research facilities.

Taiwan enjoys one of the highest levels of life expectancy in Asia. At present the life expectancy at birth is 73 for males and 78 for females. Taiwan's maternal and infant mortality rates are comparable to those of western countries.

Taiwan has eradicated infectious diseases such as plague, smallpox, rabies and malaria. No new poliomyelitis cases have been reported since 1983. Taiwan has also been the first country to provide children nationwide with free hepatitis B vaccinations and, in the early 1980s, established effective monitoring and control systems to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Taiwan's active pharmaceutical industry is exploring new drugs for cancers and viral diseases as well as chronic diseases such as cardiovascular illness.

Despite being excluded from the WHO, Taiwan has shared its resources with people around the world. From 1995 to 2002, Taiwan donated over \$120 million U.S. in medical or humanitarian relief to 78 countries spanning five continents.

Taiwan is involved in Care France's AIDS prevention program in Chad, donates yellow fever vaccines to Senegal and provides condoms and medicines to Burkino Faso and Swaziland to promote anti-AIDS campaigns.

Supply

Taiwan also funds a polio eradication program through Rotary International and is involved in malaria eradication and hospital improvement programs in Sao Tome and Principe.

Clearly then Taiwan's participation in the WHO would not be one simply of a modest recipient of benefits.

Taiwan boasts 14 internationally recognized medical schools and supports sophisticated health care delivery and health research systems that are on a par with those of many industrialized countries. Taiwan is fully able to offer financial and technical support to the World Health Organization for the benefit of all members. Its absence from the organization represents an epidemiological "black hole" in the functioning of the World Health Organization.

In order to achieve universality, the WHO has interpreted its rules on participation very flexibly. Many non-nations have been allowed to participate in the WHA sessions as observers. This practice is well established, with a number of entities having been routinely invited for years. This trend has given rise to a new category of quasi-permanent observers.

At present there are five such entities: the Holy Sea; Palestine; the Order of Malta; the International Committee of the Red Cross; and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. These entities are allowed to participate actively in the activities of the WHO, in particular by sending observers to the sessions of the assembly, precisely because they have responsibilities falling within the purview of the WHO and their aims conform with the organizations's objective.

It is clear that the intent of the WHO is to extend its functions and benefits as broadly as possible to all peoples.

In the light of these direct precedents, it is obvious that Taiwan is fully qualified to participate as an observer in the sessions of the WHA. We should note that Taiwan is not applying as an independent state but as an independent health entity. Taiwan possesses the health infrastructure, requisite manpower and scientific knowledge necessary to achieve the objectives fixed by the WHO constitution.

By establishing and continuously improving various projects in public health, sanitation, immunization and drug research, Taiwan's government has genuinely sought the attainment of the highest possible level of health as called for in the WHO constitution. Taiwan surely exercises complete authority and control over its health policy and administration and thus satisfies all the requirements for participation in the work of the WHO.

Let us be crystal clear. The Canadian Alliance motion today reads:

That this House, acknowledging that health issues transcend political borders as seen with the recent outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), express its support for the admission of Taiwan as an Observer to the World Health Organization and call upon the government to actively urge other member states and non-governmental organizations to support this goal.

● (1240)

Canada's one China policy is irrelevant in this debate, except to the extent that the Liberal government is using it to stand as an impediment to the health of the world.

The Canadian government falsely claims that Taiwan has full access to WHO services through other agencies without being a member. This is totally contrary to the known facts.

Let us again review why the Canadian Alliance is trying to force the Liberals to do the right thing.

During the recent outbreak of SARS, Taiwan immediately informed the WHO of the first suspected cases on March 14. In the beginning, the WHO's network did not list any information about Taiwan's SARS cases. However, when the network later listed Taiwan's information on March 18, the WHO politicized the issue and categorized Taiwan as a province of China, like Guangdong or Hong Kong.

The WHO refused to send its health experts directly, choosing instead to transfer the case to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. As a result, Taiwan could not get valuable health information directly from the WHO or its regional office for the western Pacific. Taiwan was not able to compare its cases of the disease to those in mainland China, Hong Kong or Vietnam under the WHO structure. Valuable time was lost in preventing the spread of the epidemic.

Taiwan's medical experts tried to find out more information about the virus in order to take the appropriate protective measures. Unfortunately the efforts were unsuccessful, despite many attempts. One example was a video conference held by the World Health Organization in which over 30 invited experts discussed SARS. However, Taiwanese experts could not participate in the conference to discuss their experiences. Instead they had to get the information from the Internet 20 hours later. This represents disregard for the health and medical human rights of the Taiwanese people, and is also a great loss to the World Health Organization.

In a press conference on April 11, Chinese official Mr. Liu Peilung mentioned that if Taiwan wanted to have the WHO's assistance it should raise this issue with China, that they would consider it and then collaborate with the WHO to deal with Taiwan. China refused to allow the WHO experts to have entry to Taiwan for seven full weeks.

On the other hand, China has sought assistance from Taiwan through its NGOs. A deputy researcher from the Institute of Biomedical Sciences of Academia Sinica in Taiwan arrived in Beijing on April 8 so that China could benefit from Taiwan's experience.

In the control of communicable diseases, the greatest obstacle that Taiwan faces is the lack of direct and prompt access to information concerning the policies and strategies of the WHO, the recommended specifications for laboratory testing, and the technical details of control measures. Professionals from Taiwan, governmental or otherwise, are denied participation in any symposium, workshop or training program organized by the WHO, even the ones that do not specify "by invitation only".

This is a clear cut case of the Canadian government dangerously out of touch, grabbing on to its one China policy. I urge the government to stop posturing and fretting over politics. I urge it to support our motion:

Supply

That this House, acknowledging that health issues transcend political borders as seen with the recent outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), express its support for the admission of Taiwan as an Observer to the World Health Organization and call upon the government to actively urge other member states and non-governmental organizations to support this goal.

Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his speech and for making the effort to bring this issue to the floor of the House.

Is the member satisfied that the current arrangements between Canada, Taiwan and the PRC adequately protect Canadians' health, in that now Taiwan, in particular with the SARS outbreak, is being reported in a fashion that requires it to go through China? We have seen that China has been somewhat, shall we say, less than forthcoming in its analysis of the disease, in its reporting of the disease and in its recognition of the disease, and that this has had implications for the world community at large.

Is he satisfied that Taiwan, which is essentially a co-operative country, is being reported by PRC, which is essentially not a very co-operative country?

• (1245)

Mr. Jim Abbott: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Indeed, there is a breakdown in communication. There can be no doubt that there is a breakdown in communication when we have the very obstructionist position of China with respect to the flow of any information back and forth, especially with respect to the issue of Taiwan.

The answer to the member's question would be, not only is Canada in danger, but quite frankly the entire world is in danger. One extra death from SARS that would be created because of this political impediment to what is truly a health issue would be desperately unfortunate. I can only hope that the Canadian government will assume its role of leadership in the World Health Organization. It was there. It had the first director general in 1948. It was there for nine three-year terms on the executive. We can only hope that Canada will take on its role of leadership and see to it that this wrong is righted. This is the only country or health entity in the world that is not represented in WHO, and yet at this point unfortunately for Taiwan it is also a hot spot for SARS, which indeed is a threat to everyone in the world, not just Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague for his speech. I received a letter this morning from Taiwan's official representative, congratulating me for having recommended that Taiwan be admitted as an observer to the WHO. I think that this SARS crisis is a perfect example of the relevance of having all interested parties truly present when a situation such as this comes up.

Does this not show that when it comes to assessing the world health situation, it makes sense for all groups to be represented, even if they are not officially recognized as a country by all health organizations? Can we afford to pay the price of using political arguments that could have a detrimental effect on the health of large numbers of people and perhaps even on the entire world, because of international air travel? In light of this, should we not all support the motion moved by the member?

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Abbott: Madam Speaker, again I thank my colleague for his comments. Indeed, this is a nation of 23 million people. We could divert and get into a discussion about whether they are a nation or whether they are a state. There are many of us in the House who happen to believe that, but that is irrelevant to this argument. That is irrelevant to this debate.

What is relevant to this debate is that it is an independent health entity with its own budget. Taiwan has its own budget and its own health ministry. I have recited all of the achievements that it has in the world of health. It truly is an independent world health entity. The difficulty we are having at this particular point is that the politics of Canada's one China policy and the politics of the PRC holding it up are getting in the way of effectively dealing with this communicable disease. We are talking about lives. This is desperately important and should far supersede anything to do with politics, be they domestic or international.

Hon. Gar Knutson (Secretary of State (Central and Eastern Europe and Middle East), Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin I would like to advise the House that I will be splitting my time with my esteemed colleague, the member for Scarborough East.

It is an honour for me to speak in the House. Canada's one China policy is long established. In 1970 Canada decided to recognize the government of the People's Republic of China in Beijing as the sole government of China. The recognition communiqué, issued jointly by Canada and China in October 1970, stated that: "the Chinese government reaffirms that Taiwan is an inalienable part of the territory of the People's Republic of China. The Canadian government takes note of this position of the Chinese government".

However, within the one China policy there is considerable flexibility for non-official contacts to promote economic, cultural and people-to-people linkages between Canada and Taiwan. These ties are well demonstrated by the activities of our business and cultural communities, from the sale of aircraft and high tech equipment to the tour of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. Economically, Taiwan is one of Canada's top trading partners and is our fourteenth largest export market worldwide.

Canada's relationship with Taiwan is an unofficial one, but unofficial relations have not prevented Canada from developing close, mutually beneficial ties with Taiwan. On the contrary, Canadians and the Taiwanese enjoy a rich partnership in many fields. Canada's approach to this relationship today is, simply put, one based on action, not words, and on substance, not symbol.

Canada has always supported Taiwan's access to many World Health Organization health protection and health promotion programs available to it under current circumstances and continues to encourage the Taiwanese authorities to profit from the opportunities that already exist for cooperation within the WHO framework.

Supply

The World Health Organization is a United Nations specialized agency. The World Health Organization constitution provides for membership and associate membership and does not provide for an observer status. Article 3 of the World Health Organization constitution defines membership as being open to states. To be considered a state for the purpose of WHO membership, one must be recognized as a sovereign state by the United Nations credentials committee.

There are, as has been mentioned by the hon. members who spoke, WHO members who are not members of the United Nations, namely Cook Islands and Niue. Both of these are independent nations in free association with New Zealand, and both Cook Islands and Niue are recognized by the UN credentials committee as sovereign states. Cook Islands and Niue therefore meet the WHO constitutional requirements for membership.

Article 8 of the WHO constitution allows for associate members, which are defined as territories or groups of territories that are not responsible for the conduct of their international relations. Application for admittance to the WHO as an associate member must be made on behalf of the territories or groups of territories by the member or other authority having responsibility for their international relations. According to the rules and procedures of the WHO and the United Nations, an application to admit Taiwan as an associate member would have to be made by China.

While some non-state entities and some international health organizations have been invited as observers to the World Health Assembly, the invitation of these entities to observe the annual World Health Assembly meetings was not contested and received broad support of all WHO members. These observers have no status under WHO constitutional rules and procedures. Their role is purely one of observer, akin to a spectator, not exercising any of the voting privileges extended to members and associate members.

Canada would support a formula for Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization as long as this formula is in accordance with the WHO constitutional rules and procedures and has received broad based approval of WHO members.

Now to a key point: As a member of the international community, Taiwan is able freely to access health information from the World Health Organization. The World Health Organization has indicated that there is no practical impediment to the exchange of information and cooperation between the WHO and Taiwan which might threaten the health of Taiwanese in some manner, nor has Taiwan been barred from humanitarian assistance from the WHO in the event of a medical emergency.

• (1250)

In this regard, the WHO cooperates with the Taiwanese authorities in measures to control the spread of disease and has over the years dispatched teams from its collaboration centres to Taiwan to assist in dealing with specific health issues. The WHO relies on its WHO collaboration centres, which are national institutions that form part of an international collaborative network carrying out activities in support of the WHO's mandate for international health work and program priorities.

The WHO's most important collaborative partner is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The WHO has always provided health care and emergency assistance to Taiwan through its collaboration centres, usually through the CDC. Through its close cooperation with the United States Centers for Disease Control, the CDC, which acts as a WHO collaboration centre, Taiwan has had access to the same information as others, including Canada, to deal with the SARS outbreak. This has in no way affected Taiwan's ability to deal with this outbreak nor has it adversely affected the health and safety of the Taiwanese.

The executive director of the WHO's Department of Communicable Diseases' surveillance and response, Dr. David Heymann, recently publicly stated that although the current situation in Taiwan was not good, Taiwan had professional monitoring and tracking systems that should enable it to confine the SARS outbreak. He insists that Taiwan's lack of WHO membership has not damaged the island in the WHO's global cooperation efforts against SARS, nor has Taiwan suffered in the process of its battle against SARS due to not being a member of the WHO.

Taiwan has not been denied access to medical information and assistance it requires to deal with the SARS outbreak. Indeed, Taiwan has received assistance both from the WHO collaboration centre at the CDC and directly from the World Health Organization. On March 16, 2003, the CDC dispatched two officials to Taiwan to assess the SARS cases. The CDC continues to this day to have a team in Taiwan providing assistance with the SARS outbreak. The WHO also sent a team of two experts to Taiwan to work with the CDC in evaluating the SARS situation.

Canada has also maintained open communication with Taiwan on SARS issues. We have taken steps to ensure that Taiwanese authorities were always well briefed on the SARS situation in Canada.

As part of our continued measures to support the global fight against SARS, Health Canada convened the first major international meeting in North America on SARS, in Toronto, to discuss a proactive approach to halting the spread of SARS. A representative from the Taipei economic and cultural office in Ottawa was also invited and participated in the meeting. Dr. James Young, Ontario's Commissioner of Public Safety and a key leader in Toronto's battle with SARS, personally briefed Taiwanese representatives in Toronto on the SARS situation. Dr. Young has also recently travelled to Taiwan with a team of experts from Ontario to share Toronto's and Canada's experience in fighting SARS.

This issue transcends the words of the motion themselves. There is a larger complexity to this issue, which is reflected in Canada's relationship with Taiwan and China. The government agrees that health care issues transcend borders and I have clearly laid out that through our actions and those of the WHO Taiwan is receiving timely and equivalent access to appropriate information and assistance.

Supply

•(1255)

Mr. Jim Abbott: Madam Speaker, while I have a very high regard for the member as an individual I must say that some of his words have made me feel very angry, angry because in fact they do not represent the facts as we know them, and angry because there are people who are going to die as a result of inaction and the difficulties that are created.

I wonder if the member could explain to me why it took seven full weeks before two people from the WHO finally appeared in Taiwan. Why did it take seven full weeks? I will give him the answer, but perhaps he will have a different interpretation. The answer is that Beijing simply was not being cooperative and was not going to permit people to go into Taiwan. Taiwan wanted the people to go in there. Second, when they did go in, they did not even contact the health minister of Taiwan, who was wrestling with this particular issue.

I do not understand where those comments are coming from when, as I recited in my own presentation, the fact of the matter is that the PRC has not spent one thin dime in Taiwan. It has absolutely no control and absolutely no jurisdiction over the health matters of Taiwan and yet it can stop WHO people from being able to go in there. I wonder if he can explain that because, quite frankly, those facts I have just recited do not relate at all well to the ones he has just presented.

•(1300)

Hon. Gar Knutson: Madam Speaker, I am not familiar with the actual case of why or if the WHO authorities were prevented from going. My understanding is that anyone can travel to Taiwan based on the Taiwanese rules. I have travelled to Taiwan. I did not require a visa when I came out of communist China.

As I said, the real information being transferred between various officials is from the disease centres in the United States and Canada. I am not sure that simply because WHO authorities may have been prevented, and I am acknowledging that may be the case, if that has made any difference on the ground. The fact of the matter is the medical people have been able to exchange information as they should have. If that is not the case, then we should fix that.

I am not sure having Taiwanese membership in the WHO, albeit as an observer, is necessary to fix that. The doctors and the medical people should be exchanging information so that no additional damage is done through this disease, and let us stay focussed on that problem and not get caught up on the large political issue of WHO observer status.

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in that regard, would the minister care to comment on the earlier comments of the hon. member across that the motion and issue of Taiwan obtaining observer status at the WHO has nothing whatsoever to do with the ambitions on the part of the Taiwanese government for sovereignty or nation state?

Hon. Gar Knutson: Madam Speaker, I do not want to get into a debate of imputing motive. Unfortunately, the Taiwanese situation is complicated by the position of communist China. At the end of the day where Taiwan ranks, whether it is an independent state or whether it is a full member of communist China, with a normal part

of its territory like any other part of its territory, is really up to the people themselves to sort out. It is up to the Taiwanese to sort out with the people in mainland China. Right now it is in sort of a situation of limbo.

That is a bigger issue than observer status in the WHO. It is complicated. It is complicated by the inability of the two stakeholders to sort this out, and we should not let that complication have a negative impact on people's health. We should not let that complication have a negative impact on the exchange of information. If we have to fix some procedures at the WHO to achieve that, then the Government of Canada would lend its support to fixing those procedures.

Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank again the hon. member for bringing this motion forward. This is a timely motion and I want to congratulate him for his initiative.

I am speaking in two capacities: one in my capacity as the member for Scarborough East and also in my capacity as chair of the Canada-Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Group.

As recent public health issues have disclosed, health knows no political boundaries. It is therefore quite foolish to leave certain jurisdictions out in the cold while arguing about status. Taiwan occupies a bit of ethereal status in the world. We all know it exists but we just cannot mention it out loud.

For most purposes, this works. Taiwan is part of the WTO but it has kind of a special trading entity status. It is part of APEC and is recognized as an economic entity. Therefore for the purposes of money and trade we seem to be able to find where Taiwan exists but for the purposes of health it has no status.

The only link therefore appears to be economic. Therefore I would like to suggest that really it is in Canada's best interest economically to recognize Taiwan for its desire to enter into this status of observer at the World Health Organization, and indeed it is in the world's economic interest.

In Toronto we have recently had a graphic lesson of the economics of health. The SARS scare has literally shaved off millions, if not hundreds of millions of dollars, off the GDP of the greater Toronto area and probably will in turn shave percentage points off the GDP of our nation.

The equation is rather simple. If we do not have health, we will not have any money. People do not shop, they do not travel when they are afraid of getting sick. Therefore, no shopping, no money, no GDP, no economy.

I do not know what the impact of SARS will be on Taiwan, but it will be an order of magnitude several times greater than that of Canada. The impact has been far deeper and far harder in relative and absolute terms than the impact on Canada. Even today's newspapers detail new deaths and fresh cases both in Taiwan and in Toronto. That is all the more reason Taiwan should be included in the WHO instead of being treated as an international non-person.

We appear to be only too happy to trade with Taiwan, for example, take its money, but when it comes to recognition even if it is to our benefit, then we have a curious case of blindness.

Supply

How did we get to this contradictory state? I suggest it all goes back to Prime Minister Trudeau's recognition of the People's Republic of China as the rightful representative of the Chinese people. During the negotiations, the prime minister was pressed to recognize China's claim to Taiwan. The prime minister, very cleverly I would suggest, would only go so far as to take note of the Chinese claim. I make the distinction that there is a great of daylight between taking note of somebody's position and actually accepting someone's position.

The take note policy formulation was acceptable to the PRC at the time and many other countries, including the United States of America. This in turn paved the way for President Nixon's historical visit to China.

Taiwan in a monumental blunder withdrew itself from the United Nations in protest, which in turn paved the way for the PRC to flex its diplomatic muscles as and when it needed on other countries and force countries to start to backtrack on this take note position. That has resulted in some evolutions and distortions of the one China policy, which really has come to mean we do not do anything with respect to Taiwan without checking with the PRC first. We then calibrate the cost and decide on how much we want to irritate the PRC.

One of the flash points is the WHO. Our position is hypocritical. At least we are joined in our hypocrisy by quite a number of other nations. There does seem to be hope however as the United States has recently come out firmly in favour of Taiwan's admission and the EU seems to be leaning that way.

● (1305)

However if we play this right, we can successfully irritate everybody instead of doing the right thing and recognize Taiwan for what it is, a fully functioning state with legitimate aspirations to join multinational organizations which are designed to help the world function in a better way.

Why should we care if in fact this little island has a big problem with its enormous neighbour? The problem is that all of our inconsistencies will come home to roost one day.

The politics of the PRC-Taiwan are getting to be too serious for the health of the rest of the world. Reluctantly, the PRC has acknowledged to the rest of the world that it has been a little less than forthcoming about its SARS problem. Clearly it understated the problem by several orders of magnitude. Given the PRC's tendencies, in the words of the *Wall Street Journal*, to cover-up and deceive, we will probably never really know the magnitude of the problem until the crisis passes.

I remind members that this is a world health problem, not merely a Chinese problem or a Taiwanese problem. What happens there directly affects us and our constituents. I put it to members, visit any hospital in Toronto and see the results.

The source of much of the SARS outbreak in that part of the world and its understatement of the magnitude of the problem is, as one doctor put it, a little like having unprotected sex while knowing that one is HIV positive. The deceitful decision of the PRC to suppress information has a direct impact on the health of all of us and is literally costing us billions of dollars.

However it gets worse. Taiwan immediately and accurately reported its SARS outbreak to the WHO, which did not get reported initially because of pressure from the PRC, and then only later as a province of China. The WHO refused to send its health experts to Taiwan or to allow Taiwanese health experts to participate in developing their knowledge about the outbreak, therefore imperilling the health of the Taiwanese, the Chinese, the world at large and Canada in particular. This has to stop.

It is one thing for the PRC to imperil the health of its own citizens. However it is quite another thing to imperil the health of citizens of other nations. The world is too small for this kind of petty politics. It is particularly galling to have a cooperative state like Taiwan shut out by the political muscle of China, a less than cooperative state. This is not the first time.

In 1999 Taiwan had a devastating earthquake, killing 2,400, injuring 10,000 people and leaving over 100,000 people homeless. Taiwan needed the WHO. Time is crucial in a matter like that, and the WHO spent useless hours and days working out ways to deliver unofficial and indirect assistance to Taiwan.

Parliament must speak on this issue. We say that we value democracy and the rule of law. Taiwan is an economic tiger but it is also a democratic miracle. It has emerged from the gloom of a brutal repressive dictatorship into the sunlight of a vigorous multi-party democracy. Yet when Taiwan requests a legitimate form of recognition, we turn our back on her. We do not walk the walk; we only want to talk the talk.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution as it would get Canada a little closer to walking the talk.

● (1310)

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for speaking in clear terms that can be understood, and should be understood, not only in the House but in the United Nations and around the world.

We in Canada sit by, as in this recent example with SARS, and let a world organization not move as it should because of the political power of mainland China. In doing so, we are putting politics way ahead of people. We did the same thing with the earthquake in Taiwan. We had to argue for months before help went in.

We, as Canadians, should sit very carefully and think about what the hon. member has just said, and the clearness of it, and put ourselves in the same position and ask, if we could act, would we ignore the people in Taiwan today because we feared something about their political identity? I do not think Canadians would but the United Nations has.

Mr. John McKay: Madam Speaker, WHO's interpretation of what constitutes a state seems to be somewhat flexible. The argument is that it can only recognize a country that is a member state of the UN. Obviously Taiwan is not a member state of the UN. It rather foolishly quit.

Several generations of leadership later and it is saying it was a bad idea. We have a bizarre situation where the WHO for certain purposes will recognize Palestine, which is really the PLO; Malta; Niue; Cook Islands; and other entities as health entities for the purposes of the WHO, but for admission to the WHO the island of 23 million is simply a black hole in the WHO scheme of world events.

That seems to be more than passingly bizarre since 23 million people constitute a population that is in excess of 75%, more than most states that actually are members of the WHO and the UN. At this point I do not think we can afford to play the game any longer. There is enough blame to go around between the Taiwanese and the PRC in terms of their politics. We could spend the rest of the day talking about that but the truth is that they are starting to cost me and my constituents their health and money. I say, enough.

We now have an opportunity to encourage Taiwan's admission and I think it is time we did it. We have terrific examples in the WTO and APEC and I cannot imagine why we cannot extend that example on to the WHO.

• (1315)

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I empathize with a number of points the member made. I will probably make them in my own discourse but just to play the devil's advocate I will talk a bit about the other side of the issue.

I assume the member would agree that this is not a discussion on Taiwan's independence. Of course that would be a very interesting debate and we could have it some time, but this is simply related to its admission as observer status in a world organization and what the benefits would be of joining or not joining.

Perhaps the member could elaborate a bit more on the positions of those who are opposed but my understanding is that their position is that Taiwan now has full access, through its contact in the United States and through the WHO that has co-operated with it, to any information it needs. Therefore what actually would be the benefit of creating an international incident on this particular membership?

Mr. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I think consistency is the big thing. The hon. member mentioned going to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention which has basically been Taiwan's window into international health issues.

We had an interesting example in Toronto where we had exactly the same outbreak. The facts were there and they were very clear and cogent. Professionals from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention came up from Atlanta to Toronto and said that Toronto was handling it as well as could be expected and that there was very little on which they would criticize.

The WHO, on the other hand, put us on a travel advisory. Therefore there was inconsistency between the two organizations. By giving Taiwan access to the WHO, at least there would be consistency. We might not be happy with it but we would at least have consistency in terms of a world health approach. I think that is what has to be achieved.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak on this motion

Supply

introduced by our hon. colleague from Kootenay—Columbia, and I want to congratulate him for this initiative. I must inform you that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Lotbinière—L'Érable.

It is important to recognize that there was cause to be concerned that this motion might be defeated in this House, given the position expressed moments ago by the secretary of state. However, not so long ago, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade had passed a motion in support of the Taiwan's application for observer status at the World Health Organization.

So, it seems reasonable to fear the possible defeat of this motion. Since this is an opposition day, it is highly likely that the government will turn this into an issue of confidence. Given the government position expressed a few moments ago, there is reason to fear that the government will ask its members to vote against this motion. If so, if this motion is defeated here in the House, this would, for all practical purposes, nullify the motion adopted by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. This would be a terrible shame, since this committee had made a non-partisan statement, unlike what we are seeing here today.

I think, therefore, that the results of the vote in committee were much more representative of the position of parliamentarians than the potential result at the end of today's debate. It would be preferable for the House of Commons to add its voice to those of the European Parliament and the U.S. Congress and admit the truth, which is that Taiwan must necessarily be granted observer status at the World Health Organization.

I shall begin with a brief outline of my view of the situation. The secretary of state was telling us that political considerations must not have a negative effect on the health of the Taiwanese population. All very well, but that is exactly what the politics are doing now. The politics are holding the health of Taiwan's population hostage. Moreover, the health of the whole region of which Taiwan is a part is being held hostage, and so, by extension, is the whole world, because disease, like poverty, does not respect borders. Diseases ignore borders.

In this era of rapid communication and frequent travel across the world, that is truer than ever. Disease knows no borders and takes no sides in political disputes. Even though the People's Republic of China has decided to act as if Taiwan were one of its provinces and, as a consequence, refuses to allow it observer status in various international bodies, this does not mean that the situation in Taiwan is not serious.

Supply

The Canadian government, for political reasons once again, is going along with this hostage-taking, affecting the health of the Taiwanese people and the health of the people in surrounding counties and all over the world. All of that because it wants to spare the feelings of the government of the People's Republic of China, which is not a very honourable way for a country to behave when it has such a well-established international reputation as Canada has.

My former colleague from Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, Antoine Dubé, asked a question of the Minister of Foreign Affairs a few weeks ago, about the potential admission of Taiwan as an observer at the World Health Organization.

● (1320)

The minister replied, somewhat offhandedly, that the problem with Taiwan is that it is not a member of the United Nations and that the WTO is a UN organization. How insincere. How glib.

It is important to remember that, until 1971, Taiwan was a member of the United Nations. If Taiwan is no longer a member, it is because it chose to withdraw, which paved the way for the People's Republic of China's admission to the UN. At one time, the international community considered Taiwan to be a full fledged member. This still holds true today, since Taiwan received special status, but status nonetheless, at the World Trade Organization.

So, if other international bodies can give Taiwan this status, given its international importance—Taiwan has a population of 23 million; it is the world's sixteenth economic power and its third largest foreign exchange reserve—why can the same not be done at the World Health Organization?

This is the question, and I think it is time to consider that the future admission of Taiwan to the WHO would have significant advantages not only for Taiwan, as I was saying earlier, but also for the rest of the world. If Taiwan can benefit from the support of the WHO to deal with crises like those we are seeing today, such as SARS, then obviously, the Taiwanese people will benefit in turn and, by extension, as I said earlier, so too will the people of neighbouring countries and the rest of the world. Just consider the effect of travel by people and the business sector on the economy; it is quite clear that, given Taiwan's economic strength, we simply cannot think that there will be no travel to and from Taiwan. Consequently, there are people travelling to and from Taiwan.

It is important to note that a number of young Canadians go to Taiwan to teach. In other words, a significant number of people are travelling between Taiwan and Canada. The Department of Foreign Affairs has a publication that outlines what young Canadians need to do if they want to teach English. It goes even further. On the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade web site, Taiwan is referred to as a country.

Why this doublespeak? First, Taiwan is treated as a country; then, it is treated as though it is not part of the international community. I think that Canada would do well to be consistent in its dealings with Taiwan and also in the principles it upholds on the international scene.

I will read a few excerpts from the World Health Organization's Constitution. The preamble states that:

The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, political belief—

I said that illness knows no political boundary.

The text also adds:

—economic or social condition.

The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent upon the fullest co-operation of individuals and States.

The achievement of any State in the promotion and protection of health is of value to all.

Unequal development in different countries in the promotion of health and control of disease, especially communicable disease—

Such as SARS, for instance.

—is a common danger.

The extension to all peoples—

Note that it says “all peoples”.

—of the benefits of medical, psychological and related knowledge is essential to the fullest attainment of health.

● (1325)

I think it is time to face reality. There is a historical analogy I could raise, but unfortunately my time is up. I will therefore close by simply stating that it is time to face reality and to recognize that admitting Taiwan to WHO observer status would not be contrary to the policy of the Peoples' Republic of China and would have considerable advantages for the health of the people of Taiwan and for world health.

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I was very heartened to hear my colleague from the Bloc talk in such favourable terms with regard to the observer status. I think that makes a great deal of sense. I was wondering if he might be able to give us some depth of his feelings or thoughts with regard to the decision by the then prime minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, with regard to the one China policy he established in 1970. Could he give us some sense of his feelings toward that subject, whether or not he thinks that was a wise move for the country, and what he thinks of those policies?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, I think this is a fascinating question from my colleague from Calgary West and I thank him for it.

A fascinating question quite simply because this problematic issue of a single China is connected to Chinese internal policy. Until quite recently, and I believe until the present time, the one-China policy has been defended by the governments of both the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China. The Republic of China, of course has a new government which may, eventually, perhaps want to change that policy. For the moment, however, until we hear otherwise, I believe it is still the policy that is defended by the Republic of China.

As a result, the international community has adopted this same one-China policy, since there were two governments claiming authority and sovereignty over the entire territory of China. The Canadian government merely responded to this state of affairs by deciding to also adopt a one-China policy. Is that one-China policy still the appropriate policy for the year 2003?

I think that this is another issue that could be related to the subject at hand. However, I believe, like the secretary of state, that politics must not influence public health issues. Therefore, Taiwan should be granted observer status at the World Health Organization, regardless of political considerations, whether in the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China or the international community, including Canada.

I was saying earlier that we need to be able to face up to reality. I was referring to the historic precedent of Germany. After the second world war, several months after the Federal Republic of Germany was created, the Soviet occupied zone responded in turn by creating the German Democratic Republic.

The Federal Republic of Germany reacted to the artificial creation, according to them, of the German Democratic Republic with the Hallstein doctrine, by which the Federal Republic of Germany broke off relations with any country that established diplomatic relations with the German Democratic Republic. The Federal Republic of Germany instantly broke off foreign relations with any country that established diplomatic relations with the German Democratic Republic.

After the Cuban missile crisis and Detente, this policy turned out to be simply outdated. This artificial policy to isolate the German Democratic Republic would not solve the problem of German unity. The Federal Republic of Germany then established a policy of openness toward the east, which allowed a number of countries in the international community to pursue diplomatic relations with the German Democratic Republic.

None of which prevented the whole issue of German reunification from being resolved some years later. This just proves that such artificial policies that are established to reach a goal often do not allow this goal to be reached. At some point, simply recognizing reality can allow these goals to be reached.

• (1330)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): There are 35 seconds remaining. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[*English*]

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would just draw the

Supply

House's attention to the fact that the hon. member made reference to finding the word Taiwan under the government website listed as a country. It is not listed as a country. It is not recognized as a country, neither by Canada, nor, might I just advise the House in case there is any further confusion, is there any country in the world today that recognizes two Chinas. I think it is important for the purposes of our debate to recall that the word Taiwan indeed refers to an island. In fact, the government on that island calls itself the Republic of China.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Time has elapsed but I will allow the hon. member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes to respond.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you Madam Speaker. I will be brief. I would simply like to say that the parliamentary secretary is completely right. No country in the world recognizes two Chinas.

The goal is not to recognize two Chinas. The goal is simply to recognize an irrefutable fact. Other international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, for instance, have recognized this fact and have given Taiwan status, not as a participating state or an independent state, but status nonetheless.

Likewise, I think Canada should be consistent. It agreed in the case of the World Trade Organization; it should be consistent when it comes to the World Health Organization.

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak tonight in this important debate on the entire issue of the World Health Organization.

A few moments ago, my hon. colleague from Verchères—Les-Patriotes referred to the questions asked in 2002 by Antoine Dubé, the former member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière. At that time, in 2002, we were not facing the current situation, namely, confronting this disease that has now struck all over the world. Even the people of Toronto got bad news on the weekend.

I would like to say that this debate is not about economics or politics. It is about health. When we talk about health issues, politics and economics must take a back seat.

I have heard the representatives of the Liberal government start in with petty politics. Just now, I heard the secretary of state lecture us about the constitution, an amazing history lesson that had nothing to do with the motion put forward today by the Canadian Alliance. When that same secretary of state said he was in favour of Taiwan being granted status with the WHO as long as it was China that sponsored Taiwan for membership, I found it hard to believe how little these people read.

Supply

I have here a recent news story, written by a *Globe & Mail* journalist on May 20, 2003, saying that at the annual assembly of the World Health Organization last week in Geneva, the lobby from totalitarian China was adamant that Taiwan should not have observer status at the WHO.

The Liberal government and the current Prime Minister pride themselves on being open, democratic and attuned to all the world's problems. Today, when the Canadian Alliance puts forward a reasonable motion, we have to sit here and listen to a rehash of an old constitutional argument focussing on politics and economics, with nothing said about the essence of this motion, which is health.

I would like to say—and I direct my message especially to the Liberals over there—that incredible efforts have already been made, particularly in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, where, despite dissent, we obtained a victory. We recommended strongly that Taiwan have observer status at the World Health Organization.

I also have a letter here signed by Thomas Chen, representative of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office. He informs us that, currently, 161 members of this House—including the vast majority of Bloc Québécois members, I am proud to say, and the vast majority of the Alliance too, I believe—signed this petition demanding that Taiwan be given observer status at the WHO.

The chair of the Canada–Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Group, the hon. member for Scarborough East, said the same thing. He was able to make the distinction between an economic debate, a political debate and a debate on health. I think he was one of the 161 signatories. I strongly urge him to find out which members of his party signed this petition so that when the question is put, the House can confirm the work already done by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. At that moment, it would be clear that, in this Parliament, there is consistency in action, meaning consistency with regard to the actions of a committee and those of the House of Commons itself.

• (1335)

I think that, now, given the crisis that the world, China, Taiwan and, once again, Toronto are facing, foreign observers are looking at what the House of Commons is doing; they are hoping that the Canadian government will show openness and understanding. They are not hoping solely for an economic and political debate devoid of humanism and compassion, given what Asia, particularly China and Taiwan, is currently experiencing.

When I see that the Liberal government is once again using “mainland China”, as they say in English, as a model, I find it very difficult to trust this government, which has already been taken to task about transparency and the free flow of information. It is clear that, over there, the State controls almost all the information to the media. But, it is impossible not to be concerned here, when we see the statistics China is releasing. No one can go to China to check and tell us otherwise.

It is likely that the crisis in China at the present time is far more significant than it seems; no one really knows. In order to protect Taiwan and other countries, then, it is important for Taiwan to have WHO observer status. This is a highly technical matter, a matter of

organization. When individuals or countries are part of an organization, even if not able to speak, they listen, they know what is going on, instead of just having the facts reported to them. As a result, when they come out of a meeting, they are in a position to give an opinion and to act.

What the Liberal government is doing at this time is trying to push Taiwan aside. But when it is a matter of economics, of policy, of money, there is no problem. Taiwan even has status within the World Trade Organization. Yet what in this world is more important than health?

This then is the message I am sending once again to the Liberal government: when the Liberal members have to vote on the Canadian Alliance motion on the importance of Taiwan having observer status at the World Health Organization, I trust that they will be guided by concerns of health, humanity, compassion and open-mindedness and will say, “Yes, Taiwan”.

• (1340)

[English]

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed what the Bloc member had to say.

I wonder if he would like to comment on some of the questions that have been coming particularly from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. She seems to be trying to make the point that it is a two China policy and of course this has nothing to do with it. This has only to do with health.

I wonder if he would like to make a comment on the fact that somehow the world has found a way with the World Trade Organization, the WTO, to accommodate both the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. If they have managed to do it for trade, when we are talking about SARS, when we are talking about health, when we are talking about a very life, surely to goodness the government should be at the forefront as a world leader in trying to come to a resolution.

We can take a template from the WTO. Why can we not do it with the WHO? I wonder if my colleague would like to comment on that.

[Translation]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Madam Speaker, that is exactly the way I feel. If the world granted Taiwan an economic and political status with the World Trade Organization, which set a good precedent for Taiwan, then why not simply take this example and apply this precedent in this case? If we acknowledge that Taiwan is part of the World Trade Organization for economic and political matters, why would we not grant Taiwan similar observer privileges at the World Health Organization?

Which brings us back to the whole issue of health, humanity, awareness and compassion. We will see how the Liberals act when we are called to vote on this important issue in the House of Commons.

[English]

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member could comment on Canada's relationship with China, considering that China has suggested it would not be pleased with such a motion.

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Madam Speaker, that is the type of question that angers me. This is not an economic or political issue; we are talking about health, compassion, humanity and keeping an open mind and being understanding.

This type of question just shows how the Liberals view this important issue. All that interests them is the economic and political aspect, and they could care less about health.

[*English*]

Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his thoughtful speech. I want to say to him that the view over here may not be as monolithic as he may think.

One of the issues that has been raised by others has to do with the practical implications of this. I will put my question for the hon. member in a provocative sort of way. If Taiwan is not admitted as an observer, really what is the harm? The Taiwanese are participating in other venues directly and indirectly in various health organizations. As I say provocatively, why are we getting all worked up here? Surely they are getting everything they need and they have a practical solution to this anyway.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Madam Speaker, there cannot be compromises on this issue. This is a fundamental issue that has already been passed by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. It was supported by 161 members and by a majority of the members of the Bloc Québécois. We cannot turn back.

If the government rejects this motion, it will have to bear the responsibility for the vote, for not being open on an important situation, a situation that is critical for humanity: health.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on this issue. I have spoken on it a number of times. Many members have been involved in this debate here in the House, on questions or comments, during question period and in committee.

Taiwan has been trying for several years to join the World Health Organization and we in the Progressive Conservative Party support that. We supported it before the SARS outbreak and the SARS outbreak has made it even more evident how essential it is that Taiwan be allowed observer status at the WHO.

We are not alone in our support. The United States, Japan and the EU all support Taiwan's bid for observer status and why would they not. The mandate of the WHO is a health mandate, "the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health". Health, as defined in the WHO constitution, is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Why would we not support the endorsement of observer status for Taiwan at the WHO considering that it is all based on health, not politics, not economics, not competition, not military and not

Supply

security. It is health. We have been made very clearly aware of how essential Taiwan's observer status is with the outbreak of SARS.

Taiwan has a population of 21 million. It is the 14th most active or most powerful in world trade and the 12th in foreign investment. It is quite amazing. It has the second highest foreign currency deposits in the world. Yet it is not allowed to have observer status. Not only is it not allowed to have membership, but it is not even allowed to have observer status at the WHO. We certainly support the motion. We support the concept of Taiwan being granted observer status at the WHO.

The same motion effectively came before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. It was passed by a vote of ten to three. As the member for Scarborough East mentioned a minute ago, there were Liberals who supported the motion and three who did not. I believe the three who voted against it were Liberal parliamentary secretaries; I am not sure about that, but I think they were at the time. It reflects the non-partisan approach to this whole question in the House that members from all parties voted in favour of it, including the Liberals, but three parliamentary secretaries voted against it.

It has been suggested that restricting Taiwan from observer status is a direct violation of the universality principle expressed in the WHO constitution. We agree that it totally contradicts the constitution.

The arguments against it are that it is not a country. Currently there are many other entities that are not countries that are observers at the WHO. In fact the PLO was granted observer status in 1974. It is not recognized internationally as a country. Hopefully it will be soon, but it is not right now. Several NGOs, including the Holy See, the Vatican, have been granted observer status at the WHO. It seems unreasonable that Taiwan is not being granted observer status. It is not asking a lot, it seems to me.

The international community does not consider Taiwan to be a country, but this still does not prevent it from gaining observer status. We would support the motion to achieve that goal.

Madam Speaker, I forgot to mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for St. John's West.

In any case the Progressive Conservative Party supports Taiwan's bid for observer status at the WHO. Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization should be limited, but it should at least have observer status.

