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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 11, 2003

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 11, 2003

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[English]

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

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CHABAD

Hon. Art Eggleton (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Chabad Lubavitch which is the world's largest network of Jewish educational and social service institutions. The Chabad movement was founded in the 18th century in the Russian city of Lubavitch. The word Chabad is an acronym for the Hebrew words for wisdom, understanding and knowledge, representing a philosophy of life that integrates the spirit of humanity with the physical reality of the world.

Chabad is a worldwide movement with 3,000 branches in almost 50 countries on six continents. Chabad operates schools, youth centres, social agencies, summer groups, soup kitchens, medical clinics, and non-sectarian drug rehabilitation centres.

At the present time, more than 100,000 children are being educated in Chabad schools. Chabad houses serve as a home away from home for college and university students. They offer food for the body, nourishment for the soul, and non-judgmental advisers always willing to listen.

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KINDALE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, I acknowledged 20 recipients of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal from my riding of Okanagan—Shuswap who contribute to the community and society as a whole.

Today I was pleased to hear that the Kindale Development Centre in Armstrong which provides services to about 90 mentally

challenged clients received a donation from Sun Country Cable, a donation that will enable the centre to continue its work in our community. Sun Country Cable donated the building. This building is next to Kindale's existing facility and both properties will eventually lead to construction of a new centre. In the meantime, the building will be used for training and respite suites.

I am proud to be part of a community that looks out for those less fortunate. Charity does begin at home.

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[Translation]

SOCIÉTÉ RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share some of my concerns about the recent decision by Société Radio-Canada to cancel its late evening sports news.

I am worried, because last year this crown corporation had also decided to stop broadcasting the Saturday night hockey games, *La Soirée du hockey*. Happily, that decision was reversed.

Société Radio-Canada has a goal and a duty to reflect Canadian society. The late evening sports news is the only cross-Canada sportscast in French. Its impact is very great, not only in terms of professional sport, but also for everyone involved in amateur sports, especially the athletes.

Therefore, in the name of all my hon. colleagues in the Quebec Liberal caucus, I ask Radio-Canada to review the file, reconsider its decision, and maintain the service.

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[English]

FIRST CAPITAL OF CANADA

Mr. Larry McCormick (Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, history is alive and well in the city of Kingston, Ontario. On June 15, Kingstonians will gather together with family and friends in their city to celebrate First Capital Day.

On that day in Kingston in 1841, Governor General Lord Sydenham opened the first Parliament of the United Provinces of Canada. Eventually, Kingston's insufficient number of office buildings forced Parliament to move to Montreal, where it opened on November 28, 1844.

S. O. 31

Over 160 years later, both the provincial and the federal governments have officially recognized Kingston as the First Capital of Canada. Thanks to the hard work of Mr. Ian Milne and Dr. Margaret Angus, the founders of First Capital Day, the occasion of Kingston's choice as Canada's first capital has been marked with much celebration for the past five years.

On behalf of myself and the member for Kingston and the Islands, I would like to congratulate Kingston for this celebration, and invite all Canadians who take pride in our heritage to come and join in the festivities at Canada's historic first capital on June 15.

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[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the former Parti Québécois government under Bernard Landry had established a network of five-dollar-a-day daycare centres by making two changes in the taxes that affect Quebec families.

Families with children have borne a large share of the tax burden in the past, and they still do so.

In an article in *La Presse*, on June 3, 2003, Claude Picher wrote:

The authors of the study concluded that 72% of Quebec families are financially worse off. Essentially, these are the households with incomes over \$25,000; below that amount, you win, above it, you lose, and depending on various factors, you may lose between \$389 and \$608 per year.

The combined impact of the two measures, five-dollar-a-day daycare and Quebec's budget tightening, varies considerably depending on the size of the family, its income, the age of the children and many other factors.

Shame.

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[English]

CHABAD

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Chabad movement was born in Russia more than 200 years ago. Chabad worked to keep Judaism alive under oppression during the czarist and communist regimes. When the Soviet Union crumbled, Chabad emerged from underground. Its work continues throughout the former Soviet Union where it has established some 200 institutions for Jewish outreach and humanitarian aid.

There are 72 Chabad centres in Canada. There are 37 centres in Quebec, 21 in Ontario, eight in British Columbia, two in Alberta and Manitoba and one in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. These centres serve the needs of Jews no matter what their level of knowledge or observance.

Only a few weeks ago for the first time ever, Chabad organized a reception here at the House of Commons commemorating the Jewish festival of Purim.

The vision and leadership for this vast network of activities and services was and is the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson of blessed memory.

●(1410)

INVESTMENT BROKERS

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the decline of the stock market over the past several years has caused investors to become more wary of the advice they receive from their investment advisors.

Many are surprised to discover that investment advisors are paid sales commissions by fund companies to sell their products to their clients and later keep them from selling those investments. These commissions and higher ones paid to sell private placements represent a conflict of interest that investors need to be aware of.

It is time for national standards to protect investors from commission-driven advice by requiring brokers working for federally regulated financial institutions to report to their clients the commissions they receive for recommending and selling investment products. Transparency and full disclosure are essential to restore the investor confidence that our economy urgently needs.

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[Translation]

HOUSING

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks from now, thousands of Quebecers will be moving to a new home. But this year as last year, many families in Montreal, Quebec City, Gatineau and elsewhere will find themselves without housing, on the street.

Between 1994 and 2002, the federal government deprived inadequately housed Quebecers of approximately 40,000 units of social housing.

This government must be reminded that nearly 1 million Quebecers are inadequately housed, either spending too high a portion of their income on housing or living in substandard and often unsanitary housing. Statistics Canada reports that in 2001, nearly 218,500 households in Quebec were spending some 50% of their income on rent.

At present, hundreds of families and individuals are already homeless, the vast majority being too poor to afford housing.

In the face of the worsening crisis, the Bloc Québécois asks that the federal government urgently make funding available for social housing.

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[English]

ANTARCTICA

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was proud to sit with the Minister of the Environment as he introduced an act respecting the protection of the Antarctic environment.

Colleagues and I have been pressing for Canada to become more involved in Antarctica, which contains most of the world's freshwater. It is a pristine continent set aside for research and other non-military activities under a treaty involving almost 30 nations.

Canadians are active in Antarctica as researchers, businesses and tourists. Our Twin Otters, snowmobiles, mukluks, parkas and remote sensing systems are used all over the continent.

As a rich, cold weather country, we have a great deal to contribute to the proper management of Antarctica and we have a lot to gain from being there.

I congratulate the minister for this important step toward Canada taking its full responsibility for this special continent. Our thanks to the Minister of DFAIT and to the staff at Environment Canada and DFAIT who helped with this project. Our particular thanks to Students on Ice for their petitions.

I urge all members to support rapid passage of this bill.

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BARRY MARSDEN

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we in British Columbia are very proud of Barry Marsden. Barry is the chairman and CEO of Cascade Aerospace.

Barry recently received an award for outstanding achievement in aviation maintenance, repair and overhaul. He is acknowledged for his vision for building a state of the art purpose built aircraft maintenance, repair, overhaul and modification facility which opened in my riding in Abbotsford, British Columbia.

Our city has now caught the eye of Southwest Airlines and Continental Airlines. This has enhanced the economics of our area considerably.

Barry's success as one of the founders of Conair, of which he is president and CEO, could have stopped at that point, but real leaders strive for excellence all the time.

We in Canada can be very proud of Barry Marsden, for he is the kind of person true Canadian entrepreneurs are made of: energy, innovation, dedication and foresight.

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MIKE LAZARIDIS

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to announce that as I speak, Dr. Mike Lazaridis is being installed as the eighth chancellor of the University of Waterloo.

Dr. Lazaridis is known as a visionary, innovator and engineer of extraordinary talent. His creations, which include the BlackBerry and other world firsts, have won dozens of industry awards for excellence.

Dr. Lazaridis is a passionate advocate for education and scientific research. He has supported his community and country with generous gifts to educational institutions. He gave \$100 million to establish the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics, a world centre for excellence based in Waterloo and affiliated with more than 30 Canadian universities.

Mike to come this country as a six year old boy and is now a fiercely proud Canadian.

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On behalf of the House, I want to congratulate Dr. Mike Lazaridis on his installation as chancellor of the University of Waterloo.

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● (1415)

CHABAD

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, Chabad Lubavitch is the world's largest network of Jewish educational and social service institutions.

This vast and modern network of activities and services can be attributed to the vision and leadership of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of blessed memory. He has been described as a profound scholar, statesman, administrator and teacher. His love of all humanity and his dedication to helping people are his unique legacy.