The issue that really brings it home is the SARS crisis. Here we have a world health situation, a world crisis in health that we have not seen before or anything exactly like it. Here we have Taiwan with 21 million people who are affected by this. In fact it is one of the key areas of new SARS cases and it does not even have observer status at the WHO. We are trying as a world to reduce health risks and improve health, yet those 21 million people are not represented at the WHO and are not even allowed to observe or have comments at WHO.

S. O. 31

•(1350)

The WHO has said that Taiwan has not yet reached its peak of SARS cases. This brings home how important this motion is and how important it is that Taiwan be given observer status.

Taiwan is the third largest infected area after China and Hong Kong. More than 12,000 people have been quarantined in Taiwan. As of today Taiwan has had 72 deaths from SARS and there are 570 known cases, and yet it is not being allowed observer status at the WHO which could help it fight its problems in its own entity. It would also help the rest of us in countries that have been affected by SARS to fight off this disease as well.

We support the motion. We supported it before SARS, now with SARS and we will support it after SARS.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I understand there is a contradiction between the fact that Taiwan is a member of the WTO and wants observer status but has not been granted that status. As of May 19 it was turned down again.

I wonder if the member would like to comment on whether this is really a health issue. I understand the sovereignty aspects and they do have to be respected, but with regard to the health aspect, since there was a delay in getting WHO officials in to help with the Taiwan situation where so many people have died, proportionately many more as a percentage of the cases that are in mainland China, does he feel that the SARS issue has created a new *raison d'être* for Taiwan's observer status simply because it is a global health issue?

Mr. Bill Casey: Madam Speaker, I do agree with that position. SARS does raise the focus of the situation and the prospect of Taiwan having observer status at the WHO.

In April this issue came before the standing committee and almost the same motion was presented. I believe 10 members were in favour of it and three were against it. Members from all parties voted in favour of urging the Government of Canada to lobby in favour of Taiwan being granted observer status at the WHO. I am sure if that vote were taken now maybe those three Liberals who voted against it would vote in favour of it as well and make it unanimous.

•(1355)

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, it is good to know that the committee has looked at this issue.

Could the member tell us what the difference is between the World Health Assembly and the World Health Organization? It appears there is some misunderstanding in the House as to what constitutes observer status and of what organization. Does that mean there will be additional resources or assistance available to a country that has received observer status that they were not already able to get?

Mr. Bill Casey: Madam Speaker, there is no misunderstanding about what observer status means. There are all kinds of precedents of other entities with observer status. As I mentioned in my previous comments, the Vatican has observer status and yet it is not a country. The Palestinian National Council has observer status.

Everybody knows what observer status means. It gives countries access to information and allows them to have input into health issues that affect the entire world. Now that the world has experienced this incredible SARS situation, it makes it more

essential that this health issue, and it is a health issue, should be addressed and Taiwan should be granted observer status.

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Madam Speaker, over the weekend China offered help to Taiwan on the current SARS situation in Taipei and the surrounding areas. I wonder if the hon. member can comment as to whether this has anything to do with the application made by Taiwan for observer status at the WHO.

Mr. Bill Casey: Madam Speaker, I cannot speak on behalf of China but I acknowledge its effort, and it was a good effort. However perhaps China could sponsor Taiwan to become part of the WHO, which would have much more impact.

I would encourage and I think the Government of Canada should encourage China to allow Taiwan to be granted observer status in the WHO.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

LES INVASIONS BARBARES

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on behalf of all Canadian film buffs, it is a great pleasure for me to congratulate director Denys Arcand for winning the award for best screenplay at the 56th Cannes film festival for his film, *Les Invasions Barbares*.

With this film, which continues to move audiences and is destined for great success, Denys Arcand has proven yet again his enormous talent as a cinematographer.

Congratulations also to Marie-Josée Croze, who won the best actress award for her role in the film. I was among those who gave a more than ten-minute standing ovation to Mr. Arcand, to the producer, Ms. Robert, to the cast and to the entire team who worked on this jewel in the crown of Canadian cinema.

I want to congratulate them personally as well. This year, we have had a strong presence at Cannes, and I think congratulations should also go to the team at Telefilm Canada for its excellent work in ensuring that Canadian and Quebec films are well represented.

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[*English*]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, at a time when relations with our neighbours warrant improvement, the Prime Minister has shown both disregard and contempt for our relations with one of our greatest friends and largest trading partners, the United States of America.

With many issues now present to discuss, the Prime Minister has found it timely to host the Prime Minister of France. Given our current relations with the Americans and their own current difficulties with the French government, this was a display of ignorance and blatant disregard of our own national interest. While relations with France are important, now is not the time to concentrate on them.

Let me tell members about the farmers and ranchers in my area and most of the west who do not care that the Australian prime minister was invited to the Bush ranch and that the Canadian Prime Minister was not. What they do care about is re-opening the U.S.-Canada border to beef.

The Prime Minister's blatant "thumb in the eye of the Americans" is all about timing. Let me repeat, it is about timing and now was not the time to host the French prime minister.

* * *

● (1400)

[Translation]

MSGR. GÉRARD DRAINVILLE

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister of Canada addressed his best wishes to Msgr. Gérard Drainville on his 50 years of priesthood, 25 years of that as a bishop, which were celebrated on May 18, 2003, at the Amos cathedral in Abitibi.

The Prime Minister of Canada wrote the following:

I have no doubt that this very special day will reawaken many precious memories. In the many years you have devoted to serving the Church, you have done a remarkable job, deserving of respect and admiration.

The celebrations marking this double anniversary attest to the affection and gratitude of those to whom you have devoted so many years.

My congratulations and best wishes to you for the future.

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[English]

BARB TARBOX

Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, last week Barb Tarbox died, as she knew she would, from lung cancer caused by smoking.

Many Canadians, especially teens, will know her as a tireless advocate against smoking. Her brutal realism and shock truth was intentional. She was saying to those kids, "Look at what smoking can do to you. Look at my head. Look at what smoking has done to my body. Look at me". How ironic for a woman who was drop-dead gorgeous and a famous international model to be destroyed by the ravages of lung cancer.

Everyone wants to make their lives count for something but so few of us do. Barb Tarbox died telling kids, "Don't start smoking," or, on a Nike theme, "Just don't do it". She made her life count for something and she inspired us all.

Maybe, just maybe, some kid will not start or will quit. God bless Barb Tarbox. She was an inspiration to us all.

S. O. 31

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, May is Asian Heritage Month.

I would like to make special note of a number of organizations in my city of Calgary that have come together to sponsor events commemorating Asian Heritage Month. These are: the Tibetan community; the Iranian Cultural Society, Council of Sikh Organizations, the Calgary Multi-Cultural Centre. Also included are these associations: India Canada, Cambodia Canada; Pakistan Canada; Bangladesh Canada; Calgary Vietnamese Chinese; Great Wall Cultural and Recreational Association; and Hoy Sun Association of Calgary, under the able leadership of Hoy Sun president Peter Eng and vice-president Pat Lam.

I invite all members of the House and all Canadians to celebrate the legacy of Canadians of Asian heritage, and applaud their commitment to unity that ensures the harmony and strength of our wonderful country.

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CYSTIC FIBROSIS AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May is Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month in Canada, and although one in 25 Canadians carries the defective gene responsible for CF, most people are unfamiliar with this disease.

Cystic fibrosis is the most common fatal inherited disease affecting young Canadians. It causes severe problems with breathing and also results in difficulty digesting and absorbing adequate nutrition from food.

In 1960, cystic fibrosis was considered a children's disease. Thanks to Canadian research, funded in part by the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, young Canadians with CF today are living into their thirties and beyond.

Yesterday CF supporters in over 74 communities across Canada participated in the annual Zellers family walk for cystic fibrosis. I congratulate them in their attempts to raise awareness and support for a cure.

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[Translation]

LES INVASIONS BARBARES

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we anxiously waited to find out who the big winners would be at the closing ceremonies of the 56th Cannes Film Festival. Canada was represented by an impressive selection of films.

Allow me specifically to congratulate Denys Arcand, who won the prestigious Prix du scénario for his feature film, *Les Invasions barbares*, and Quebecois actress Marie-Josée Croze, who won best female performance for her role in the same remarkable film. *Les Invasions barbares* literally won the hearts of the festival-goers.

The Government of Canada is proud to support the Canadian film industry, which projects all the richness and diversity of our culture on the big screen.

S. O. 31

Mr. Speaker, colleagues, join me in wishing Mr. Arcand and his film, *Les Invasions barbares*, much success in Canada and the world.

* * *

• (1405)

BLOC VERT DRUMMOND

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to applaud the 2,000 households in my riding that recently participated in the hazardous household waste collection organized by Bloc Vert Drummond.

The ecological spring cleaning recovered 32,500 kg of tires, 26,250 kg of paint, 19,615 kg of solvents and oils, and other products that need to be disposed of safely to protect the environment.

Most of this waste will be recycled and the rest will be eliminated in specialized centres.

To show appreciation, the participants were sent home with a sapling as part of an effort to counter deforestation.

I would also like to mention the contribution of the 130 volunteers without whom Bloc Vert Drummond's 11th hazardous household waste collection would not have been such a success.

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[*English*]

ALGERIA

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to bring to the House's attention the terrible earthquake that recently afflicted the people of Algeria. The earthquake has already claimed over 2,000 lives, injured almost 9,000 people and left countless people homeless. Even more are still missing. It is the worst earthquake in the country in 23 years.

In its efforts to help the people of Algeria in this difficult time, the Government of Canada has made an immediate contribution of \$200,000 to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

I would ask the House to join me in offering our condolences and support to the citizens of Algeria who have suffered from the earthquake and those who have lost friends and family members. We wish to extend all condolences to the people of Algeria.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express the concern of farmers across Ontario about the recent BSE outbreak and the effect it will have on this vital industry. Canada is the world's third largest exporter of beef and beef cattle, and the beef industry is an important part of Ontario agriculture.

In eastern Ontario alone, beef added \$700 million to the provincial economy last year. That is why we in the Canadian Alliance are committed to ensuring that the confidence of both Canadian and

foreign consumers of Canadian beef is restored through effective action from both the federal and provincial governments.

Ontario's farmers and Ontario's minister of agriculture stand ready to do all that is necessary to avoid the potential devastation that could result from a protracted ban on imports to the United States. Although there has been no hint of BSE in Ontario, the provincial government will assist in any way that it can to re-establish Canada's international reputation as the producer of the world's best beef.

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ENERGY

Mr. Paul Harold Macklin (Northumberland, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with regard to a project that is critical not only to Canada's place as a world leader in research and innovation, but also to our quest to find a plentiful and sustainable source of energy for the planet.

The ITER, or international thermonuclear experimental reactor project, is the next step in fusion power research. Should the Canadian bid to host ITER be successful, our country would host 250 of the world's top nuclear scientists and reap the benefits of an \$18 billion, 30 year project being located in the Durham region.

This week, along with the hon. member for Durham, I am pleased to welcome representatives of the Durham community and ITER Canada to Ottawa to bring this critical project to the attention of hon. members.

I ask all hon. members to join me in supporting this remarkable project that is the next step in ensuring a clean, sustainable supply of energy for generations to come.

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SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, once again this government has sold Atlantic Canada down the river.

For over a year the Minister for International Trade promised to find a made in Canada solution, a long term solution, to the softwood lumber deal, but now the minister has put on the table a proposed two year solution in which Atlantic Canada loses its exemption from export taxes.

Just last February the Minister for International Trade stood in the House and said, "...let us be very clear. We are not going to renegotiate the situation of Atlantic Canada that has been exempted".

We are now learning that on Friday they made a proposal which gives that exemption away.

For years the Maritime Lumber Bureau in Atlantic Canada negotiated the softwood lumber exemption, and incredibly, the Department of International Trade has now offered to give it away. This sets a dangerous precedent and I ask the minister to move quickly to withdraw the proposal that gives up the Atlantic Canada exemption on softwood lumber.

•(1410)

[Translation]

LES INVASIONS BARBARES

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonnette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Quebec cinema enjoyed an hour of great glory when Denys Arcand won the prize for best screenplay for *Les Invasions barbares*, and Marie-Josée Croze the award for best actress.

At Cannes, the director expressed his delight with this recognition, and particularly the warm welcome his film received from the public.

What impressed everyone in Quebec was that Marie-Josée Croze won the prize for best actress, ahead of Nicole Kidman, Charlotte Rampling and Emmanuelle Béart. Although a little disappointed to have missed her magic moment at Cannes, Marie-Josée Croze was still very moved by the various hommages she received.

The Bloc Québécois congratulates Denys Arcand for the success of *Les Invasions barbares*, and Marie-Josée Croze for her brilliant interpretation. The Quebec cinema is a beacon of light both here and abroad, and everything must be done to make sure that it has stable funding.

Bravo to Denys Arcand, Denise Robert, Marie-Josée Croze, Stéphane Rousseau and everyone who worked on the film.

* * *

[English]

DES AWARENESS WEEK

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House and all Canadians that May 26 to 30 has been designated as DES Awareness Week.

DES is a synthetic estrogen prescribed to women between 1941 and 1971 to prevent miscarriage and ensure a healthy pregnancy. However, DES did not work as it caused serious health problems for both mother and child, problems that continue to this very day.

[Translation]

DES Action Canada is an organization that works tirelessly to identify everyone who was exposed to DES. Its purpose is to inform victims and their physicians of the devastating consequences of DES.

Join with me in congratulating DES Action Canada and its members, who provide an essential service to Canadians. I wish them an excellent DES Awareness Week.

* * *

[English]

CANADA HISTORY CENTRE

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while Canadians from coast to coast are worried about SARS, West Nile virus and mad cow disease, the Prime Minister announced \$100 million for a museum in his own honour today.

S. O. 31

How will the museum show the Prime Minister's legacy? Combatting mad cow fears by eating a steak in Alberta? Alleviating fears of SARS by dining in Toronto's Chinatown?

Will the museum exhibits show the disastrous results of millions of dollars of cuts to Canadian social programs and the legacy of the government waffling on every issue instead of taking strong leadership?

One hundred million dollars could have gone a long way to compensate and help health care workers working overtime in Toronto and farmers losing business because of international bans on our products, but I guess instead \$100 million also makes a pretty big shrine for the Prime Minister.

* * *

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Richmond, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Richmond, I rise today to draw the attention of the House to Taiwan's bid for observer status at the World Health Organization.

This is not a geopolitical issue. It is a health issue: a matter of life and death. Viruses and other infectious diseases know no boundaries. SARS has now claimed the lives of 72 people in Taiwan, up from 60 just three days ago, and almost 700 worldwide.

The residents of my riding of Richmond have strong personal, cultural and commercial connections with China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, and the Vancouver International Airport is situated in Richmond. Richmond residents have directly felt the negative health, societal and economic fallout from SARS.

As the member of Parliament for Richmond, I support Taiwan's bid for observer status at the WHO.

* * *

JUSTICE

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I had the opportunity to discuss the criminal justice system with front line workers from the police and crown counsel office. Unfortunately, what I heard only confirmed my worst fears about the system. It is broken and mere tinkering will not fix it.

Many of the problems begin here in Parliament, where the laws we pass place severe handicaps on the effectiveness of our police.

For instance, when investigating a serial rapist, the police must have sufficient evidence for each offence to justify a warrant to obtain DNA evidence from a suspect rather than using just one sample to compare against evidence collected from all possible victims.

We have a justice system that permits petty criminals to indulge in habitual criminality with little deterrence and allows violent offenders to be released, knowing that they are threats to the community.

Oral Questions

Sadly, the greatest failing of our criminal justice system is that it has turned our law enforcement officers and prosecutors into little more than paper-pushing bureaucrats.

* * *

●(1415)

NEW MEMBER

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Mr. Gary Schellenberger, member for the electoral district of Perth—Middlesex.

* * *

NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Gary Schellenberger, member for the electoral district of Perth—Middlesex, introduced by the Right Hon. Joe Clark.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the government about the mad cow situation which we know is of grave concern to all sides of the House. Hundreds of animals are being destroyed or quarantined as is necessary to ensure containment and to ensure the quality of Canadian beef, but in the process hundreds of jobs of ordinary Canadians are being affected.

In the case of the SARS crisis in Toronto, the government acted quickly to relax EI rules to waive the EI waiting period. Would the government be prepared to do the same thing for Canadian workers affected by the mad cow crisis?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were not very happy when we saw that problem develop. I would like to congratulate the ministers and officials of the Department of Agriculture in Ottawa and in Alberta for the diligence they have shown in coming to grips with the problem.

We had some good news in that there was only one cow affected in that operation. There is some work still going on and there is the question of the consequences for the people affected. Of course, the Minister of Human Resources Development will see what she can do in order to be just for these people as was done for the people of Toronto.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Prime Minister for that consideration.

There is another way the Canadian government can help. Canada has an agreement with a number of countries, including Australia and New Zealand, to import a fixed amount of beef, but in the past we have allowed into the country some extra beef through an over-quota system.

Now that Canadian beef is blocked at the borders, will the government agree to temporarily suspend the over-quota import of

foreign beef and allow Canadian producers to fill the entire demand of the Canadian market?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the official opposition for the very pertinent question. We have already been working very closely on this issue with the Canadian industry.

I understand that we actually import from three countries at this time: Uruguay, Argentina and New Zealand. They are special products and we are in close touch with the industry to ensure that we do what is in the best interests of our industry at this time.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, hopefully that will become a yes in the next little while.

Let me switch to another important topic because we seem to have no shortage of crises these days.

Two weeks ago I was in and out of Canada on an international flight. I was not asked a single question about SARS either upon leaving the country or upon returning to the country. This is after months of reports of Canadians falling ill, travel warnings and advisories.

Can the minister explain why the delay in instituting routine screening procedures for SARS at Canadian airports?

●(1420)

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been no delay. In fact, as I have said throughout this entire situation, we were one of the first nations that responded, on the basis of risk assessment, to WHO recommendations many weeks ago. Those screening procedures have been strengthened and they continue to be strengthened.

The opposition has, for example, talked about thermal scanners, which everybody should be fully aware are no magic bullet. In fact, we have thermal scanners up and working for both inbound and outbound passengers on a pilot project basis at Vancouver and Pearson. We are also heightening other forms of screening at both Vancouver and Pearson, and will in—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Yellowhead.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is not so important how fast we react. It is how we react that is important.

Two months ago the WHO recommended that SARS interviews be given at airports to passengers arriving from infected areas. It has also been two months since the Canadian Alliance called for tighter screening measures at those pertinent airports.

The minister is now blaming airport screening on airport authorities. Rather than blaming the airport authorities, why has the minister not actually implemented those screenings herself?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nobody is blaming airport authorities and I certainly have not blamed airport authorities.

Oral Questions

In fact, we are working with airport authorities to determine how best to implement our enhanced screening measures. As I have indicated, we now have thermal scanners at both Pearson and Vancouver International Airports screening both inbound and outbound passengers.

We are working with the airlines to ensure that passengers coming especially from affected areas not only provide us with travel locator information, but fill in a questionnaire, answering pertinent questions regarding where they have been and whether they have been in close contact with SARS-infected individuals or—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Yellowhead.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, today the WHO designated Toronto a SARS-infected area once again. Despite its recommendations, there are still no compulsory screenings, no personal interviews, and no third party screenings.

I assume the health minister spoke to the WHO this morning. Did she tell the WHO that we are complying, or did she come clean and say not yet?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been in constant contact with the WHO since the announcement last week by Ontario public health officials in relation to this latest cluster.

I would like to point out to the hon. member that as of this morning the WHO is fully aware of not only the number of probable cases identified by public health officials in Ontario but of our screening procedures and, as the WHO has stated throughout, it has no problem with them.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the sponsorship scandal is expanding. An internal Public Works report informs us that certain advertising agencies, having pocketed generous commissions, helped themselves again, and often without any bidding process, by awarding subcontracts to subsidiary companies, companies owned by family members, or friends of the Liberal regime.

Since the internal report speaks of a whole web of companies, and the strands of that web are so tightly woven with the Liberal Party, will the Prime Minister admit that a public and independent inquiry is needed to shed light on the sponsorship scandal?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, the matters that were discussed in the newspaper today were first brought to light by the internal work of my own department in a report that was published in October of last year. This material is a follow-up to that.

In every case, the allegations are being pursued meticulously, on the one hand, to recover funds on behalf of the Government of Canada if that is appropriate, and of course, the RCMP will

determine what other action it ought to take in cases of violation of the law.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Speaking of the RCMP, Mr. Speaker, in the sponsorship scandal, RCMP Commissioner Guiliano Zaccardelli refuses to say how many files have been turned over to the federal police; he refuses to say how many investigations are under way; he refuses to say if there have been any charges; the same goes for the Solicitor General.

By refusing a public inquiry, is the Prime Minister not using the federal police to cover up a scandal that shows his government and his party in a bad light?

• (1425)

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that would seem to me pretty rudimentary. If we wish to pursue a successful police investigation and ultimate prosecution, we would not discuss it publicly on the floor of the House of Commons.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a small Montreal company located in a residential basement and headed by Mr. Renaud donated \$63,000 to the Liberal Party of Canada, which puts the company at number seven of the top ten contributors to the Liberals.

How can the Prime Minister justify the fact that another small company located in the same building as the first and headed by Mr. Renaud's brother just so happened, a few months later, to end up with a \$390,000 contract with the federal government through Groupe Everest, without there being any call for tenders at any step in the contracting process?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to any of these allegations, both the Prime Minister and I have made it absolutely clear that we will not defend the indefensible. Where there are matters to be prosecuted, they will be prosecuted by the proper authorities and the ultimate result will flow through the courts.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is why we are calling for a public inquiry.

How is it that federal officials were able to negotiate the details of a subcontract for promotional materials with the company belonging to Mr. Renaud's brother on April 16, 1999, when the main contract was not authorized until May 3, 1999, some 18 days later?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again I think it is very appropriate that the good work of officials within the Department of Public Works has brought these matters to light in the ongoing investigations that have been done. Where the consequences ought to fall, they will be identified through two ongoing investigative processes: one is being undertaken right now by the Auditor General of Canada and the other, wherever appropriate, by the RCMP. They will get to the bottom of all of this.

* * *

AUBERGE GRAND-MÈRE

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is about another intervention by the Prime Minister in the Business Development Bank.

In 1997, Pierre Thibault, a former owner of the Auberge des Gouverneurs in Shawinigan received a mortgage loan from the BDC valued at almost a million dollars. He has now pleaded guilty to fraud charges in a Montreal court.

Can the Prime Minister confirm whether he contacted, directly or indirectly, the then president of the Business Development Bank, François Beaudoin, to secure this loan for the Auberge des Gouverneurs?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is going back over ground that has been covered in the past by raising questions, the answers to which are on the record. There is nothing to add to the relevant facts that are already well known and in the public domain.

* * *

LIBERAL LEADERSHIP CAMPAIGN

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, the minister certainly has nothing to add.

While the member for LaSalle—Émard was finance minister, money was being collected on his behalf to finance a leadership campaign. The former minister has refused to divulge the names of those secret contributors because he says that the Prime Minister would take vengeance on them.

Would the Prime Minister agree not to interfere in all ongoing business which these companies might have with the Government of Canada and in that way permit the member for LaSalle—Émard to stop the secrecy and identify the donors who are afraid to give their names?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that everybody knows that people are making contributions to individuals in leadership campaigns in different parties.

I have never heard any people who gave money to the Tories, the Alliance, the NDP or Bloc Québécois complain that I have tried to do something against them because they did not support my party, or because they supported my party at the same time. It is quite frequent in that business.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, besides health concerns, Canadians see crises like mad cow and SARS as big time job losses in the country. Our Prime Minister may see crisis as an excuse for dining out, but putting food on the table is a real concern for families even if it is only a photo opportunity for him, particularly for meat plant workers who cannot afford even a temporary loss of work.

The government has ignored the hospitality workers in Toronto with the EI benefit program. I am asking if the Prime Minister will deliver for meat plant workers and waive the waiting period as a result of the mad cow layoffs.

● (1430)

[Translation]

Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are taking the risk of job loss in the beef industry very seriously, and the department will continue to monitor the situation very closely.

If there are layoffs in meat packing plants or in related areas of the beef industry, workers will be eligible for employment insurance and can count on it.

[English]

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, workers in crisis deserve more than a prime ministerial happy meal. SARS has again hit Toronto, with the hospitality industry already in crisis and reeling from the first one.

The Liberal response: Not a penny in compensation for the hospitality sector, just an ad campaign that apparently does not even mention the word Toronto in the ad.

Why will the Prime Minister spend \$100 million to glorify the past when he will not spend one penny to protect hospitality workers as a result of these emergencies?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member of Parliament just made a remark about the fact that I went to have a dinner the other day to show that Canadian beef was good.

I received a letter from Premier Klein, who said:

On behalf of the Government of Alberta and Alberta's cattle producers, I am writing to thank you for your public show of confidence in Alberta's and Canada's beef industry. Your steak lunch in Ottawa on Wednesday received a tremendous amount of coverage across Canada, and it means a great deal to our province...

He kept on and on, congratulating the Minister of Agriculture, so I think I will accept that.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, these are the facts regarding mad cow disease in Canada.

Oral Questions

Exactly one cow has been found to have mad cow disease. That animal never entered the food chain. Not one of the other animals in that herd showed any signs of the disease. A dozen other herds with links to this diseased animal have been quarantined. Not a single animal in any of those herds has shown any signs of mad cow disease.

However despite these facts, the U.S. border remains closed to Canadian beef and cattle.

I assume the minister has been in touch with his counterpart in the U.S. My question is this. What specific criteria does Canada now have to meet in order for the Americans to open up the border again?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had at least seven conversations with my counterpart in the United States in the last number of days.

The hon. member is correct in the statistics he gives, except that the trace out being done in those quarantined herds, the tracing ahead of the animals that left that farm and back from where that cow came, is not yet complete.

The work we have done so far definitely proves there is only one cow and, no, it did not get into the food chain. We need to complete that, and that work is ongoing at this time. We are very fortunate that we have the best food surveillance system in the world and when we show—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Medicine Hat.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, 2,400 workers in my riding alone, at meat packers, are affected by this. Cattle feeders are on the verge of going bankrupt, and all their suppliers are in deep trouble right now. This is an extraordinarily serious issue.

What I want to know from the minister is this. First, how long will it take for that trace-out to finish up? Second, what criteria have the Americans specified that we need to meet in order for them to open up the border again so we can start to export our beef?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they have not given a specific criteria other than they say that they want, and I believe them, this border opened as quickly as we do. They know the integration of the beef industry between Canada and the United States. They know there are over half a million head of Canadian cattle in feedlots and in breeding herds in the United States. It is critical to them as well.

What they want is what we want, and that is all the scientific proof we possibly can get that this was only one cow. We are well on the way to doing that. It takes time to do that scientifically. Food safety and safety are number one. We will base it on science and demonstrate that, not only to the United States but the world.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Alain Renaud, the seventh largest donor to the Liberal Party of Canada in 1998, told *Globe and Mail* journalists that he did not remember giving \$63,000 to the Liberal Party.

How is it that the president of such a small business, which has since gone bankrupt, could have given \$63,000 to the Liberal Party of Canada without remembering it? Either he is lying or someone else was using his name.

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I obviously cannot comment on that gentleman's recollection. The matter is in the public domain and I am sure the RCMP will do the job.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we must be serious. A former associate of Groupaction, someone very close to the former minister, Alfonso Gagliano, all of a sudden becomes the seventh largest donor to the Liberal Party of Canada, and just after that, his brother signs a subcontract with the government even though the primary contract has not yet been awarded.

How can the government expect us to swallow such a story without calling for a public inquiry? That is the only way to find out what has been going on with these people who are so close to the Liberal Party.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not asking the hon. gentleman to swallow anything. In fact, as I have drawn to the attention of the House, the entire set of files with respect to sponsorships is under review by the Auditor General in a formal audit by her. Any of these matters that raise issues of a legal nature will be properly and thoroughly investigated by the RCMP, and it has demonstrated that it will follow the trail wherever it needs to go.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, unbelievably the Minister of National Defence has stated that there is no need for more troops. Yet our inability to play a role around the globe shows just how wrong he is.

Canada does not have troops for post-war Iraq. Canada does not have troops for the Congo. Canada does not have troops for the Middle East peace force.

Will the minister stand up today and increase the number of troops?

Oral Questions

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would not say it was unbelievable, but it is a fact that the hon. member has his facts wrong because it is also a fact that over the last year the Canadian Forces had a record recruiting season in which more than 10,000 new recruits joined the Canadian Forces. It is also a fact, as compared with a year ago, that the strength of the army is more than 1,000 greater today.

The purpose of my earlier comments was to say that we were going to transform the army, and I am delighted to say that we have launched upon that process now.

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that is a shame. There are uniforms and no training for those people.

The minister cannot hide the fact that Canada commits fewer troops internationally than Bangladesh, Ghana or even Uruguay. Canada ranks 32nd in the world. That is a disgrace.

Canadians are proud of the contributions our troops have made in the past. It is a shame the government is not willing to continue the proud tradition.

When we are consistently unable to provide troops to important missions, that means we do not have enough troops. Will the minister admit that his government has cut troop levels too low?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I will say is that Winston Churchill once said that there were three kinds of lies: lies, damn lies and statistics. This figure of 33rd or something in terms of ranking of peacekeeping includes only blue hatted troops which gives a hugely distorted picture when the majority of our peacekeeping troops are in Bosnia and soon to be in Afghanistan.

Therefore the true ranking for Canada would certainly be in the top 10 and possibly the top 5 by the time our troops are deployed to Afghanistan in August.

* * *

[Translation]

BEEF INDUSTRY

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec government has implemented an exemplary tracking system that ensures it will not suffer Alberta's current problems with mad cow disease. Moreover, when this disease hit Britain, the entire beef industry in Europe was not subject to a ban. The minister should consider using this system.

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food should learn from what Alberta is going through and adopt the UPA's solution, which is to regionalize agricultural and safety practices, thereby limiting the ban's impact to local areas instead of endangering the Canadian beef industry as a whole.

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian cattle industry, as I said a few minutes ago, is not only integrated with the United States but it is integrated across our country.

Canadian genetics of cattle move from province to province across the country, and the programs and the system of surveillance based on food safety and science needs to be in place for the whole country.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think that the minister's answer is, in fact, the problem.

I asked him a clear question. Since Quebec's prevention system works extremely well, what is the federal government waiting for to implement it, insofar as possible within its own areas of jurisdiction, to reassure importing countries, so that Quebec producers can resume exports?

[English]

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that Quebec is part of Canada, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is a federal inspection agency that does the inspection in Quebec, as it does in every province, for all meat that leaves Quebec for other provinces or other parts of the world.

We all benefit in Canada from the best food inspection system in the world, and it is there for all Canadians in all provinces.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Benoît Renaud is the brother of Alain Renaud, a Liberal Party organizer and fundraiser. Benoît Renaud is not a rich man. In fact, he has declared bankruptcy twice. This did not stop him from contributing \$63,000 to the Liberal Party of Canada. Where did he find the money? In the pockets of Canadian taxpayers. He received \$68,000 for a contract that was not publicly tendered. He kept \$5,000 for himself and made a cheque out to the Liberal Party for \$63,000.

Why does the government accept commissions that were paid by Canadian taxpayers?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated in response to other questions today, this is a matter that is very much in the public domain. The RCMP is perfectly capable of investigating all things pertaining to these allegations and determining whether charges ought to be laid. That is its responsibility and I have every confidence it will discharge it.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the story is incredible. Benoît Renaud is the brother of Alain Renaud, Liberal organizer and Liberal fundraiser. Benoît Renaud is not wealthy. In fact he has twice declared bankruptcy but his bankruptcy did not prevent him from donating over \$63,000 to the Liberal Party. Where did he get the money? He got a \$68,000 contract, kept \$5,000 for himself and cut a \$63,000 cheque to the government.

Oral Questions

If the government really wants to clean up this mess, if it really wants to say that it is ending the corruption that has been scandalizing the government, will the government return the money? Yes or no. Will the money be returned?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a matter, as I said before, that is properly the purview of the RCMP. That is what it is there for, to investigate matters of alleged wrongdoing. I am certain it will do whatever is appropriate in the circumstances.

The last thing that ought to be done is any political interference from the House.

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FISHERIES

Mr. R. John Efford (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after extensive consultations with members of Parliament, provincial governments and aboriginal groups, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has announced a 29% increase in the total allowable catch for northern shrimp for 2003. Sharing of this increase follows a new access framework that resulted from the work of the independent panel on access criteria.

However, given the precarious state of other fish stocks in the Atlantic, could the minister inform the House about the state of northern shrimp stocks and the measures the government is implementing to ensure their health in the future?

Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague as well as all federal and provincial Liberal colleagues for the valuable advice they gave me in developing this northern shrimp management plan.

This year's quota of just over 152,000 tonnes is the result of a healthy and abundant resource where exploitation rates continue to be low. The quota is based on the principle of conservation, adjacency and equity. It also increases aboriginal participation in this fishery.

I was pleased to announce an industry-led science project that will continue to monitor the state of these stocks into the future.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, mad cow disease along with the new cases of SARS have delivered a one-two crippling punch to the Canadian economy. What Canadians needed was somebody to instill confidence, someone to demonstrate real leadership. Eating one steak does not cut it. People's livelihoods are threatened. The future of a \$30 billion industry is in jeopardy.

My question is for the Prime Minister. What kind of compensation package, what kinds of support payments will be in place for producers, truckers, auction houses and packing plants?

• (1445)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have the problem of mad cow which has been dealt with by the

Minister of Agriculture very effectively. Now there will be necessarily some consequences for some people and we will see what we can do.

However, as for his big attack on the economy of Canada, I would like to tell the hon. member that the G-8 has asked the Prime Minister of Canada to make a presentation on economic performance because Canada is the one country in the G-8 that is having the best economic performance of all the industrialized nations.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Middlesex, PC): Mr. Speaker, the case of mad cow disease is having a devastating impact on beef farmers across Canada. Better Beef, a packing plant in Guelph, announced that it has just laid off 100 people.

Earlier a question was asked about providing an EI program for workers affected by mad cow disease similar to the one created for SARS. The government's response was to continue to monitor the situation. That is simply not good enough. Will the government provide real assistance? Yes or no.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we are taking the situation in the beef industry very seriously, and workers can count on the employment insurance plan if they lose their jobs.

Moreover, if the situation warrants, those in charge of employment insurance can sign a worksharing agreement. The Government of Canada is there for Canadian workers and is working very hard to find solutions to this difficult situation.

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[English]

AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on May 6 the Minister of Industry told the industry committee that the auto industry was his number one priority.

Since then, DaimlerChrysler announced that a proposed \$1.6 billion plant will not be locating in Windsor. A good start. I cannot wait to see what happens with his second and third priorities. Even the Liberal member from St. Catharines noted the government should have acted more quickly.

Why is the Minister of Industry telling the auto industry to hit the road and go to the U.S. and Mexico? We need auto policy, not the road to nowhere.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were at the table with the Government of Ontario and DaimlerChrysler. DaimlerChrysler announced last week that because of market conditions, the international economy and overcapacity in the auto sector this was not the time to build that plant in Windsor.

Oral Questions

This is not an investment lost. It is, in my view, an opportunity postponed. We will have an opportunity again to talk with DaimlerChrysler when the market returns and we will do everything possible, as we have in the past.

We are delighted to see confirmed that DaimlerChrysler is continuing with over \$2 billion of investment in its existing Canadian operations, a vote of confidence in Canada's economy.

* * *

TRUCKING INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for the same minister, let us try International Truck and Engine Corporation in Chatham. It is going down. It will lose 1,000 jobs. What do we hear from the Liberal member for Chatham—Kent Essex? A vitriolic attack on the workers, blaming them for it.

Does the minister accept that as the reason? Is that why that plant is going down? Is that why he is doing nothing?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Navistar plant in Chatham announced that it would be closing this July because of market conditions. I have corresponded with the plant and have told it that existing government programs, including Technology Partnerships Canada and infrastructure, are available to any company in Canada. I have made it aware of those programs and if those existing programs can respond to its needs then we will do everything we can to assist.

However the one thing we cannot do is provide cash subsidies to any industry in the country. That is not the way we do business and I think that is understood.

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Alliance has just uncovered that another \$17.5 million has been wasted on the gun registry and that the government's accounting is still incomplete. Seven other departments and agencies incurred gun registry costs but they were not reimbursed or reported to Parliament by the Department of Justice.

Why did the government hide the \$17.5 million in additional gun registry costs from Parliament? Why was that hidden?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really find it difficult to understand where this member is coming from. The government hid nothing in terms of costs. The costs were all tabled before the committees and before estimates.

Let me provide an example. There were 325 actual police investigations using the services and information database of the Canadian firearms program in the month of December. The member would have us believe that if there is an arrest as a result of that investigation, we should charge the cost of incarceration to the firearms—

• (1450)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, even the Auditor General of Canada said that answer was not correct, that it was being hidden from Parliament.

It has been almost six months since the Auditor General blew the whistle on this billion dollar boondoggle and the government still cannot tell Parliament or the oppressed and exhausted taxpayers how much the gun registry will cost.

I ask again, how much will it cost to fully implement the registry and how much will it cost to maintain it?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we were discussing estimates before the justice and human rights committee the other day maybe the member should have raised that question. He continues to blow things all out of proportion in the House of Commons.

The fact of the matter is that the Minister of Justice and I announced an action plan for the firearms centre some time ago in which greater efficiencies are now being brought into the system. Measures have been taken to improve the system. The Internet registration is working well. There is a continuous improvement plan on which I have already reported.

Maybe when the member comes to committee he should listen to the facts.

* * *

[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last October, eight months ago now, the Minister of Natural Resources announced an assistance plan to help with the softwood lumber crisis, which was to be followed by a second phase. We are still waiting for phase 2. The crisis continues however, to wreak havoc on all parts of Quebec, Témiscamingue, Mauricie and today Chibougamau, where major slowdowns have been announced.

What is the minister waiting for before he moves ahead with phase 2 of his plan, improves employment insurance for the workers and provides loan guarantees for the companies?

[English]

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I am glad the hon. member has recognized that we did have a phase that was very important; \$350 million to make sure we work on new markets, on R and D and in a variety of other areas to support the industry.

The hon. member makes a good point. We have to make sure that we monitor the situation closely. We are seeing hardships in certain parts of the industry and we have to ensure that we do everything we can to look at the next phase.

However our first priority is to make sure we get an agreement, which is what the Minister for International Trade is doing. Our priority right now is to make sure we have a long term agreement with the Americans.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister appears not to know that the American strategy is to continue the legal wrangling in the courts for months, with appeals of any decisions unfavourable to them.

Will the minister open his eyes? Plants are closing down one after the other, workers are losing jobs. Does he not see in the American attitude just one more reason to move on to phase 2 of his assistance plan forthwith?

[English]

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are monitoring the situation very closely. We had hoped to have some sort of an agreement but unfortunately that has not come out. We are still hopeful that there will be an agreement.

I can assure the hon. member that if we do not get an agreement in the near future we will be looking at other measures. However our focus right now is on making sure we get a long term agreement. We also want to monitor the industry closely.

We appreciate the hon. member's view. We will be looking at this issue to see if further action needs to be taken. We want to make sure that our industry can survive during this difficult time and our employees can continue to do the work in the forest industry across the country.

* * *

MUSEUMS

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is obviously in the middle of his magical legacy tour and nowhere was that more obvious than today's announcement that he wants yet another Ottawa museum, this time a museum of political history.

Meanwhile, the Canadian Museums Association is none too thrilled with this legacy loving Prime Minister and is asking the government to instead come up with a coherent national strategy to help out the entire museum community, not just the 500 metre egocentric zone beside Parliament Hill.

Why did the Prime Minister ignore the finance committee of the House when it recommended that funding should be provided for the entire museum community, the ones most in need, and not just an edifice to polish the image of politicians in Ottawa?

● (1455)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I were an Alliance member I would be very worried about history because they do not have a very big place there.

The building has been there for a long time. It is an historic building that needed to be repaired. I think it was a very good idea that we could celebrate the history of Canada with all the millions of Canadians and other visitors that are coming. They should look at Canada, how it was built and how successful Canada is today. We have to know that based on history.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal caucus may be a little more reluctant to cheer when they realize the Prime Minister will not stay in this political museum of history as its first exhibit.

It is time the Prime Minister realized that the museums across the country, which have millions of visitors, need funding as well. The finance committee recommended that. The Canadian Museums Association recommended that.

The last thing Ottawa needs is another politically motivated museum driven by a politically motivated Prime Minister to glorify more politicians.

Why does the Prime Minister not just forget the legacy, do the right thing and help out museums from coast to coast, not just on Parliament Hill?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is about telling all Canadians about Canadian history, telling Canadians that we have had prime ministers from the west and the east, from Quebec and Ontario, telling Canadians that we have had members of Parliament from all across Canada coming to this city for a long time and that they built a country that is an example for the world. I now know why the Alliance is going nowhere. It is because it has absolutely no sense of what Canada is all about.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL AID

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a major earthquake struck Algeria last week, causing over 2,000 deaths, as well as leaving over 8,000 people injured and over 1,000 people homeless.

Could the Minister for International Cooperation tell us what with and how the government is responding to this emergency?

Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first let me say how deeply saddened I was to hear about the tragic consequences of the earthquake. On behalf of all Canadians I would like to extend our sympathies to the families of the victims.

Last Friday I announced that Canada would make an immediate contribution of \$200,000 to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to help alleviate the immediate suffering and to help provide emergency relief to the victims of this devastating consequence.

* * *

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is about to embark on a series of very expensive job interviews thinly disguised as a farewell tour. There is no benefit for Canada since he can no longer speak for Canada. He has been neutered. He is a lame duck. His retirement is not only imminent, it is overdue.

Will the Prime Minister do what any other job seeker does, namely pay for his own expenses out of his own pocket?

Routine Proceedings

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really ridiculous how they can be. There is a meeting of the G-8 and the Prime Minister of Canada has been asked, on behalf of all Canadians, to explain to the rest of the world how this country has performed so well in the last 10 years. Last week the Prime Minister of France wanted to know how we managed to put the finances of the Canadian nation in order. I will carry that message on behalf of all Canadians to the G-8 meeting in Europe next week.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, such enthusiasm for this tour. Too bad he did not take that kind of interest in this country.

Back in 1993 a member of the opposition caucus, in which the Prime Minister sat, said this:

How can...Canadians have any hope with this government's sense of priorities when the federal government is spending \$1 million on a final farewell tour by [the then] Prime Minister [Brian Mulroney]?

If it was wrong for the then prime minister Brian Mulroney at that time, why is it acceptable now?

● (1500)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year the Prime Minister of Canada has a meeting with the European Union and it is a meeting that is scheduled years ahead. It is the same thing with the G-8. Every year there is a G-8 meeting in one country where Canada is represented. It is not a tour that I have organized. These are meetings that have been organized for a long time.

I want to tell the hon. member that only one person was elected across the nation as the leader of a party that had 172 members elected in the last election and he is on this side of the House. The Alliance had its third bad defeat.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, having promised to restore the funding she had cut from the Canadian Television Fund, the Minister of Canadian Heritage has not kept that promise, nor has the Minister of Finance kept his commitment, although he did meet with the industry last Friday.

Does the Prime Minister find it normal for the Minister of Heritage to commit her government while the Minister of Finance is using blocking tactics, because the two are leadership hopefuls?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once the hon. member has examined the documents I submitted to the House on May 3, she will see clearly that there will be \$230 million put into the Canadian Television Fund this year, which represents \$30 million more than when we created that fund.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 20 petitions.

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[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, an interparliamentary delegation report.

[English]

This is a report of the OSCE Parliamentary Association which represented Canada at the expanded bureau meeting held in Copenhagen, Denmark on April 24 and 25, 2003.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

Mr. Joe Fontana (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004, reporting the same less the amount granted in interim supply.

* * *

● (1505)

PETITIONS**HOCKEY**

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have some petitions that I would like to present.

The first petition comes mainly from people in the city of Weyburn. The petitioners are asking that the Government of Canada ensure that junior hockey league players and teams be treated like Olympic sport participants and that billeting costs and modest reasonable expenses and allowances not be treated as taxable income under the provisions of any applicable federal tax legislation.

BILL C-250

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): The second petition, Mr. Speaker, is from a portion of Saskatchewan whose the petitioners are asking the Government of Canada not to pass the private member's bill, Bill C-250.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): I have another petition, Mr. Speaker, which asks that the government enact section 33, the notwithstanding clause, if it is necessary, to preserve and protect the current definition of marriage as between one man and one woman.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): This petition, Mr. Speaker, asks that we make use of the adult stem cell and that we should not in any way be pursuing the embryonic stem cell as a method of treatment.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions from across Saskatchewan on pornography. The petitioners are ordering the government to re-examine this issue and to give priority to the protection of children and not the pedophiles.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Richard Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present three petitions to Parliament today. These petitions represent the voices of the constituents of Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

The first petition is from several dozen people who are concerned about the fact that the government may allow the use of embryonic stem cells in medical research despite the fact that non-embryonic stem cells, known as adult stem cells, have shown considerable significant research progress.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to focus its legislative support on adult stem cell research to find the cures and therapies necessary to treat illnesses and diseases of suffering Canadians.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Richard Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Canadian Alliance): The next two petitions, Mr. Speaker, call on the Parliament of Canada to recognize the democratic vote that was taken in the House regarding the state of marriage. The petitioners pray that Parliament legislate the definition of marriage passed by a motion in the House on June 8, 1999 as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

There are several hundred signatures on these petitions.

HOCKEY

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present two petitions signed by constituents in my riding of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar.

The petitioners are asking that Parliament make sure that junior A hockey players are treated like Olympic athletes and that modest reasonable expenses and allowances are not treated as taxable income under the provisions of any applicable federal tax legislation.

There are many more people who have not signed this petition who want their voices heard.

Routine Proceedings

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have several petitions to present today.

The first petition comes from people mainly in my constituency. They point out to the House of Commons that Canadians suffer from debilitating diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, diabetes, cancer, multiple sclerosis and spinal cord injury. They are asking the government to support ethical stem cell research which has shown encouraging potential to provide cures and therapies for these diseases and illnesses.

Non-embryonic stem cells, which are also known as adult stem cells, have shown significant research progress without immune rejection or ethical problems. Therefore the petitioners ask Parliament to focus its legislative support on adult stem cell research to find the cures and therapies necessary to treat the illnesses and diseases of suffering Canadians.

• (1510)

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the next petition comes from a large number of petitioners from Saskatchewan and from across Canada. It is with regard to property rights.

The petitioners cite the December 10, 1948 United Nations resolution which states that everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others and that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property. They note that the federal government has failed to comply with this article 17.

They therefore petition that Parliament support private member's Bill C-452 introduced by the member of Parliament for Yorkton—Melville, which would strengthen the protection of property rights in the Canadian Bill of Rights and specifically guarantee that every person has: one, the right to enjoyment of their property; two, the right to not be deprived of their property unless they are given a fair hearing, paid timely and impartially fixed compensation; and three, the right to appeal to the courts if their property rights have been infringed upon.

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the last petition I would like to present also comes from petitioners from Saskatchewan and from across Canada.

The petitioners cite that the violent crime rate is a major concern and that all law-abiding citizens want safer streets regardless of whether they live in a big city or a rural community. The 1997 report by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics showed that 1994 represented the largest annual decline in police strength since it has been surveying and that the number of police on the streets is a serious problem.

Routine Proceedings

In an attempt to do something about the criminal use of firearms, the government passed Bill C-68 into law in 1995 and now is wasting hundreds of millions of dollars on it. The petitioners ask that Parliament repeal Bill C-68 and redirect the hundreds of millions of tax dollars being wasted on the licensing of responsible firearms owners and registration of legally owned guns by doing something proven to be more cost effective at reducing crime and improving public safety, such as more police on the streets, more crime prevention programs, more suicide prevention centres, more women's crisis centres, more anti-smuggling campaigns and more resources for fighting organized crime and street gangs.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Mississauga South I am pleased to present two petitions to the House. The first petition is on the subject of child pornography and is signed by a number of Canadians, including people from my riding of Mississauga South.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that the creation and use of child pornography is condemned by a clear majority of Canadians and that the courts have not applied the current child pornography law in a way which makes it clear that such exploitation of children will always be met with swift punishment.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to protect our children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify the abuse of children are outlawed.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I wish to present has to do with funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research with regard to stem cells. The petition is signed by a number of Canadians, especially those from my riding of Mississauga South.

The petitioners draw to the attention of the House that it is unethical to harm or destroy human beings in order to benefit others and that adult stem cell research holds enormous potential and does not pose the serious ethical questions of embryonic stem cell research. The petitioners also point out that the Canadian Institutes of Health Research have recommended guidelines on stem cell research that include the use of human embryos which they disagree with.

The petitioners petition the House to ban embryonic stem cell research and direct the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to support and fund only promising ethical research that does not involve the killing of human life.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 174, 198, 202 and 209.

[Text]

Question No. 174—**Mr. John Reynolds:**

Pertaining to the Francophonie Day that took place Thursday, March 20, 2003 and the 625 million people from francophone countries, can the government please indicate the amount of money, in dollars, spent by the government on all activities and undertakings in Canada to recognize this day and our membership in the francophonie?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): The amount spent by the government on all activities pertaining to the Francophonie Day that took place Thursday, March 20, 2003 came to a total of \$1,534,000.00.

Question No. 198—**Mr. David Chatters:**

Concerning the pesticide approval process at the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, PMRA: (a) why does it take Canada significantly longer to approve and review pesticides and herbicides than the United States; (b) is there any specific part of the approval process that is a roadblock; (c) what is the step-by-step description of the pesticide approval process; (d) what is the average length of time it takes at each step; (e) what is PMRA's target length of time for each step; and (f) has the approval process been any faster with the establishment of the new ombudsman?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): (a) It does not take significantly longer to review and approve a pesticide in Canada as compared to the United States. In fact, for new active ingredient submissions, the review and approval time is shorter in Canada. It may seem to take longer in Canada because historically most companies submit applications for registration in Canada long after submitting an application for registration in the United States. The result of this company practice has been that a number of new pesticide active ingredients and the related end use products are available on the U.S. market before they come to the Canadian market. The Pest Management Regulatory Agency, PMRA, has addressed this problem through implementation of joint review programs with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, EPA. One of the goals of the joint review process and other work sharing initiatives with the EPA has been to make the new products available to users in both countries at the same time. The North American Milestone Report may be found at: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pmraarla/english/pdf/-nafta/docs/naftawgrep-e.pdf>.

(b) There is no specific part of the approval process that can be considered a 'roadblock'.

Routine Proceedings

(c) The step by step description of the approval process is contained in the PMRA publication 96-01 Management of Submissions Policy, MOSP, found on <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pmra-arla/english/pdf/pro/pro9601-e.pdf>. In general there are five steps: verification, screening, review, public consultation/final decision, and verification of final label. The quality of a submission has a major impact on the length of time it takes a submission to proceed through the submission examination process. For example, a high quality, ideal submission for a new active ingredient has a timeline of 737 days or less. For a submission of the poorest quality, there are seven possible points in the process where the applicant has the opportunity to provide missing data, missing fees and/or corrected labels. The PMRA requires time to screen and/or review the additional information submitted to correct the deficiency. For these poor quality submissions, up to 1,912 days may be added to the submission examination process depending on which of the 7 delays are needed by the applicant. Only 6% of the category A submissions registered over the period from 1997-2002 have been ideal submissions. Category A submissions include new active ingredients and companion end use products and/or manufacturing use products, or import maximum residue limits, MRLs, for a new active ingredient, or major new uses (addition of a new use-site category (see response to question d). 94% of the category A submissions registered in this period have had quality problems requiring the use of at least one of the seven delays resulting in additional time being added to the 737 day ideal submission target. PMRA has developed and held training courses and has worked with applicants to assist them in putting together better quality submissions. Through pre-submission consultations and a number of guidelines, the applicant is provided with details of what is required to make a complete submission.

(d) The average length of time to register a pesticide depends on the complexity of each of type of submission. In Canada, for major new active ingredient pesticides, the average time to completion, including the screening and review components, in 2001-02 was 23 months; whereas in the United States, based on the information available from the EPA, in 2001 it was 38 months on average. In 2000-01 the average time to completion in Canada for new active ingredient submissions was 21 months while in the United States in 2000 it was 27 months.

The length of time for each step varies depending on the submission category and subcategory. For category A submissions, which are the most complex and are for new active ingredients or major new uses, there can be eight different sets of performance standards depending on whether the submission is standard or priority or chemical or microbial or reduced risk or a pheromone. For submissions subject to the MOSP, (see response to question c) the typical standard category A submissions registered in 2000-01 had an average verification time of 6 days, first screening time of 49 days, review time of 432 days and first final label verification of 29 days. For 2001-02 the times were 7, 65, 515 and 27 respectively. As part of the MOSP, the final step and end of the review stage for category A submissions is the release of a proposed regulatory decision document, PRDD, for public consultation. For those registered category A submissions that had a public consultation, the public consultation time was always 45 days and the average

time for final decision was 32 days. Please note that PRDDs are not currently required by regs but will be required by the new act.

(e) For category A standard submissions, the PMRA targets to complete the review portion of the submission, i.e. after all deficiencies have been addressed by the company, in 18 months (550 days) for traditional chemicals, and 15 months (465 days) for reduced risk chemicals. In 2001- 02 PMRA met its performance target for these submissions. The ideal target length of time for the typical standard category A submission is 7 days for verification, 45 days for screening, 550 days for review, 45 days for public consultation/45 days for final decision, and 45 days for final label verification. For standard category A submissions, subject to the MOSP and excluding deviations, registered/ rejected/withdrawn in 2001-02 that were screened and the review completed, the PMRA met the review performance standard of 550 days on 94% of the submissions.

(f) The new ombudsperson has facilitated increased communication between growers, the PMRA, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to ensure the data requirements for approvals are met and has helped streamline the processing of submissions. In 2002-03 PMRA approved more than 450 minor uses which was more than double that of any of the previous years.

Question No. 202—Mr. Garry Breitkreuz:

With respect to the following statement in paragraph 10.29 of the Auditor General's 2002 report to Parliament, "The costs incurred by the provincial and territorial agencies in enforcing the legislation were not reported. In addition, costs that were incurred by firearms owners, firearms clubs, manufacturers, sellers, and importers and exporters of firearms, in their efforts to comply with the legislation were not reported.", in addition to the government's response in respect of the preparation and function of the regulatory impact analysis statements, what specifically were the above-mentioned unreported costs for the period from 1995 to the present?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): The Canadian Firearms Centre, CFC, does have records of costs for the opt-in provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island as has been reported publicly. The CFC does not monitor other potential or actual costs that may have been incurred by provincial or territorial agencies in enforcing the Canadian firearms legislation. The CFC does not monitor the costs that may have been incurred by firearms owners, firearms clubs, et cetera, as a result of the Canadian firearms legislation.

Question No. 209—Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:

What is the breakdown, by gender, of federal appointments made during the 35th and 36th Parliaments, and during the 37th Parliament up to and including March 31, 2003, at all levels, to: (a) judicial positions; (b) deputy ministerial positions within the federal public service; (c) agencies; (d) boards; (e) commissions; and (f) other bodies?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): The Privy Council Office submits the following chart with the information required to respond to the question.

Routine Proceedings

Men/Women Distribution: Appointments and Re-appointments within a specific timeframe

Time Frame	35th Parliament 18.01.1994 - 24.04.1997			36th Parliament 23.09.1997 - 22.10.2000			37th Parliament 30.01.2001 - 31.03.2003		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Agencies/Boards/Commissions/Other Entities	815	1444	2259	732	1303	2535	532	936	1468
Crown Corporations	120	296	416	166	353	519	114	262	376
Judiciary organizations	78	163	241	132	329	461	46	84	130
DMs and Associates	17	52	69	13	31	44	12	23	35
GRAND TOTAL	1030	1955	2985	1043	2016	3059	704	1305	2009

last five years, what are the top ten contracts awarded to companies outside of Canada and what were those contracts for?

NOTE: 262 (218 men and 44 women) of these appointments are not technically new appointments. They were for existing incumbents of the Ontario Court of Justice who had to be appointed anew when this court's name changed to the Superior Court of Justice following amendments Ontario Courts of Justice Act and the Judges Act.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 184, 186, 191 and 199 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

• (1515)

The Speaker: The questions enumerated by the hon. parliamentary secretary have been answered. Is it agreed that Questions Nos. 184, 186, 191 and 199 be made orders for return?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 184—**Mr. James Rajotte:**

Concerning the regional economic development bodies (i.e. Western Economic Diversification Canada, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Federal Economic Development Initiative in Northern Ontario, and Canada Economic Development/Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec) and the Community Futures Program since 1993: (a) what was the annual budget for each body; (b) what amount of the annual budget was for grants, loans and contributions broken down by province and territory; (c) what percentage of the grants, loans and contributions is repaid on an annual basis; (d) what percentage of the grants, loans and contribution is written off on an annual basis; (e) what are the top 50 annual write-offs for each body/program since 1993 (including the name of the company, province and the amount written off); and (f) who were the Ministers responsible since 1993 for each body or programme?

Return tabled.

Question No. 186—**Mr. Gerry Ritz:**

Concerning contracts: (a) what is the total value of contracts made annually by the government since 1993 broken down by province and territory; (b) what is the total value of contracts made annually by department, agency, and/or crown corporation since 1993; (c) what are the top ten contracts in value for each year since 1993 (please provide the name of the recipient, location, and the value of the contract); (d) for the last five years, what are the top five lawsuits on an annual basis against the government over contractual disputes and what was each dispute about; (e) for the

Return tabled.

Question No. 191—**Mr. Grant Hill:**

What consultations are departments and agencies of the government currently conducting with environmental groups, environmental lobbyists, environmental stakeholders, non-governmental climate scientists, non-governmental energy experts, non-governmental industry experts and non-governmental agricultural experts regarding the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol; what environmental groups, lobbyists and stakeholders, non-governmental climate scientists, non-governmental energy experts, non-governmental industry experts and non-governmental agricultural experts are being consulted in this regard; what are the names and addresses of these consultants, and what are the particulars of any grants, payments and/or contracts awarded to them, including dates, amounts and types of funding?

Return tabled.

Question No. 199—**Mr. Charlie Penson:**

Identifying each recipient with the amount and a description of the transaction, what contracts, grants and loans did the government and all of its agencies make to organizations or individuals in the riding of Perth–Middlesex from November 15, 2001, to March 1, 2003?

Return tabled.

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 39(5) to inform the House that the matter of the failure of the ministry to respond to the following questions on the Order Paper is deemed referred to several standing committees of the House as follows: Question No. 197 standing in the name of the hon. member for Lethbridge to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade; Question No. 204 standing in the name of the hon. member for Edmonton Southwest to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY

The Speaker: The Chair has received several requests for an emergency debate. In consecutive order, the first was from the right hon. member for Calgary Centre. Accordingly, I will now hear from him on this subject.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, this is an application under Standing Order 52 for you to grant permission for the House to debate a matter that merits immediate and special consideration by the House of Commons. I am referring to the discovery of a case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, BSE, in a cow in Alberta. This has resulted in the banning of importation of Canadian beef by the United States and a number of other countries.

International trade and food safety fall within the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada. The beef industry is a major contributor to the Canadian economy and to our balance of payments. Canadians have faith in our national food safety procedures.

[*Translation*]

A special debate will provide the government with the opportunity to inform the House of all the steps it has taken and will take to maintain and protect the integrity of our trade and ensure food safety, as well as advise the House of the measures it intends to adopt to reassure our trade partners so as to promote the re-opening of our international markets.

[*English*]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your consideration of this request.

The Speaker: The Chair has carefully considered the request from the right hon. member for Calgary Centre and the numerous other requests on the same subject that came from other hon. members. Accordingly, I conclude that this matter is a matter of some urgency and a debate will therefore be held later this day at the conclusion of the proceedings at roughly 6:30 p.m.

Since the other requests were all on the same subject, I need not hear at this time from the hon. members who made them. They can go on at length during the debate later this evening.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand to support the resolution put forth by the Alliance Party.

The people of Taiwan, through their Canadian representatives, have been asking all parties to support their request for observer status at the World Health Organization. As the day progresses, Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find within all parties support for that request, and in fact I would think perhaps on this side collectively,

Supply

unanimous support for that request. Certainly within the governing party you will find a number of individuals who are solid in their support for making sure that Taiwan does receive observer status.

The resolution itself, for the record, states:

That this House, acknowledging that health issues transcend political borders as seen with the recent outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), express its support—

All that is being asked for is support from the House. It continues:

—for the admission of Taiwan as an Observer to the World Health Organization and call upon the government to actively urge other member states and non-governmental organizations to support this goal.

Most people in this hon. House are very familiar with Taiwan. When we look at the fact that many other countries, much smaller, less populated, less productive and much smaller contributors to the world's economic scale, are members of the World Health Organization or have observer status, it seems there should be no reason at all why Taiwan would not be granted the same status and why we collectively here in the House should not support such a status.

All countries that are members of the United Nations may become members of the World Health Organization by accepting its constitution. Other countries may be admitted as members when their application has been approved by a simple majority vote of the World Health Assembly. Territories that are not responsible for the conduct of their international relations may be admitted as associate members when an application is made on their behalf by the member or other authority responsible for their international relations. Members of the World Health Organization are grouped according to regional distribution.

In 1996, Taiwan held its first direct presidential election. Although Taiwan was a charter member of the World Health Organization because it is a United Nations organization, Taiwan has been barred from participating in World Health Organization activities since 1972 when it lost its seat at the UN. With a population of 21 million, not a lot less than that of our own country of Canada, Taiwan is 14th in the world in trade, 12th in foreign investment and possesses the second highest foreign currency deposits in the world. It is a nation that contributes so significantly to world affairs and yet it has to fight to obtain observer status at the World Health Organization, which I believe is very unfair.

Taiwan has been trying for several years to gain observer status at the World Health Organization. This is supported by the United States. The United States House of Representatives most recently passed a bill, on March 11 of this year, supporting Taiwan's bid to participate as an observer at the World Health Organization. We see, then, that the United States is in support of its application.

Taiwan has a population larger than those of 148 member states of the United Nations. Further, Taiwan's population is equal to the sum of the 50 least populated member countries of the United Nations. It has been suggested that restricting Taiwan's being granted observer status is in direct violation of the universality principle expressed in the World Health Organization convention.

Supply

• (1520)

Taiwan's request is not without precedent. There are currently 30 different countries that have been granted observer status, and one ongoing organization, the Holy See or the Vatican. The PLO was also granted observer status in 1974, as was the Order of Malta in the 1950s.

The international community does not consider Taiwan a country, which, I might add and I am sure I have a lot of support in adding, is very unfortunate. Therefore, in order to be granted an associate membership it would be necessary for China to make an application on Taiwan's behalf. The likelihood of this happening is extremely remote given the present-day relationship between China and Taiwan, which we hope will improve. We have seen some improvements and I think a lot of the credit should go to the leadership shown by Taiwan.

The World Health Organization has issued a travel advisory for all of Taiwan in light of the new cases of SARS. Just today we heard that 72 deaths, I believe, have occurred in Taiwan. Over just the last few weeks alone, as of May 17, Taiwan's situation had worsened to the point of 274 reported cases and 35 deaths. A few days later on May 20, the situation had increased to 383, over 100 cases in three days and 52 deaths. Two days later on May 22, the situation had increased again to 483 cases, an increase of 100 in two days and 60 deaths. I understand now it is 72 deaths and certainly more reported cases.

When we see that SARS in particular, which is a real challenge to the medical world and to the world generally, is becoming so devastating to Taiwan and when we see the research capabilities in the medical field of a country such as Taiwan, what a tremendous contribution this country could play as an observer, or actually we would hope a full member eventually but certainly as an observer in this case, to the World Health Organization.

We could go on and laud Taiwan for how far it has come, for its tremendous contribution to the world and for its ability to make a contribution, not to the world generally, not to the world just economically, not to the world in relation to innovation, but certainly also in the medical field. It is certainly with pleasure, as I have said, that we support this resolution. We ask all members in the House to support the resolution, because in light of the support Taiwan has received, including that of our friends and neighbours to the south, the United States, it would be great if we would make acceptance of this resolution unanimous.

• (1525)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to enter the debate and for once, as the member for Halifax and as the spokesperson for the New Democratic Party, to enthusiastically support and embrace an opposition motion introduced by the Canadian Alliance.

Before I turn to the substance of the motion, I just want to take a moment to congratulate those members on the government benches who, in defiance of their own government's position on the issue, have had the courage, foresight and frankly the guts to be openly critical of that position. They obviously have done their homework and recognize the hypocrisy involved. They recognize how dangerous it is for the Canadian government not to understand that

if there were already reasons to support Taiwan's longstanding bid for observer status at the World Health Organization, there are even more compelling reasons today. This has been illustrated by the SARS crisis and the unacceptable manner in which Taiwan has been treated by the World Health Organization and, unfortunately, quite clearly in response to the heavy-handedness and the highly political way in which Taiwan has been dealt with by the Chinese government.

I say, not really meaning with tongue in cheek, I welcome the fact that the Canadian Alliance for once has introduced a motion which the NDP finds it can to support. As was pointed out in discussion already, this motion is practically identical to a motion already put before the foreign affairs and international trade committee where it was evident, by a vote of four to one, that the overwhelming majority of committee members did see the wisdom of the position of advocating for Taiwan observer status with the WHO.

In fact it was quite clear at that foreign affairs committee that individual members had fully apprised themselves of what the facts and figures were, what any possible gaps in understanding about this meant, what the precedents were and why this was a sensible, acceptable bid for observer status which was utterly supportable and so on. Of course that was done with very extensive homework, and I congratulate the Taiwanese representative and staff here in Ottawa in having ensured that they provided extensive background information and a basis on which we could further do our research.

I wondered for a moment or two, when I saw the Canadian Alliance champion this issue, whether this was the dawning of a new day in Parliament. I do not want to get carried away with this but there are not very many occasions on which Canadian Alliance decides to take up and support a position that the New Democratic Party has been advocating for some time. A careful reading of the resolution indicates that it is almost verbatim based on a resolution introduced by my colleague from Burnaby—Douglas, the then foreign affairs critic and now the health critic of the New Democratic Party, who put forward such a motion, I think on October 21, 2002.

I say it is almost identical. The motion put forward by the Burnaby—Douglas member was a slightly more progressive and more action oriented resolution. In addition to calling for the Canadian government to support observer status for Taiwan with the World Health Organization, it went on to propose a bit of an action plan. In other words, it not only called upon the Government of Canada and all parliamentarians to support the principal of observer status by Taiwan, it also set out how to try to move that principle forward and how to put it into practice by calling for the establishment of a UN working group.

• (1530)

I quote directly from the previous motion introduced by the member for Burnaby—Douglas. It states to establish:

—a UN working group to facilitate Taiwan's effective participation in the WHO, reaping benefits for both the international community and the Taiwanese through shared knowledge and equality of access to health care information.

I listened to the official government line in expressing opposition to this motion. It was very disappointing to hear how, in my view, both misguided and misinformed the government's official position was.

First, there is the contention that this just simply is not possible to accommodate within the existing WHO structure. That simply is not true. Strong evidence exists to support the Taiwanese participation in the WHO and there are past precedents for admission to the WHO that paved the way for this observer status to be accorded to Taiwan. The Holy See, the International Red Cross, the Order of Malta, the Cook Islands, Rotary International and the PLO have been pointed out, despite their lack of status as sovereign states. Therefore it is simply not true that because Taiwan is not recognized as a sovereign state, it therefore somehow cannot be accommodated as an observer with the WHO.

Second, the government knows perfectly well that in its current status, not fully recognized as a sovereign state, this government and other governments saw fit to make room for Taiwan to be a participant in the WTO. I have to wonder, and I hope this is not true but I think it raises the question in people's minds, whether with this government trade considerations in fact trump health considerations. However when it comes down to something as fundamentally important as addressing literally global health concerns, the government is so caught up in the politics of the situation it is not prepared to put health first.

Third, the claim has been made that really Taiwan now has full access to the information it needs from the WHO, full access to the services of the WHO, and so what is the problem? It is just some kind of symbolic thing being pursued here that somehow Taiwan is just trying to push the political envelope and make a step further in the direction of achieving sovereign state status. I think this is simply not true.

The pitch has been made again and again by representative Thomas Chen that it is fundamentally a health issue, not a political issue. It surely has to be recognized that if the states of the European Union can recognize the bid for observer status of Taiwan, if Japan can recognize that bid, and for heaven's sake, even the United States can recognize the bid for Taiwan to have observer status at the WHO, this is not asking Canada to do something that is trail-blazing and thumbing its nose at important structures and precedents. The opposite is the case.

The fact of the matter is, we heard the parliamentary secretary stand up here today and say that there had been no difficulties with respect to Taiwan's full access to WHO information and services as a result of not having observer status. That is simply not true. The record is extremely worrisome. When we are dealing with a major epidemic that has potential to become a pandemic, as SARS does, we know that time is of the essence and that an appropriate sense of urgency is imperative. We also know there were severe impediments placed in the way of Taiwan's concern in dealing with the SARS epidemic, being blocked by the Chinese government.

• (1535)

This is not only a health threat and a violation of the health rights of the Taiwanese people, this is literally a danger to the world. As has been put forward again and again, when one is talking about the increased mobility of the population of this world and the obvious mobility of disease entities, viruses, bacteria and so on, then what one is talking about is a situation that needs to engage all parts of the world and as many participants as possible in addressing these issues

Supply

and ensuring that prevention and early intervention are the most important things to be recognized.

The story has been told again and again. I know there is no government member who is not aware, far from having full access to the WHO through other agencies without now being a member of the WHO, that Taiwan discovered, in the context of the SARS outbreak, that the information was not forthcoming and that extraordinary barriers were put in the way. Taiwan was deprived of direct assistance not just from China but actually from the WHO itself at a critical stage as it tried to move to deal with the threat of the SARS crisis.

I know government members will say that has been remedied, that after those early signs of blockages, delays and withholding of information steps were taken by the Chinese government and by the WHO to address this worrisome situation. That is not good enough when we know perfectly well that early intervention and all possible measures being taken are what absolutely have to be supported from day one.

I could do no better in wrapping up the statement of support of the New Democratic Party for observer status for Taiwan than to refer directly to the words of the Taiwanese representative, who so ably leads the Taipei economic and cultural office in Canada, Thomas Chen. He has been very conscientious and thorough in addressing all aspects of this issue. In making the case for Taiwan's recognition as an observer at the WTO, he reminds us that diseases have no respect for national boundaries. That should seem obvious, but it seems as though it has not been possible to persuade the Canadian government that is precisely why we cannot get sidelined or caught up in internal political debates when we are dealing with major health issues.

Representative Chen goes on to say that Taiwan registers over 10 million outbound and inbound travellers each year. Over 150,000 Taiwanese come to Canada annually and over 15,000 Taiwanese students attend Canadian schools at any time of the year. With these increasing contacts among the world's nations, to exclude Taiwan from the WHO system can cause serious health issues for the entire world, and to state the obvious, especially for Canada given the amount of interaction and interchange that we are privileged to have between Canada and Taiwan these days.

The tremendous danger that Taiwan's exclusion from the WHO poses is most obviously seen and underscored by the SARS outbreak. Because China chose to politicize the issue, the WHO in turn refused to send needed assistance until beyond the early intervention dates that were desperately important to meet, missing the opportunity to contain Taiwan's outbreak at the earliest stages possible. As well, the WHA has denied Taiwan's bid to be an observer in this year's assembly. However, Taiwan will continue to seek support for this goal.

Supply

● (1540)

As has already been mentioned, 161 members of this Parliament have already signed a petition calling for the Canadian government to recognize and support this and not just to say the words. As one government member had the courage to stand up and say here today, it asks the Canadian government not just to talk the talk, but to walk the walk when it comes to saying we are genuinely committed to doing everything possible in the world community to address health issues and to contain diseases in the most effective and expedient way.

Those 161 parliamentarians have done their homework on this issue and understand why this is a policy whose time has come. Surely as a result of this debate today and the further arguments put forward, the Government of Canada could listen, if not to the official opposition, if not to all the members on the opposition side who have overwhelmingly supported this position, perhaps the government could at least listen to its own backbench members. They have made it very clear that the arguments are cogent and supportable and that it is irresponsible for Canada to continue to put its head in the sand and not be prepared to support a bid that has been so widely supported by many other nations around the world and by the majority of members of Parliament.

[Translation]

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have been a member of this House for almost ten years now, and I have not congratulated the official opposition very often. However, I am pleased to do so because today's debate is one that reaches far beyond Canadian society, far beyond nations.

One year ago, my colleague, the member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, tabled a petition in the House with the following wording:

The petitioners are asking the government to support Taiwan's legitimate request to be admitted as an observer at the annual general meeting of the World Health Organization... The fact that Taiwan is an important tourism and business destination that receives 10 million travellers a year makes it more vulnerable to epidemics.

The current SARS epidemic is only the tip of the iceberg. With populations being so mobile, diseases that have been unheard of until now will develop and be transmitted.

Are Canadians more responsible for health than the Taiwanese? I do not think so. Are Canadians more competent than the Taiwanese when it comes to health? I do not think so. Are Canadians more responsible than the Taiwanese in fulfilling their responsibilities? I do not think so.

Incidentally, as far as responsibilities, China is a member in good standing of the World Health Organization and the United Nations. There are questions about China's sense of responsibility in this whole SARS incident, given that it took China nearly four months to issue a statement.

I wanted to ask my colleague from Halifax if she could give us a good reason and a good justification for refusing to insist that we exercise normal, sensible, responsible and reasonable pressure for Taiwan to be granted observer status with the World Health Organization.

● (1545)

[English]

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Madam Speaker, I welcome this question but I am sort of speechless. I have listened carefully to the reasons and excuses given by the government spokespersons of the official line and I have been left scratching my head. I cannot for the life of me grasp why it is that the government is digging in its heels and is not prepared to understand that granting observer status to Taiwan would be in the interests not only of the health of the Taiwanese but literally in the interests of the health of people around the world.

The government can stick its head in the sand if it wants and say why cannot Taiwan just solve this problem internally, that when the People's Republic of China will not give timely information or will not allow for full participation by Taiwan in putting its needs and interests forward, then why can they not just solve that problem? The reality is that while the problem continues, there can be huge health hazards to the people of Taiwan and as we know, illustrated by the SARS crisis, health hazards literally to people around the world. If anyone thinks that does not mean Canada, then just stop and think a moment about the SARS crisis.

I am with the member in being really stymied in trying to understand the basis of the position the government has taken. It is not a practical one. In my view it is not a responsible one. There are enough precedents where observer status has been accorded to others which are clearly not sovereign states that one does not have to be concerned about this being politically provocative.

If the concern is that the People's Republic of China is going to in some way take some kind of retaliatory action toward Canada because it construes it as a political gesture, then Canada should have the backbone to stand up and say that is not what it is, that there are other compelling reasons for doing it. It should take some leadership in trying to persuade the People's Republic of China as to why this is a reasonable and responsible measure.

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are so many comments I would like to make but as ever, we are constrained by time. It is indeed too bad that the hon. member for Halifax was not in the House at the time that our minister spoke on this. She would have been able to apprise herself of the knowledge that the government of the republic of China—Taiwan is the name of the island and not of the government—has received all that anyone who is a member of the WHO or an observer, to discuss that in detail later, could possibly receive.

To put this in a perspective that I think she is failing to admit to, though deep down I think she knows it is the driving motivation here, may I quote Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council in today's *Globe and Mail* who said that the Chinese communists should keep the medical supplies on the mainland and that if the Chinese authorities are really concerned about the Taiwanese, they should no longer interfere with Taiwan's attempts to participate in the WHO or other international organizations.

I wonder if the hon. member for Halifax could interpret for me the reference to other international organizations, or do those too relate only to the public health and safety of the people of Taiwan?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Before I allow the hon. member to answer, there is a point of order by the deputy leader of the government.

Hon. Paul DeVillers (Secretary of State (Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I believe that you will find consent for the following order:

That, at the conclusion of the debate on today's opposition motion, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, May 27, 2003, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

• (1550)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Paul DeVillers (Secretary of State (Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I believe that you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That when the House begins proceedings under the provisions of Standing Order 52 later this day, no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be entertained by the Speaker after 9:00 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Does the House give its unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Madam Speaker, I can surmise and speculate about what other kinds of public policy issues are problematic for the people living in Taiwan vis-à-vis the People's Republic of China.

I would think the member would agree that the bid for recognition and participation at the WTO would be one such example of a position that found broad support by many others. One of the frustrating things about the question and answer exchange in these debates is there is not much of a chance for wide open debate or exchange.

I cannot help but think, and I am not sure if this is the unspoken reason for Canada's opposition, that all the time there is lurking in the back of the mind of the federal Liberal government the notion that anything Canada might do to recognize Taiwan for the purposes of WHO observation might at some time become a precedent that might get used with respect to the province of Quebec seeking a more independent status. That is another broader debate, but I think it is one we need to recognize cannot be used as a parallel.

Supply

Even though I think the government really does amazing contortions in the attempt to evade the reality that there are sometimes reasons for there being a recognition of the specificities of different language and culture and so on, it is just an absurdity for the government to be paranoid about any possibility that granting WHO observer status to Taiwan might somehow come back and bite it on the nose because the province of Quebec in seeking some kind of recognition for its specificities could use it as a precedent. I have not heard that offered up as an excuse by the government itself but it seems to inform many of its other actions and I can only assume it is a factor in this one as well.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, we are debating today the official opposition's supply day motion relating to the current world health concerns over severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, and the fact that Taiwan's aspirations to be recognized as a member of the World Health Organization should be supported and championed by Canada. The motion reads:

That this House, acknowledging that health issues transcend political borders as seen with the recent outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), express its support for the admission of Taiwan as an Observer to the World Health Organization and call upon the government to actively urge other member states and non-governmental organizations to support this goal.

Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Calgary East.

SARS developed in Guangdong province in southern China in November of last year. It was not until March of this year that it was reported to the World Health Organization. The People's Republic of China has been roundly condemned by the international community for trying to deny this outbreak rather than exposing it immediately, as one would assume would be its responsibility as a World Health Organization member. Essentially, the PRC broke the rules of membership and yet wants to continue to retain a veto over Taiwan membership.

It is worthwhile to remember that in the middle of March there were more reported SARS cases in Canada than there were in Taiwan. There were 11 cases in Canada and three cases in Taiwan as of March 18. It was clearly evident in the case of both Taiwan and Canada that the SARS victims were a consequence of people travelling to and returning from mainland China.

Canada has a strong vested interest in displaying leadership at the World Health Organization and in ensuring that Taiwan and mainland China are active participants in the World Health Organization because of the high number of ethnic Chinese living in Canada and the highly developed travel and trade between mainland China, Taiwan and Canada.

In fact, each year more than three million Taiwanese citizens travel to China. Over 150,000 Taiwanese travel to Canada and tens of thousands of visitors travel to or arrive from mainland China. It is no surprise to anyone to realize the health and economic consequences of the SARS epidemic in Canada and Asia.

Supply

On March 28 Canada listed Taiwan on a health advisory authority, at a time when Taiwan had less reported cases than Canada and had no deaths, with the rationale that Taiwan was geographically close to Hong Kong and mainland China with 20 flights a day between Taiwan and Hong Kong. Canada then took great exception when the World Health Organization issued a health travel advisory for Toronto on April 23.

Historically Canada has been very influential at the World Health Organization. The WHO is a specialized agency of the United Nations created in 1948. The first director general was a Canadian. No country, other than permanent Security Council members of the UN, have been elected to more three year terms than Canada, a total of nine times.

Given this circumstance and our participation as a SARS infected and vulnerable jurisdiction, it is incumbent upon Canada to take the lead in bringing in the only remaining sizeable territory in the world whose people are excluded from the benefits of WHO engagement. Full membership was rejected for Palestine and Taiwan in recent years. The U.S. opposed Palestine's application and the People's Republic of China opposed Taiwan's application. Observer status was granted to Palestine in 2002 as an entity and Taiwan is applying for observer status as an entity. Taiwan's application is being supported once again by the U.S. and by Japan.

● (1555)

Japan and the Japanese minister of health, labour and welfare have recently once again demonstrated strong support for Taiwan's bid to join the World Health Organization as an observer. Taiwan has made annual submissions to join the World Health Organization since 1997 and the People's Republic of China has been criticized in Japan since then for annually blocking Taiwan's efforts to join the health organization. Japan has large foreign direct investment in Taiwan and China, and these countries are geographically close. Japan has a one-China policy similar to the Government of Canada, but this has in no way detracted from its position and desire to support Taiwan's World Health Organization application for observer status.

The Japanese vice-ministers decided on April 17 that in order to prevent the spread of SARS, Japan should once again actively support Taiwan's bid. This is in strong contrast to the Canadian government's position, which is not being overtly opposed to Taiwan but leaving the onus on Taiwan to deal with China in reference to its application, an impossible situation for progress on the basis of unwavering opposition to Taiwan's application emanating from the People's Republic of China. Lack of Canadian leadership on this crucial international and domestic health issue clearly is demonstrable and constitutes a public health risk.

The U.S. congress and the European parliament have not agreed on many issues recently, however the U.S. supports observer status for Taiwan at the WHO and the EU has expressed similar support. This leadership from others in the international community is in stark contrast to Canada's position and yet Canada has been more directly impacted by SARS than any other country outside of Asia.

The U.S. administration does not support Taiwan's membership in organizations that require statehood for membership and yet clearly states that Taiwan's application at the WHO meets this test, contrary

to statements made from time to time by our own Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In an increasingly smaller and globalized world, where one can fly to any region or country within 24 hours, it is increasingly unacceptable to exclude Taiwan from the benefits of WHO engagement and to exclude other WHO members from the advice which Taiwan could provide through membership.

I just returned from Asia nine days ago. Our trade committee did not go to Singapore or Beijing as originally planned because of concerns about SARS. We did travel to India, Thailand and Japan.

When one is in Asia, it further concentrates the mind as to the threat from diseases like SARS. Clearly we are not involved in an academic discussion. The posture which the parliamentary secretary and secretary of state took in today's debate were weak, defensive and poorly researched. The status quo Canadian position is bankrupt and has been exposed, warts and all, through the foreign affairs committee, the efforts of individual members of Parliament from all parties, and today's Canadian Alliance motion.

As of today, the WHO website reported that a cumulative total of 8,202 probably cases, with 725 deaths, have been reported in 29 countries. New cases in the last two days were reported from mainland China, Taiwan, Canada and Hong Kong. While we must continue to report new cases in Toronto, it is anticipated that Canada is over the worst and we are getting on top of the disease. We certainly hope this is the case and we congratulate our courageous health care workers. In China and Taiwan there is an ongoing problem which cannot with certainty be predicted as to when it will be controlled. There is a real danger that a SARS outbreak in an area of poverty in the developing world could create untold tragedy and consequences.

● (1600)

Taiwan's health care delivery system, research and medical schools are world class. Taiwan can contribute much to the WHO and it is time that it be given this ongoing opportunity. Let Taiwan join the community of nations, the Order of Malta, the Holy See, the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as the PLO, as a participant in the World Health Organization.