July 3 will mark the ninth anniversary of the passing of Lubavitcher Rebbe. Let us mark that day to promote goodness and kindness throughout the country. Let all of us in the House encourage our fellow citizens to live by the values of tolerance, understanding and love for each other.

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[*Translation*]

MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is pleased to celebrate the life and work of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, "the Rebbe" as he was affectionately known. Born in Nikolayev, Russia, on April 18, 1902, or 11 Nissan 5662, the Rebbe survived the Nazi regime and fled to the United States in 1941.

He was definitely one the most influential Jewish figures of the 20th century. The Rebbe was no doubt among those who fostered the awakening of the Jewish collective consciousness following the Holocaust. In 1950, he assumed the leadership of the Chabad movement and guided it toward international outreach. He has been described as an accomplished scholar, statesman, administrator and teacher. His deep commitment to humanity and his dedication represent a unique legacy.

The Rebbe died in 1994, at the age of 92, but to this day he is still an inspiration to thousands of disciples and millions of admirers the world over. There are currently 37 Chabad centres in Quebec, which shows that his influence is felt even in our part of the world.

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[*English*]

MILLENNIUM EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Mr. Tony Tirabassi (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to 11 outstanding high school students in my riding of Niagara Centre who have been selected to receive one of the 404 millennium excellence awards that the Millennium Scholarship Foundation provides to outstanding Ontario students entering post-secondary education.

They have been selected on the basis of academic performance, community service and leadership and innovation.

Oral Questions

Congratulations to Jimmy Wintle, Taryn Diamond, Keith Bennie, Sarah Golin, Delaney Greig, Deanna Hunt, Tasha Maheu, Lisa Moreira, Elena Paraskevopoulos, Kelly Todd and Janelle Fournier.

My best wishes to all of them as they follow their paths to a bright and promising future.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Labour Congress National Women's Conference has once again succeeded in focusing attention on issues of vital importance to Canadian women.

Conference studies show disturbing trends in women's employment that clearly point to the abysmal Liberal record on helping women gain an equal footing in the workforce. The earnings gap between men and women actually grew between 1997 and 2002, with women earning only 63% as much as men on average. Women of colour earned even less.

The percentage of women working full time has dropped from 51.6% in 1995 to 44.5% in 2002, even though a quarter of women working part time would prefer to work full time. Many are pinned down by the Liberal failure to bring in a meaningful national childcare program, as are many unemployed women.

The percentage of women in low paying jobs has also risen to 31.5%, with the majority still in clerical, sales or service jobs.

Canada's unions are fighting hard to improve this disgraceful record. When will the Liberals put women's equality back on their agenda?

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I must tell the Prime Minister that there really is growing concern and frustration among cattlemen and their families.

They have been waiting weeks for test results to be completed. Those tests are apparently now completed, but our border with the United States remains closed. It is within the power of the U.S. administration to open the border and we believe it is incumbent upon the Prime Minister of the country to phone the President and try to get action on that.

Will the Prime Minister do that or does he believe he has lost complete credibility with the U.S. government?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at this moment Canadian scientists are discussing the file with their counterparts in the United States. We must prove to them scientifically that everything is safe.

At this moment the best course is to let the scientists resolve the problem among themselves. Of course, if there is a need at one time to speak with the President, I will be happy to do that. I have already discussed this problem with him when I was in Europe last week.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that has been the government's line for weeks, that the science must be dealt with.

We now believe that the science has been dealt with, but yesterday two of the Prime Minister's own cabinet ministers, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Public Works, suggested science was not the issue. They suggested that somehow there were issues beyond science.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what they were talking about? Were they talking about the Prime Minister's bad relations with the United States?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we must be very careful when there is a question of public safety. The member should recall the problem we had with P.E.I. potatoes for a number of years. I spoke with the President time and time again. The Americans were using the health problem to ban potatoes.

At this moment it is very important not to make a mistake. Our people must convince their counterparts in the United States on a scientific basis first.

Of course, if there is a need for me to speak to the President, I will be happy to speak with him and I am sure that he will be happy to speak with me.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there is a need to talk to the President. The Prime Minister had time to give no less than two press scrums on what the President was doing wrong with domestic policy in the United States. He can have a second conversation on this issue with the President.

For two weeks we have been told the science would be done and the borders would be opened. The science is now done and it is the responsibility of the Prime Minister to get answers.