[Translation]

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Vancouver Island North on his speech. I asked the previous speaker why the Government of Canada was opposed to supporting Taiwan's bid for observer status. Thinking about it some more, I may have found a reason and I would like to ask my hon. colleague if he thinks it makes sense.

The thing politicians in power fear most is precedent. If, for example, Canada threw its weight behind allowing Taiwan observer status at the World Health Organization, that would definitely be a precedent. Does the fear of a precedent justify the current position?

Let us imagine, for example, that Nunavut—where health problems are very significant and needs absolutely enormous—decided one day to ask for observer status; would Canada have to support that request? Or what if it were Quebec that asked for observer status at the WHO? I would like my hon. colleague to answer me that.

• (1605)

[English]

Mr. John Duncan: Madam Speaker, I thank the member from the Bloc for the question because I know everyone wonders what motivates the government to do some of the things that it does.

I believe that this is not a question that relates so much to domestic issues as it relates to the fact that there are ties between people in the government, the business community, and the People's Republic of China. There is a concern in the government and in the business community that taking an action such as supporting Taiwan's observer bid for status at the World Health Organization would elicit a negative reaction from the People's Republic of China which would negatively impact on the business of friends of the government. That I think is the prime and root cause of this issue because the government position shows a distinct lack of imagination, a distinct adherence to the status quo, and the world has moved on.

Taiwan is now a member of the World Trade Organization and is a member of APEC. Increasingly it is a major player in the Asian region. When one looks at Canada's relations with the Pacific Rim and with Asia in particular, one can only wonder at how we treat the whole region, never mind our relationship with Taiwan. Japan is our second largest trading partner and we would never know it by the way the government prioritizes its resources. That comes as close to an answer as I can provide.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to rise and speak on this motion which basically speaks about Taiwan joining the WHO.

I was listening to the questions the parliamentary secretary was asking colleagues on this side. It seems to me from her questions that the government has made up its mind to oppose the motion, which is a tragedy, because people on this side, and including members of her own government, are in agreement that Taiwan should be a member of the WHO.

As a matter of fact, I can say that I know the parliamentary secretary very well and I respect her extremely. I can say in all honesty that if she were not a parliamentary secretary she would be supporting the motion, but because of the government she is not.

Nevertheless, in order to answer my colleague from the Bloc who spoke just before me on the question of what the real motive of the government is in not supporting the motion, of course it is the government's one China policy. Where did the government's one

Supply

China policy come from? It is tragic that this is coming down to an issue in which the basic bottom line is politics.

My colleague mentioned certain reasons as to why he thought the government, with its one China policy, was opposing the motion. He indicated economic interests. However, I would like to state from a different perspective what basically has happened. As we all know, in the past for a long time China was in isolation. It developed its processes, its country and everything in isolation under Communist rule and saw the world with a different vision, a vision of suspicion and mistrust, and I would say that insecurity still exists with the current leaders of the People's Republic of China.

This is a tragic situation, because we all know China is a land of great civilization. China has nothing to be ashamed of. It is a great, proud country. Its people are very resourceful. It has given the world a tremendous civilization and it should be standing very proudly on its achievements.

However, this insecurity seems to go on, manifested in recent years when China has taken one step toward joining the world community. We can see it in its handling of the whole Taiwan issue, the nitpicking of the small issues on Taiwan about its membership in WHO. Basically anybody looking at this issue in depth will know that it would benefit mankind, it would benefit humanity and it would benefit 22 million people living on an island.

What is the downside? There is no downside to Taiwan joining the WHO. The only downside is that it is going to hurt the pride of those old leaders in China.

An hon. member: What about the old leaders over there?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: When I was the trade critic, I was an adamant supporter of China joining the WTO. I felt that as a great nation China should be a member of the world community and I supported its application to join the WTO. As such, the world also welcomed China into the community of nations. On the other hand, there was also an expectation that China then would take on its responsibilities as a member of the world community. As a member of the world community, there are responsibilities, which include making rational decisions and not trying to be living in the old culture that it was. The SARS crisis indicates why that kind of regime cannot be and will not be accepted in the world.

• (1610)

China has made tremendous economic progress by joining the WTO and is now becoming a critically important member of the world community, including in that region. It will become a powerhouse in that region, but first, it cannot act as a bully, and second, it cannot still be living in a closed society, thinking that whatever happens inside China will have no impact outside China. That is not going to happen, because China is now a member of the world community, period. It is simple.

Supply

The SARS crisis has indicated that very clearly. China's reluctance to say that there was a SARS crisis in the country has spread this disease across the world. If China had taken very strong steps in the SARS crisis, as is expected of all communities, then in this whole crisis there may have been fewer deaths, who knows. But the responsibility still lies with China. It must understand that politics should be put aside, that it is now a grown nation, a powerful nation, and that it should view this whole issue with a different perspective.

What I do not understand, even now, is that for a nation that is reaching out and saying Taiwan is its province, that it wants to overtake Taiwan, there is the very strange behaviour of the government of China in stopping 22 million Taiwanese citizens from benefiting from the services of the World Health Organization. What is so political about it? Nothing. This is for the benefit of the people of Taiwan, but here is a government that wants to represent them and it is denying them all of this. This boggles everyone's mind.

Yes, I have listened to the political speeches. I know the political arguments. No one has to tell me about the political arguments. I have been to APEC meetings. I have seen how the Chinese work. I have been to Taiwan. I have talked with the academics in Taiwan. I know what they feel. I am very well versed in the politics of the whole situation. What I do not understand is the reluctance of China to let Taiwan become a member of the WHO. We have precedents. The Palestinians are there and the Holy See is there, so what is the actual motive of China in saying no?

Why do I keep repeating this? This is not a China bashing speech. I am just pointing out the facts. Why do I keep repeating this about China? It is because the Government of Canada, regrettably, is afraid to stand up to China because of various reasons, be they economic, political or whatever. The Canadian government does not want to rock the boat. Those mandarins sitting in the foreign affairs department do not want to rock the boat and have given instructions on this. It is as simple as that. Yet countries or anyone logically looking at this application cannot find a sound reason why Taiwan should not be a member of the WHO. Why should 22 million people not be able to directly participate and take advantage of the services of the WHO?

I would say that one of the reasons, which I personally agree with, is that the 22 million people of Taiwan should be the ones to decide who is going to rule them and who is going to do that. They should make the choice, not someone from outside, but that is not the debate today. The debate today is about this point-blank simple fact: Why is China stopping Taiwan from joining the WHO and why is the Government of Canada following along and not agreeing to this motion? Even its own members have said they do, with 161 MPs stating they will support this application.

In conclusion, I say to the government members that they, like the opposition, support the people of Taiwan who do not want politics at this stage. The people of Taiwan want Taiwan to be a member of the WHO so they can participate in the world affairs of health, across the world.

• (1615)

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the member about

Canada's position on this whole arrangement. Does he see Canada's role as one that would involve supporting this application or does he see Canada's best interests being served by actually championing this application by Taiwan?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, Canada has a huge Taiwanese community. They are Canadians and they expect us to do something. We cannot ignore this. We cannot sit here and ignore the wishes of a segment of Canadians who happen to be of Taiwanese origin. It is the desire of a lot of Canadians, not just those of Taiwanese origin but those of other nationalities as well, who see the need for Taiwan to be a member of the WHO so its 22 million people can benefit from it. That is one reason.

Second, Taiwan is one of our major economic partners. We have to admit that this nation made up of 22 million people has made tremendous economic progress. It is our second largest trading partner. Canada also has a vested interest in seeing that the Taiwanese benefit from the WHO and from world services. At the same time, we must also see that there is the political situation of helping them. This is not China bashing. It is saying that there is a need to look at this in a different perspective. It should be Canada's responsibility to champion this cause as opposed to just staying neutral. Yes, there is a need to make an argument as to why Taiwan should be a member of the WHO.

• (1620)

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, after listening to the debate today and the questions and answers from speakers on each side of the House, does the member not believe that a free vote should be held in the House on this private member's motion? There is no reason not to hold a free vote in the House. It seems to me that those who are opposing this are doing so because they do not want to lose a vote to a private member's motion and that is simply it. There is no other logical reason to vote against it.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, it is very simple. Over 50% of the members in the House, 161 members, signed in favour of Taiwan's application to the WHO. Obviously they cannot only be members of the opposition. It also had to be members of the governing party, the majority members. Where are those members? I hope they will vote for this motion.

Mr. John Duncan: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member quickly what he reads into the fact that Japan, a close neighbour and a major investor and trader with mainland China and Taiwan, has consistently pursued and supported Taiwan's application at the WHO?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, Japan is in that part of the world. Taiwan and China are its neighbours. If Japan can stand up on principle, I do not see why Canada cannot stand up on principle as we espouse the same principles and same values too.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Yukon.

It is my honour as a member of Parliament for Richmond in the wonderful province of British Columbia to stand in the House today and discuss the merits of the motion of the Canadian Alliance, a motion supported by many members of Parliament in the House, that this House support the admission of Taiwan as an observer status at the WHO.

We have heard two or three different lines of argument. One was on the political side, and my colleague from Calgary East talked about those things. We have also heard about the humanitarian and health considerations.

Let me just say that as a member of Parliament for Richmond, that community is the gateway to Asia. The community receives the vast majority of the 150,000 Taiwanese coming into Canada every year and the 6,000 foreign students from Taiwan who study in Richmond and in Vancouver. That community plays a major part in the \$6 billion of trade between Canada and Taiwan. Yes, Canada has wonderful and strong economic and cultural ties with Taiwan, but this issue is not a political issue. It is not a debate about geopolitics. Whether this House endorses the motion and supports Taiwan's admission as an observer status at the WHO will not change the position of the Government of Canada. The one-China policy still stands. In the United States, the Congress has approved a similar motion endorsing Taiwan's position as a non-voting member, as an observer at the WHO, and this has not changed the position of the administration of the United States.

Today we are debating an issue about compassion, an issue about life and death matters. As has been mentioned in the House, Taiwan has had 72 deaths based on a disease called SARS. We have had 700 deaths worldwide. We do not know how this disease is mutating. We are not talking about politics. Yes, there is a debate about the World Health Organization, what it states and whether it will then impact upon the United Nations. We have had different precedents arguing both ways. We have member states in the WHO, we also do not have member states. We have the Red Cross, the Vatican and also the PLO. I am not sure of the exact term for its executive branch.

The question is whether this House should endorse a motion that would allow the people of Taiwan, its medical officers, as well as the people of Canada, to have a system with which we could better tackle infectious diseases, viral diseases, and in particular the case of SARS.

The Vancouver International Airport is in my riding of Richmond. I see, day in and day out, less and less people coming in from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan and mainland China. Those who are coming in have masks and gloves. This impacts upon our economic and cultural links, not only with Taiwan but with China, Japan and Singapore. Something must be done in a compassionate way to deal with this disease but also to maintain those wonderful economic links that exist between Canada and the Far East.

• (1625)

This is what we are talking about now. We have a problem. We are not talking about the grand stage of geopolitics. We are talking about the best way to solve a problem. The solution is to give an entity of 23 million people, or whatever we call it, which participates a great deal in the connections around the world, an opportunity to deal with the SARS disease and everything else. That is the crux of the issue.

Supply

Should the House allow the world, Taiwan, the people of Richmond and all Canadians, to better deal with a serious disease that is mutating and that has produced 20 or 30 new cases in Toronto? That is the issue here.

I do not know much about medicine and infectious disease, and that scares me. The people who have lunch and dinner in the restaurants along No. 3 Road in Richmond are concerned about SARS. I assume this is happening all across the country and across the world. Why, because of a false political argument which I do not think applies, should the House not endorse a motion that will simply provide Taiwan, the world community and more important, because we are representatives of Canadian ridings, and in my case as a member of Parliament for Richmond, our communities the tools to deal with what has been a tragic and serious health and economic concern, and it could be a much more serious one?

I would like to end my comments by encouraging everyone in the House to look at the health issues and as members of Parliament endorse the ascension to observer status for Taiwan.

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would be delighted to look at this issue with the hon. member for Richmond strictly as a health issue. However I draw to his attention some of the facts that seem to have eluded the bulk of the debate we have listened to today.

First, through the close cooperation with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which is a WHO collaboration centre, Taiwan has had access to the same information as others, including Canada, to deal with the SARS outbreak. It not being an observer has in no way affected its ability to deal with the outbreak. Nor has it adversely affected the health and safety of the Taiwanese.

It was very well said, in a longer period of time than I have now, by the minister this morning just exactly when and how much, and the consecutive order in which they received all of what could possibly have been accorded to a member or not.

I find it somewhat incredulous that we are standing here talking about the health issue as if it really is the driving force and to have those on the opposite side debunk the very notion that there might be a political agenda here, and I include my hon. colleague on this side of the House. I would again, as I tried to enlighten the member for Halifax, draw his attention to comments from the Taiwan Mainland Affairs Council that said today, and quoted in the *Globe and Mail*, that the Chinese who had offered assistance could keep their medical supplies on the mainland and that they should not interfere with Taiwan's attempts to participate in the WHO or other international organizations.

Perhaps the hon. member might wish to make reference in his response to what other international organizations Taiwan wishes to join and how that would reflect to the SARS and health issues that are the big push of today's debate.

• (1630)

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: Madam Speaker, I cannot speak for the government of Taiwan. I do not know its motivations. I am not sure what its plans are and I do not particularly care. This is an important point. I am the member of Parliament for Richmond and there is a very serious disease occurring, SARS.

Supply

We have had a situation in Taiwan where delay has occurred of x number of days where a political decision was made. If Taiwan had observer status at the WHO, action could have been taken sooner. I do not know whether that would have saved lives. However I would like to err on the side of the health issue here.

The building I am in in Richmond, on Saba Road, has a notice in English as well as in Chinese characters which states very clearly that if people have arrived from Hong Kong, China or Taiwan, they should be isolated for 10 or 12 days and that people should ensure they wash their hands so they do not spread the disease.

The point that I am making is, as a member of Parliament, as the House of the Canadian people, it is incumbent on us to solve a problem. The problem is, in my view, that we have a disease we should contain. We might have diseases in the future that are more serious than SARS. I believe, not changing the political configuration, the best way to do that in this particular case is to give an entity, Taiwan, call it what we will, observer status with the World Health Organization because the risk and the costs are too high.

We are talking about people dying. We are also talking about lack of economic activity. I know what I see when I drive around my riding of Richmond. I see the lack of economic activity. Restaurants are 10% full. The shops of all the different communities in Richmond have 20% to 25% of the sales they had before. Why? Fear of SARS and fear of uncertainty.

I want to stop that. That is why I, as a member of Parliament for Richmond, support this motion to have Taiwan given observer status in the World Health Organization.

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, who has let the little children die? WHO has let the little children die. In 1998 there was an enterovirus outbreak in Taiwan. Taiwan learned later that WHO was in possession of certain high quality, single strain antibodies that would have helped meet Taiwan's needs. Numerous official and unofficial letters requesting urgent assistance were sent to the coordinator of the WHO by professors of the National Taiwan University. However, to Taiwan's disappointment, there was no response at all. Over 80 Taiwanese citizens died, most of them children. WHO has let the little children die.

Today I will ask some questions on both sides of the debate. Quite often speeches in the House are only one-sided but on some occasions I try to bring out both sides because no debate is uncomplicated or simple enough that there is only one view. I think all sides have to be taken into account. The biggest underlying motivation for me is what is in the best interests of the health of Canadians.

At the moment Taiwan has access to health protection and health programs available to other countries around the world from WHO. If it has access to these programs, under the unique circumstances of its political position in the world at this time, then what is the health issue?

Because of its unique political position in the world, it obtains some of its WHO related information from a collaboration centre of WHO, which is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. If Taiwan has access to this information through these other channels, then what is the health issue? What is the health problem? The health issue is

what most of us today want to ensure is resolved and it is what is most important for Canada.

There has been talk about the recent SARS outbreak which was announced in Taiwan on March 14 of this year. The previous speaker actually mentioned that there was a delay. It was only two days later that the Centres for Disease Control, the WHO collaboration centre, sent representatives to Taiwan to assess and report on the SARS cases. If there is such quick action and connection in today's modern world, access to information is fairly quick. If Taiwan has the access and is willing to use it and make all best efforts to obtain that information, then why is this a political issue we are dealing with today?

However, on the other side, we hear that Taiwan has been denied participation in any symposium, workshop or training program organized by the WHO, even the ones that do not specify "by invitation only".

We were told that on September 21, 1999 a devastating earthquake hit Taiwan where 2,400 people were killed. While the WHO developed its indirect and direct methods of assistance, it slowed down getting assistance to Taiwan which included putting roadblocks in front of Russia and the Red Cross in providing assistance to Taiwan.

Having Taiwan as a member or an observer of WHO would be a two way street. Taiwan has some very advanced health care systems and could provide information back to WHO. That should be occurring through one channel or another, whether through an observer status or by some other mechanism, but I think it is in the world's best interest that the sharing be done.

After the SARS outbreak a video conference was held with 30 experts from around the world who discussed SARS. Taiwan was not allowed to participate. Once again the interaction of that participation would have been beneficial.

The response from China, which is that with its one country policy it is responsible for health care in Taiwan, does not, of course, make any sense. China does not fund Taiwan's health care system. It has nothing to do with it. Taiwan manages its health care system on its own. One of the Bloc members suggested a parallel to Quebec, but of course that does not match at all because the Government of Canada is a major partner in the health care system.

● (1635)

In fairness I contacted the Chinese embassy today to make sure all sides of this debate were brought forward. As the House knows, Taiwan cannot join WHO at the moment because it is not a sovereign nation state but WHO is always ready to accept an application from Taiwan to join a Chinese delegation meeting of the WHO.

Therefore, if, as most members have said today, the issue is health care and following up on health care, then if Taiwan is interested why does it not follow that procedure until something better is negotiated?

The embassy also believes that during the SARS outbreak the Chinese government sent medical experts, chemicals and equipment to assist in testing for SARS in China.

Supply

There is an upcoming conference on SARS in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia from June 17 to 18. Taiwan is sending two experts and China is not objecting to that at all.

In closing I want to talk about the politics for a moment. As we have all said, the interest is in health care but a number of members have tried to avoid the fact that there are political consequences involved, which is kind of ironic being in a political House. However these are international relationships with major countries in the world. Obviously there are political relationships with political ramifications, including health ramifications.

For instance, if we are worried about the health of Canadians, where does the biggest SARS threat in the world come from? Where are the most cases of SARS? Are they in Taiwan? No. They are in China.

What if we have a breakdown in communications that makes it harder for Canadians to find information on many Chinese who come to visit Canada and do business with Canada, as do the Taiwanese? If we were to have a breakdown in the relationship with a country that has the largest population in the world, a country that has the most SARS cases, what ramifications would that have for Canada's health care and to the health of Canadians?

I think it is quite evident today, unfortunately on all sides of the case, that politics has played a part in this whole exercise, when members of the House are interested in not only the health primarily of Canadians but of the world.

I encourage all participants and all players in the unique political structure we have with Taiwan to try to work toward finding a solution to the sharing of medical information and the speedy delivery of medicine. We must take the politics out of the situation and find the best way of sharing the information so that we do not have to ask again: who has let the little children die?

• (1640)

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, if my dear colleague who just presented would forgive me for being somewhat obtuse, I will preface my question with a preliminary question. Is his speech in support of our motion or not? Forgive me for appearing obtuse but I ask that question in all sincerity.

In contradiction to what the member for Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford continues to toss out before us, purported to be information, when she says that Taiwan has all the information available that it would possibly ever need, I would like to cite one case.

Is the member aware that during a video conference held by the WHO, in which over 30 experts were invited to discuss SARS, Taiwanese experts were not allowed to even participate and discuss their experiences? They had to wait a considerable period of time to get the information from that particular video conference off the Internet. Is the member aware of that and could he answer the first part of my question?

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, I am delighted to answer that question because I answered both of those questions in my speech.

On the first question about whether I was supporting the motion, the point I was making was that there were a number of issues on both sides of the situation. There are a lot of politics on both sides. What I am supporting is better sharing by all parties of the health information to make Canadians and the world safer.

With regard to the second question about the video conference and whether I was aware of it, I announced it in my speech. Therefore I guess I was aware of it. Taiwan did have to wait 20 hours to get the information on the Internet which is not a long time.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): There are three minutes left and four members wish to speak. The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier.

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Madam Speaker, perhaps I have a problem comprehending the language of Shakespeare, but I still do not understand the answer provided just now by my hon. colleague from Yukon to the former leader of the Canadian Alliance. So, for the benefit of all the members of this House who are participating so avidly in this discussion, I will repeat the question: is the hon. Liberal member for Yukon in favour of the motion put forward by the Canadian Alliance or is he opposed? A simple question deserves a simple answer.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, as I said in my last reply, it is not a simple question. It is a very complex question. The purpose of my speech, unlike the speeches of many other people in the House, was to outline the various ramifications on both sides, the fact that politics has been put into this issue by both sides and that is not what should be driving this. The health care of Canadians and of the world should be of the most interest.

Hopefully members on one side who listened to the arguments from the other side will widen their horizons. However everyone will have to wait until 3 o'clock tomorrow to see how I will vote.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Madam Speaker, I repeat the question asked by my hon. colleague from Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier. When it comes time to vote, it will be impossible to vote half in favour and half against the motion.

My question is very clear. The vote is tomorrow. What is the position of the hon. member for Yukon? Is he for or against the Canadian Alliance motion? It is simple.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, I am delighted to answer this question for the fourth time. It is unfortunate that the three members who asked this question did not give proper respect to Parliament because the purpose of a debate is for people to present arguments on both sides. The proper role of a member of Parliament is to listen to arguments on both sides for the entire debate in order to make the most informed decision.

Supply

I will be making the most informed decision at 3 o'clock tomorrow. I hope the members who have already decided will change their ways and listen to the valid arguments made by all members of the House during the rest of this debate and not prejudge them without all the information.

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I have a very simple question. If the government is against the motion, why is it against the motion?

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, probably for the reasons I mentioned in the second half of my speech, the broader implications of this to the health and other aspects of Canadians.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, about a year ago I had the honour of being appointed to the role of senior critic on foreign affairs and to the foreign affairs committee. I had the double honour of being elected to be vice-chair by all members of the committee, and I appreciate that honour. It was at that time that I indicated that issues related to Taiwan would be a priority for me and for the Canadian Alliance. It has been the case for the last year and will continue to be.

I want to thank some people now related to this specific issue. The member for Burnaby—Douglas has been tireless in his efforts in terms of trying to bring some attention to this issue related to observer status for Taiwan at the World Health Organization. As a matter of fact, he had a motion before the foreign affairs committee for some period of time and eventually brought that forward. The motion was defeated by the Liberal members on the committee but the member for Burnaby—Douglas was, as I said, tireless in his efforts, as were other members of that committee. I also want to thank the Bloc Quebecois members of the committee.

[*Translation*]

It is true that, quite frequently, I do not agree with the Bloc Quebecois' policies but the Bloc has always supported Taiwan on this.

• (1650)

[*English*]

I appreciate that. I appreciate the way in which those members brought out their concerns as did other members of the committee.

I also want to thank the few Liberal MPs on the foreign affairs committee who voted for the motion when I had the opportunity to bring it forward sometime ago in the foreign affairs committee. At that time the motion passed because of the agreement and cooperation of all of the opposition parties but also notably because of the participation of a few Liberal MPs. I appreciate their support in passing that motion.

I will admit we were dismayed when I brought forward a motion in the House of Commons simply to concur in the report which was asking to support Taiwan's request for observer status at the WHO. That particular day not long ago in the House there was not one Liberal MP who voted to concur in that report. That was a cause for dismay for many of us. We do hope sincerely and what I have heard from talking with certain Liberal MPs, and I do not profess to have an insider knowledge, is there seems to be an indication that Liberal MPs will be voting with us on this motion tomorrow. I hope there will be enough of them that it will carry.

I appeal to every Liberal MP in the House of Commons to put conscience before convenience and support Taiwan in its hour of need. I ask in all sincerity that they would do that.

As we heard from the Liberal member who spoke before me, he could not give a clear answer whether his speech was supportive or not of the motion, but I am going to take him at his word when he said that debate is all about listening and making a decision. I am going to ask him to continue to listen and to ask himself in all sincerity in his heart if this is not worthy of support.

I have in my possession a number of statements of support from other jurisdictions. The United States policy guideline on the World Health Organization issued March 18 is very recent and very clear: "We support the goal of Taiwan's participation in the work of the World Health Organization including observer status". That in very simple language is a statement of support from the United States.

I also have the statement from the External Relations Commissioner of the European Commission in the European parliament. This is as far back as September 4, 2002. This issue keeps coming up. He made an interesting important distinction. He said that "while the EU are cognizant of the one China policy and that precludes formal relations with Taiwan"; he made that distinction. He also made it very clear that the EU is able to support "Taiwanese participation in internal organizations and processes". The EU supports Taiwan's involvement with those other organizations and those processes and he made a very clear distinction that he does not feel this intrudes in any way on acknowledging the one China policy.

I also have a statement from the Japanese health minister who voiced support for Taiwan's request for observer status. It was issued on May 1. It indicates there is strong support for Taiwan's bid to join the World Health Organization as an observer. I want to make it clear that it is not just the health minister from Japan in isolation. Yasuo Fukuda, the spokesman for the Japanese government, also expressed as far back as May 2002 Japan's support for Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization as an observer.

These are notable jurisdictions around the world that are supporting Taiwan in this. I suggest it would be somewhat of an embarrassment if Canada was not to join our partners. It is not a military intervention we are talking about. It is support for a jurisdiction which is asking for something as simple as observer status.

It is also important to note the speech from Taiwan's president, Chen Shui-bian, which was given on May 9, 2003. He made some interesting observations. He talked about the fact that when SARS first appeared in Taiwan in March, they moved very quickly and they achieved a record of zero mortality, zero community transmission and zero transmission abroad.

• (1655)

Then he acknowledged in his remarks just this month that another outbreak occurred in late April. Again he requested the ability to have observer status at the WHO to deal with that. His remarks are really important. He said "At no time has my administration suppressed information about the disease".

One of the jurisdictions opposing Taiwan's request is mainland China, which in fact did suppress information about the disease. That was not Taiwan's position. It was very open about it.

He went on to say "Our press reported freely", because of course Taiwan has freedom of the press, freedom of expression. He went on to say that his officials know that they are accountable to the people both morally and at the ballot box. In Taiwan all the people vote. He acknowledged that accountability.

He went on to talk about the fact that Taiwan is a nation of 23 million people and is a major trading partner with many countries. He recognized Taiwan's responsibility as it trades and has dealings with many other countries and that Taiwan should not be left to ad hoc arrangements when it comes to serious crises like this one. He acknowledged that two experts from the WHO went to Taiwan last week but because Taiwan does not have official observer status, the experts went to practitioners but they did not consult with the wide range of officials that they would have and as they did in other jurisdictions.

He talked about the fact that Taiwan's epidemiologists are still unable to gain prompt access to information and to get samples of the virus that could help the scientists learn and treat the disease and the patients.

Those comments from Taiwan's president are helpful and instructive in this particular debate.

We need to consider a number of factors when we look at this.

Taiwan is a major transport hub, linking northeast and southeast Asia. In 2002 Taiwan registered over 10 million inbound and outbound travellers.

By the end of 2002, over 300,000 migrant workers from Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam were living and working in Taiwan. These workers were coming to take part in the freedom of enterprise that exists in Taiwan and also the freedom of speech and freedom of democracy. The people of Taiwan recognize their responsibility to these people.

Over 150,000 Taiwanese come to Canada annually. Members may be aware that there are over 15,000 Taiwanese students who attend Canadian schools.

Taiwan has experiences, resources and achievements that it can share with the world, especially in times of crises and especially in times of medical crises. The Economist Intelligence Unit of the United Kingdom rated the medical practice of all countries in a special report some time ago. It rated Taiwan as being second among all the developed and newly industrialized countries, next only to Sweden, in terms of the rating of the medical practices.

When it comes to the generosity of spirit of the Taiwanese people, Taiwan has donated to the international community over \$120 million U.S., not Canadian dollarettes, but U.S. dollars. Taiwan has donated medical and humanitarian relief to some 78 different countries on five continents. The Taiwanese have done this from 1995 to 2002, showing their own generosity of spirit to other countries in need.

Supply

Taiwan and the people of Taiwan are the ones who possess the information and the data, talking about what is affecting them relating to this SARS crisis. They are the ones who hold this information. They are the ones who are being effective. Excluding Taiwan creates a loophole in the health network which is absolutely unnecessary and in fact is unconscionable.

● (1700)

I know a case is made where people say to let mainland China care for the health needs of Taiwan, but let us just look at the facts and not the emotional expressions that are not based on fact. In fact, China has never exercised any authority over Taiwan's health care system, nor has China contributed anything from its national budget to Taiwan in the area of its health needs. In fact sorrowfully, we can report just the opposite.

In 1998 China prevented WHO experts from helping Taiwan when it needed to combat a deadly outbreak of enterovirus. China actually obstructed WHO experts from helping Taiwan. People died in Taiwan as a result of that virus.

As we all know, the following year a massive earthquake struck central Taiwan. It was devastating. Over 2,400 people were killed and over 10,000 were injured. Again, China got in the way of the shipment of emergency medical equipment and rescue assistance that had been offered by the Red Cross and Russia. The Russian federation offered assistance. China said no, that it could only happen if it went through China. It had to go through a whole diplomatic and time wasting process through China.

In Canada in a time of need such as the ice storm in Quebec, people did not hesitate or run something through a democratic process. Help just went forward. When there is an issue in other provinces, including Quebec, the people are there. It is not run through some kind of a diplomatic process because people are worried about getting their diplomatic noses out of joint because of how it is going to be interpreted. Most citizens in most countries, including citizens in Taiwan, know what it is to want to reach out and help people just for the purpose of helping them.

Taiwan has put aside the controversial political issue of membership, as has the EU in its declaration which I read a few moments ago. A one China policy is not the issue here. There is not a pursuit of that. This is strictly related to observer status at a health entity called the World Health Organization.

We can look at some of the other jurisdictions that have observer status at the WHO. The Cook Islands is 234 square kilometres. That is not a very big tract of land. It is not a separate nation. It has observer status. Niue at 264 square kilometres is not a very big tract of land. It has observer status. Some people have argued that we have to wait until a country has full nation status. Those jurisdictions do not have full nation status. Neither did occupied Japan before it had full nation status after the first world war, yet it was a full member of the WHO, not just an observer. It was the same with occupied Germany before it had nation status. The Vatican has observer status at the WHO.

Supply

In 1947 Switzerland, which refused to even be a member of the United Nations, had full status at the WHO. Of course the international Red Cross has status as an observer. The international Red Crescent Society quite rightly has status as an observer. The Order of Malta has status as an observer at the World Health Organization. The Palestinian Authority, not a recognized nation—hopefully some day there will be a state there but that is an issue for another day—has observer status at the World Health Organization.

However Canada, at least to date, refuses to back Taiwan's request. Taiwan has a population larger than 148 of the countries in the United Nations and Canada says no. It is time to stop this health apartheid which treats Taiwan differently than other jurisdictions in terms of a simple request for observer status at the World Health Organization.

Contrary to what we hear from members on the other side, Taiwan has been deprived of direct assistance from the World Health Organization because of this obstruction. The World Health Organization, when the SARS outbreak happened in Taiwan, refused to send its health experts directly there. Instead it transferred those Taiwan cases to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. That was nice and the people in Atlanta, Georgia were willing to help, but why the circuitous route in a time of need, in a time of emergency?

● (1705)

I have already talked about the fact that at a video conference that was held by the WHO, in which over 30 invited experts were discussing the SARS situation, Taiwanese experts could not participate in the conference to discuss their experience. They had to wait to get the information from the Internet. We heard a member say that it was just only 20 hours later. Every minute counts with SARS, as we painfully know with the Toronto situation.

Back in 1998 there was an the enterovirus outbreak in Taiwan. The WHO was in possession of certain high quality, single strain antibodies that would have met Taiwan's needs, however, it was not able to intervene because Taiwan did not have the nature of this status. Over 80 citizens of Taiwan died. Most of them were children. This is unnecessary and dangerous.

This motion may pass tomorrow for the following reasons. First, more Liberal members have had more information available to them, although we have made the information available to them for a year, but now with the SARS crisis upon us it is more acute. Also, the time for Taiwan to have participated in this year's World Health Organization conference has passed. The opportunity has been missed. A difference could have been made if Canada had been there advocating for Taiwan to have observer status.

The Liberals may feel the heat of the moment has passed and they can quietly grant it status even though the time for the conference has passed. However, I am choosing to believe that Liberal MPs will support us this time because it is the right thing to do and they will not acknowledge those who are in a misleading way, maybe not intentionally, giving information about how this may effect the relationship with mainland China.

We do not want it to be said of our government in Canada that we tend to give less support for democratic jurisdictions than to non-

democratic jurisdictions. Taiwan has an exciting, proud and recent history in the practice of the grand human experience called democracy. We often quote heroes of democracy from the 16th century in Great Britain or from the United States, the colonies or even the Soviet Union, but we often miss the great untold stories of those heroes who stood and paid a price. They stood for individual freedom and human rights in Taiwan and it is only in the last decade that it has achieved democracy and become one of the world's most exciting new democracies.

It is time now, in a day when in other parts of the world people linger in the shadows out of fear, who want to step forward to promote democracy in their own lands, but they look to see how other democracies will be supported. Will they be supported when they are challenged by non-democratic states? Now is the time to send a message that Canada supports issues like this because it is the right thing to do. I appeal to our Liberal colleagues to support us in this vote tomorrow.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's comments. I am a little concerned that there was too much in his speech that dealt with diplomacy issues. The member will know that the issues surrounding a one China policy and the resolution of a complex matter, which I think came about since 1971, is detracting from the argument of the health related issues.

I am hopeful that the member will put a little refocus back to the driving force behind the resolution proposed to the House regarding the granting of observer status for Taiwan to the assembly of the World Health Organization for the purpose of ensuring better global health and therefore better health for Canada.

● (1710)

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Speaker, I was careful to set aside the diplomatic argument and the diplomatic concern at the outset of my remarks.

As a matter of fact, I urged members to see this as an issue without borders. There is a credible and noteworthy organization called Doctors Without Borders which does not become hung up on the diplomatic niceties that might get certain politicians as ourselves hung up or our noses bent in a particular direction. It simply identifies a need. Is there a health need? Is there a need there that we can reach out and make better? Then it goes and meets that need. Doctors Without Borders is an organization which should be a shining example to us as elected people to set aside some of the diplomatic difficulties and complications, and just reach out when there is an area of need.

I would close my response to the member's question with this question: how is it that the European parliament was able to identify the one China policy, though it precludes formal relations with Taiwan, and yet stated that it supported Taiwanese participation in international organizations and processes?

We are able to say that there is a whole other separate issue. The one China policy is a very important issue. How is it that the entire European parliament can set that aside and support Taiwan and the federal Liberals cannot?

Supply

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment the senior foreign affairs critic of the official opposition for his comments. I am very proud to be on the team as the foreign affairs critic for Asia-Pacific.

It is a very important motion. In the last couple of weeks we have had a devastating experience with SARS, as well as with mad cow disease. Diseases do not respect the geopolitical borders of different nations. With globalization we have more opportunities and we have more challenges as well.

Taiwan was a co-founder of the WHO in 1948. After China joined in 1972, Taiwan had to withdraw. Today Taiwan is seeking only observer status and not even full status in the WHO.

Taiwan has a population of 23 million. It is larger than 75% of the countries that belong to the WHO. Other bodies such as Palestine, the Holy See, the International Red Cross and the Order of Malta are members of the WHO. Does the member believe that if smaller non-sovereign bodies can be members of the WHO, and he mentioned the Cook Islands with a small population—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla.

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Speaker, the member for Surrey Central is making some keen points and bringing forward examples, some of which I have cited, that show observer status at the World Health Organization has been accorded to a variety of jurisdictions and organizations that are not nations.

If precedent means anything in international law, and I believe it does—and our Liberal friends are always quick to cite international law and that is commendable—then here is a case where international law has been firmly established in precedent with these organizations and small jurisdictions that have been accorded observer status at the WHO.

We talk about contentious issues and contentious jurisdictions around the world. There are few issues more contentious than what is happening in the Middle East right now. Yet, we have supported observer status for the Palestinian authority. The least we can do is support Taiwan's request.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate today. I will be splitting my time with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

I would like to start off with a couple of technical matters and I would ask the previous speaker to take note of my suggestions.

The motion before the House has two aspects to it. The first part requests the granting of observer status to Taiwan with regard to the meetings of the WHO, and the second part calls upon the government to actively urge other member states and non-governmental organizations to support that goal. There are two separate items involved here and the second item may be problematic in terms of the best approach in pursuing this issue.

Given the sensitivity regarding the sovereignty matters of mainland China, this would cause some difficulty for some members who may want to vote in favour of observer status but who may want to vote against the second part of the motion. Rather than asking for the consent of the House at this time to split the motion, I raise it for

the consideration of opposition members so that maybe prior to the vote they would consider recommending to the House to split the motion.

I noticed in some of the briefing notes that there is reference to the World Health Organization, the WHO, and also the World Health Assembly, the WHA. I have asked the question of other members, and it is not clear at this time, but it appears in the context of those notes that the WHO is a UN agency. It is an organization with a constitution with no provisions for observer status.

However, when the WHA hosts meetings or its members have meetings, it is called an assembly. It is the World Health Assembly and it is an assembly of those members. There are certain groups, such as the International Red Cross, Rotary Clubs, the Red Crescent, the PLO and others who have, by consent of the members, been permitted to be observers at the World Health Assembly to discuss various issues.

On a technical matter, it is interesting to note that most of the information we have before us calls for observer status for Taiwan to the WHO when in fact nothing exists. The motion may be technically out of order because it is not possible.

For the purposes of this issue, we should talk about the importance of having the involvement of Taiwan in the international community of those who have a common bond of interest in terms of global health.

I have had a great deal to do with the Canada-Taiwan parliamentary group over the last number of years. I have had an opportunity to travel to Taiwan on a number of occasions as a delegate. I have taken the opportunity to carefully inform myself about the sensitivities of the one China policy and about mainland relations between Taiwan and China. This is an extremely complex and sensitive issue. It would be totally inappropriate to introduce into this debate aspects related to those sovereignty questions. Canada has talked about our own sovereignty and how we as a sovereign nation must make certain decisions. When we get into those matters, it is for that country to make decisions.

This is a very unique situation. Taiwan split from mainland China in 1971. We must consider that China has about 1.4 billion people whereas Taiwan has about 23 million people, less than 2%. Taiwan's economy is 40% as large as the entire economy of mainland China. Even though Taiwan's population is less than 2% of the population of mainland China, its economy has been referred to as an economic miracle.

• (1715)

That is why countries around the world have extraordinary economic relationships with Taiwan. Taiwan had, the last time I was there, about seven to ten products that were rated number one in the world, mostly on the high tech side, so it is not a surprise to me that Taiwan was included recently in the World Trade Organization as a major trading entity. That did not threaten anyone, including China, simply because it made a great deal of sense to have a very large economy participating in the dialogue in a global economy.

Supply

However, there is another aspect to that. When we have a global economy it means that we have people who are globally mobile. It is this mobility that is the issue and I think that is what we should be discussing here. In China I believe there have been about 5,000 infections identified, as a round number, and there have been approximately 315 deaths. That is less than 10% of the infections that resulted in death. In Taiwan there are 570 infections but 72 deaths, so wait a minute, the proportion of deaths to infections is much more. Something is wrong there.

We have Chinese citizens, residents who are living on the mainland, who are also living on Taiwan. We have 400,000 Chinese business people from Taiwan who are doing business on the mainland. How is it that the number of deaths per infection is so much higher per capita in Taiwan than it is on the mainland? Somebody's numbers are not right, I would suggest.

It goes further. I think we have missed the point in the debate with regard to the SARS health issues we are talking about. Incidents of SARS in China in Guangdong province were detected in November 2002, but it was not until March 10, 2003, that the outside world was advised about SARS. China is a full member of the WHO. It interacts. It is there. It has access to all of what is offered by the WHO and to all its members, but the incidence of SARS was not revealed to the outside world for months.

•(1720)

I am concerned about why that happened, because as a consequence of that SARS spread around the world and people died. This is a very serious question and I hope the WHO will be able to deal with how one of its members was able to withhold this important information, which has affected the lives of the people of Taiwan, the lives of the people who died in Canada and the lives of people around the world where these hot sites are. It is a question that is ancillary to what we are discussing here today, but it concerns me a great deal. Why would one want observer status in an organization that cannot even rely on its own membership to play ball? It is a really interesting question, but I will not pursue it any further.

I have heard many members say that Taiwan could have everything it wanted and does get everything it wants even without observer status. Why is it, then, that the United States, the European Union and Japan all have come out in favour of Taiwan having observer status at the WHO? This is a problem. We cannot deny the fact that there must be something there. I believe Taiwan has something to contribute. We have 150,000 Taiwanese travelling to Canada each year. We have 15,000 students from Taiwan in Canada. It is our 40th largest trading partner and it is our 4th largest Asia-Pacific trading partner. It is part of our economy as well. It is part of the Canadian family. If it has a problem, that problem affects Canada as well.

I think it is in our best interests for Taiwan to be part of the observer network of the WHO and I would hope that members would consider it in the context of global health issues. I think that is the gist of the debate today. I ask members to seriously consider Canadian health issues in this global perspective.

•(1725)

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance):

Mr. Speaker, I visited Taiwan some time ago. I believe that if we truly are living in a global village there is a need to reform international institutions. We need to have the global spirit in which all countries are treated fairly, particularly those countries that are progressing very fast with the rest of the world, the democracies, the self-governing democracies or the countries willing to participate in assisting in any humanitarian crisis anywhere in the world, for example, in earthquakes, in controlling other diseases, in developing vaccinations, in doing research and so on.

I believe that such countries should be given a chance in the international community. The international community should be treating those countries fairly. If Palestine, Malta or Cook Islands, those countries, nations or bodies, have been given that chance, even non-sovereign states, to have observer status at the WHO, I think Taiwan deserves an equal chance, particularly so if a precedent has been set. For example, in the World Trade Organization Taiwan is a full member of the WTO, as is China.

I would like to ask the member about this. If Taiwan has full status at the WTO, as China does, and if other sovereign bodies have status at the WHO, why not Taiwan? How would he like to justify this unfair attitude from the international community?

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, again I think we are getting into the sovereignty issue. I think members will understand that membership in the WTO as an economic entity makes a great deal of sense.

I can recall meeting with President Lee Teng-Hui, the prior president, and I remember him telling us that these issues are so complex it probably will take another generation or two before they are resolved. Similarly, the current president, Chen Shui-bian, has also come up with I think a great deal of wisdom in terms of patience and making sure that we create conditions in which we can address in a peaceful and diplomatic way a resolution to the one China policy.

I do not think it is helpful to say, "We did it here and let us do it there". I think there must be a way, a formula, an agreement or something agreed to by mainland China to allow and ensure that Taiwan has the opportunity to integrate its thinking and questions, et cetera, to recognize the fact that it is a global traveller in this global economy and that it is in the best interests of global health for Taiwan to be involved in some fashion. Whether it be called observer or invitee or whatever it is, Taiwan should also be there to give its input and expertise and also to learn from the rest of the world.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the member. He is a learned member of the House and makes very significant contributions in debate from time to time, but I do not agree with him when he says that this is an issue of one China. That is an issue for another day. This issue is not part of the motion we are debating today. The question, then, is about the welfare of the international community in giving non-sovereign states like Taiwan an opportunity to positively contribute to the health care and welfare of the international community, the true global village, as I mentioned.

The question to which I would like a direct answer from the member is this: Why the double standard? If Taiwan is a full member of the WTO, where is the problem in making it an observer at the WHO? It is a direct question. If there are other bodies of equivalent status that are given observer status for the WHO or WHA, why not Taiwan? That is the question with respect to the best interests and the welfare of the international community.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the member believes that the accession of Taiwan to the WTO automatically gives it something else. That is not the way the world works. We have to earn everything on its own merit.

The WHO is a UN agency. Taiwan, unfortunately, is not a member of the UN and cannot be a member or an associate member, but there is an opportunity. Taiwan is not making the argument that it is in the WTO and it makes sense for it to be there; even China wants Taiwan to be there and in fact supported Taiwan being there under the one China umbrella. The WHO is a little bit different and I think we have to recognize the sensitivity. We cannot be a bull in a china shop and say that we will solve all the problems so let us just do this. I think it is very important to be wise and patient and seek the support of mainland China on the basis of global health issues and humanitarian reasons.

• (1730)

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of discussion today about the need for this measure and how it will affect the health care persons both in Taiwan and Canada. Indeed the motion itself seems rather benign at first appraisal. However the issue of observer status in the World Health Organization as a United Nations organization is as one would expect subject to United Nations rules.

As my colleague, the secretary of state mentioned earlier today, membership of the WHO is open to nation states. Nation states are defined as those having been recognized by the United Nations credentials committee. This committee has not recognized Taiwan as a state.

Associate membership is available to territories or groups of territories which are not responsible for the conduct of their international relations. Application for admittance to the WHO as an associate member must be made on behalf of the territories or groups of territories by the member or other authority having responsibility for their international relations. According to the rules and procedures of the WHO and the United Nations, an application to admit Taiwan as an associate member would have to be made by China.

Some of the members today have mentioned that certain international health authorities are "observers" to the WHO. While these organizations have attended the annual World Health Assembly meetings in the past, their participation was not contested and received broad support of all WHO members.

Canada has long been on record that it would support a formula for Taiwan's participation in the WHO as long as this formula is in accordance with WHO constitutional rules and procedures and has received broad based approval of other WHO members.

Supply

As I mentioned earlier today, no country in the world today has diplomatic relations with both China and Taiwan.

Since the United Nations does not recognize Taiwan as a state, Canada's relationship with Taiwan is an unofficial one. As has been mentioned at great length, unofficial relations have not prevented Canada from developing close, mutually beneficial ties with Taiwan. On the contrary, Canadians and Taiwanese enjoy a rich partnership in many fields, including health which dates back to the father of modern medicine in Taiwan, a Canadian doctor, George Leslie Mackay.

Canada's approach to this relationship today is, simply put, one based on action, not words; on substance, not symbol. I am sure any member in the House who has been to Taiwan, which I have not, will indeed willingly attest to a broad range of activities and actors which support this rich relationship, and I know many members of the House have had an opportunity to visit Taipei.

As can be expected of any bilateral relationship, neither side is fully satisfied all of the time. However we should keep in perspective the contrast between those few areas where Canadian and Taiwanese priorities may differ and the bigger picture of extensive cooperation, including in the health fields.

Let me take this opportunity to highlight just a few aspects of this cooperation.

Economically, as has been mentioned, Taiwan is one of Canada's top 10 trading partners and is our 14th largest export market worldwide. Canadian multinationals, like Bombardier, Nortel Networks and hundreds of SMEs have had significant success in Taiwan. As a result of Taipei's membership in the World Trade Organization, which Canada was active in facilitating, we have witnessed a 20% growth last year in our agricultural exports to Taiwan, totalling over \$1 billion. Canadian markets have been open to Taiwan's exporters for decades and the island enjoys a healthy trade surplus with Canada, about four to one.

For both Canada and Taiwan, this is about both jobs for today and a strategic investment in our increasingly globalized future, which is why Canada's National Research Council's cooperation with Taiwan's national science council represents the NRC's largest bilateral R and D relationship outside of North America. That investment and research are just two of many threads. When it comes to people to people contacts Taiwan is one of our closest neighbours on the Pacific Rim.

• (1735)

Over the past 30 years, more than 110,000 Taiwanese emigrated to Canada. Annually over 100,000 Taiwanese visit Canada as tourists, short term students or to see family and friends. Canada has become a preferred destination for full time students from Taiwan.

Supply

Our policy toward Taiwan then is a balanced one consistent with those of virtually all of our like-minded allies. We have been a strong supporter of Taiwan's entry into a variety of international organizations, including the WTO and APEC. We believe Taiwan needs to be compliant with international regulations, participating in multi-national trade remedy regimes and partnering with Canada in global trade liberalization as well.

As a member of the WHO, we believe our responsibility to the health of the global community goes beyond occasional meetings in Geneva. That is why the government supported a working level visit by medical experts, led by Dr. James Young, Ontario's Commissioner of Public Security, to Hong Kong, Taipei and Beijing just last week. Their visit, which included meetings with local experts as well as WHO and CDC experts on the ground, will facilitate ongoing exchange on best practices and the latest research.

Like Canada, Taiwan and many of its neighbours, including China and Hong Kong, have also been affected by SARS. Authorities in Taiwan continue to work diligently both domestically and with the international community to curtail the spread of this disease. Canadians continue to watch the development of SARS in Taiwan with concern and empathy but we are doing more than watching. The meetings held last week during the visit to Taiwan by Dr. Young and his team were an important opportunity to provide the Taiwanese people with medical and moral support. The focus of that visit and indeed the consistent focus of this government is on SARS as a global public health challenge, not a political and diplomatic one.

Taiwan should be supported in its legitimate desire to ensure the health of its citizens, and there is much we can do in this regard. The message Dr. Young delivered in Taiwan last week, in addition to the detailed information on how Toronto managed its SARS challenge, is that Taiwan is not alone in its effort and that Canada will do our part to assist Taiwan. Cooperation and support will continue to be the theme of our relationship with Taiwan in the public health sector whether there are crises like SARS or ongoing programs like the training of Taiwanese health care administrators which have already been carried out within an existing expert relationship with British Columbia.

In the field of health, just as with the rest of our unofficial relationship with Taiwan, we will continue to focus on substance rather than form. This does not mean, as members of the House have at times suggested, that we oppose Taiwan's participation in the WHO. However, under present circumstances where the WHO as a United Nations body does not allow for the kind of long term participation which Taiwan seeks, Canada will continue to act in Canadian and global health interests.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, with respect, the member for Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford continues to throw out red herrings on this. She talks about the constitution related to membership. She mentioned membership and she mentioned associate membership. Taiwan is not asking for either of these. It is simply asking for observer status. She said that would have to have broad based appeal before Canada would support, not Canada being a leader, but Canada being a follower.

I submit to members the exhibits for broad based support: Japan supporting, the United States supporting and the European Union supporting. The European Union, as do we, sets aside the diplomatic situation. The Liberals keep trying to raise it. We keep focussing on the health part.

If the EU can say, and we agree with this, one China policy precludes formal relations with Taiwan, they recognize that and they set it aside. Then they go on and they say however, that we support Taiwanese participation in international organizations and processes.

If France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, Belgium, Italy and other countries can support simple observer status, that is the broad based support for which the member was looking, why cannot the federal Liberals?

● (1740)

Ms. Aileen Carroll: Mr. Speaker, I do not, but I wish I did, have the numbers that were in the assembly at the time the EU non-binding resolution was passed. I would assume that perhaps there were some MEPs, members of the European parliament, from some of the countries that were mentioned by the hon. member. I do not know either, the numbers that might have been in Congress in Washington when its non-binding resolution was passed.

I hate to appear possibly a little cynical, but I have been cognizant of a number of debates in the House which were predicated or used as a point of departure; votes in certain European parliaments that took place in the dead of night, with a handful of just the requisite number there to make it pass. However it blew within the House as though we had seen a revolution happen within that parliament.

As I said, I do not have those numbers. I merely make reference to others where I do have them. Nevertheless, those were the words and voices of parliamentary assemblies of which I am very proud to belong. There has been no subsequent action by the governments involved.

[Translation]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the secretary of state a question about two things.

First, we are well aware that a motion recommending that Taiwan have observer status was adopted by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Second, 161 members signed a petition along the same lines.

Given that she seems to be telling us that she is very democratic and open-minded, how does she feel now, in the House of Commons, about rejecting a motion adopted by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade and a petition signed by 161 members? How does she explain this inconsistency?

Ms. Aileen Carroll: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I do not understand the member's question. Is he talking about something that happened in this House? I missed his meaning. Would it be possible for the member to repeat what he said?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Yes, it is possible, but there is only one minute remaining. The hon. member for Lotbinière—L'Érable, if he can repeat his question in 30 seconds.

Supply

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, there are two things.

First, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade adopted a motion to give Taiwan observer status. Second, 161 members signed a petition along the same lines.

With the open-mindedness that the member boasts of, how does she feel, as a democratic person, knowing that she is contributing to reversing a decision taken in committee and reversing a decision taken by 161 members who signed a petition?

Ms. Aileen Carroll: Mr. Speaker, I will answer in English because time is running out.

[*English*]

Yes, I am aware of the decision of the committee. I was a member of the committee. Certainly the majority of those present on the foreign affairs committee did that. I do not agree with the decision but it was a democratically taken one.

Second, a number of persons, and I accept his numbers, have signed a petition in the House and we will see whether the signatures on that petition are realized in a vote once all the facts of the matter come out, in which I am hoping today's debate is assisting.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I too wish that all of the facts would come out. I am sure my hon. colleague will consider them intently and perhaps even change her view and her decision.

Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan. Because of the interest of this topic we need to lend as many voices as we possibly can to this debate.

It is indeed my pleasure and privilege to speak to this motion as the health critic for the Canadian Alliance. It is a very important issue. Many of my colleagues have talked about it being of political and economic importance, but I would like to spend most of my time talking about the health importance of this.

I was an observer at the WHO. I was not a recognized observer but I was there the year before last. I had the opportunity to see how it actually worked. It is a great opportunity to dialogue with colleagues from around the world, to discern exactly how they feel on very important health issues. Things are done there by consensus and by trying to get along. For Taiwan to have observer status and be able to lend its voice to that dialogue is very important. Make no mistake as to where I am on this issue. I am 100% in support of observer status for Taiwan at the WHO.

It is an important health issue. That is where I would like to lend my voice to this debate because of what actually has happened over the last little while with regard to the SARS issue. If there is one thing we have learned in spades in Canada when dealing with an infectious disease such as SARS, it is the importance of time and of being very aggressive in dealing with the SARS virus with everything we have. Perhaps in some ways it is a forerunner of some worse viruses that are to come, but hopefully we have learned some lessons. One lesson we have learned is that we need to act quickly.

The question being asked all day long is where China was with regard to SARS. It started there and it carried on for at least five

months prior to the world knowing about it. We have to really discern why that would take place. In fact, if we did not know about it, I am sure Taiwan did not know anything about it as well, and it is part of the exact same country, and the WHO did not have the opportunity to inform the world or Taiwan. It is very important that we make communication number one. This is certainly an opportunity to engage Taiwan in this kind of debate.

I would like to take a look at exactly where we are at with SARS and some of the things about this virus. It has a tremendous human and economic toll, as we see what has happened in Taiwan. Just over the last two months SARS has become such a common term. Two months ago we did not really know what the acronym meant. Now we mention SARS and everybody understands it full well. In just a two month period of time it has come on to the world stage and is a common term around the world. In fact I was in the Baltics last week and there is no question that the number one issue on their minds is what is happening in Canada with regard to SARS.

It looked as if Toronto had it under control and we were very pleased with the way the containment had come along, then all of a sudden SARS raised its ugly head again and is now infecting more people in Canada. There are 350 probable suspected cases and 27 deaths in Canada. Most of those are in the Toronto area. Around the world 8,000 have been infected and over 700 have died up to this point. It is very important that we look at that.

SARS continues to be a global threat, not least of all in Taiwan. We have to look at Taiwan and see exactly what went on there. Are they suffering from the same problems that we have had in the difference of how the patient in Vancouver was dealt with compared to the patient in Toronto? I am not blaming anyone, I am just saying that they were handled differently because of the information that was given to both those hospitals. One patient was put instantly into quarantine and in the other case it took 24 hours. We can see in a 24 hour span how many lives were lost, how many people were affected, how much economic damage has been done to Canada and to the Toronto area. We must discern how important this information is.

• (1745)

SARS has killed 27 people. Many hundreds of people have been sick. Thousands have been in quarantine. Our health care system has been pushed to the breaking point, as we saw five nurses at the height of the first outbreak in the Toronto area just walk away from their positions because of the stress of it. There is public fear out there that we are trying to alleviate. It is there, it is real and it is not only here but around the world.

The city of Toronto has such a black mark because of it and is something we will have to work to overcome. Hundreds of millions of businesses have been losing millions and millions of dollars in the hospitality and tourism industry. It is not just in the Toronto area, it is right across Canada. In the riding of Yellowhead, where I come from, in the national park tourism is a major economic driver particularly in the summer months. We are feeling some of the effects of this even in western Canada.

Supply

We understand how this has taken place. We talked about the difference between the two hospitals. We also have to ask where was the Liberal government? Where was the strong leadership? Where was the coordinated national response? Where was the ability to alleviate some of the public fear?

An hon. member: It is right here.

Mr. Rob Merrifield: My hon. colleague says it is right here and looks at the Minister of Health. That is exactly the problem. The Minister of Health did not play quarterback for the national engine to deal with the problems, to stop it from moving outside our borders and deal with the security at the airports. In fact, even today as we speak the security is not there as was appropriately called for by the WHO.

What can we learn from this? We can learn lots and we had better learn lots because it has major repercussions. The repercussions are not only for SARS, not only for what we have seen happen here and what is happening in Taiwan.

I would like to take a quick look at what might happen in the future because it is very important in light of what we are talking about. Let us look a little further in the past before we look at some of the things that could happen in the future.

We can look at what was expected for the influenza problem and the epidemic that comes every 11 years. It is a very deadly influenza problem and we were expecting something in that regard. That was what alerted the two hospitals. We have to understand that influenza comes in many forms.

This is an alarming stat which I do not think most Canadians know and certainly I was surprised to learn that in 1918-19 the Spanish influenza epidemic killed 50 million people worldwide. It killed more than the great war did which just preceded it. It is amazing. The number of dead in Canada in that one year period was 50,000. The Asian flu in 1957 claimed 70,000 in the United States. The Hong Kong flu of six years ago killed half of the serious cases that it infected. When we see SARS and the seriousness of it and the 27 deaths we grieve for in Canada and the 700 we grieve for around the world, it is mild in comparison to what it could be and what will likely be in the future.

We have to be very cautious, stand on guard and be vigilant with regard to information. We must work internationally because these viruses know no borders. They do not care much whether there is a 49th parallel between the United States and Canada, or water between Taiwan and mainland. It is important that we discern how much information is given and that the information is given liberally.

Just to mention a few, there is the West Nile virus, HIV, and the mad cow disease which we are going to talk about tonight in an emergency debate. I could talk about all of these as well as the foot and mouth disease in the United Kingdom, but my time has gone.

It is very important that we discern what is really being asked for in this motion. It is nothing more than to allow recognition status at the World Health Organization for Taiwan, which is only the right thing to do. There is no reason, no true justification, why we should not allow this to happen and to not encourage it to happen. I believe it reflects where most Canadians are on this issue. I would encourage

members of the House to consider all the facts as they vote on this issue.

● (1750)

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join in the debate. I support the motion and believe it is an issue that should be coming before all members of the House for both debate and support.

The world that we live in has changed in many ways in recent years. Indeed in recent months we have heard many references to the world since 9/11. Without a doubt there are many things that have changed even since that time. We are more aware of course of both our personal and our country's security. We hear terms such as biological warfare and recognize that it could now happen here and not just in some far-off place.

There have been many other changes in recent years as well. Our world has become much smaller. When Lord Grey was the Governor General of Canada in the early 1900s, he had a summer home. That does not sound unusual today, except that his summer home was located in south central B.C., I believe in the riding of the hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia. To reach his summer home, the Governor General rode the train for days in a cross-country adventure and arrived in Banff, Alberta in order to begin several more days of horseback riding.

By way of comparison, many of us will be on a plane later this week and will arrive in British Columbia in hours, not days. Our offices are filled with computers that send and receive e-mails to virtually anywhere in the world instantly. We can communicate with our constituents from all parts of Canada through cell phones, video conferencing and faxes.

My point for raising this is simply that we no longer live in isolation. No country lives in isolation any more. From a global perspective, distance has become less and less relevant. We can no longer view world issues with an isolationist perspective.

In recent weeks the world has watched and grappled with severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS. As we already know, this infectious disease has infected people around the world, killing many in the process. The problem is we simply do not fully understand all aspects of the disease, how it started, how it is transmitted. At present we have no cure or vaccine to prevent the spread of SARS.

In the past there have been many devastating epidemics of influenza that have swept the globe. Surely learning the lessons of history we must do everything in our power to ensure that this does not happen again. Disease does not recognize borders or lines on a map. Disease travels where infected people travel and travel is an integral part of our business and vacation world today. As we have witnessed in recent weeks, a disease like SARS has the capability of travelling great distances before we even know it exists.

What are we able to do? We must share information openly. It is simply not enough to expect that each individual country can devise its own preventive methods or cure solely on its own.

The case of Taiwan is clearly not in keeping with this. As my colleague the member for Kootenay—Columbia so ably outlined in his opening address of this debate today, there are very clear and compelling reasons for supporting Taiwan's application as an observer to the World Health Organization. This debate should not involve international or internal politics. It does involve world health and that is clearly where the debate should remain centred.

From the information that I have read, Taiwan has requested observer status to the World Health Organization in the past. Unfortunately to date, this request has fallen on deaf ears as well as outright obstruction from the People's Republic of China. The time has come to move beyond idle words and to real action on this matter. The most recent outbreak of SARS gives impetus to resolving this issue.

Taiwan, with a population of over 22 million living in a geographic region a little larger than the size of Vancouver Island where I live, has all the health amenities that the citizens of a developed country have come to expect.

● (1755)

Among other things, Taiwan has contributed to medical research and to health issues that have helped people from around the world. The Taiwanese people deserve the same access and level of health care that everyone in this room has come to expect when it comes to world epidemics like SARS.

It is imperative that we focus on the health of people, not on politics. Earlier today the secretary of state felt that we should not lose focus on this issue. On this I agree with him. However, it is my belief that his government has already lost focus on this important issue itself.

It is my belief that Taiwan must be viewed as a health entity. The Taiwanese government and people face health difficulties regardless of any political claim. The health needs of the people of the island of Taiwan must be viewed in a progressive, not regressive, manner.

The world around us today relies on expanded trade. When the Asian economy sneezes, the world economy catches a cold. So it is when the Asian population contracts a new illness: the health of the whole world suffers.

We can take steps to resolve this and Canada can be shown to be a leader in this matter, a compassionate, caring leader. Along with world trade of commodities, there must be world trade in all forms of information, including, and especially perhaps, health information.

The world has watched as SARS took root in China and how China misrepresented the now deadly effects of this mysterious outbreak. Now China is attempting to withhold Taiwan's entry as an observer to the World Health Organization. I do not find this an acceptable practice and I must voice my opposition to it on health and humanitarian grounds.

I note that while the secretary of state mentioned UN recognized countries that are not formally a part of the World Health

Supply

Organization, he failed to mention that according to *The Globe and Mail* on May 20, 2003, both the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Rotary International Club have observer status with the World Health Organization. Somehow the believability of the hon. member's argument does not stand up, then, to greater scrutiny in the face of these statistics.

In considering this debate I have reflected on the roles that Canada has played in many other international situations. Canadians have been involved internationally through the federal government, NGOs, charitable organizations and various other methods in order to ensure that the world has clean drinking water, fresh food and the like. Now, when we can support the Taiwanese in a practical manner, the federal government has an opportunity to step up and be counted on the world stage. Unfortunately, from what I have seen today the government is going to continue to follow a hypocritical pattern.

Let me just repeat some of the opening statements from the constitution of the World Health Organization:

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being...health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being, without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition...the promotion and protection of health is of value to all...Governments have a responsibility for the health of their peoples, which can be fulfilled only by the provision of adequate health and social measures.

In fact, I note that nowhere in the constitution of the World Health Organization is there direct reference to any one country. There are, however, many references to the needs of people and the promotion of physical, mental and social health, but no references to countries. I believe this is an important distinction.

Although the World Health Organization is an arm of the United Nations, which obviously is made up of countries, everyone is deserving of good health. Taiwan is not asking for additional consideration of the World Health Organization for full or associate membership. Taiwan is not asking the World Health Organization to make, therefore, a political decision. Taiwan is asking to have observer status in order to receive and offer health information in the most efficient manner possible. Furthermore, the United States, the European Union and Japan are now all in favour of granting Taiwan observer status with the World Health Organization.

Why should Canada be out of step? A country that has had a compassionate record in terms of countries in need, we should not be hypocritical now in our stand on Taiwan. I fully support the motion and I urge all good members of the House to do likewise.

● (1800)

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member if he can indicate to us what the U.S. policy is on this issue. Also, does the member support U.S. policy on the same issue we are discussing today?

Supply

●(1805)

Mr. Reed Elley: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that of course the United States has had a benevolent relationship with the Taiwanese people for a long time. It has been supportive of Taiwan's position in the world and indeed has come to its rescue a number of times in terms of military aid and that sort of thing. I think in a sense the United States acts as a protector for Taiwan in the world in the face of some of the concerns vis-à-vis China. So my understanding is that the United States' position is in favour of this.

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian: Mr. Speaker, in the member's last sentence he said that the U.S. is in favour of this observer membership, but I do not think it is the case that the hon. member is correct. Maybe he could discuss this with his colleagues and ask them exactly what the U.S. policy is on this issue. How does he compare his policy and that of the U.S. government concerning Taiwan's participation in the WHO?

Mr. Reed Elley: Mr. Speaker, I think the question the hon. member should be asking is not what the United States feels about this issue but indeed what Canada feels about it. This is the Canadian Parliament. We represent the Canadian people. We have the opportunity to make some kind of decision that could be a world leader in this. Indeed, maybe my hon. colleague should consult his own constituents on this and vote perhaps more with the wishes of his constituents.

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague's stand defending the sovereignty of Canada. Last month when we were discussing the Iraqi situation he was against the sovereignty of Canada and said we should follow American foreign policy. Now he has changed his mind. That was April and this is May. Is this the way it is going to go? How far are we going to go in giving in to U.S. pressure?

Having said that, prior to becoming the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I signed petitions supporting this concept, but however, now that I am the parliamentary secretary to the minister I suppose my position would be different from what it was. I would not vote against it, but certainly now I abstain from it.

Mr. Reed Elley: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is asking the wrong member of this party that question. He says that I supported the United States position in the war against Iraq. Indeed, I was one of two members of this party who did not support my party's position on it. We have the freedom in this party to go against the wishes of our party if we can prove that our constituents are indeed against something. In fact, that was my position.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I highly appreciate the opportunity to speak on this very important motion on behalf of the constituents of Surrey Central. In fact, as the foreign affairs critic for Asia-Pacific for the official opposition, I have been quite interested in this particular motion. I have prepared for one week to make comments on it, but as my time is limited I will try to make the best use of it.

We know that for the last week or so we have had devastating experiences with SARS as well as the mad cow disease. We know that it has serious consequences for Canada as well as for the international community. With globalization the world has shrunk

and where there are so many opportunities we have many challenges as well.

While domestic policies are obviously important, international perspective and foreign policy are acquiring more and more prominence. If we truly live in a global village there is a need to reform the global institutions, enhance global cooperation, share global information, share privileges and responsibilities in the global village, restore discipline, and have good standards, whether it is health standards or any other standards. We also should promote good governance, et cetera. The global village should have a global spirit and it is desperately needed.

Diseases do not respect political boundaries of nations. Therefore, the old saying is still true: prevention or control is better than cure. That is what today's motion is all about.

Taiwan has undergone a dramatic transition. On the economic front, Taiwan has continued to grow and prosper. It is the world's 12th largest trading power and has trade with Canada valued at over \$5 billion.

We know that a huge Taiwanese community lives in Canada and that about 150,000 Taiwanese visit Canada each year. There are 150,000 immigrants of Taiwanese descent who live here and there are 15,000 students. We also have direct air links with Taiwan.

Taiwan's achievements in the field of health are substantial, whether it is in life expectancy, mortality rates, eradication of diseases or vaccinations. It has 14 internationally recognized medical schools and a sophisticated research system. These things are very important.

We know that the decades long dispute over Taiwan's status has impaired its participation in international organizations. The World Health Assembly, the World Health Organization's governing body, has 191 members, but Taiwan's bid to join as an observer was not successful two weeks ago. Member countries are allowing political pressure to stand in the way of what is right. Regrettably, it can come at the cost of human lives and fundamental human rights violations.

Taiwan was a co-founder of the World Health Organization in 1948 but had to withdraw. Taiwan now seeks only observer status, not full status. We know that non-sovereign bodies like Palestine, the Holy See, the International Red Cross and the Order of Malta all are observer members of the WHO.

With a population of 23 million, Taiwan is larger than 75% of the 148 countries that are members of the WHO, whose universal health mandate prompted it to include as member states even those that do not belong to the United Nations, giving certain states observer status, including Niue, whose population is less than 2,000, and the Cook Islands, whose population is only 21,000. We also know that Taiwan is a self-governing democracy, responsible for its own defence and international relations.

Taiwan's exclusion from the WHO means that the Taiwanese people are denied access to the newest medical treatments and procedures, also putting Canadians at risk because we have that direct link I mentioned earlier.

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●(1810)

Since Taiwan was allowed to become a full member of the World Trade Organization, as was China, I find it very strange and surprising why the members on the other side will not support Taiwan being given observer status with the WHO. It would increase and enhance the global spirit in the international community to make the world a safer place for all of us.

I hope members from all political parties support the official opposition's motion and at least, from the Canadian point of view, give Parliament the mandate to support Taiwan being given observer status with the World Health Organization.

I see my time has expired. I had more arguments to make but I think they will be for another day.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply is deemed to have been put, and the recorded division is deemed to have been demanded and deferred until Tuesday, May 27, 2003, at 3 p.m.

[English]

Do I have the unanimous consent of the House to see the clock as 6:30?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

EMERGENCY DEBATE

●(1815)

[English]

BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The House will now proceed to the consideration of a motion to adjourn the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely, bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC) moved:

That this House do now adjourn.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the member for Brandon—Souris.

I want to say how pleased we are that the Speaker granted my request, and I know there were requests by members of the Canadian Alliance and other parties, for the debate this evening on the threat to Canada posed by bovine spongiform encephalopathy, BSE, better known as mad cow disease.

The recent discovery of a cow infected with BSE in Alberta is troubling. However thus far it is, thankfully, only a single case. The evidence indicates that the animal never entered the food chain for human consumption. The number of farms in quarantine in Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia is so far not an indication of further cases but rather a testament to the speed with which officials are attempting to understand, decipher and deal with this one isolated case of BSE.

The very fact that the case was detected is a testament to the good work of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Province of Alberta. I commend the quick, efficient and dedicated work of all those officials involved in responding to this incident. Too often we forget and undervalue the tremendous work of people who work in the public interest and who are called to come forth in times of emergency. These people did that and they performed exceptionally well in this case.

However the reason so many members of the House sought an emergency debate is that we need to know precisely what the federal government intends to do now. It has the opportunity tonight to come and tell Parliament and the people.

Canada's beef industry is one of the largest in the world, second only to Australia and the United States, earning around \$8 billion a year. Many individual Canadians face serious financial challenges as a result of the concerns generated by BSE.

No one here wants to play games of jurisdiction and I would implore the federal government not to get involved in any of those. Canada is a federal state and we have made that federalism work. We continue to be a world leader in health and safety standards. Canada's record of herd health is beyond reproach. We have earned a strong international reputation as the provider of the safest and highest quality beef in the world.

It is obvious that the magnitude of the threat posed by BSE is much bigger than simply one cow in one herd in Alberta. The Prime Minister—and I understand he did it to minimize to concern—runs the risk of minimizing the size of the problem by talking as though it is only one cow. What is at issue here is the highly valued and hard-earned international reputation of an essential multi-billion dollar Canadian industry.

The top five importers of Canadian beef, the United States, Mexico, Japan, South Korean and Taiwan, have now closed their borders to our exports. Other countries are following suit. These actions are costing the industry an estimated \$6.3 million a day.

More broadly speaking, this case of BSE will have wide implications across the Canadian economy. Related food, transportation, hospitality and tourism industries are also threatened by potential damage from mad cow disease and the damaged reputation that this find has generated. Some estimates have placed that damage in many billions of dollars.

Quick action must be taken to protect our reputation and restore the much deserved confidence in the Canadian beef industry.

The first action that must be taken is to ensure that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has the resources and the capacities to conduct a timely and thorough investigation into this incident of BSE. The government must quickly trace any cattle or calves that may have come into contact with BSE and/or with feed made from the remains of cattle or calves.

The Progressive Conservative Party has long called for additional resources for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. The government needs to respond quickly to the agency's request for more funding for tracing and containment efforts.

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Federal coordination is essential to ensure that all the facts are known, the history of the animal in question has been traced, any other potential cases have been tracked down and the incident of BSE has been completely contained and eliminated.

Questions need to be asked as to whether there is any way to improve federal coordination.

● (1820)

Questions need to be asked as to whether there is any way to improve federal coordination. Are there any improvements that can be made to our national standards and the degree of consistency in food safety from jurisdiction to jurisdiction? Should there be further prohibitions on the use of animal remains from being used as animal feed or should high risk animal parts, such as brains or spinal cords, be banned from any human or animal consumption?

Questions should be asked about whether the current amount of inspectors and labs is sufficient. While some additional funding has been added in recent years, some labs have had their capacities reduced and pathologists are in shorter supply. Alberta agriculture's chief provincial veterinarian has estimated that between \$6 million and \$10 million are needed to fully restore inspection facilities.

Canada needs to examine whether our current food and agriculture emergency response system, known as FAERS, is as comprehensive and efficient as it should be. There are, however, no set criteria that need to be met in order to enact that response system and emergency actions remain up to the discretion of the minister. Under what specific criteria will the minister decide what emergency measures are necessary in this case? I hope he will be in the House tonight to spell those measures out.

I want to come to the question of compensation. In response to the ice storm that ravaged Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick in 1998, the federal government contributed more than \$717 million to counteract more than \$1 billion in damage. The federal government should be prepared to compensate and protect industries whose business is damaged and whose reputation is tarnished as a result of BSE.

I should make the point that existing programs will not be enough. Existing emergency assistance programs, apart from taking too long to kick in, will not in the aggregate deal with the concerns and the problems that this is bound to cause in the industry across the country. Certainly programs of support in agriculture itself are not enough. The Prime Minister and the government should stop pretending that there is some money out there waiting to be called upon by individuals. What they need to do instead is very clearly and quickly ante up for people whose livelihoods may be devastated and severely affected in these cases.

We have seen what happened in SARS. In SARS the economic victims are people largely in the greater Toronto area who are people often of low incomes, people often operating small businesses, people not able to deal with this sudden attack upon their livelihood that came from the SARS case. The same thing applies in the cattle industry.

Today my colleague from Perth made the point about the layoff of some 100 people in Guelph. There are problems of that kind across

the country and those simply must be addressed. There can be no playing around on the question of compensation.

Once the situation is under control and the major immediate questions have been answered, the government must take the lead in securing the Canadian beef industry's access to foreign markets. A concerted effort must be made to counteract any damage that has been done to our reputation abroad.

Obviously one area where the government has to move immediately to restore confidence is the United States. As the largest client of our beef industry, 40% of Canadian beef exports go to the United States. Another large segment of our exports traverse the U.S. en route to Mexico, our second biggest client.

We should, by the way, speaking of the United States, not to be offensive or combative, we should note the intervention of Senator Byron Dorgan of North Dakota. His intervention demonstrates that some Americans are prepared to exploit a crisis and misrepresent the facts to promote their own interests. In that context it is worth noting that between 1996-2002 several states in the United States, including Colorado, Kansas, Montana, South Dakota, have faced the challenge of chronic wasting disease in wild deer and elk. The Americans have also faced their own interstate bans such as the recent Ohio ban on importing deer and elk from Wisconsin.

This is a serious problem that needs to be addressed seriously on both sides of the border and it should not be exploited by Senator Dorgan or by anyone else.

The United States and all of Canada's customers have a right to demand assurances that Canadian beef is safe and the highest of quality. We must prove those assurances on the facts. We can work with the Americans and our other trading partners to avoid further drawn out border disputes that threaten an essential Canadian industry.

The Prime Minister should be involved in this issue directly. He should be talking directly to the President of the United States and making it clear that it is in both countries' interests to deal with the concerns raised by this discovery.

● (1825)

The government must assure that the free flow of goods across the border will resume and that the restrictions on Canadian beef are removed as soon as possible.

I see the signal that my time has expired. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your attention and I thank the House for granting this emergency debate on what is undoubtedly a very serious problem that must be addressed in the country.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, this is an extremely troublesome and problematic issue facing Canada's beef industry, without question. It is the first case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in 10 years in Canada. It raises the issue of the human variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, and immediately Canadian consumers are on the defensive.

This begs another question. I see the government on the defensive as well. It has reacted to this, and I thank the Speaker for granting the emergency debate. However I would like the right hon. member's opinion on this point.

I just left the aboriginal affairs committee, which has been meeting since 8 o'clock this morning. I asked the chair of that committee to cancel and abandon the committee to allow all members on it to participate in this debate because of the extreme set of circumstances.

This is an emergency, recognized by the House of Commons and the Speaker of the House of Commons, that takes precedence over the work of the House. Yet the chair of the committee completely refused to abandon debate at committee. It is still sitting, members are having their supper and the Liberal and opposition members on that committee will have no opportunity to participate in this debate. It is a total dereliction of duty on behalf of the government to recognize the important issue that it is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Before I give the floor to the right hon. member for Calgary Centre, I made the mistake of asking for questions and comments, and there are none. However now that the hon. member for South Shore has asked a question, I will allow the right hon. member for Calgary Centre to respond.

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Speaker, I regret the behaviour in the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources. I have been there part of this afternoon myself, and it will be raised in the House tomorrow. There has been a series of quite untoward decisions by the chair.

Let me take the opportunity to make one thing very clear. There has been the discovery of a very serious disease that has apparently been limited now to one cow. However what has also been demonstrated by this experience is the excellence of the Canadian inspection team, the excellence of our scientists and the very high standards that protect Canada's invaluable reputation as a provider of food to the world. That is as important a reality as this surprise discovery on a farm in northwestern Alberta.

Without diminishing at all the importance of a threat that surprise discovery has generated, we should not allow any panic about the very high standard of food safety and the very high and exacting standard of inspection. Had there not been an exacting standard of inspection, this cow would never have been identified in the first instance. That is the message that should be sent to the world.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the right hon. gentleman from Calgary Centre for allowing me to speak after him for a short period of time on this very important issue. I also thank the right hon. gentleman for taking the initiative in putting forward his request for this emergency debate. Coming from Alberta and from cattle country, I know he recognizes the importance of this issue. I know he recognizes the importance of the livelihoods that are currently being affected, not only in his constituency but also in many constituencies across this country.

I would like to open my remarks by saying something that I just said in the agriculture committee a few moments ago. I congratulate the CFIA, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and its staff for what I consider to be a yeoman's duty and job on this incident. I will never congratulate the government, but I will congratulate the department itself. It has kept an open line of communication, and it is transparent. It is a very serious issue, which the department dealt with immediately.

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When officials found out there was a case in Alberta, it did not take CFIA very long to get the second test performed in our own labs in Winnipeg and to get a third test, confirming that test, out of London, England. The officials did what they had to do, and that in itself speaks to what the right hon. gentleman just talked about and that is the absolutely, totally safe food supply we have in Canada. I stand by that.

I say to every Canadian who will listen that we are very blessed to have a system in place to catch this type of incident. The fact is if that system were not in place, we would be suspect, but we are not suspect. We have very talented people in place. We have excellent individuals within CFIA who are prepared to put an effort into to ensure we have the safest food supply, not only in North America but in the world.

As mentioned by the right hon. member, one incident of BSE has been identified. I will not pronounce it as my colleague from South Shore did, but will just use the term BSE. In some 13.4 million cattle in Canada, one incident of this disease has been found. That is not to downplay what has happened because one incident is too much as we have seen already by the ramifications of that incident. What it tells us is that out of 13.4 million cattle, the process worked.

This debate tonight is more of an information session for the public than it is for us in the House. We in the House agree to the fact that our food supply is safe. The public has to recognize that this one incident involved an animal that never made it into the food chain. Provincial inspectors in Alberta caught the animal and disqualified it from the food chain. It went through a different process, and that is the rendering process. It did not get into the food chain, and that is a positive thing to know.

The CFIA got to work at that point in time and quarantined the case herd up in northern Alberta. Those animals were tested. Unfortunately, the only way to test is by depopulating the animal herd, and this was done. Officials tested all those animals and found they were free of BSE, as was expected by the way.

I had a conference call this past week with one of the doctors in which I asked him why the animals had to be destroyed. I told him I knew they had to test for BSE and that this herd probably did not have any other animals with this disease. The answer the doctor gave me was to bring consumer confidence back. He said that they were 99.999% assured that not one animal in that herd had BSE but the herd was put down simply to ensure people that we have confidence in our system. No other animals had BSE. I am sure the other quarantined herds that will be depopulated and will probably also be destroyed will show there is no other incidents of BSE. The system is all about that. It is about getting confidence back into the system.

● (1830)

I would just like to touch on a couple of things very quickly. One is to say to the government, let us be proactive in this issue and not reactive. That was touched on very eloquently by the right hon. member. We should not worry about nickels and dimes here. We have to ensure that the proper supports are put into place to ensure that the people, who are currently suffering, suffer no longer.

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People in my constituency have called me and cry because they have no idea, no confidence, no understanding as to what will happen to them and their livelihoods from this day forward. We need to have systems in place. Financial systems, yes, but we also need to have social support systems in place to be supportive. We have agricultural people in every community in the country. Let us those people and that resource to assist the people who are currently in jeopardy. It is deep, serious jeopardy. Financially, yes, we have to have systems in place. Forget nickel and diming, as I said, and let us ensure we have it.

As the member said, when we had issues with the ice storm across Quebec and Ontario, dollars were there magically. Let us make dollars appear magically right now and let us ensure that those people who have those herds, who cannot sell those fat cattle and who cannot pay their farm payments right now have that support.

I had more people phone me up in the last week to say that they would be unable to generate enough cash to make their payments in the summer. As we probably know, or should know, agriculture payments are usually semi-annual, one in the summer and one in the fall. Unfortunately, now is the time they need the cash and they cannot get it. Maybe we should put in programs right now that allow Farm Credit Canada to allow dollars to flow so those people can make their payments or extend their payments. At least it would give them some confidence that there is some future for them.

We talked about not just the producers being affected, but the people on the periphery around agriculture, and they are substantial. It is a \$30 billion industry if we take in the trucking, the auction marts and the packing plants. People do not know whether they will have a job today, tomorrow or next week. We have to put the support systems in place. That is proactive. Let us take it off the shelf, put it on the table and say how we will help those people who now have some difficulties.

That is the minister's responsibility, the department's responsibility and the government's responsibility. They have to react quickly because right now there are too many people who do not see a tomorrow. We have to give them a tomorrow and we have to give them hope so they can feed their families, pay their mortgages and make the payment that is on the baling equipment sitting in their backyard.