Can the Prime Minister tell us with any degree of specificity what exactly is the new criteria that Canada must meet to get the borders open?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we must assure everybody that there is no disease in Canada. It was only one cow and the system worked well. We have acted very diligently. Scientists, who came from other nations, have looked at the file and complimented the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the people working on the file from the Government of Alberta for having moved quickly.

That is the way to deal with it, not try to score political points. We must do it in a responsible way.

*Oral Questions***POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING**

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on the day the Liberal government is forcing through a new law on election financing, the minister responsible for ACOA has already a unique way to get around the rules. He just mailed out a letter asking constituents to send money to help celebrate the 1000th anniversary of Viking settlements in Newfoundland and to send all cash to his home address where he promises never to issue receipts or account for the spending. For that matter, no public events will actually be held but what the heck, those are just details.

Does the Prime Minister really believe that this kind of behaviour is acceptable from his minister or have we simply moved from Eric the Red to Gerry the red-handed?

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is always a time and place for supporting community events, especially when they are very important to the constituents.

I say to hon. members opposite that maybe this is a good example of how they will be supporting Bill C-24, the political financing act, because they agree with transparency.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): It is pretty transparent, Mr. Speaker, when he takes the cash at his home address and does not account for how it will be spent. That is transparent.

But not only did the minister's fundraising activities violate the new political financing act, they make a mockery of this new ethics package that the Liberals are ramming through the House today as well. Rules look good on paper, but they really only work for honest people.

The Prime Minister should be asking himself: is this kind of behaviour acceptable from his ministers? Or does he really think that transparency and accountability should be a hallmark of someone in his cabinet?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across is pontificating—

Some hon. members: Oh, ho.

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Fraser Valley has to be able to hear the answer from the Minister of State and he will not be able to with all the noise.

The hon. Minister of State has the floor.

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across is pretending today that he is in favour of Bill C-24 and to have the rules in place now regarding everything that is in the bill including transparency. He and his party have systematically blocked this bill at every occasion, but today the bill will pass and it will be the law of the land.

● (1425)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to be part of the select club of agencies entitled to manage federal sponsorships, the call for tenders specifies that the tenderer must have extensive experience in the field. The Nino Colavecchio translation firm, which has no experience in sponsorships, not only was part of the club, but pocketed \$14,000 in commissions and landed contracts worth \$115,000.

How could a company with no relevant experience have been selected, without the cosy relationship that existed between its owner, Nino Colavecchio, and Alfonso Gagliano?

[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, on the basis of the information in the files, it would appear that this particular standing offer was established by a competitive process. Nevertheless, as the House knows, I have never favoured the use of independent advertising agencies as administrative intermediaries and I terminated that practice more than one year ago.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are no longer any problems with the Minister of Public Works and Government Services. He sounds just like Alfonso Gagliano, and he reaches the same heights of hypocrisy. He is being a hypocrite right now. He should be telling us that he knew Alfonso Gagliano was a close friend of the Colavecchio family. He knew that the son, Roberto Colavecchio, was being investigated by the RCMP in the immigration commissioners affair. He knew that he was one of his main organizers.

Without reaching heights of hypocrisy, he should come right out and say that the main thing Nino Colavecchio had going for him was Alfonso Gagliano.

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Public Works and Government Services will have the floor, and I hope we will not hear any unparliamentary language.

[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, let me just say very directly to the hon. gentleman that in a contest of public ethics I will stack mine against his any day of the week.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the ethics counsellor cleared the former Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Alfonso Gagliano said that he was especially satisfied because the counsellor had gotten to the bottom of the issue. Yet, we now learn that the counsellor did not even bother to look at the books of the companies Gagliano's son worked for before clearing his father.

Were the actions of the ethics counsellor, in the end, nothing more than a charade to clear the former minister? In fact, no serious investigation was carried out and Alfonso Gagliano is still up to his neck in trouble.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the ethics counsellor examined the matter at the request of Mr. Gagliano himself. He made a public report. This is an institution that did not exist before. There was no ethics counsellor before this government took office. In each case referred to him, the ethics counsellor has published a report, appeared before committees and explained his reasoning. This is an institution that is new and evolving. A new bill will be passed shortly to improve it. However, I am proud that we, here in the House, have been pioneers in this.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister wants to cover for Alfonso Gagliano because he, too, is involved in this affair up to his neck. Does the Prime Minister not realize that the only way to clear his name at the end of his mandate is to call for a public inquiry, otherwise, everyone will remain convinced that the Prime Minister was deeply implicated in this whole affair?