The last thing I would like to say is Canadians must recognize that this is a one-of occurrence, we hope. I should say there are some positive things. Let us give the producers some hope.

One thing I have seen over the last week is that the Americans, as I understand, want this border open as quickly as we do. I can honestly say, and again I will give some credit where credit is due, we have not had a terribly good relationship with the Americans on a number of issues, agriculture being one. We have country of origin labelling and we have other issues with which this government and this ministry did not deal very well. However, I can give it some credit where credit is due; it has dealt with this.

The Americans have been helping. They have USDA people here. They have been helping with making lab facilities available for us. They know they need us as badly as we need them. If there is a little ray of sunshine, Secretary of Agriculture Veneman certainly wants

this issue resolved as quickly as we want it resolved, as quickly as the producers who have their trucks sitting at the border with fat cattle sitting in them want it resolved.

I can see that this has some positive opportunities to it. I hope it is not a week, three weeks or three months that this issue has to go before we can resolve it. I hope we can deal with this in the next 24 hours. I would like to hear from the minister, when he gets up to respond, just what kind of a timeline he sees because there are too many people in my constituency and constituencies across the country who need that little ray of hope. We do not need something dangled out there saying that it will happen. We know it will happen but we need it to happen sooner. We need it to happen now.

I pledge, and I know my leader, the right hon. gentleman will also pledge, as much support as we can give them as the Progressive Conservative Party to make this work.

● (1835)

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the opposition for asking for this debate, more appropriately this information session. I had already spoken to our House leader saying that we needed to have an opportunity such as this to tell Canadians about the situation that we are in. Because of the press coverage that we have had this weekend and this past week, I am sure every Canadian already knows about it.

As hon. members who have already spoken have pointed out very clearly, and I thank them for that, this was one cow out of over 13 million in the Canadian herd and one cow out of 3.6 million that are slaughtered each year in Canada. The system worked because the cow was found and the cow did not go into the food chain.

As has already been said, I too want to congratulate the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the agriculture and agri-food people in the government for the quick work that they did. When we look back at the proactive actions that have been taken over the last number of years in order to be ready for this type of situation if, unfortunately, it did happen, it proves that being proactive is far more effective than being reactive.

And because of that, within a very short time of discovering this, the federal government was informed by the province a week ago last Friday that there was a possible positive case of BSE. We tested it in the Winnipeg lab. At the time, I was out of the country and scheduled to give a keynote address at an international conference on food production in London, England, on Monday morning at 9:30.

I was informed on Saturday morning, London time, that we might have a BSE case and that the sample was being retested. I was informed late Sunday night that, unfortunately, it was confirmed positive. This was one time that I wished that we had proven that some people read something wrong, but I am proud that they read it right.

However, I wish that they had not had the opportunity. I immediately made the decision that I would return home. Instead of speaking at 9:30 the next morning, I left for the airport at 8:30. When we had the final confirmation from the lab in England early Tuesday morning, I was with my provincial colleague in Edmonton at 11 o'clock Edmonton time, just about three hours after we received the final final confirmation.

We have an excellent system here. We have been able to trace that animal through a number of different approaches. We certainly know where the animal was in the last few years. It was not an eight year old animal. It was about a six year old animal. We traced where it was through most of its lifetime.

We are taking a couple of tracks and we are confident that one track is almost 100%. Just in case it is not, we are going in the other direction as well. We have traced the animals that have left that herd where that case cow was and gone forward. We have traced the meat meal that was made from the animal from the rendering plant out to the feed mills and to the farms, and all the places that it went.

Some people have had the concern that as there were more quarantine sites, it meant that the disease was spreading. The disease was not spreading, but the trace out system was. Certainly, we hope that as the science and the work is done that we will be able to remove some of those quarantines. Will we be putting some animals down? Yes, and we already have.

As has already been said, the only way to test for this disease is to test the brain. All of the case herd have been put down. They all tested negative and negative is good. We wanted a negative test for BSE. We have put other livestock down as well.

• (1840)

I know nobody likes to put animals down for this kind of reason. We will not put down more animals than is necessary, but we will put down as many animals as is necessary because safety is number one and we will base those decisions on science.

The question has been raised about the timeline of getting the U.S. border opened with our largest customer. Those who have been following this closely have seen and heard Secretary Ann Veneman. I have had numerous phone calls with her. Those who have spoken are right. She has said to me that she wanted the border opened as badly as I did and I said that I wanted it opened pretty badly. So, we both agreed.

The industry is integrated between Canada and the United States. There are over half a million Canadian cattle in American feedlots and breeding herds. It is an integrated market, not only within Canada but also within North America. We have a North American reputation to protect as well. She has recognized that it is one cow and she has highly recognized our system here.

For example, this morning I had a call from a minister in Uruguay telling me very clearly that our system is respected and that there is confidence in our system. The European Union has not banned our product. It says that it has full confidence in our system.

As we go forward over the next few days, and I certainly hope it is a few days, I will be unable to give a timeline of exactly when the border might be opened. We will move as quickly as we can. It does take a little bit of time to put the animals down and to test the samples of the brains.

For those who wonder about the compensation to producers, we have regulations in Canada for any of these types of situations. The producers are compensated for their animals. The compensation is based on the market for those animals for the last number of months, not the market just on that day. For producers who are not able to sell

their stock now, there is also the proposed business risk management program.

I now have the authority from my Treasury Board to sign it. As soon as the province has signed it, the business risk management program will be available for producers. It is better than the programs that have been there in the past. That was verified by the third party review assessment group in the not too distant past.

We have tried to be, I hope successfully, as up front and out there as we possibly can giving everyone all the information as quickly as we get it. We have put in place toll free lines and we have received well over a thousand calls from people wanting more information. We have quarantined 17 different sites to date. The tracking and tracing system is working quite well. We have the best tracking and tracing system in the world. We can be proud of that and the work that has been done.

When it comes to food safety, the investment that the government made in food safety, the environment, different areas in research, and the announcement that the Prime Minister and I made last June showed the proactive approach. It is a proactive approach that we wanted to put in place, but certainly did not hope or expect that we would have to use it for this reason at this time. Nevertheless it is something that we certainly will continue to build upon and work with the industry as we planned by putting in place even more rapidly food safety plans on farms as well as all the way through the food chain.

That is there now, but what we have been doing, and will continue to do, is to look at this and if there are some changes we see that are necessary to make it even better we will certainly do that. It is the same with the tracking and tracing system.

• (1845)

Two and a half years ago we started working with the beef industry in an identification program for beef cattle in Canada. As of July 1, 2002, it became law. Any animal, whether it is a dairy animal that has finished its dairy production and is going on to slaughter, and any animal that leaves a farm in Canada must have an ear tag which is registered in the system so that we know where the animal came from and it can be tracked.

This animal did not have that. We know the farm it came from because it was after 2002, but since it was born before that system was in place we did not have that information. However, there was some excellent work done by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the provincial governments. I want to stress here that the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and B.C. have been extremely cooperative on this and they have been able to trace through records. The farms have been extremely cooperative on this as well and that is why we have been able to trace it.

In the future we will be able to trace it even better. For any animals that leave farms, we will not only know where they have been but we will know where they are. When they go somewhere, we will know where they went because that will all be in the system.

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We have provincial slaughter facilities and we have federal slaughter facilities. I have full confidence in the safety of the food coming out of both of those systems. The difference being that in provincial slaughter houses the meat that is slaughtered there cannot be marketed outside that province. As far as health and safety is concerned, it is the same as the federal inspection. It was the provincial system that pulled this cow out of the food chain and tested it, and then passed the results on to the federal government.

However, in Whitehorse, ministers at the federal-provincial meeting in June 2001 said very clearly not only on this issue but on environmental and farm food safety issues that we need to go to national standards. If meat is going to cross the border of a province or out of the country it must have federal certification. We are well along in discussions with the provinces to combine those two systems into one system of inspection and certification.

Anything that we need to do is already underway. There is no question that because of this incident it has demonstrated that we must move even quicker than we had previously planned on.

I also wish to thank the United States. It has sent pathologists and its top person on BSE to Canada for a few days. It has offered its laboratories as have other countries. The United Kingdom has offered support to us. We think back when it had the terrible situation of foot and mouth disease. We sent a number of veterinarians and people over there to help. The United Kingdom has offered to do that and we certainly appreciate the support from everyone.

I am not diminishing the seriousness of this in any way, shape or form. The economic effect that this is will have will hopefully be only short term, for everyone in the beef industry and the spinoff industries from that. However, as far as food safety is concerned, we must keep it in perspective.

In closing, we can be proud of the system that we have. We can be proud of the fact that we constantly review it. Resources will not and are not a limiting factor. I am pleased that the Treasury Board has already said to us that it will be there if needed. That may very well be the case. But it was one cow. Our system found it and it did not go into the food chain.

•(1850)

I look forward to the comments of others. I may not be able to stay for the whole session this evening because of another committee that I am supposedly chairing, but again I want to thank the opposition for giving everyone the opportunity for what I consider to be an information session for Canadians and the House tonight.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake.

I rise tonight to address a very serious issue that is impacting all Canadians. That is the recent confirmation that BSE or mad cow disease has occurred. It has sent shock waves through the Canadian cattle industry. It has also led our trading partners to question the safety of the product that they are consuming.

As Leader of the Opposition, let me make this clear. As someone who is no defender, as everyone will know, of the government or its performance, let me state as clearly as possible that Canada has the

safest food supply in the world. I have complete confidence that our food inspection system would not allow any infected animal into Canada's food supply, nor does the system allow for any animals that might test positive for BSE to move into the ruminant feed supply. In fact, the recent testing of the 150 cattle from the index herd has revealed no additional incident of BSE. Therefore I state again that Canada has the safest food supply in the world.

The reason I can say this with such confidence is that after the outbreak of BSE in the United Kingdom in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency took steps to prevent the introduction of BSE into Canada. For example, it has done the following: first, prohibiting the importation of products assessed to have a high risk of introducing BSE into Canada; second, only permitting the importation of meat and meat products from countries considered BSE free; third, creating a surveillance program in 1992 to test the brains of cattle for disease, since which time approximately 10,000 cattle have been tested; fourth, since 1997 banning the feeding of rendered protein products from ruminant animals to other ruminants; fifth, since 1990 making BSE a reportable disease; sixth, implementing all advice based on scientific facts that have been learned in the past 17 years since Great Britain had its BSE crisis; seventh and finally, assisting in the development of the Canadian cattle identification tagging program which tracks individual cattle from birth to slaughter.

It was important to take these steps to protect Canada's beef industry not only for consumers and for our trading partners but for the industry itself. As of February of this year there were nearly 13.4 million beef and dairy cattle in Canada. That is one cow for every 2.2 people. It is a huge industry. It has an enormous economic impact in this country.

Agrifood contributes 8.5% to Canada's GDP, but of all the sectors in the agrifood industry, beef production is the largest contributor to that figure. Last year alone the farm cash receipts for the sale of cattle was \$7.6 billion. The economic impact to the industry extends well beyond the farm gate. Beef production contributes to the processing, retail, food service and transportation sectors and with all of these considered, beef production adds about \$26 billion to the Canadian economy and employs about 100,000 people. This is why this one reported case of BSE is so important to all Canadians.

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I must admit that when the announcement came last Tuesday, I was very shocked. I was of course pleased by how so many people responded and not the least bit surprised by the strong response from my senior agriculture critic, the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake. He was right on top of this immediately, asking for this debate and consulting with his colleagues across all political parties. I was also pleasantly surprised at the speed at which the government informed the Canadian public, the industry and our trading partners. Unlike the outbreak of SARS in Toronto where the minister and Prime Minister were nowhere to be found, our ministers of agriculture at both levels were front and centre answering the tough questions.

The daily briefings by the CFIA to the public and by the minister's office to members of Parliament have been helpful. They have been required to keep everyone informed and to prevent any kind of over-reaction. It is imperative that these briefings continue and that information is readily available to everyone here and around the world.

However, despite the positive aspects of the government's response, there is a significant underlying problem that we have to be frank about. That is the failure of the government to maintain solid, positive relations with our largest trading partner, the United States.

• (1855)

Seventy-five per cent of the exports of the beef industry go to the United States. Therefore, as of last Tuesday Canadians lost access to about \$3 billion worth of their markets. The industry is losing millions of dollars daily. Because of our poor relations, some U.S. senators are looking for protectionist excuses and are calling on their government to keep our borders closed for an extended period of time even if no more cases of BSE are found.

What influence do we have in this kind of situation? Obviously the influence that the Canadian government has most strongly to deal with protectionist pressures in congress is normally in the executive branch of the government. But who is President Bush more likely to listen to on this matter, his own senators or a Liberal government with members who insult the president and the American people with impunity?

The Minister of Agriculture has been in contact with Secretary Veneman, but why has the Prime Minister not called President Bush to discuss this situation? We have asked this question already about the reconstruction of Iraq. We have asked it about SARS. We have asked these questions over and over again because all these situations have the potential to have a serious impact on the Canadian economy. In the case of SARS and in the case of this problem, there is the potential to do serious damage to the Canadian economy. We will need the Americans to be sympathetic to our interests rather than be hostile. The eating of a steak by the Prime Minister is simply not enough.

The next question is what has to be done in the future. The ongoing traces must be completed as expediently and accurately as possible. The government cannot drag its feet in determining the origin of the cow or the extent of this problem. It must continue to work with our trading partners to ensure they have every confidence in our food exports.

We know that members of Canada's cattle industry have visited our trading partners. The Minister of Agriculture and the Prime Minister should be part of these face to face meetings.

Of course we all hope that the border will reopen as soon as possible, perhaps tomorrow. But if it does not, the government will need to have a contingency plan in place to help mitigate the negative economic impact on the Canadian economy. The disaster safety net component under the agricultural policy framework cannot respond to a disastrous loss of our export markets.

The recent outbreak of SARS in Toronto resulted in layoffs. The government waived the two week waiting period for employment insurance in some affected areas. Layoffs are already occurring as a result of the BSE case, as I raised today. These workers should be given the same consideration as those workers in Toronto industries affected by SARS.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the Canadian cattle industry for its efforts in the creation of the Canadian cattle identification system. This system has enabled the tracking of some of the cattle involved in this investigation and will ensure that all are fully traceable in the future.

The cattle industry implemented the identification system in 2001. Unlike the bloated gun registry, this identification system has had 100% compliance and has registered nearly 25 million cattle for only \$4 million. It is extremely impressive and indicates the efficiency of this system. Maybe the government should take some tips from people in the cattle industry on how to create an effective gun registry system, but that is a debate for another time. My guess is they would tell it not to create one at all.

I will be very brief as I see my time is almost out. Canada, we know, has the best farmers, the best food producers in the world. There are no straighter shooters and better people in this country than cattlemen. We should all be proud of that. We should not buy into the media hype. We should not buy into any doomsday predictions. Canadians should stand by our farm families through this crisis. Let us get past it and let us all go and have a steak for dinner.

• (1900)

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we meet here tonight in an emergency debate on an extremely serious issue. The issue is serious not in the area of health or food safety for Canadians. The issue is an economic emergency, an economic crisis that is affecting individual farm families and ranch families that depend on their cattle in particular for their livelihood.

It is not only the cattle producers of the country who have problems with this. It is every agricultural producer who produces ruminant animals. Bison is a growing industry in the country. I have neighbours in my area where I ranch who are exporting bison into the United States. There is a killing plant in North Dakota and from there it goes not only into North America but around the world. It is a delicacy in many areas.

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The emergency is the economic well-being of thousands of Canadians and the stress it is putting on farm families, many of whom already have a lot of stress.

I will continue with that issue in just a minute, but I want to point out that when the issue arose on Tuesday and the government made its announcement through the federal Minister of Agriculture and the minister in Alberta, I commended the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and those two ministers in doing what was not done in Great Britain.

In Great Britain when the BSE outbreak happened 17 years ago, they tried to cover it up. They tried to tell the British people that there was no problem. That led to a distrust by consumers of their own government and their own industry. The reputation of farmers sank very low, almost worse than politicians.

In Canada we have a case where Canadians are looking at the reaction not only of the government members but the opposition members, all of whom wanted this emergency debate tonight. They are reassured that they can hear, see and question politicians and get the facts. We should not be believed blindly though. What has happened is that the scientific community and the university community have kicked in and are giving us independent facts.

That was the other problem in Britain 17 years ago. A lot of the science on BSE was unknown. No one had ever heard of this disease. For several years after BSE became known, Britain continued to feed renderings from ruminants back to ruminants and it spread the disease.

We do not do that in Canada. Since 1997 we have outlawed that as a feeding practice. That is why Canadians can be so confident that the food supply in our stores is as safe today as it was before last Tuesday when that case was discovered.

I know the government is working to do the trace-out and determine where the cow came from and where the offspring came from. It is working diligently to determine how the animal happened to come down with BSE and we will have to let that investigation go on.

I mentioned earlier the economic impact on the farm families. The average cattle operation, which relies on cattle and does not rely on grain or anything else, has probably in the neighbourhood of 250 to 500 cows in order to have a half reasonable living for a farm family.

●(1905)

Before last Tuesday, the inventory value for an average family with a small operation was anywhere between \$500,000 and \$700,000 worth of live animals out in the pasture and in the feedlot. By 4 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon their inventory value was at zero. The auction markets closed. That is what we are dealing with here. That is the importance of this issue.

Farm families have to make mortgage payments and they need to buy food. They spend on all the things that other Canadians, who have paycheques coming in, do. They still have these expenses but in fact they have no cashflow.

The urgency of the debate tonight is to re-establish our ability to export not only to the United States but to all our major customers around the world.

During question period this afternoon the member for Medicine Hat asked the Minister of Agriculture exactly what criteria was needed in order to conform with the requirements of our trading partners, the people to whom we want to sell our meat and our live cattle. The answer was accurate but only partially there. The answer was that they were doing the tracing. Well the investigation is very important but we know that the United States has questioned whether our regulatory system is in fact capable of guaranteeing this level of safe food supply for our exports. That has to be addressed.

We know that certain senators down in the United States have said that the timeframe of four months was too long from the time the animal was slaughtered until the brain tissue was actually examined. I agree that the timeframe was too long but my question and the question from the member for Medicine Hat for the minister was whether that was a requirement. We wanted to know if the United States was asking us to fix that.

The government has to tell Canadian farmers what the criteria is that not only the government has to meet but that they have to meet in order to reopen these borders. Tonight I am hoping that the government members, in consultation with the minister, can expand on just what Ann Veneman, the secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture, has said is the specific criteria that we need to meet in order to start exporting again. Is it more inspectors? Is their HACCP program right? They are criticizing a certain part of it. We know that Senator Dorgan of course is criticizing but we will take that with a grain of salt. However they are not to be taken lightly and that is what we need from the government.

We do not need to be talking about compensation programs right now because there is no compensation program that will be able to cover a livestock industry that is based on exports. There is no market in Canada today because the price for our cows is based on exports. It is not based on a closed domestic market. If it were we would not be worrying about this. It is based on exports and that is why reopening the borders to our trading partners is so important.

Once again I want to emphasize this because it is so important. The government needs to tell farmers, ranchers and all Canadians exactly what it is that will open up that border. That is a reasonable request. If the answer is that they have not really told us specifically, that is fine, that is a legitimate answer, but I believe they may have given some very specific suggestions and I invite the government members, in response to these speeches from the opposition side, to try to cover these and give us some assurance that the border will be open within the next few weeks.

●(1910)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this emergency debate requested by the Progressive Conservative Party and consented to by all of the political parties. It goes without saying that the first priority for the Bloc Québécois is protecting the public and the need to protect the confidence of our trading partners.

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We must point out the good work done by food inspectors, as well as the organizational work that this crisis requires. We commend the efforts of those involved, but we also need to learn lessons from the experience and the Bloc Québécois would like to suggest a few solutions.

First, we need to take a more regional approach to health practices. While only one case of mad cow disease was diagnosed in Alberta, all of the provinces were affected by embargos from our trading partners. The American embargo on all ruminants has hit us especially hard, because the U.S. is our main buyer. While the Bloc Québécois acknowledges that the American decision was reasonable during the diagnostic stage, we feel that it is unfair to continue the embargo when only one province is involved.

I would like to point out that with the controls Quebec has in place, if it controlled its own borders and health policy as a sovereign state, it would not be affected by the American embargo today.

I would also like to quote the president of the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec, Laurent Pellerin, who said on May 21:

If we were separate provinces each with its own distinct inspection system and if we had a more regional approach to product marketing systems, only one province would have to deal with this problem.

The current situation is especially frustrating for Quebec producers who, for a long time, have had a series of restrictions for the very purpose of ensuring the health of their livestock and the quality of their products. Quebec has not imported any product from countries considered at risk for contamination from mad cow disease for years now. Also, detection procedures were implemented and there has been mandatory reporting of the disease since 1990. Since 1993, well before the 1997 federal ban, Quebec cattle producers have made a commitment to not using meat meal to feed their livestock.

One example of the superiority of the Quebec program is without a doubt the tagging of cattle. Tracing cattle has been implemented in parallel in Canada and in Quebec. Quebec producers had until 2002 to tag their stock. Let us compare the two systems. The Canadian system has no centralized data base, for example. The Quebec system does. Canada collects only birth and death information, while Quebec collects information on all of the animal's comings and goings, such as birth and death, attendance at an agricultural exhibition, sale to a breeder.

The prevention system in place in Quebec is, therefore, highly efficient. The federal government must do everything within its area of jurisdiction to reassure importing countries immediately, so Quebec producers can resume exports.

In the weeks to come, once the federal authorities have established the diagnosis and we have a better idea of the scope of the crisis, the Bloc will ensure that the new measures implemented in order to regain the confidence of our partners will not be imposed coast to coast, that there is some flexibility in the regulations imposed by the government.

●(1915)

Second, it must be admitted that the federal government has neglected food safety. The federal government's inflexibility has kept the strategic framework for agriculture from being put into place so far. This strategic framework, which comprises a food safety and quality aspect and a disaster insurance aspect, needs greater flexibility if the provinces are to accept it and implement it promptly.

The provinces began their negotiations in good faith, and in June 2001 Quebec and several provinces gave agreement in principle. There is, however, no agreement on regulations based on a federal promise that it will show flexibility as far as the mechanisms for application are concerned. The federal government is proving to be inflexible, more concerned with its visibility than with producer safety.

Yet what Quebec is calling for is simple. The Financière agricole du Québec must continue in its role as designer and administrator of the farm risk management program. This is the most significant of Quebec's demands. The farm income stabilization program for Quebec and the farm income stabilization insurance program must be eligible for federal funding. The hang-up as far as the strategic framework for Quebec is concerned is a risk management envelope of \$1.1 billion.

The producers say that the federal proposal is less generous than the previous programs. The federal government must review the methodology of its income stabilization project in order to ensure that producers do not accidentally lose out. The burden of proof is on the shoulders of the federal government.

At the same time, I would like to say something about the neglect that has led to a lack of renewal in the veterinary profession. Let us remember how the faculties of veterinary medicine have struggled for survival. The mad cow crisis reminds us of the importance of trained personnel. The Alberta minister of agriculture pointed out that his province has a severe shortage of veterinary pathologists. In Quebec, Maurice Vigneault, president of the UPA, Lotbinière-Mégantic, recently explained that many producers in his region are suffering because of a shortage of veterinarians. He said that everyone is stressed out. He even reported that five veterinarians at a clinic in Plessisville had chosen to limit their practice to the dairy sector, leaving 80 beef producers to find veterinarians from outside the area. There is a problem.

That is why the Bloc Québécois fought so hard to save the Saint-Hyacinthe faculty of veterinary medicine. Briefly, the facts are as follows.

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The faculty of veterinary medicine of the Université de Montréal is the only veterinary medicine research and teaching facility in Quebec and the only French-language veterinary medicine faculty in North America. There are four faculties of this kind in Canada. The faculty's problems began in 1999 after four lean years during which the budget was cut by 20%. That is when the American Veterinary Medical Association asked the faculty to improve its infrastructures by December 2001. The school had to submit a recovery plan and evidence that the budgets to correct the problems had been approved, which it did in December 2001. The North American association found the medical school's efforts to be sufficient and gave it two more years to find funding. After dozens of interventions and an act of good faith by the Government of Quebec, which came up with \$41 million to modernize the faculty, the federal government agreed, under Bloc Québécois pressure, to contribute \$35 million. It should have contributed \$59 million. Not enough effort was made in terms of funding.

As for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, I will repeat what the Auditor General said:

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency should take additional action to identify what it needs in a future work force.

This was said in reference to the major staff shortage. The urgency to act went unanswered.

• (1920)

Mr. Speaker, you motioned to me. Do I still have one minute or five minutes to finish my speech?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In fact, time has elapsed. The Chair will agree to grant you one more minute.

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to finish. There are many points I would still like to raise, but I would like to conclude quickly by saying that the borders should be opened as soon as possible for Quebec. I hope that the federal government understands that the debate is about flexibility according to the regions affected. Rest assured that the Bloc Québécois will continue to exert pressure at every opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe I was entitled to 20 minutes and you stopped me after 10 minutes. Could you please check with the clerk?

• (1925)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The member is completely right. The timer showed 10 minutes, but in fact, you have 20 minutes. The hon. member still has 10 minutes to continue his speech.

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this very acceptable ruling, except that it has thrown me slightly.

I would like to tell the federal government that it has not done its share to compensate the workers of the softwood lumber industry affected by the trade dispute between Canada and the United States. Furthermore, the workers affected by the cod moratorium and the crab dispute are still waiting for federal assistance.

It must be said that, in all these instances, Quebec acted rapidly so as to focus on priorities. So, a comparison can be drawn with the compensation expected by Quebec and Quebec workers, as well as

by those in the rest of Canada in this sector. This industry will be greatly affected by mad cow disease.

According to estimates, the various bans are costing Quebec producers \$2 million per day, without considering the costs to the truckers, auction workers or meat packers. The economic consequences of a sustained ban on exports are astronomical, even though Quebec had taken all the necessary precautions to prevent such a situation.

Quebec's minister of agriculture has already announced that his department would study the need for compensation. It appears that, already, the price stabilization programs will not be sufficient to cover the losses. Some outputs will not be covered by these programs, for example, dairy calf and cull cattle. Price stabilization mechanisms are not designed to absorb the heavy losses associated with a catastrophe.

Despite appeals for aid, the minister remains silent. All he says is that the measures in place are sufficient. He even said this during a Canwest news broadcast on May 23. However, the minister needs to understand that he must act, as Quebec has done and as some of the provinces are doing. He must do his share. This is an emergency.

The Bloc finds it equally paradoxical that the Americans have imposed a ban on Quebec meat when some American states are much closer to Alberta than Quebec. As long as we belong to the federal system, we will continue to be subject to such paradoxes.

Once the diagnostic phase is complete, meaning once inspectors for the Canada Food Inspection Agency have identified the cause of the disease and the scope of the crisis is known, the federal government must work hard to restore the confidence of consumers and foreign buyers.

We also think that veal could be treated separately right away. That was the case in Europe, because there is no chance that calves could have ingested animal meals, which cause mad cow disease, because they have all been born since the use of animal meal was banned. This means veal could be exempt from the moratorium immediately.

There is also an example that is puzzling. New Castle Disease, which affects all birds including poultry, can destroy a flock quite quickly if animals have not been vaccinated. We know that certain flocks in the United States have been hit by it. What is the CFIA doing? Is it closing the border to all American states? No. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has said that California, Nevada, Arizona and Texas may not export poultry, but that the rest of the states may. Should the same not apply to beef?

There has been only one case in a very specific region. Should Quebec and Ontario not be considered separately, and each region of Canada be considered separately, as we are doing with the United States when it comes to New Castle Disease in poultry?

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In closing, I would like to remind the House that we have already experienced a similar crisis in 1993, when one case was discovered, and we got through it. What is encouraging is that the American minister of agriculture says she is satisfied with the work of the CFIA. She says that the measures are temporary. So, we have hope, but the Canadian minister must lobby hard and inform the American officials.

• (1930)

The Quebec and Canadian industries have demonstrated in the past that their international reputation was very important to them and that they were ready to do everything necessary to maintain the highest possible standard of quality. I am sure they are prepared to do the same today.

[English]

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too am pleased to rise on this emergency debate on BSE. It is my understanding that, as the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food noted in his remarks, this is more an information session than a debate. I appreciate what I have heard so far from all the speakers.

I thought I would add to that by talking a bit about mad cow and the bovine industry in Canada and then turn my thoughts to the ramifications on Canadians and the industry; some regretful look at cuts to federal inspection at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency which occurred about a decade ago and some of the fallout from that perhaps; the meat inspection system as it is today because it does vary from province to province; and finally some interim steps that I think ought to be considered by the government opposite.

Before I begin, I might note, as a number of Canadians are concerned about the diminishing amount of green spaces in Canada, they would really like to see the House of Commons tonight and the number of green spaces available here.

The epidemic of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, BSE, or mad cow disease, has been spreading steadily in Europe for the past 20 years. The discovery of a case of mad cow disease six days ago in Alberta is now testing the measures introduced over the past decade or so to prevent the introduction and propagation of the disease in Canada.

Mad cow disease is a transmissible, a TSE which attacks the central nervous system of cattle. Other types of TSE include scrapie in sheep, chronic wasting disease in deer and elk and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, or CJD in human beings. There is no treatment for the disease and there is no vaccine against it. The exact cause is unknown but as we heard, for those of us who were listening to *As It Happens* yesterday, it appears to be associated with the presence of an abnormal protein called a prion.

It is increasingly agreed that a new form of CJD identified in Great Britain in recent years could be caused by human exposure to BSE or mad cow. The exact origins are still unknown of this disease. An independent study which evaluated the British government's response to the appearance of the disease summed up current scientific knowledge about it.

The report rejected the initial hypothesis that BSE was transmitted by sheep with scrapie, instead suggesting that the disease broke out in the 1970s following a genetic mutation of a single cow. The

carcass of the animal apparently entered the animal food chain because it was common at that time to add meat products, in particular rendered products from ruminants, which are identified as cattle, sheep, goats, deer, elk and bison, to cattle feed. The disease then spread in the late seventies and early eighties because of the use of such feed.

The protein that is linked to BSE is very resistant to heat and other normal procedures for inactivating disease causing agents. This means that it may not be destroyed in the rendering process which processes carcasses at an extremely high temperature.

In 1988, 15 years ago, Great Britain banned the use of rendered material in animal feeds, thus removing potentially contaminated material from the food chain. As a result, the number of BSE cases reported in Great Britain had been dropping progressively since the winter of 1992-93.

The interval between an animal's exposure to BSE and the appearance of symptoms varies on average between three and six years. The animal that was identified in Alberta was apparently six years old. Animals with BSE show a number of different symptoms including nervous or aggressive behaviour, abnormal posture, lack of coordination or difficulty in rising from a lying position. The symptoms may last for a period of two to six months before the animal actually succumbs to the disease.

• (1935)

The first case of BSE diagnosed in Canada was a beef cow that had been imported from Great Britain in 1987 at the age of six months. The second case was discovered, as I and others have noted, on May 20 last week in a cow from an Alberta ranch. Obviously the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is currently investigating how this second case came to be.

Following the discovery of the first case of mad cow in Canada 10 years ago, the animal was destroyed and the government attempted to trace every other head of cattle imported from the United Kingdom between the years 1982 and 1990, the date at which cattle imports from the U.K. were banned.

According to a report by the European Commission's scientific steering committee, Canada imported 160 head of cattle from the U.K. in that eight year period. Of these 160 animals, 53 had been slaughtered and entered the food chain, 16 had died and had been sent for rendering, and 11 were exported out of the country. Of the remaining 80, 79 were traced and withdrawn from production, culled and then incinerated, buried or returned to the U.K. This means that 70 head of cattle that could not be traced at that time either entered the human or animal food chain, to the best of the CFIA's knowledge.

That is a history of what has happened until now. Following the case in 1993, BSE in Canada now is a reportable disease and every suspected case must be reported to a federal veterinarian. There is also a surveillance program under which any cows showing possible symptoms of the disease must be tested.

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Since 2001, in the last two years the Canadian cattle identification program for cattle and bison has backed up this eradication policy and the program makes it possible to follow the movements of individual animals from the herd of origin to the slaughterhouse.

Prior to 1997, there was no restriction on the use of meat meal or bone meal in cattle feed. Since 1997 it has been forbidden to feed ruminants with mammalian meat meal or bone meal except for meal made exclusively from pork or horse meat. Meal prepared from fish or poultry is still permitted for cattle feed. Animal meal is still permitted for feeding poultry, swine and pets. No other BSE specific regulatory measures apply to rendering plants.

Canada also controls imports of products assessed as having a high risk of introducing BSE into Canada. We allow, for example, imports of live ruminants and their meat and meat products only from countries that Canada considers BSE free. According to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Canada has not imported ruminant derived meat meal or bone meal from Europe for the purpose of livestock feeding for more than a decade.

In December 2000, the CFIA suspended imports of rendered animal material of any species from any country that Canada did not recognize as BSE free. Canada is also proceeding with import controls on animal products and byproducts from countries where cases of BSE have been confirmed among non-imported animals. These animal products are evaluated on a case by case basis.

It is still too soon to say how a second case of mad cow disease has occurred. That is indeed what the CFIA inspectors and federal veterinarians are trying to do as they examine the animals that were slaughtered as a result of this one positive case coming to light. They believe that two options are possible. Either the animal was imported from a risk zone and contracted the disease before arriving in Canada, which is a theory that the CFIA appears to have rejected at the present time, or more likely, the animal, whether imported or born in Canada, may have contracted the disease here by consuming feed containing contaminated animal protein.

Whichever hypothesis turns out to be correct, the appearance of a case of BSE raises questions about the measures in place in Canada to restrict imports of animals from risk zones and to prevent contamination of feed intended for cattle as well as monitoring its use.

● (1940)

The ban on Canadian beef exports that began as soon as the positive identification for that black Angus cow in Alberta last week is significant. The Americans of course closed their border, and New Zealand, Japan and other countries did so as well. That of course is having a significant negative impact on a variety of people in the cattle industry. Certainly slaughterhouses and auction houses are cancelling sales, as we have heard this evening. The whole system is being backed up. We export, depending on which province, maybe 30% or 40% of our cattle, most of them to the United States, so a ban at the border will have a very negative impact on all of that.

In my own riding of Palliser, we have a slaughterhouse at Moose Jaw. The Minister of Labour in that province has written to the human resources minister here asking that Ottawa waive the two week waiting period with respect to employment insurance benefits

for any workers whose livelihoods are affected by this mad cow disease and its outbreak.

There are a number of people who are impacted and it is something over which they have no control. In this case some people are on voluntary holidays or layoff for a couple of weeks until we see how long it is going to take for the tests to be concluded and the border to reopen. We are encouraged when we hear the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food say that his counterpart in the United States, Ann Veneman, wants that border open just as badly as he does and we do.

Byron Dorgan, our favourite American senator, and that is said tongue in cheek, says our inspection system was either negligent or incompetent to have waited more than three months to analyze a diseased cow. In fact, it is important to note that this animal was slaughtered or taken to a provincial plant and was put down. It is important to stress that it was not put into the food system, the human food chain. I think perhaps there is some criticism due for the fact that it took three months to analyze and confirm after this animal was killed that it indeed did have BSE or mad cow disease, but it is also important to recognize at the same time that we have had significant concerns in the meat packing, slaughtering and animal industry with CWD in deer and elk. I believe the preoccupation at that plant and that test ground has been to test the elk and the deer heads, and they finally got around to testing this black Angus animal.

Two years ago, the Auditor General reported that CFIA lacked the staff it needed to fulfill its mandate and that some files and problems had been neglected for long periods of time. There are veterinarians who are saying now that the CFIA is not able to keep up to other jurisdictions and does need more resources. I think those are some of the hard questions we need to look at in the wake of what has transpired over the past week.

One of the big questions in this case is whether the diseased cow ate contaminated food. There are those who say it is simply unsafe to render animals and to feed animals to other animals because that can recycle infectious agents. Again, those are important questions for the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food and indeed for all Canadians to be satisfied on.

I mentioned the federal food inspection cuts. They occurred in the 1995 budget when the government created a single food inspection agency to collapse the activities of three departments, Agriculture and Agri-Food, Health Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, into one. The single agency was supposed to facilitate collaboration and help speed up work toward harmonizing standards among federal, provincial and municipal governments, but it had to do so with 44 million fewer dollars per year and 600 fewer employees than the three had prior to the amalgamation.

● (1945)

Indeed, according to a release from the then agriculture minister's office, which I will quote:

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Commencing in 1998-99, total annual savings of \$44 million are anticipated from the elimination of duplication and overlap following the creation of a single food inspection agency for the Government of Canada... it is anticipated the reductions may lead to the elimination of an additional 600 FTEs (Full-Time Equivalents—the service of an individual for one year) by 1998-99.

Those are some of the concerns that may be out there as a result of possible cutbacks. Again, we need to make sure that food safety is number one and we have the resources to ensure it is carried out.

At our agriculture and agri-food committee back in February we had some presentations on food and the slaughter of animals. I have looked at my notes from Dr. John Taylor in Manitoba and want to put some of his thoughts on the record because I thought what he had to say was of interest. He said in testimony in February that in Canada we have five levels of meat inspection: first, the federal system; second, a joint federal-provincial system; third, a provincial mandatory system; fourth, a provincial voluntary system; and finally and perhaps of most concern in some instances, we have no inspections at all, according to Dr. Taylor.

He said:

Even among the provincial governments we have some different inspection requirements... If you go back about five years, ministers of agriculture discussed a national standard for meat inspection. They concluded that they didn't want anything that was too stringent because it would have a significant negative impact on small plants in rural parts of the provinces and territories across Canada.

Given the very diverse standards, major driving forces for national standards created by international and domestic trade agreements, and market forces driven by retail chains that want a higher food safety standard and are starting to limit their purchases to federally inspected meat, the federal government and the provinces and territories developed the national meat and poultry regulations and code. The provinces and territories expected that this would allow for the interprovincial shipment of meat.

It has not done that yet and in light of this positive test for mad cow disease it is probably a good thing that it did not, but I think this will probably serve as a wake-up call for Canadians and for people in the food inspection business because of the dramatic impact that one hopefully isolated incident has caused already in the past six days in this country. It will serve as a wake-up call to ensure that we continue to have a very high secure standard of health safety from coast to coast to coast and that in fact the provinces and territories as well as the federal government have those kinds of securities in place in their slaughterhouses.

We can do more exporting internationally if we bring some of our provincial plants up to national standards. I think of the bison industry, which is a growing and important part of the agricultural industry in western Canada. The industry would love to be able to ship more of its product interprovincially and indeed internationally, but those animals have to be slaughtered at a federal plant. If we could get some of the provincial plants up to national standards, it would alleviate that problem significantly.

In conclusion, the other point I want to close on is the fact that this is having a significant impact on the ranchers, on farmers, and indeed on the folks who work in our packing plants, our packing house workers. I think there should be some short term programs put in place, such as waiving the two week waiting period for employment insurance benefits for those who pay into the system, for example, to assist them with putting food on their tables while these tests are carried out and finalized and we get the borders open again.

● (1950)

Mr. Murray Calder (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the good member for Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant.

I am pleased to rise tonight to explain what the Canadian government is doing to protect Canadian export interests.

At the outset I first want to put to the House that as a rural member and a farmer, I know how worried my many constituents are about the discovery of a BSE infected cow in Alberta. Last week in my constituency I heard from farmers and food processors alike who are worried about the disruption of their livelihood.

We must keep things in perspective. That is what the government is going to do. This disruption is a very serious matter and it has an impact far beyond the beef industry. So far, only one cow has been infected and Canada's food industry is among the safest in the world. We hope that this disruption will be short and temporary.

As everyone knows, Canada is a very important exporter of beef and cattle. Canada has established itself as one of the most important beef and cattle exporters in the world. In 2002 beef and cattle exports were worth approximately \$4 billion; beef valued at \$2 billion and cattle valued at the other \$2 billion.

This has made us the fourth largest exporter of beef behind only Australia, the United States and Brazil. We are a substantial player in the business of cattle exports. We are also a leading exporter of bovine genetics, valued at over \$37 million in 2002. There is therefore no question about our important role in the world market and the need to take every step necessary to protect it.

Canada's major export market for beef and cattle is the United States at approximately \$1.8 billion for cattle and \$1.7 billion for beef; Mexico at \$187 million for beef; Japan at \$720,000 for cattle and \$52 million for beef; South Korea at \$200,000 for cattle and \$43 million for beef; and Taiwan at \$19 million for beef. Our other important markets include China, Saudi Arabia, France, Russia and the United Kingdom.

While the U.S. is by far our major market, our beef and cattle export markets are clearly diversified. As a result of one BSE case, nearly all our trading partners have suspended imports of beef and cattle from Canada: the United States, Mexico, Japan, South Korea and most others.

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I can assure the House that the government is doing everything it can to ensure that our export markets are reopened as early as possible once the BSE situation is fully researched. It goes without saying that the steps we are taking to take control of the BSE situation in Canada are critical to restoring our market access. We need to be able to satisfy our trading partners and consumers that we have the BSE situation under control.

In this regard we immediately launched a comprehensive strategy to protect our trade interests. Our two pronged strategy includes: one, ensuring that our trading partners are kept fully informed of the efforts that we are making to take control of the situation in Canada with a view to ensuring early removal of trade measures once we have the BSE situation under control; and two, monitoring closely the measures being imposed by our trading partners to ensure that they are based on science and that they are not more trade restrictive than necessary to address the legitimate BSE concerns.