[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 the whole sponsorship issue, the examination process began in 2000 with an internal audit. That was followed up by an audit action plan that was implemented and verified in 2002, followed by the inquiries of the Auditor General, followed by the inquiries under the Financial Administration Act, and wherever necessary, referenced to the RCMP. A reference to the RCMP is hardly a cover-up.

• (1430)

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, the story concerning Canada's ambassador to Denmark has revolved around new-found allegations of corruption, ethical conflicts, and the Vatican's refusal to accept him.

There is a myriad of new evidence now against Mr. Gagliano, including scandals at Groupaction and Groupe Everest as well as his son's printing company, and today, TNC Multicom, which has a stench of corruption that is hanging over this disgraced minister.

Will the Prime Minister simply recall Mr. Gagliano to Canada to deal with this issue and remove this cloud that hangs over Canada's distinguished foreign service?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the member is just making accusations. The Minister of Public Works talked about all the steps that have been taken and that all

these files have been looked into by the Auditor General as well as cases being referred to the RCMP. There was an internal audit.

He is making accusations saying that Mr. Gagliano was refused by the Vatican. It is absolutely not true.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, if the Canadian ambassador to Denmark is not good enough for the Vatican, why is he good enough for Denmark? It begs the question, was there an official request to remove the ambassador? This is the biggest tragedy to hit Denmark since *Hamlet*.

With new evidence linking Mr. Gagliano Jr. and the contracts to TNC Multicom, will the Solicitor General open an investigation to look at this situation again, where the ethics counsellor has failed to uncover this evidence?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this has already been answered several times in the House. There have been many investigations surrounding this issue. In relation to the references to the RCMP, those are operational matters and I cannot comment on them.

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GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, pursuing the Shakespeare 101 theme, the real tragedy is not Mr. Gagliano, but the way the government is letting the victims of SARS and mad cow disease dangle in the wind while it hesitates to make up its mind on how it will help them.

I know the Prime Minister likes to golf, but would he not agree that he should not be on the golf course until such time as the needs of these victims have been met, and that the House should continue to sit until such time that the government gets its act together on these issues?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Really, Mr. Speaker, this is ridiculous. I have not played golf in a month and I do not know when I will play.

The member does not want to recognize that I was on the phone yesterday with the Premier of British Columbia. We discussed the issues and he commented positively. We said that it had to be a solution involving the two levels of government. I talked to him again last night.

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food will be in western Canada on Friday and will meet with the ministers of agriculture to find solutions.

We had to wait for the results from the scientific community. It reported this week and now we are working to find an—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there seems to be an unholy rush on the part of the government and the official opposition to get out of here, even if it means getting out of here before these issues are dealt with.

Oral Questions

My question is for the Prime Minister. Will he commit that there will be solutions to these problems before he hits the golf course? Will he step up to the tee and hit one down the fairway for the victims of SARS and mad cow disease?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, his is getting very ridiculous. I am doing my best.

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has been complimented by his counterparts in the west. The people involved in the industry know that we have shown concern. I have raised the problem myself with the President of the United States. I was on the phone yesterday. There were some ministers looking at solutions.

I know that NDP members will never form a government, so they do not know how we must work to make proper solutions that will be lasting.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the beef industry is being held hostage and denied immediate financial compensation in an attempt to force the provinces to sign on to the agriculture policy framework. As of today eight provinces have not signed on to the APF.

I find it incredible that the government would use the beef industry and abuse it in this way.

My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Why is the government blackmailing the provinces into signing the agriculture policy framework?

•(1435)

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are not blackmailing anyone into doing anything. As of the end of December last year, the old program, the Canadian farm income protection program, which the opposition did not like and others did not like, ceased to exist.

We worked with the provinces and the industry, and we have developed a new program that is more effective and goes deeper into disaster situations than the old program did. That is there for the farmers to participate in. I am sure they want to do that.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association has stated at the agriculture committee that the agriculture policy framework would not handle a catastrophe, such as BSE where the border has been closed to the United States.

All other major farm groups, including the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, have said the same thing.