With respect to the first part of our strategy, right from the beginning we have been open and transparent with all our trading partners. On May 20, the day of the announcement of the BSE finding, the federal Minister of Agriculture spoke to U.S. secretary of agriculture Veneman and the Minister for International Trade spoke with U.S. trade representative Zoellick. By May 21 our embassies and consulates around the world were informing governments.

•(1955)

On May 21 our chief veterinary officer, Brian Evans, informed the Office International des Epizooties international committee, the international standards setting body for animal health issues, at their meeting in Paris. This is an ongoing process.

We are sending daily updates to all our embassies and consulates. Based on this information, they are providing constant updates to foreign governments.

In the United States, our largest market, our embassy is providing up to date information to the U.S. administration. They are in touch with congressional contacts and our consulates are informing authorities at the state level of the latest developments. Further, U.S. media are receiving technical briefings.

In all our other markets our embassies are contacting foreign government authorities and advising them of the most recent information.

As I said, this is an ongoing exercise. Our embassies and our consulates will continue to keep foreign governments well informed. We will continue to keep the OIE informed.

I would add that our efforts are being made at the highest levels. All of our ambassadors are giving this issue the highest priority. Almost without exception, foreign governments have responded positively to our timeliness and openness in providing complete information.

We are hopeful that these efforts will put us in a good position to have the import measures lifted as early as possible once we confirm that the immediate problem is under control.

As I said, the second part of our strategy is to ensure that measures being imposed by our trading partners are science based and not more trade restrictive than necessary.

I need to emphasize up front that both the WTO and NAFTA give members the right to impose sanitary and phytosanitary measures necessary for the protection of human, animal or plant life or health. This is a fundamental right of all WTO and NAFTA members. Canada itself takes very seriously the right to impose SPS measures necessary for the protection of our human, animal or plant life or health. We therefore do not in any way question the right of our trading partners to impose measures on Canadian products based on legitimate health and safety concerns.

Both the WTO and NAFTA recognize the OIE as the international standard setting organization for animal health. Under the WTO and NAFTA, sanitary measures which conform to international standards, in this case the OIE, are deemed to be consistent with the WTO and NAFTA. Members therefore have the right to maintain measures necessary to prevent the introduction of BSE in accordance with OIE standards. However, we are being very vigilant in monitoring the measures imposed by our trading partners to ensure that their measures are in accordance with the OIE.

The OIE is very clear on products that are not to be included in BSE related measures, for instance, milk and milk products, semen and embryos, protein-free tallow and derivatives made from this tallow, and hides and skins.

We have asked our embassies and consulates to provide full details of the measures being imposed by our trading partners.

There are other issues that need to be sorted out with some of our trading partners, such as how they will be dealing with in-transit shipments. In some cases it is simply unclear. We need more information to inform our exporters. We are trying to get that information.

I see my time has run out. There is much more I would like to say on this issue, but the bottom line is that the government is taking this issue very seriously. We will try to get this problem resolved as quickly as possible.

•(2000)

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak this evening in this emergency debate. I congratulate the Speaker of the House for allowing this debate because it is very important. It is one that members on all sides of the House feel is a very serious matter and is one that was supported unanimously in the House.

Coming from a rural part of southwestern Ontario I share with members, particularly those from the west, my colleagues from the Alliance Party and the Conservative Party, as well as my colleagues from the Liberal Party, who have shown tonight by being here that they support the cattle producers and agriculture across this country. All hon. members recognize the importance of this industry to our country.

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There is no question that we in southwestern Ontario may not see the size of the farms and the ranches in western Canada, but we certainly sympathize with those in the west who are struggling through these hard times with the BSE problem. I too recognize that even in my own riding there are producers who are uncertain about their own futures given the severity of this problem.

Canada is one of the leaders in beef production. Canada is one of the top 10 beef producers in the world. In Canada three billion pounds of beef create some \$30 billion in economic activity in this country. This is significant not only for agriculture but for the country as a whole. It has a major economic impact in this country. I think that is why the Speaker agreed to have this emergency debate tonight.

Members have spoken eloquently about the safety and the security of the Canadian food system. That security is being upheld at this time by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. It plays a very important role in Canada in assuring Canadian consumers that the food on their plates is safe. It also allows people throughout the world to understand that we in Canada go over and above what is called for in making sure that the food our consumers eat and the food that we export is some of the safest and cleanest food in the world.

It was mentioned earlier that we double the international standard of testing of animals for BSE. It is significant to let all Canadians know that what we do as Canadians and what we have asked our government departments to do is to make sure that we go over and above the international standards for testing for BSE. I believe that is a very good approach to take in terms of making sure that our food is safe to eat.

That becomes important in terms of our exports. It becomes important in terms of making sure that our international markets, those countries in the world that have chosen at this time to stop Canadian imports of beef into their countries, recognize that the standard we have set will be no different for Canadians than what it is internationally. We will not ship outside the country anything that we believe is not fit for human consumption. Our standards go well beyond what the world would expect for this.

● (2005)

I want to take this opportunity to agree with the Minister of Agriculture. The help from our close colleagues in the United States has been very helpful in terms of moving forward to make sure they are sensitive and understand what it is that we actually do. Even though some people in the United States may question our standards, I do not think those questions have been coming from the U.S. administration or Ann Veneman, the American secretary of agriculture. I think those other questions were more politically motivated.

When we look at the facts and what we do, and our American friends have been here and have looked at what we do, I think the standard they would look at is to make sure that we can trace all the way back to make sure there are no other animals infected with this.

It was good to hear earlier that when the first tests of the initial herd came back there were no other cases. That is significant, as we said earlier. What will be more significant and take a little bit longer

is when we are able to trace back all the way and assure our friends. I am glad they were here to see what we do. I am sure they will do what they can to make sure the border between Canada and the United States is open.

As with a number of other trade products, around 80% of our beef is exported to the United States. The Americans know that our beef system in North America is integrated. It is a system where beef travels back and forth across the border. It is one I know that the Americans also want to make sure is opened as quickly as possible.

I know it has been mentioned before but I think it is very important to reiterate what it is that Canada does to make sure that we do not have a spread of BSE. In 1992 Canada created the BSE surveillance program. It has tested nearly 5,000 cattle since the surveillance program started. As I said, that level far exceeds the international standards in this area. It made BSE a reportable disease and any suspected case of BSE must be reported immediately to a federal veterinarian. In 1997 it banned the feeding of rendered protein products from ruminant animals to other ruminants, meaning other cattle and sheep. It made sure that since 1997 that did not happen. As we know, it was believed that was one of the leading causes of this happening and certainly led to the spread of BSE in Great Britain. It also created a cattle identification program, or tagging for cattle and bison, making it possible to trace individual movements of a herd from origin to slaughter. I want to assure Canadians that we can trace back to when the piece of beef came from the producer right to the plate. That is significant. I believe it will assure all Canadians that we have a very safe system.

As the Prime Minister did and as other politicians have done, I recently bought beef and served it to my children, not only because it is good tasting and not only to show solidarity for our beef farmers, but because I believe, having travelled across this country and having talked to Canadians and seen the market in action, that we do have the safest and most tastiest beef that any country can produce.

I hope all Canadians will take the lead of the Prime Minister and others in this House and buy some beef. It will show solidarity and support, not only for beef farmers in this country but for rural Canadians and indeed all Canadians who I believe hope this situation will be ended as quickly as possible.

● (2010)

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is good to speak to this most important and critical issue tonight. I have one message for the government: It is absolutely critical that we get the border open and get it open now. We do not have a month or two months. We only have days left before this whole industry will go down the river. We do not need to hear any more about how good our testing is or how wonderful we do in the world. That is important for consumer confidence and we have heard that message time and time again but what we need now is action from the government. We need the border opened up, we need confidence put back with our trading partners, and we need it today.

I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Medicine Hat, my neighbour and colleague.

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Our cattle and beef producers cannot withstand this issue for any extended length of time. They have been through years of drought. We have seen issues with the high dollar and with the country of origin labelling being thrown at them. One thing after another has been thrown at them and now this issue, an issue where science has proven us right. There is not a problem in this country with our beef. Let us do whatever is necessary to get that border reopened, get our trading partners back on side and let us get to work.

When we asked the minister today in the House of Commons what exactly the criteria was for the U.S. to reopen the border we did not get an answer. We also asked what the timeline was going to be to get the job done. We did not get an answer for that. Those are the answers that we need, our consumers need, our customers need and certainly the industry needs, and we need the answers now. If this thing carries on there will be a snowball effect that will be absolutely disastrous. The government had better realize that if panic starts in this industry and the bankers lose confidence that it can be overcome, we will have a big problem.

I sent a letter to the Prime Minister last week and asked him to make sure that the resources needed would be thrown at this and that there would be no shortage of people or whatever was needed to make sure the testing was done. I asked him to make sure that the fan out was finished, that confidence was restored to our consumers and our customers and that this industry gets back on the road.

We have seen tonight just a bit of what is happening with the overemphasis on our testing. I agree that testing is critical for consumer confidence. It is there. I have no doubt that our industry is safe and I have never stopped eating Alberta beef for one day.

I want to talk about the feedlot industry because it is in my riding. There are 950,000 head of cattle in this country on feed. Over half of them are in my riding or in southern Alberta. I know these people and I know how hard they work to maintain a clean industry and to maintain safety.

Let us look at the stats over the last few years for importing cattle from the U.S. into Canada. The producers have been telling the government for years that we have to bring in more cattle from the U.S. to calm the Americans down. They do not like to see our fat cattle go down there by the truckload and very few coming back. One year when it had the ability that industry brought in 200,000 head of cattle, quadrupling the number that comes in on an ordinary basis. It did that on its own just to show that it would buy these cattle if the opportunity was there.

We have been talking about the terminal feedlot protocol for years but it is not happening and it needs to happen. The U.S. is our closest trading partner. It buys 70% of what we produce. If we cannot ship it to the U.S. we do not have enough people in Canada to eat it. Therefore it is absolutely critical that we start this process and get that border opened up as soon as we can.

We are facing potential layoffs. I think the member for Medicine Hat might talk about this. He has a huge plant in his riding where a lot of this beef is processed. This plant has 2,500 employees and half of them will be laid off next week. This will have a snowball effect right across, not only in western Canada but in northwest U.S. A lot of the beef we produce goes down to Hyrum, Utah; Pasco,

Washington; and Greeley, Colorado, and if that beef does not show up there they will have a problem.

Let us look at Canada. The spinoff effects on the trucking industry, the auction mart industry, the feed industry and on the people who grow barley and the people who grow the silage that goes into this will be absolutely incredible. One hundred feed train loads of barley go into southern Alberta into feedlot alley every day. That has created an industry in itself which has created a feeder industry into the feedlot business that is absolutely incredible.

● (2015)

Let us look at what else could happen to auction marts, to trucking firms and feed sales. Right now \$11 million a day is being lost, which is \$4 billion in a year. The numbers are astronomical. There are 950,000 to 1 million cattle and feedlots alone with over half of that in southern Alberta. We produce two and a half times more beef than we can consume. We need customers but we need our customers to have confidence in our product. The world needs to know that we have a safe product.

I believe our beef is safe and I will never stop eating it. I would not hesitate for a minute to feed it to my family or my grandchildren. However the markets are important and that confidence has to be restored.

There are 85,000 families in this country that make a living by raising cattle on cattle ranches, cattle farms, and 60,000 of those farms are in jeopardy because of this one issue. It is one cow. We must get it in perspective. It is one cow out of millions and we have shut down the border. We must get the criteria that is needed, get it done and get that border reopened. Everything else will take care of itself.

The people in this industry, all the way from the cow-calf guys, are very concerned. I just had a call from a rancher in southern Alberta who is very concerned. They will not be hitting the wall until fall when they have their yearlings or spring calves to get rid of but they realize that their customers, the people who will buy these animals, are in trouble right now. They need help and they need this border reopened.

This is a huge industry in southern Alberta and I believe they police themselves very well. They do a tremendous job of raising safe food and they go through the exercises to make sure that happens. I received letters from a couple of producers I have known for a long time who raise a lot of cattle in the area. They put out a scenario, which I think is important for us to put into perspective, as to what is happening right now as we speak.

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The cattle inventory values dropped \$100 a head in the first week of May 21-22. That week is past. During the second week cattle inventories will drop another \$50 a head. That is \$150 a head times 950,000 head in lots. Do the math. We are talking about a lot of money that has gone down the drain already. If we get into week three with more fear and uncertainty, it will cause complete market panic. If that does happen, the value of cattle will plummet. We are talking \$350 to \$500 a head, a huge amount; \$500 million gone that will never come back.

This whole industry has been built on the sweat and hard work of people forever raising cattle. The big cattle ranches and cow-calf operations are what made people go out west. There are huge tracts of grassland. It has the best grass to feed cattle in the world. It is the people who invested their time, energy and their years building that industry who have made it second to none anywhere in the world. We need the cow-calf guy on the ground. We need the people who are finishing it.

We had a great system when the markets were there but in the last couple of years we have had the drought, the country of origin labelling threat and the high dollar which has taken 16% out of this industry in a few months. When a dollar shoots up that fast without anything holding it back it creates problems. People do not have enough time to adjust their inventories to make the changes they need to stay feasible. That happens in all export markets, not just in this industry.

However if these things continue to happen tumbleweeds will be blowing down the streets of many towns and cities in western Canada. The dollars that are turned over in this cattle feeding industry alone are absolutely huge and it keeps communities alive and keeps them going. Nothing creates as much wealth. Some 23% of all agriculture sales out of this country are in the cattle industry.

Let us do some things. Let us get that border open. We will do that by building confidence in our consumers and in our customers. We need to restore confidence in our producers and in the world. The most important people in whom we need to restore confidence are the bankers who bankroll these people. These people still have expenses and still need to feed their cattle as they grow but there is no income coming in.

• (2020)

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by acknowledging a few people: my leader who gave a great speech on this whole issue a little earlier this evening and the member for Selkirk—Interlake who has done an outstanding job as the Canadian Alliance agriculture critic. He has done a great job of analyzing the situation and has had media interviews over the last week or so.

I also want to acknowledge my friend from Lethbridge who just spoke. He knows better than most people in the country about the impact this has having on especially the feeder industry. It is absolutely devastating, and I want to congratulate the member on the job he is doing representing the people of Lethbridge on this issue.

I also want to say there are people in the cattlemen's association in particular who have done an outstanding job. Neil Jahnke, head of the CCA, has been a great spokesman for the industry and has been forthright with the government and has worked cooperatively with

officials on this issue. I get to work locally with Arno Doerksen who has done a great job on this.

I also want to pass on my congratulations to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency that jumped on this issue as soon as it became public. It has done a very good job of assuring the public that it has the issue in hand. That is really important. I want people to understand the size of the problem in terms of risk to health first of all. There is a very small problem.

Let us go over the facts. In a 13.4 million cattle-cow herd in Canada, one cow was discovered with BSE. That herd was quarantined when it was discovered. It was sent to be slaughtered so the herd could be tested. The initial testing has been done and there is no indication of BSE in that herd. Any other herd that has been even remotely associated with that cow has been quarantined. Therefore there is no way that these cattle can enter the food chain.

I want to point out by the way that the first cow that was found never did enter the food chain. Right away people get concerned but that animal never got into the food chain. Since that time the trace out has continued. When there is even a remote association with that initial cow those herds are quarantined.

I think many people automatically want to compare this to what happened in the U.K. back 17 years ago when all of this first began. However there is no comparison. The numbers I have of the problem that hit the U.K. and Europe was 400,000 infected cattle. We have one infected cow. Out of that 400,000, about 100 people became ill. We have no one who is ill. There is a very tiny chance.

We also have to remember that in Europe the practice was to consume parts of that cow that we would not consume in Canada, and they are the ones that ultimately can cause some kinds of diseases. We do not even consume those organs in Canada. Therefore there is absolutely no risk in Canada. We should not be concerned about this.

Having said, we know there are protocols in place so if there is an incident of BSE that crops up of mad cow, right away the border is closed.

However now I want to drive home again the impact that has on Alberta and on western Canada in particular, but also the entire country. I can speak best of course about my riding.

My riding is the riding of Medicine Hat. We are an area that raises a tremendous amount of cattle. In addition to raising cattle, we also process cattle. We have a meat packing plant in my riding and we process a tremendous amount of beef every week. We have 2,400 people who work at the meat packing plant, Lakeside Packers in Brooks, Alberta. Those people incidentally come from all over the world. There are about 60 languages spoken on the floor of Lakeside. That reflects the fact that people come from all over the world to work there. They make good wages and they are a tremendous benefit to our community. It is impossible to overstate the positive economic benefit they have had in our community.

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I want to point out also that through this time, even though the company cannot really process beef or not very much of it anyway, it has managed to come up with a way to provide its employees with 32 hours a week of pay even though there is not that much work for them.

● (2025)

To its credit, Cargill down the way in High River has done the same thing and should be recognized for that.

However they cannot do that forever. They will be in a situation where they will have to start to lay off folks. We urge the government to give the same consideration to people in Alberta and places affected by this, when it comes to employment insurance, as it did for the people in Toronto when the SARS epidemic hit. I think that is only fair.

I also want to emphasize a point that my friend just made a minute ago. I was talking with a friend of mine on Sunday morning, a guy I have known for quite a few years. There was a bunch of us standing around, talking about this whole issue. I told people what I had heard lately and my friend looked at me and said, "If this continues very much longer, a few more days, I will be done. I will be bankrupt." He grows the feed to supply some of the big feeders in Rick's riding. Of course those guys are in no position right now to look after their payables. This man is close to losing everything he has worked for over many years, and I am afraid to say he is one of many.

We have talked a bit about the feeders but there are the guys who supply the feeders. Then there are the big packing plants like Lakeside and Cargill that could probably weather this for a while longer. Ultimately the cow-calf guys, although not immediately, will be in jeopardy if that border does not get open.

Therefore, what do we do now? There are a number of things we have to do. That trace out has to be finished as soon as possible. They have to track down all the cattle associated with that cow and all the cattle, or animals of any kind, associated in any way with that processed diseased animal. It did not end up in the human food chain but it did end up being rendered and that has to be traced now. We have to find out where all that went, those animals have to be quarantined and that all has to be done as fast as we can. I urge the government to take whatever resources it has to take to do that. It is just so critical.

The second thing is, and I already touched on this, the human resources minister has to prepare a package so that people who are affected by this do not have to go through the two week waiting period and that they get the same consideration the people in Toronto got when the SARS epidemic hit. Again, this is through no fault of their own.

Another important point, which my leader raised today in question period, is these supplemental permits that are issued to countries to bring beef into Canada over and above what they are allowed under their tariff rate quotas has to stop. That beef was allowed in because the understanding was that if Canada exported so much beef to the United States, we could not look after domestic processors. Guess what? We have a glut of beef now. There is no reason to allow this over-quota beef into Canada. It does not make a huge difference, but it does make a difference. I hope the trade minister will work right

away to deal with that. It would mean the stopping of about 50,000 tonnes of overseas beef coming into Canada and would allow us to feed our own market.

There are two final points that I want to make. One thing that has to happen, as my friend said a minute ago and as I asked about in question period today, is we need to establish from the Americans what criteria have to be met if we are to open that border up and export our beef and our live cattle into the United States once again.

I understand the Americans are working with us, and I appreciate that. I think they want to get that border open. However we need to know, and the government has an obligation to tell producers, to give them confidence that the government is on the job. It has an obligation to tell them the criteria so producers and the government, the CFIA, can meet those standards. That is important.

● (2030)

The final point is, where is the Prime Minister on this file? It was great that he was eating a steak on TV. That is fine. That is good. He should have been on the phone to our closest ally, the President of the United States, but he has so burnt up that relationship that he is afraid to do it. That is a shame. At a time like this when we need the influence of the Prime Minister, we cannot count on it because of his own sorry record when it comes to Canada-United States relationships. Unfortunately, that burns a bridge that we vitally need at this time.

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I love Alberta beef. We are talking tonight about an economic issue, not a health issue. Canadians have every reason to have continued confidence in the safety of our food and all of us must continue to eat beef without concern or fear.

It is important to stress to Albertans, all Canadians and the international community that so far we are looking at the infection of a single cow from a single farm, one cow out of perhaps 5 million or 6 million in Alberta and many more millions, as we just heard perhaps 12 million or 13 million, for the country as a whole.

In 2002 Canadian cattle and beef exports were valued at about \$4 billion. In Alberta, beef and cattle production provides \$3.8 billion in farm cash receipts per year, which translates to 51% of the farm production income. The cattle industry contributes \$15 billion to our national economy. Annual exports, including both interprovincial and international, totalled approximately \$1.7 billion in calendar year 2002.

There has been excellent cooperation between the federal and provincial governments, the industry and our trading partners in finding a resolution to this situation.

[Translation]

The events of the past week have shown that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is working closely with its provincial counterparts, other stakeholders in the industry, and international agencies. The agency acted quickly and with transparency, keeping the population informed at every stage.

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[English]

The identification of this one cow at slaughter and its subsequent removal from the human food chain is evidence that Canadian meat inspection and food safety systems are working effectively. Canada's procedures to detect BSE are among the most rigorous in the world. Since 1993 we have tested 10,000 animals on a random basis, twice the internationally recommended level of testing. Although there is no question as to the safety of our food system, there should be a full review of our livestock inspection practices to ensure their accuracy and expediency.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has now placed a total of 17 cattle herds under quarantine in Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia as part of its investigation. The increasing number of herds under quarantine is a normal occurrence in an investigation of this type. It demonstrates the thoroughness of the effort. It does not indicate that the situation is getting worse, and this cannot be stressed too strongly. The investigation is progressing as quickly as possible and the CFIA remains committed to keeping the public informed as new information becomes available.

Yesterday the Canadian Cattlemen's Association issued the following statement:

The negative BSE rapid test results for the cattle in the index herd are what we anticipated. We're confident that this situation is confined to one cow. However we must leave no stone unturned in our efforts to reassure our markets and trading partners that the situation has been contained. Additional precautionary slaughter and testing will be necessary. The sooner our borders can be reopened to exports, the sooner our industry will recover. The best thing our government can do for beef producers right now is to take all the necessary steps to get the borders reopened as quickly as possible.

My colleagues across the aisle and on this side have made that point repeatedly tonight.

I agree wholeheartedly with the Alberta minister of agriculture, Shirley McClellan, when she said that government and industry must be prepared to do whatever they must to restore public confidence and reopen international borders. As she so rightly pointed out, we should not euthanize herds without scientific reasoning. We must not unduly cause suffering for our cattle producers.

It has been clear that those who lose their stock will receive compensation, but last night on the news something was made clear: there are losses that we will never be able to compensate. Alberta rancher Harvey Buckley told *CTV News*:

The thing you can't replace in your cow herd of course is your genetics and your breeding over the years.

By moving quickly to get the answers and reassurances needed, it is these kinds of losses that can be reduced or minimized.

The impact on our economy has not gone unnoticed. Canadians on farms, in processing plants, slaughterhouses, auction houses and trucking companies already are feeling the effects. As the long term impact is not yet known, we must move to assist them in the short term. Today in the House of Commons the Prime Minister asked the Minister of Human Resources to see what she can do in order to be just for these people like we have done for the people of Toronto.

The events over the past week extend far beyond the confines of a single city. It reaches all parts of the country. It is our entire border

that has been closed to beef exports. The investigation must move quickly to have the border reopened.

First and foremost, the steps we are taking to control the BSE situation in Canada are critical to restoring our market access. In this regard, as we have heard tonight, we are being very proactive in keeping our trading partners informed of the actions we are taking. Second, we are reviewing the trade measures being imposed to ensure that they are science based and no more trade restrictive than necessary.

It is important to note that the European Union has not closed its borders to Canadian beef. When asked why Europe does not share the concerns of the countries that are banning Canadian beef imports, Beate Gminder, the spokesperson for the European Commission's health and consumer protection department said that Europe has more experience with this disease, commonly known as the mad cow disease. She further stated:

The problem is that the reaction is always very emotional because people understand very little about BSE. But once you understand it, you realize you can manage the disease.

● (2035)

We must proceed with cautious urgency. Farms cannot remain under indefinite quarantines. The border must be reopened. Testing must proceed quickly and definitively to reassure Canadians and the international community that Alberta and Canadian beef is the safest in the world.

Marty Carpenter, food service team leader at the Beef Information Centre, stated:

It was a safe product yesterday, it is a safe product today and it will be a safe product tomorrow. Essentially, what consumers need to understand is the A-grades of beef they're buying in the grocery store are under 22 months of age and BSE doesn't manifest itself in animals under 30 months of age. So the risk of ingesting BSE-infected beef is extremely remote, extremely remote.

Mr. Speaker, I am sharing my time with my colleague so in closing, I will quote the Alberta Cattle Commission by saying "if it ain't Alberta, it ain't beef".

Mr. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is my first address to a debate in the House.

I am a farmer. My family has been in the beef industry for 30 years. This is a very volatile occupation under normal circumstances, but this incident has again shown us the challenges beef farmers are facing.

The last week has shown us that elected officials and government agencies working together are dealing with the challenges that the industry is facing. Canadian farmers have also stepped up to the plate. Five years ago they developed better feeding and tracking practices for their herds. This is obvious in the reports of the last 24 hours. Through the commitment by farmers to healthier and safer products for consumers, we can be assured that our beef is safe.

I must make one thing very clear: the system does work. It is obvious from the events of the past few days that government agencies have worked hard and swiftly to investigate and determine the origins of the one animal suffering from BSE.

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The system responded quickly to track the history of the infected animal and determine what possible hazards exist. All evidence indicates that one infected cow never entered the food chain. Farms have been quarantined and extensive testing has been done and is being done.

The Canadian beef industry and the agricultural industry in Canada are regulated and very specific. They also have important guidelines that make them among the safest and strongest in the world.

Five years ago strict and tough regulations dealing with the types of feed that we feed our livestock were implemented. I know on my farm, as well as those of my farming colleagues, that we feed our cattle with forages and whole grains. There is routine testing and inspections of livestock to ensure the quality and safety of the beef being eaten in Canada and exported to other countries.

Two years ago I was asked by the Prime Minister to be part of the agriculture task force. I had the opportunity to travel throughout the country to see firsthand the Canadian agricultural industry at work in many provinces. I personally met with ranchers and beef farmers, as well as people in the food industry in western Canada. It became very clear to me that we truly have a world renowned beef industry with a reputation for unsurpassed quality.

With all my years of being a farmer and being involved in the agriculture industry in Nova Scotia, I never truly realized the magnitude of this country's agriculture industry. The agriculture industry is of immense importance to the Canadian economy and provides a livelihood for many Canadians. An industry worth over \$30 billion annually is an industry worth taking care of and we do take the health of the industry very seriously.

We must hope that the American food inspection delegation in Canada will realize the high standards and the safety of our inspection processes and will reopen the border for the safe and high quality beef we produce in this country.

I would like to reiterate what I have been saying. The system works. The regulations and high standards of the beef industry are the best in the world. The response from both levels of government has been swift and thorough.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency and its provincial counterparts have worked together. Information has been open, honest and transparent. A concerted effort is being made to restore confidence in our markets. We are doing everything to open the U.S. border.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has proven to be a highly capable and effective agency in preventing any harm to consumers.

The issues are being dealt with. They are a priority for all stakeholders.

The country's beef farmers have many challenges. If it is not the weather, it is the marketplace itself. All farmers in this country work hard and deserve to have their industries protected and their livelihoods secured. We have all worked hard and will continue to work hard in the future for the farmers and the agricultural industry.

In closing, I thank all my colleagues for their attention to this very important issue that we are facing.

● (2040)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as I rise to speak in this emergency debate, a number of people in my riding are going through difficult times, and some may find themselves unemployed. Since the media reported the case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, better known as mad cow disease, discovered in Alberta, events have unfolded very rapidly. The crisis in the Canadian cattle industry does not respect provincial boundaries.

I forgot to mention that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Jonquière.

Cattle producers in Quebec also say they have been just as affected by the American embargo and the drop in prices as their counterparts in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The announcement of the bad news was immediately followed by an American embargo on Canadian beef. A number of other countries, including Australia and New Zealand, followed Uncle Sam's lead.

The consequences of this embargo were immediate. The price of beef dropped from \$4.03 to \$3.19 per kg. The price of cattle ready for slaughter fell by 21% in less than a week. These figures come from the committee of 250 fed cattle producers of the Fédération des producteurs de bovins du Québec.

In an interview with a daily paper, the group's president, Jacques Desrosiers, himself a steer farmer said, and I quote:

For now, feeders can continue to feed the animals. We can survive for a few weeks, but if it lasts more than four weeks, if it lasts for months, we will lose more than half of our stocks. This could represent a million dollars for me, and I am unable to sustain that kind of loss.

The shock wave has spread all the way to my riding, which has a huge agricultural base. A major producer, Entreprises agricoles Saint-Joachim Inc., has ended up with some 3,000 head of cattle on its hands because of the embargo. When you consider that it costs between \$2 and \$3 a day to feed an animal, you can imagine the losses that Mr. Autot, from Saint-Joachim-de-Courval, and this company will sustain if the situation does not improve soon.

Producers are holding on to their herds, which is bringing meat packing plants to a standstill. Again, in my riding, in the municipality of Saint-Cyrille-de-Wendover, employees of the Colbex meat packing plant owned by the Dubé family could lose their jobs. Fifteen have already been laid off and management has had to give advance notice to all workers, which is 196 people in this company alone.

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The harmful effects of the ban have gone so far as to impact exports of cattle embryos. Embryotech, the third Chinese company to locate in the Drummondville industrial park, specializes in the development of an embryo culture technique that ought to provide China with a 10 million-strong herd of good dairy cattle within 10 years. China being one of the countries that has closed its doors to our exports, Embryotech's activities are, at the very least, compromised for the moment. As well, the hiring process to staff 50 positions in this company has been slowed down.

The federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food claims embryos are not affected by the ban. That is not the reality as described by the management of Embryotech to a journalist in my region. That is a brief overview of the situation in my riding.

Let us now examine the Liberal government's attitude. The day after the announcement of the beef export ban, representatives of the Fédération des producteurs de bovins du Québec were at the door of the federal Department of Agriculture and Agri-food calling for it to put in place emergency financial assistance programs to compensate producers for the losses sustained.

The federation feels that this financial assistance should also include other segments of the Quebec cattle industry such as auction yards, abattoirs and the like.

Yet the Prime Minister himself has refused this form of assistance, and this afternoon in oral question period, the Liberal member for Shefford had nothing more to say than that the workers in this industry will be able to draw employment insurance after a waiting period of 15 days, and at about the 55% level, not 55% of their actual earnings, but 55 of the actual value of the employment.

• (2045)

Clearly, this form of assistance is not serious.

As for the Minister of Agriculture, a few hours ago, he told the committee that the investigation now going on to trace the origin of the sick animal would not lack for funding. That is fine for the investigation, but what about the producers, the slaughterhouses that have been shut down, the distribution network, the auctions, the transporters? In short, everything has stopped. The president of the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec, Laurent Pellerin, says it is a catastrophe.

The embargo is not only on beef, but on all ruminants; veal, goats, sheep, lambs, and farm-raised bison and deer. There is a bison farmer in my riding. He has the same problems.

The questions we hear from everyone affected are: Does the government have an assistance program? What should the industry expect from government? Will there be compensation for the losses?

How did we get to this point? Simply because this government decided to make draconian cuts to agriculture. We have a shortage of laboratories and veterinarians. The faculties of veterinary medicine at the universities do not have the funding necessary to hire professors and buy state-of-the-art equipment.

The situation is a paradox. Canada is one of the world's largest cattle producers. And yet there are only two specialists in mad cow disease in this country.

My hon. friend from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot and I fought to get federal funding for the faculty of veterinary medicine at the Université de Montréal, so that it could get accreditation from the American Veterinary Medical Association. Weeks have passed. The Liberal government is still humming and hawing and the faculty of veterinary medicine is left with partial accreditation.

As to why it took more than three months to get results from the tests carried out on the animal's carcass, let us just say that it is a consequence of Liberal cuts. Brain samples from the animal waited a long time for testing in Alberta's only public laboratory. There is only one laboratory to look out for the interests of an industry worth nearly \$4 billion. Ten years ago, there were four, but budget cuts have done away with three of them, and saved \$10 million.

Canada is paying the price now for cuts made in the past. In fact, it would be fair to say that it is Quebeckers and all Canadians who are footing the bill because of this government's lack of long-term vision.

How much will this crisis cost? How much longer will it take to trace the origins of the infected animal?

The minister is talking about the risk management program that is already in place, but he seems to be the only one who believes in the program. When answering my questions at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, the minister said he wants the problem to be resolved as soon as possible to limit the damage, but he did not elaborate on possible compensation.

Quebec farmers are currently being unfairly penalized by the onset of mad cow disease outside of Quebec. Cattle farmers are being hard hit by the embargo declared by several countries on importing ruminants and ruminant products. This situation is especially frustrating to farmers, who have been subjected for a long time to a series of restrictions aiming specifically to ensure the health of livestock and the irreproachable quality of their products. For many years, farmers have avoided importing products from countries at risk for spreading the disease and have also undergone all the detection procedures that were implemented for mad cow disease and other reportable diseases.

In conclusion, since the Quebec prevention system is very effective, what is the federal government waiting for to do everything it can to reassure importing countries and to allow Quebec farmers to resume exporting?

I would like to point out that if Quebec were sovereign at this time, we would not be in this situation. We would not be caught up in this crisis in Quebec.

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• (2050)

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to take part this evening in this extremely important debate. I want to thank the leader of the Progressive Conservatives for having asked for this emergency debate, because it is extremely important for Canada and Quebec.

The priority for the Bloc Québécois in this matter is to protect the public and preserve the confidence of our trading partners.

The solution to this crisis does not lie in centralization, but rather in adopting a more regional approach to health practices.

Although a single case of mad cow has been diagnosed in Canada, all the provinces were included in the ban by our foreign partners. The U.S. ban on all ruminants is particularly damaging, because that country is our main buyer.

Although the Bloc Québécois considers the Americans' decision to be reasonable at this stage in the testing, we believe that it would be unfair for this ban to continue and to be applied to provinces not affected.

The Bloc Québécois notes, as my hon. colleague from Drummond said, that if Quebec were sovereign and controlled its own borders and its own health policies, it would not be affected by the U.S. ban today. The president of the UPA, Mr. Laurent Pellerin, said the exact same thing during a press conference on May 22, 2003:

If we were separate provinces each with its own distinct inspection system and if we had a more regional approach to product marketing systems, only one province would have to deal with this problem.

This situation is particularly frustrating for Quebec producers who have long been subject to a series of constraints aimed at ensuring herd health and impeccable product quality.

So, for many years, not only have they not imported any products from countries considered "at risk" for mad cow disease, but the detection process for cases of mad cow has been implemented and, in Quebec, mandatory reporting of this disease has existed since 1990. Since 1993, Quebec producers have been prohibited from feeding animal meal to their cattle, well before the federal ban of 1997.

I want to give the House a conclusive example of the superiority of Quebec's system: cattle tagging. Implanting cattle with tags for tracking purposes was established simultaneously in Canada and Quebec. Quebec producers had until June 2002 to tag their cattle.

I will tell the House the difference between the establishment of this practice in Quebec and in Canada. In Quebec, there is a centralized database, but not in Canada.

In Quebec, we collect information on all the comings and goings of an animal: birth, death, participation in an agricultural exhibition, sale to a breeder. This is all done with bar codes. So, when the consumer buys beef at the grocery store, there is a bar code on the packaging, the same one that has followed the animal from birth right up to the consumer's plate. In Canada, they keep information on birth and death only. The animal is not followed throughout its life span. The advantage of what is done in Quebec is clear. It is far superior.

Given the existence of a highly efficient system of prevention in Quebec, the federal government must do everything within its area of jurisdiction to reassure importing countries so Quebec producers can resume exports.

• (2055)

In the weeks to come, once the federal authorities have established the diagnosis and we have a better idea of the scope of the crisis, the Bloc Québécois will ensure that the new measures implemented in order to regain the confidence of our partners will not be imposed coast to coast. In short, different regions of the country have different practices and must therefore be handled differently.

The federal government has neglected food safety in the last 10 years by neglecting to replace staff at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and by threatening the funding of faculties of veterinary medicine.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency was created in 1997 in a consolidation of the food safety and inspection components of three federal departments: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Health Canada, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The objective was to facilitate a more uniform and consistent approach to food safety and quality standards and to food product inspection according to risk level. The agency does not have sole responsibility for food safety, but it is at the heart of the Canadian food safety system.

The CFIA estimated it was "short 500 staff positions across all of the Agency's inspection programs", according to chapter 25 of the December 2000 Auditor General's report. The CFIA has a serious staff recruitment problem.

In 2000, the agency estimated that by 2006, 734 employees would be eligible to retire, including 33% of the veterinary science group and 29% of the inspector group. The Auditor General stated, "The agency has already experienced some difficulty in recruiting for some positions".

The Auditor General added, and I quote:

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency should take additional action to identify what it needs in a future work force and to develop a plan for creating the work force that it needs to deliver its mandate in the future. The Agency should measure employees' views on whether Agency values are fully practiced.

The federal government has not done its part to compensate workers in the softwood lumber industry affected by the trade dispute between Canada and the United States. My riding is the most heavily affected region in Canada. And, in addition, we are still waiting for federal government assistance for workers affected by the cod moratorium and the crab dispute.

The Bloc Québécois finds it ironic that the United States is imposing an embargo on Quebec meat when certain American states are closer to Alberta than Quebec. As long as we are a part of the federal system, we will have to live with this kind of paradox.

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Here is a brief list of the federal government's responsibilities. First, it must support cattle producers affected by the crisis, as it helped Toronto with the SARS crisis. It must also examine Quebec's practices, which are effective, thanks in large part to its tracking system that is more effective than the federal system. Third, it must ensure that farmers from provinces with higher standards, such as Quebec, are exempt from the American embargo. It must defend the interests of cattle producers. Fourth, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food comes from Quebec, from the riding of Portneuf; he needs to get the message out and ensure that Quebec is not affected by the lower standards put in place by the federal government.

The federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food must act quickly to restore confidence in our cattle products. This is what the minister must do, while continuing to assess and analyze whether mad cow disease has spread to other herds.

• (2100)

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to speak on such an important issue that concerns us all this evening.

[*English*]

My first words this evening are for the cattle ranchers and the beef industry as a whole in our country. As a member of Parliament from Alberta, I have witnessed many selfless acts by these remarkable people in the past week. Their interest in the issue of food safety and concern about BSE have been longstanding and well documented.

We all know no one is more optimistic than an Alberta farmer. Now we also know of their resolute spirit and willingness to deal with challenges both large and small. After the events of this past week, there is little doubt that food safety is a rancher's number one priority. The dedication of farmers and ranchers to ensuring quality and safety represents Canadians' first line of defence.

I would like to thank our beef producers for their steadfastness at this difficult time. We respect and support their efforts and know they will be part of future solutions.

Health Canada and the Government of Canada as a whole also place the utmost priority on ensuring the health and safety of Canadians.

Let me reinforce the fact that the information available to date suggests that we are dealing with a single case: one cow infected with BSE. I cannot stress often enough that this cow did not enter the human food supply.

The risks to human health at this time are very low, virtually non-existent. We have no information that would lead us to suggest that Canadians should modify their food choices. I am confident in stating that the Canadian food supply is safe.

Of course the confirmation of the single case of BSE is a concern for everyone involved in food protection and food safety, but let there be no doubt about the resolve of the government to ensure that BSE does not become part of the Canadian agricultural landscape.

Many lessons have been learned from the United Kingdom and the European experiences. Health Canada, Agriculture Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency all have been proactive on

numerous policy fronts to ensure the safety of the Canadian food supply.

Based on what we learn in the ongoing BSE investigation, there is little doubt that Health Canada and our partners in food safety will make further enhancements to our food safety policy.

Let me highlight some of the measures that the government has taken in the past few years. Canada prohibits importation of beef and beef products from countries not designated as BSE free. Since 1997, Canada has banned the feeding of rendered protein products from ruminant animals, such as cattle, sheep, goats, bison, deer and elk, to other ruminants. Exposure to BSE contaminated feed is considered to be the largest risk factor for the spread of BSE in cattle. This measure is therefore an extremely important part of our strategy.

In addition, we will continue to protect the integrity of Canada's human blood system in light of recent events. I would like to note that blood donations have been prohibited for a number of years from anyone who has spent significant periods of time in countries with substantial occurrences of BSE.

It is important to stress that the discovery of the single case of BSE in Canada does not affect Canadians' ability to donate blood. Careful monitoring will ensure the safety of Canada's blood supply.

Health Canada is also closely monitoring the situation as it relates to the use of rendered animal products as source materials for vaccines, cosmetics and biological products.

The government takes the threat of BSE very seriously. We are aware of the potential impacts in terms of human health and on the Canadian economy.

Even though we are in the midst of an extremely important investigation, we should not lose sight of the important work that has already been done by our public health and food inspection personnel. People are working around the clock to get to the bottom of the issue and we all owe them a very great vote of thanks.

Let me assure Canadians that we will do everything necessary in the future to reassure our ranchers, farmers, trading partners and consumers that Canadian beef is safe and that our food safety net exceeds international standards.

• (2105)

Health Canada will continue to work in support of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in its investigation of the one confirmed BSE case. As I have said, current evidence suggests the risk to human health appears to be very low, almost non-existent, infinitesimal, very small indeed.

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Is there more to do with respect to our food safety policy? Yes, there is. Will we do what is necessary to restore confidence? Yes, we will. By working together with ranchers, beef processors, exporters, food inspection authorities, health departments, provincial governments, our international trading partners and other stakeholders, I am confident that Canada's food safety net will be one of the very safest in the world. It will continue to be one of the very safest in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I am thankful to have participated in this important debate this evening and I should have indicated at the outset that I am splitting my time with the hon. member for Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle.

• (2110)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every day of our lives we unknowingly take for granted benefits, advantages and opportunities that are inaccessible to most people in the world.

The quality and abundance of food that we eat is part of the exceptional benefits to which we often give little thought.

That explains why Canadians are surprised and worried about the recent discovery of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, more commonly referred to as mad cow disease.

I completely understand this surprise and concern. We all know what anxiety this disease has already caused elsewhere in the world.

That is why I want to assure all Canadians that the Government of Canada, particularly the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, is taking this situation very seriously.

We quickly took all the necessary measures in cooperation with the provincial authorities. I also want to assure Canadians and our trade partners that this was an isolated case, one animal out of more than 3.5 million animals that are slaughtered in Canada each year. The disease was detected in an animal and that animal was destroyed. It never entered the food chain.

We know that there is no such thing as zero risk, not even in science, but we know that under the circumstances, Canada has taken all necessary precautions and has acted promptly and properly.

For many years, Canada has enjoyed worldwide recognition for its food quality control system and, in particular, for its vigilance and effectiveness in the fight against BSE.

Since 1993, the last time a case of BSE was discovered in Canada, we have tested some 10,000 animals, which is double the recommended international standard. No other diseased animals have been identified.

Our inspection system is working very well. In particular, our beef is very reliable and its quality is recognized around the world.

I would also like to emphasize the excellent work being done every day by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, which manages 14 inspection programs covering food, plants and animals in 18 regions.

The agency's role includes: enforcing the standards established by Health Canada regarding food hygiene and nutritional quality; establishing standards for the health of animals and plant protection; monitoring their application and enforcement; and providing inspection and regulatory enforcement services.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency employs 5,500 people to meet the demands of consumers and domestic and international markets. Its staff consists of many specialists: veterinarians, inspectors, systems specialists, support employees, financial officers, researchers and laboratory technicians.

The organization consists of four operational centres subdivided into 18 regional offices, 185 field offices including border crossings and 408 offices in non-governmental establishments such as slaughterhouses.

The agency also includes 22 laboratories and research institutions that offer scientific advice, design and implement new technologies, provide analysis and conduct research.

• (2115)

It is also worth mentioning that farmers and anyone who works in agriculture in Canada are among the most effective and conscientious in the world.

I would like to remind this House and all Canadians that we can still be very proud to live in a country that is the envy of the world for the quality of life that it continues to give us, including the excellent food that we eat.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I want to indicate that I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Yellowhead.

I am happy this debate is happening because it is a very important issue. I am not very happy with the circumstances that brought it about but the Canadian Alliance members felt it was important that we have this emergency debate. We put in the request for it so we could air this item fully and let people know exactly our perspective on this topic.

Tuesday last week I got a call from my office saying that there was an important call from the Department of Agriculture and that an official wanted to brief me on a problem in my riding. I had no idea what to expect. It was not a very happy circumstance a few minutes later when the gentleman who briefed me told me there was a case of mad cow disease and it originated in an operation in the constituency of Peace River. That is the kind of news no one wants to hear quite frankly.

It took us all by surprise and certainly it took the wind out of the sails of those people in agriculture and those people who depend on that agricultural industry.

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We are talking about a hardy lot, ranchers and farmers who have built up operations, carved them out of the prairies or carved them out of the forest and built up herds of animals through a lot of hard work. They are people who have contributed a lot to our society. They are a hardy stock indeed. This problem really did a number on them. They are concerned about their livelihood and they are concerned about the disease itself, how to isolate it and ensure that it does not spread. That is what I want to talk about today.

Peace River constituency is the place where this originated. This young man moved from Mississippi just three years ago. It is my understanding that he and his brother farmed crawfish in Mississippi. They came looking for opportunity in the Peace River country, as many people do. It is a land of opportunity and a place for farmers and others to develop their skills.

The man bought a cattle herd, never suspecting that he might have the animal with mad cow disease, only finding out when it went to market.

In the Peace River country there are over 2,800 cattle operations, farmers and ranchers who raise cattle. My brother has an operation that has 1,500 head of cattle, which is a very big operation. It takes a lot of work. In fact, there are over 380,000 cattle in the Peace River constituency. It is a huge industry. Farm equipment dealers and truckers are all affected. Farm equipment dealers sell over half their product to cattle operations. That is how large it is in my constituency. Things like auction marts and so on are affected as well.

Therefore it is very important to keep this issue in perspective. Yes, it is a big health concern, one with which we have deal. I think all people involved recognize that. We have to keep it in perspective because it is one case at this point, and may not be any more than that, out of 13.4 million cattle in Canada, with 5.2 million cattle in Alberta alone. As I said, there are almost 400,000 in my own constituency. If this turns out to be more than that, it still probably will be a very small situation compared with the total number we have.

However this is a huge industry. It is a huge economic downturn if this continues to develop, especially if the Canada-U.S. border is closed. It is important to us because we export so much product to the United States. My understanding is that we export about \$4 billion worth of live or processed cattle to the United States per year.

It is a big industry in the U.S. too. There are 100 million cattle in the United States, which is a lot more than we have, so our cattle represents a pretty small part of their imports but it is still an important integrated business. The economies of Canada and the United States have become much more integrated in many sectors in the last few years. The automotive sector everyone knows about, but it is much more than that.

There are cattle from Alberta and from all of Canada in U.S. feedlots. There are cattle from the United States in Canadian feedlots and in my riding. I know the members for Medicine Hat and Lethbridge spoke earlier about how big the industry was in their ridings. It is important that we get on top of this issue just as soon as we can.

● (2120)

My colleague, our agriculture critic, said that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency did a pretty good job on this. It is on top of it as it should be, but it is important that we deal with it quickly. The agency has taken the proper steps. It has isolated these herds. It has quarantined them when it has found out where they are. It is doing the trace out to find out, forward and backward, where this animal came from, where the offspring of the cow in question went to, and these have been identified. It has also destroyed the index or the herd from the Peace River country. It trucked it to a facility and the word came today that of the 150 cattle in the herd, no other animals tested positive. That is a very good sign indeed.

When the United States closed the border, it was a serious blow to us. However we can understand why it did that. It has a public which is concerned about it, especially after what happened in Britain over the years. The Americans want to know that we are handling this in a manner and dealing with it effectively and quickly.

I think Ann Veneman, the secretary of the department of agriculture in the United States, sent inspectors here to work with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in the province of Alberta to satisfy themselves that we were doing the necessary things to deal with it. They will no doubt go back and say that is exactly what has happened. The trace out will be in place pretty quickly and we will know exactly with what we are dealing. Those affected animals will be destroyed if need be and Canada will be back on the road to providing a very safe product.

However I want to emphasize in the clearest possible way, we have to keep this in perspective. There is probably only one animal at the moment out of 13.5 million cattle in Canada. Since 1987, Britain and other countries in Europe have had mad cow disease. Yes, it is a serious problem there, but we should think of the perspective. We know that 130 people died as a result of eating product from these animals, but that is out of 60 million people.

We know it is serious. We know we have to deal it. We know we have to isolate it to stop it from happening, but we should keep it in perspective, please. There is a huge industry and a huge economic impact for my riding and for all agricultural communities in which agricultural producers are working. There also is a huge economic impact for the country. If we get enough bad press and bad things happening all at once, I suggest it will slow down the Canadian economy.

It is important that we work with the United States in this integrated market to deal with this quickly. It is absolutely imperative that we have good communications with the U.S. authorities. I am glad to see the Minister of Agriculture is working with his counterpart, Ann Veneman, to do just that.

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It is vitally important that the Prime Minister realize how serious this is and make that phone call to George Bush. He should put the personal things aside. He has to talk to the President of the United States. We need the President to reassure his public, once this trace out is done, that Canada is dealing effectively with this problem, it is being isolated, it is being dealt with in the proper manner, so we can get back to supplying that product to the United States, or \$4 billion a year. That is vitally important and I urge all the people involved, all the authorities, to continue to work as quickly as they can to deal with this issue.

I am very happy with the progress to date. We can be very happy that this will probably come to a successful resolution. I urge the Prime Minister to take that next step, reach out and talk to his counterpart in the United States to reassure the American public that Canada is doing all it can to deal with this in a very serious manner.

I know others will be debating tonight. I just want to reassure the people at home that the Canadian Alliance is taking this issue very seriously, not only from a health perspective, but from the economic perspective of those involved in the agriculture industry. This is a very important industry to us. We are working with the government and urging it to do whatever is necessary to deal with it in the proper manner.

● (2125)

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege and a pleasure for me to speak on this important issue. It is an issue that certainly grips my riding in a way like no other issue I have seen to date since becoming a member of Parliament and being the voice of the riding in the House.

I do not think people in central Canada or in other parts of Canada quite understand the impact that this has in a riding that has a predominance of cow-calf operators, auctioneers, feedlot operators, and the number of truckers who are actually involved in the agriculture industry. I could go on and on to describe just how many people are impacted because of one cow that broke out with the mad cow disease.

My hon. colleague for Peace River just talked about the one farm that was quarantined in his area, actually the farm where the animal was found. We are pleased with the news that came out yesterday with regard to all of the trace-out animals from that herd being negative. It certainly looks like that was the only animal out of 13.4 million cattle in Canada that came down with this disease.

We are hoping that is truly going to be the case in all of the rest of the trace-outs. It is imperative that we do everything that we possibly can and do it as quickly as we can because we are talking about a very short timeline to be able to stop the bleeding from the negative impact of trading with the United States and open up the border as soon as possible and get the cattle moving again.

It is a small window of opportunity before it has some devastating impacts on the industry. I do not think ordinary Canadians quite understand that because they do not understand how the feedlot operation really works. It talks about nickels and dimes, and actual pennies of profits per animal and it is a very tight margin. These margins are based on pounds per day. If an animal stays in the feedlot too long it gets too fat and the quality goes down. It affects things in a significant way and we are talking a small amount of time

before an animal has to be moved or the quality is considerably compromised.

I was trying to get a bit of a handle on how it was impacting the individuals in my riding of Yellowhead today. We have three large farms that have been quarantined in my riding. One of the large farms is a 10,000 animal feedlot. The individual who I was talking to was absolutely devastated because his farm was quarantined and it means he cannot move an animal off the farm.

The chance of him having any animals on his farm with BSE is very slim. Nonetheless, he has been put in a compromised situation that is absolutely devastating to him. When I talked to him and asked how it was actually impacting on him, he had a difficult time describing what it was like.

Farmers in western ridings have just come through the most horrendous year that we possibly could imagine. There was the drought situation in our riding last year. They are survivors. They are individuals who have gone to the wall to save their industry. The feedlot operators are paying additional prices for the products they are feeding the animals. It has been a very difficult winter, difficult last summer, and they were just coming into spring and finally getting a little bit of grass growing. Finally there was an opportunity to feed the animals some fresh product in a fresh start to the year, and to be hit by this is absolutely devastating to the industry. I cannot emphasize enough just how that impacts.

There is another thing we must realize about agriculture. In the oil and gas industry, every time there is a primary job lost it has a ripple effect of four other jobs or every time there is a job created it is a one in four or one in three increase, but in agriculture every time we lose a primary job in agriculture the spin-off is one in seven. That means that for every job lost there are seven others that it impacts. So, it is seven other jobs or seven other families.

● (2130)

The ripple effect is massive. It is absolutely imperative that we understand the dynamics of that as we see the crippling effect this one animal has had on the industry and how it could impact it.

Therein lies the reason and the rationale for an emergency debate in the House. We take this very seriously and we do everything we possibly can. That is why we asked the minister today, what will it take with his counterpart in the United States, what criteria have to be met, and what exactly does the industry have to do to be able to open that border up and allow the product to move back and forth and regain some stability?

Hopefully by the end of this week that will happen. However, even with the trace-outs coming back, the opening of the border, and we start to rebuild back to where we were before this disease started, we must know that the government is there to stand beside the industry. We must ensure that the industry knows that the government is there to help and assist as it did with the SARS crisis that has impacted the Toronto area.

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We know that it is very important to rebuild the credibility of the Toronto area and all of Canada because of the black mark that has been inflicted because of the SARS disease. The government was there to hand out at least \$10 million to bring back the international market. We are certainly expecting a nod from the government. Having the Prime Minister eat a plateful of beef does not quite do it.

Most Canadians have no problem understanding that the beef is safe. That is not the issue. The issue is that the international community must know that. To do that we must put some investments into that to be able to ensure that those markets are rebuilt. If we do not, the devastation and the impact will be phenomenal.

Members might say that this devastation and the impact is a natural thing, that we should expect that. Why would a government treat one industry different than another? Why would the government look at tourism and the impact on that differently than the impact on agriculture? People in my riding are uncertain of what the government is prepared to do as far as standing up for the industry because of what the industry went through in the last year. Last year was a one in 133 year drought. This was a natural disaster that impacted my riding and agriculture in a way that has never happened before.

Yet we saw absolutely nothing coming from the federal government to assist in drought relief in our area. It was a shameful year. It was a year that our farmers more or less shrugged their shoulders and wondered what is actually happening. They wondered if they counted and if they mattered. Are they not Canadians and do they not pay taxes? These are the questions that I get from my riding every day when I talk about representing my constituents and being their voice here in the House of Commons.

It is very important that we get that nod. It is interesting and I listened with great interest this evening as we heard from Liberal members on the other side, in fact, some ministers said that they would be there for the beef industry. I will be holding those ministers to their words. I will say that I heard it here. Canadians have heard it here. It was not very specific, but the indication was there. We will have to make it specific so that the people in my riding will know that the government will not treat them as second class citizens. They want to know that the government will be there to assist them in their time of need. Believe me this is a time of need.

In this debate we must understand, that although it was one animal, that the survivors, the farmers in my riding and the industry, they are survivors because they are very aggressive. They are survivors because they are proactive. One of the things that will save this industry is the proactive measure that farmers have provided and that is the identification of animals. Last July this became compulsory. Due to that compulsory tagging we can follow a product from the shelf right back to the actual herd that it came from. Because of that we have the safest product in the world as far as beef. We also have the best product in the world. Alberta alone, if it is looked at as an export nation, is the fifth largest exporter of beef in the world.

• (2135)

It is a phenomenal industry that must be protected, not only in Alberta but across Canada, because of its importance as an economic

driver and a social driver, and as an engine that will sustain Canada in the long run. The government must take this very seriously.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Madam Speaker, there are a number of issues before us tonight. I would like to thank my colleague from Calgary Centre for requesting this emergency debate on this extremely important issue. He spoke to it earlier along with the member for Brandon—Souris.

There are a couple of questions which I do not think have been answered in this debate. I was pleased to be here earlier to hear the minister reply to the member for Calgary Centre and the member for Brandon—Souris, and explain to the House the steps he took as minister to at least alleviate, if not totally prevent, any repercussions that could occur here. The thing that I did not hear the minister say is that he immediately contacted the rendering plants in Canada to ensure there was no brain or spinal cord material going through those rendering plants. After seeing the devastation of the beef industry in Britain and the repercussions throughout Europe, I would have thought this was something we would have done already, that we would not be waiting to discuss this in an emergency debate.

We have a beef industry in Canada that is worth \$30 billion. That is a tremendous industry. That of course includes not just the farms and the sale of livestock, but certainly also includes trucking, the associated industries, the feed mills, the slaughterhouses, and the grocery store chains. We cannot stand a \$30 billion hit to the economy of this country. We are out of time in our relationship with our largest and most important trading partner. I would not be off base to say it is at an all-time low. We have had members of the government call our largest trading partner bastards in the House of Commons. I would hope that is unacceptable language and behaviour for a member of Parliament, but it still happened.

The government made some decisions in our relationship with our traditional allies on the war in Iraq. I do not think those repercussions are through yet. I do not think that is over yet. We have a softwood lumber crisis which may or may not have a little break in the weather tomorrow with the WTO hearing, but we are not expecting any breakthroughs and the government is preparing us for the worst.

On top of this, we end up with the very worst thing that could happen to one of the biggest industries in this country, an industry that much of rural Canada is dependent upon. I do not think that the government can do enough to reassure consumers, our traditional trading partners, and the people around the world, the Americans, the Mexicans, the Japanese, and the Taiwanese who buy Canadian beef.

I appreciate the fact that the minister cut short his trip in Britain, returned back and took charge. That is to be commended. What the minister has not done is come up with any concrete plan on how we are going to cull the herds if they need to be culled, how the compensation package is going to be developed, or even if there is going to be one. I certainly have not heard it. Quite frankly, if I were a beef farmer with anywhere from 100 to maybe 2,000 head of beef, I would be extremely concerned on that particular issue.

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• (2140)

We had a similar catastrophe with scrapie in the sheep flocks in Quebec. Those animals were purchased not just at their market value, but at their earning potential. I have not heard the minister say that. If an animal on a farm in Alberta or in P.E.I. for some reason has to be put down, I would expect the farmer to receive full compensation. First of all there has to be compliance, and in order to have compliance people have to buy into the idea. In order to have that, there has to be proper and adequate compensation. If we could pay up to \$600 for a purebred ewe in Quebec, an animal that could be bought on the market for anywhere from \$250 to \$325, then I expect we could do the same type of thing for a herd of cows in Alberta or Saskatchewan or Manitoba. I think that is the type of action that will get support from farmers and a larger buy-in to some of the difficult decisions that will have to be made.

I am not satisfied that the issue of compensation to farmers has been settled, and the issue of compensation will be directly linked, in my opinion, to consumer support for the beef industry. Consumers are worried right now because they see the government reacting but they do not have enough information. Many are looking at this from the point of view of fear, not from the point of view of science. I think this is certainly one time when the minister needs to show leadership. He has started to do that. There needs to be more of it.

How many people know that mad cow disease or BSE, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, is not passed on by muscle? It is only passed on by nervous tissue. The majority of Canadians probably do not even understand that. The department of agriculture and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency have to get out that message.

Right now only one cow is involved and it did not enter the food chain. I do not think we can say that enough, because the consumer generally is not aware of that. No one has stopped buying Canadian beef yet, but they could. The border is closed down. This is an extremely serious issue, and it is one, quite frankly, that I would have hoped to see a ministerial statement on in the House, reassuring, first, consumers in Canada, and second, the beef industry. The safety of our food supply is not something that can be questioned. The safety of our food supply is not something that can even be debated. It has to be guaranteed. It has to be written in stone.

What is the relationship right now between the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the United States Department of Agriculture? Have our officials been talking to American vets? Have they been talking to British vets? Have we brought in extra help from experts around the world? We are still chasing one cow back to its herd of origin. Apparently that has been done, but we still do not know where that cow came from. We still do not know where it contracted BSE.

• (2145)

This is not a debate to put doubt in the minds of consumers. This is a debate to reassure consumers and the only way we are going to do that is to give them information, enough information so they are reassured that every step has been taken that could be taken. I am not certain that is the case. I appreciate the 10 minutes the minister gave us here tonight, but I was not satisfied with the 10 minutes. I would have liked to hear half an hour and I would like to hear the minister

explain at a press conference exactly what he has done to guarantee food safety for all Canadians.

The \$10 million a day we are losing in beef exports should be a bit of a driver behind responsible action here. I am not going to speak at length on this. I very much appreciate this opportunity and I would like to summarize my comments.

First, we have a \$30 billion industry that is extremely important to all Canadians and especially to rural Canadians. We have a farm and agriculture industry that is already threatened on many fronts and this is one more threat that is going to be very difficult to deal with. Next, we have an absolute responsibility and an immediate demand to satisfy Canadian consumers that their food supply is safe. It is safe, but we have to back that up with sound reason and policies that reassure the public. Also, we have to reassure farmers that we are not going to go through in Canada what farmers went through in Britain. I quite sincerely believe that it will not be the case, but at the same time farmers have to be reassured that they are going to be paid for any animals they have to put down, and paid very adequately. We did it with scrapie, as we should have, and now we will have to do it with the beef herds that are being put down.

It is okay for the minister to say he returned from vacation, and he is doing everything that can be done, but my original question was, have they taken the brain material and the spinal columns out of the rendering plants? I do not know. I would like to know the answer to that question. Has that occurred? I would hope so, but we do not know the answer to that question. Feed designated for non-ruminant species sometimes ends up in ruminant species. Mistakes are made.

We have excellent health and food safety standards through the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Is there a backup? Are the backups working?

There are still a number of questions not being answered here and at risk is a \$30 billion industry. I do not think we can ignore that. I think it is a huge risk, and I am not sure the government is up to the task, although I hope it is.

• (2150)

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in the House tonight to speak on an issue that is of huge concern to all Canadians, an issue that is of concern specifically to my constituency of Crowfoot, east-central Alberta, a riding that has a high number of producers and feedlots in the agricultural sector in Crowfoot and east-central Alberta.

Just over two years ago I was elected as a new member of Parliament for Crowfoot to represent the people of east-central Alberta, to come down here and make sure that the concerns of the agricultural sector, the gas and the oil industry and all the people living in this riding were heard here in Ottawa.

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As a new member of Parliament, shortly after the election, in January or February, I stood in the House to take part in another emergency debate that had far-reaching and serious consequences for the province of Alberta, for western Canada and for the livestock industry in particular. It was a debate about another infectious disease. The year was 2001. I am sure that most viewers, most people listening to the debate tonight, can recall 2001 and the threatening infection of foot and mouth disease, the horrors of watching on television the billowing smoke from pits in Great Britain and other parts of the world where animals were slaughtered and burned, where a disease was rampant and threatening the livelihood of producers in Great Britain and other countries, a disease that was driving people out of the livestock business.

I recall receiving as a new member of Parliament over 100 e-mails at my office in Ottawa one evening, e-mails showing concern about the status of our precautions and regulations ensuring that foot and mouth disease would not come into this country. I remember leaving the House of Commons at night and, recognizing the two hour difference between Ontario and Alberta, going back to my office and calling some 20 or 30 people on that list, all concerned about foot and mouth disease, an epidemic that devastated the livestock industry in England.

Fortunately for us, foot and mouth disease did not hit this country. Many precautions were taken immediately. We know that many young people were prohibited from joining school groups and other groups going to visit some of those countries infected with foot and mouth. A lot of people ended up paying a high price to prevent the disease from coming to Canada. Above all else, we saw an industry that rallied and responded in a time of crisis, an industry that said, "We must protect the safety of our food supply. We must protect our industry, the livelihood of the farmers, the cattle producers". And the cattle industry responded.

Many members of Parliament, including me, initiated a series of public meetings throughout their own constituencies, meetings that had a type of educational forum on this infectious disease. I know that in Crowfoot, in Camrose the CRE brought in Canadian Food Inspection agents. I organized a meeting in Stettler. Close to 250 or 300 people came out that evening and again a member of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency was on hand to answer questions and to respond to the fears and the emotions of many of the producers and the public in general.

● (2155)

Residents of Crowfoot, as all western ranchers, were naturally nervous about a potential Canadian outbreak for obvious reasons. They greatly feared if the disease hit anywhere in North America that the borders would be closed between our country and the United States, that the borders between Canada and all of our trading partners would be shut down. Those fears were well founded.

That is precisely what has happened now with this infectious disease despite there being only one confirmed case, a very isolated case of BSE, or mad cow disease. Most recent reports, even yesterday and today, have indicated that so far mad cow disease in Canada has been limited to one cow. Results from 192 animals that have been tested in the same herd and other herds have shown that there is no trace of BSE in any of those animals.

The ability that we have in this industry to effectively register and trace the cattle from that ranch and the cattle from the offspring from that cow is to be commended. We now have in place a resource that we can explain to our trading partners. We have the ability to police and guard against the spreading of this or any other type of infectious disease.

At a time like this, it is imperative that we realize the perspective of what we talk about here. It is imperative that we realize that out of 13.4 million cattle in this country, we have one isolated incident of mad cow disease. That is one too many. Out of 5.2 million cattle in Alberta we have one cow with mad cow disease, or BSE, that has tested positive to that disease. We must keep this in perspective.

I submit to all members tonight that the industry, that those involved in the leadership and in the administration or working within the cattle industry would tell us that they will effectively do what needs to be done to make sure that our markets are protected and that the fears of the general public will be diminished.

However, a huge concern of mine is that the investigation has yet to pinpoint the source of the disease which is causing the United States, Russia, Singapore, Indonesia and other countries to temporarily ban Canadian shipments of beef.

The president of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association has said that the only way to restore consumer confidence and to reopen the international markets is to have the investigation completed as soon as possible. This is exactly what we are welcoming. We are welcoming a complete and indepth investigation. We are welcoming the Americans or any of our trading partners who want to come and assure themselves of the safety of this beef, but get to the bottom of where this one came from.

We recognize that the only way to restore consumer confidence, to reopen international markets is to complete this investigation and not to complete it with just a quick yes, everything is okay, but to be absolutely comprehensive in carrying out the investigation.

To date, 17 farms have been quarantined: 12 farms in Alberta; 2 farms in Saskatchewan; and 3 farms in British Columbia. These have been quarantined while federal inspectors continue to comb through the records of the ranches, the mills, the rendering plants to determine the source of this disease. Until the source is determined, until the markets are assured, beef exporters continue to wait and continue to be hurt.

● (2200)

Some suggest that the hit is as big as \$11 million a day. Not being able to access the key markets such as the United States and Japan hurts this industry to the tune of \$11 million a day.

The cattle industry has been one of the very bright spots in Canadian agriculture over the last couple of years as grain farmers, especially last year, were devastated by the worst drought in 133 years. Successively year after year after year it has hurt the agricultural sector. It has hurt the beef industry. It has hurt the livestock industry. Perhaps it has hurt the grain industry as much, but the cattle industry has been one of the strongest saving graces for agriculture that we have had. Imagine the effect on agriculture as a whole if we would not have had a cattle industry over the last five, six, seven, maybe 10 years.

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As the third largest exporter of beef in the world, in 2002 Canada exported \$4.3 billion worth of beef and beef products. Seventy per cent of Canada's beef production is exported and 75% of that is exported to the United States. Approximately 100,000 Canadians are employed directly within the cattle industry, from ranchers to feedlot operators, to those who work in packing plants and slaughterhouses, transporters, butchers and those who are employed in the auction markets.

The auction markets are shut down. They are closed down. A sign on the highway says "No sale this week". That is because they want to protect the industry. That is because they want to assure the Canadian public that the product they are putting on that plate is grade A Alberta beef and it is the best in the world.

Suffice it to say, the livelihood of a significant number of Canadians, particularly Albertans and the vast majority of my constituents, depend on a healthy and vibrant beef industry. Alberta's livestock transport industry could be crippled if the scare over mad cow disease lasts more than a couple of weeks. One livestock transporting company in Alberta said that even if the United States ban is lifted immediately on Canadian beef, the situation could be dire for truckers.

We know that last year a lot of the trucking companies that truck barley and grain were basically sitting idle. The grain trailers were not brought out. The combines were not brought out. The harvest was not brought out. I would not say many, but some of them bought cattle liners and have been moving cattle across the province and the west from Alberta into the United States. Out of 60 trucks one company utilizes, it can only keep 10 to 15 busy enough to survive as there are only small amounts of work available for shipping other types of livestock or moving cattle to pasture.

I spoke to an operations manager of a trucking company. He said that if the boycott goes beyond two or three weeks, men are going to start losing their trucks. Truckers are paid on average between \$1,500 and \$2,500 for taking cattle across the border to the United States. I was reading in the newspaper that Roberge Trucking, the largest livestock transporter in Alberta, has switched part of its operation looking for other things to move, shipping freight.

As just stated, the impact of this isolated case of BSE has reached well beyond cattle breeders and producers. To a certain degree it has also affected the dairy cattle and dairies. Milk producers, for example, in the province of Alberta have been very quick to assure the Canadian public that dairy cows have not been affected at all by this mad cow disease. They have been quick to point out that the latest scientific evidence shows that BSE is not transmitted through dairy products such as cheese and yogurt and that the World Health Organization has confirmed that milk from cows infected with BSE does not contain any traces of the agent believed to cause the disease.

• (2205)

Other sectors and other industries, including the dairy industry, are rallying to alleviate the concerns of the public. It is a frenzy. We need to assure Canadians.

Alberta Milk, the province's milk marketing board, has attempted to inform Canadians that it was not a milk cow that was infected. It is

emphasizing the fact that the infected animal did not enter the food chain.

Despite this message, according to Gerry Gartner of the Saskatchewan Milk Control Board, the dairy industry has been caught in the net when it comes to the U.S. ban on Canadian live cattle imports. While milk products have not or cannot be affected by the ban, even the movement of dairy cows can be.

A lot of the cattle industry whether it is beef or any other industry now is feeling the pinch. The agricultural industry as a whole continues to be negatively affected by this isolated incident. Therefore I appreciated what the Canadian Alliance members did when they called for this debate this evening, recognizing how it has affected this sector. I appreciated the agriculture critic from the Canadian Alliance thanking the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for its quick and steadfast message that beef is safe. It is safe to eat.

I too would like to applaud the CFIA for being quick to respond and quick to begin the trace-outs and quick to begin all the requirements that are needed to satisfy the consumer.

Tonight I would even recognize and thank the Prime Minister for his symbolic gesture last week in promoting the same message. I do not think that tonight is the evening to stand in the House of Commons and let partisan politics dictate questioning any move by politicians and question their motives for what they are doing. I applaud all those who have stepped forward to encourage consumers and the general public.

I would also like to recognize and thank Alberta agriculture minister Shirley McClellan for her response and her efforts during these very trying times. In Alberta I think we can be very confident that we have a minister who understands agriculture. She understands the cattle industry. She understands the impact that this type of disease has on the industry in her province.

I applaud her this evening. I applaud the way the governments in the press conferences have been open and have let the public know about the threat and about how they are responding to it.

It is not the time to try to cover up anything. This is not the time when we try to pretend it did not happen. This is the time when we respond and prove that we have the best inspection requirements probably around the world. The inspectors have responded quickly, to their credit.

In 1997 Canada banned feed made from cattle remains from being fed to other cattle to guard against BSE. In 1993 Canada prevented the importation of cattle from countries that were affected with such diseases. Under the Health of Animals Act, feeding prohibited material is punishable by a maximum \$250,000 fine and/or two years in prison.

I suggest that we vigilantly ensure that this rule is followed. In cases where individuals knowingly would do anything like this—and I do not believe anyone has; I still wait to see how this isolated incident came about—we need to remind the public that penalties will be enforced. We must be vigilant at all times when it comes to the safety of our food chain. We must be diligent in acting accordingly in cases where safety has been jeopardized.

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• (2210)

In closing, I encourage the government to continue to be transparent and effective in the handling of this one isolated case. I also encourage the Canadian beef industry to continue in its professional and responsible manner with which it has gone about business over the last couple of weeks, individuals like Neil Jahnke, the president of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, whom I have seen on television, and Arno Doerksen out of Gem, Alberta, on behalf of the Alberta Cattle Commission. I am confident that with their ability and their professionalism to effectively manage this situation, in concert with the federal and provincial governments, we will see a positive outcome here. Yesterday the Canadian Feed Industry Association met. It has assured us that all guidelines are being met.

All parties wish a speedy end to this outbreak and to the CFIA inspections.

Mr. Andy Savoy (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I must say that in this debate I am very impressed by the positive approach by all parties to this very serious situation in Canada.

The people who work in our cattle industry, from producers to processors, have worked hard with government over the years to ensure its growth. As a result, Canadian beef is among the best. Canada is well established as a world leader in beef production and exports. It is in the best interests of all Canadians to keep this industry strong.

Canada ranks as one of the world's top 10 producers of beef, accounting for 2.5% of the world's beef supply. To put that into perspective, each year Canada produces about three billion pounds of beef, contributing over \$30 billion annually to Canada's economy. In 2002 our beef cattle industry was the single largest source of farm cash receipts at almost \$8 billion.

Clearly the cattle industry makes an important contribution to Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector, and the Canadian economy as a whole. That is why the Government of Canada is committed to resolving this situation quickly and minimizing impact to Canada's cattle industry.

The U.S. accounts for over 80% of our exports of beef and nearly all our exports of live cattle. Confidence in the safety and security of Canada's food supply will reopen markets. We are maintaining close contact with the United States and other key trading partners throughout this investigation. While reopening the U.S. border to exports as soon as possible is important, our first priority remains public health and food safety for Canadians.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency, in cooperation with the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia and industry, is continuing its investigation around the clock and has made significant progress. I am pleased to report that the results of the rapid diagnostic tests of the depopulated case herd indicate that no other cows in that herd were infected with BSE.

Our commitment to keep Canada BSE free is not only a commitment to the well-being of our industry, but a commitment to the health and safety of all Canadians. The protection of human and animal health is not something we take lightly. I have every

confidence in the system we have in place, which is reviewed regularly by the CFIA.

For nearly a decade, Canada has taken a number of measures to prevent the introduction or spread of BSE. Canada does not import commodities which are known to pose a risk of BSE from any country which is not BSE free. Canada has not imported ruminant-derived meat and bone meal from European countries for several decades. In 1997 the CFIA banned the feeding of rendered products from ruminant animals back to other ruminants, like cattle or sheep. In December 2000, the CFIA suspended the importation of rendered animal material of any species from any country that was not recognized as BSE free.

In addition, I would like to note that Canada's domestic BSE surveillance program is internationally recognized, and not only meets but exceeds international standards.

The number of samples being taken under this program is double the current international standard. The program tests all animals with symptoms which could be compatible with BSE, and the program goes beyond that to test mature animals without clinical signs of BSE.

Our extensive screening system is the reason why there have only ever been two cases of BSE diagnosed in this country, one in an imported cow in 1993 and of course the case that brings us to the House tonight. In both cases the cow did not enter the food chain. Our inspection system is working the way it should.

In the case before us, the cow was deemed unfit for human consumption, not because it showed symptoms of BSE but because an inspector diagnosed it with a much less serious affliction, pneumonia, and pulled it from the system. This is a clear indication of the level of scrutiny placed on meat destined for the food chain. It is a clear indication that Canada's food safety and food quality system works.

In closing, I would like to express our gratitude to the industry and particularly to the farmers, who have been most directly affected by this situation, for their cooperation and support from day one. By working together, I am confident we will resolve this matter soon. Then our industry can return its attention to doing what it does best, producing exceptional beef and beef products which meet the highest standards of quality for Canadians.

• (2215)

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that we are addressing not just this very challenging situation related to what is known as mad cow disease, but early in the day we were also addressing another crisis, being the SARS crisis, which has been upon us as a nation. This tests to the ultimate the capabilities of a nation to properly respond to something as dire as a health issue, something as critical as this type of issue.

S. O. 52

We saw in the SARS crisis a situation where the government responded, but in the views of many, including the views of those of us on this side, the initial response was delayed. It was not as forthcoming as it could of and should have been. The effect of course on our country and certainly on our economy has been extreme, into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

We have watched what has happened with the onset of, as we have heard from members here tonight and earlier today, one animal being affected. The entire herd from which that animal came is declared as being clean from this disease. The federal government appears to have acted more responsibly this time. I believe it is the responsibility of opposition to properly criticize when criticism is due and to give credit where credit is due.

I believe, and I think all members here agree, that Canada has a food protection system, a food inspection system, certainly related to livestock, that we would argue is second to none in the world. The response we have seen, other than a couple of questions that we have, has been swift and right out front to address this problem.

I appreciate the fact that though the Prime Minister seems to have had a delayed reaction on the SARS problem, he was right out there on this issue. Some people may wonder what is the value in a photo opportunity, as the Prime Minister took to show that he was dining on Canadian beef. However it is important that he did that. It is a show of confidence. If a picture is worth a thousand words, that picture could or may be worth thousands of jobs in the long run.

The fact of the matter is, there are still questions. There are still herds that are, as we know, quarantined right now and there is still some ongoing testing. The question I am putting to the government, at this stage in what we hope is the winding down of this crisis, is what specifically is the government prepared to do in relation to compensation for those who are affected in this industry? It is not enough to say that there are EI programs for workers who are laid off. As hon. members know there is a time delay under normal circumstances before which workers can actually claim their compensation. We are asking that it be expedited so those who have been hit instantly by this crisis can have their needs met in rapid fashion.

It is more than just workers. The House has heard from our agricultural critic how many of the farm programs are affected. Yes, there are certain farm compensation programs in place, but none really tailored to deal directly with an issue of this magnitude. We are asking the government to work closely with and consult with all farm groups to ensure that the expediency of relief and of compensation be the factor at this moment.

Further to that, certainly there are the primary producers. However sometimes we forget in this entire chain of economic activity how many tens of thousands of people are affected. Think of the packing plants, the abattoirs, the trucking and all the ancillary operations that go into not just the production of the beef itself but the processing of it. This is an incredibly intensive and extensive industry.

• (2220)

I would suggest that Canadians, especially Canadians in western Canada, know that producers and operators in Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada are also being affected by this. However this is a

time in our history as a country where people, especially in western Canada, are sensing and have sensed for quite a period of time alienation from a federal government whose operations cause them to wonder if the care is really there.

The questions have already been put to me by producers and people in my own constituency in Okanagan—Coquihalla. As we know, the Douglas Lake Ranch is situated there. There are also other ranching operations. People are saying that if ever there were an opportunity for the federal government to show that it cares about the plight of all Canadians in all regions it is now. This is the opportunity in which the federal government can move with speed, with clarity and with a sense of conviction that all Canadians are important.

I have talked about people in my own constituency, producers and processors who are affected. I have talked with people in Quebec who are equally affected, people who have operations related to the processing and the production of quality meat products. Across the country the cry is going out to the federal government that the normal periods of time to produce compensation for many will not suffice this time. It will be a matter of swiftness and expediency because the instant this situation hit the news, the very day the headlines broke, packing plant operations began to shut down. Reefers began to return from the border, trucks with meat product that were turned back at the border. This happened instantly. There was not the luxury of a one week, two week or three week delay.

The government needs to realize that although we will work through this crisis, and we hope it is in a relatively short period of time, and the confidence worldwide about Canadian beef products will be restored, and we believe that will happen, many economic operations will be lost in the process, perhaps never to return, unless the government is there with compensation in a realistic way.

Right now, whether we talk about the truckers, or the people who work in those packing plants, or the abattoir and packing operations themselves, they have been hit with something they have never been hit with before. We cannot afford to see what happened in Europe and Great Britain, take place here. As a matter of fact, we are confident that we will not see that. We are confident that this is already working through the process. Therefore, time is clearly of the essence.

I listened carefully as our leader, the leader of the official opposition, put the question to the Prime Minister today. He asked what specifically would be in place and if the normal timelines could be overlooked as the government moves to deal with the operation we face. Clearly he seems to be aware of the problem but we are looking for more direct comment. We are looking for a more direct commitment. We want to hear from the Minister of Agriculture, from the Minister of Human Resources Development and from the other ministers that the program is actually in place. We are hearing from people on the other side of the border. We are hearing from the major customers in the United States.

In B.C. alone we are talking about a multi-million dollar industry. We have already been hit in British Columbia with the down side of the softwood lumber difficulties. We have already been hit economically with the pine beetle infestation. It has already impacted, in a severe way, on the economy in British Columbia. We literally cannot take another shock to the economic system in British Columbia. The message has to go out that the government will be there in a significant way, and it has to go out immediately.

• (2225)

People making long term market decisions right now are literally waiting for the government's response to this. People in the futures market are making their long term decisions right now. This will have an effect on the consumer and on the person buying at the retail end, right down to the number of train cars and refrigerator trucks that will be ordered in the long term. Those decisions are being made right now in the short term.

We urge the government to not just back up what already is a worldclass food production and food safety system that we are proud of here in Canada, but to also show that it is a people protecting government and that it will protect those who are being hurt.

Other nations instantly closed their borders to Canadian products. I am not saying we would not do the same but we must deal with the issues. We have the issue of over-quota. We know there has been a surplus of quota in Canada in the recent past brought in from other countries. Just as those countries have now closed their borders to Canadian products, we are asking again for swift action. We are asking the government to come to certain conclusions that would allow Canadian producers to take up that slack. We are asking the government to take action that is swift, that is focused and that will be effective.

We have heard that the government wants to act in that fashion. Within the next few days the specific type of assistance that it comes up with will be a measure of its commitment, certainly to the industry across the country but also to the variety of industries that are being affected: our cattle industry, the guide and outfitters associations, the truckers, the packing plants and the processors.

Thousands of Canadians and investors are waiting to hear specifically what the government is prepared to do to meet the

needs of Canadians, especially in an area that is so important to western Canada.

We ask the government to act. We ask it to do it clearly and with determination and in a way that will allow many people who have built their lives, their families and their businesses around this industry to survive and continue on. We want people to be able to look back and say that this was the day the government acted quickly, took clear action and spared an industry from long term injury that could have been far worse had it not acted. That is what we are looking for, that is what we are asking for and that is what we are hoping to see.

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to close the debate by following up on the remarks made by my colleague from New Brunswick.

I compliment members on all sides of the House for a very positive debate this evening and for bringing forward their creative ideas. Having the minister's staff and departmental staff listening to the wisdom of the remarks and the suggestions being made is the only way these emergency debates are productive. When they do that they are able to come up with the best possible solutions. Tremendous compliments have already been given to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for its quick action.

It is evident to beef farmers and everyone involved in the industry, such as packers and so on, that Parliament, with its quick action and staying until 10:30 tonight, understands the seriousness of the situation. We do care and we will try to do what we can to solve the problem. We will be watching it very closely.

I thank all members of Parliament who participated in the debate tonight.

• (2230)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I am satisfied that the debate has now been concluded and I therefore declare the motion carried.

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

(The House adjourned at 10:30 p.m.)

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