Why is the government not willing to provide immediate compensation to our feedlot industry that needs the cash today?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has already said that we are having those discussions with the industry and with the provinces. I will discuss those and the ideas and ways in which we can do that with ministers again on Friday.

We very clearly understand the seriousness of this. We also understand the importance of scientists working initially to help us

get the border open. A combination of all that is what is needed. Those are the efforts we are putting forward.

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[*Translation*]

AMATEUR SPORT

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in June 1999, I personally filed a complaint to speak out against the treatment of French-speaking amateur athletes. Again today, the Commissioner of Official Languages is harsh in her condemnation of the excessive slowness and the lack of a consistent approach in implementing the recommendations she made in 2000.

How can the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport claim that he is doing his job when the commissioner is saying today that Sport Canada is still a long way from reaching the podium and that, ultimately, English is the language spoken when it comes to sports in Canada?

Hon. Paul DeVillers (Secretary of State (Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in answer to the hon. member's question about the fact that this report is very negative, I want to quote the report's conclusion:

Efforts made by SportCanada and other sport organizations demonstrate their commitment to incorporate linguistic duality within the Canadian sport system.

Given this conclusion, I believe that it is not as negative as the hon. member is suggesting.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport can say what he likes, but one thing is clear: in amateur sport in Canada, francophones are being treated like second-class citizens. The commissioner confirms this, and the athletes are tired of it.

What is he going to do to rectify this immediately?

Hon. Paul DeVillers (Secretary of State (Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been enormous progress since the commissioner tabled her report in 2000. This progress notwithstanding, the Government of Canada remains committed to working with the commissioner.

However, I want to point out that 33% of the Canadian Olympic team in Salt Lake City were French-speaking athletes from Quebec. This proves that francophone athletes can hold their own in our sports system.

* * *

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the plan of the industry and now the plan of the premiers for BSE compensation was delivered to the Prime Minister on June 9.

Premier Campbell was not overstating the BSE economic crisis when he said, "If something is not done immediately, the feedlot industry as we know it will disappear".

Oral Questions

Could the Prime Minister tell the House why he has not agreed to compensation in view of the fact that the APF cannot provide immediate help?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no reason why the business risk management portion of the new program cannot provide immediate help. That is indeed very possible.

As well I have said that we are looking into the possibility of interest free loans to help the industry's cash flows in this crisis. Along with that, we are working very diligently and the sectors are too to get the border open, which is even more important than all of the other. However, we need all of it.

• (1440)

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Alberta minister of agriculture, who has signed on to the APF, has stated that any BSE compensation package has to be a compliment to NISA and that NISA alone will not address this crisis.

Why is the government refusing to offer immediate assistance to feedlot operators who are going broke?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct. NISA alone will not do it but the new program, which is a combination of the old NISA program and the disaster program, will do it. I had those discussions with the minister yesterday on a conference call, and she gave very strong indications that was one of the directions we needed to consider.

* * *

[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Secretary of State responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec claims that giving loan guarantees to the companies hit by the softwood lumber crisis could trigger reactions from the Americans, thus implying that this would be contrary to the provisions of NAFTA and the WTO. Nothing could be further from the truth. Canada Economic Development already offers loan guarantees to exporters and this is wholly in compliance with WTO rules.

Can the Minister for International Trade inform his colleague responsible for Canada Economic Development once and for all that loan guarantees are perfectly acceptable, and tell him at the same time to stop talking nonsense?

[English]

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we introduced our first package of \$350 million, this was one of the options we looked at. We have always said as a government that we have never taken that off the table. It is still on the table. We are monitoring the situation.

The hon. member should also keep in mind that since the duties have gone, yes, there has been an impact on communities, but the export of lumber has only dropped 8% across the country. We understand this still affects communities. We are very concerned, and we are monitoring the situation very closely.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister for International Trade himself has said that loan guarantees were one of the possible options for assisting the softwood lumber industry. It is not only an option, but one of the few options possible.

What, then, is keeping the Minister for International Trade from convincing his colleague responsible for Canada Economic Development to move on these loan guarantees for affected businesses?

Hon. Claude Drouin (Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that he ought to listen to the replies as well. We have never said we were not interested. All we have said is that we wanted to be cautious. We have spoken with representatives of the Forestry Industry Council and have asked them for proposals on how we can work together to find solutions.

This is what the hon. member ought to do, as we have been doing for several weeks, as well as providing \$350 million in assistance to the lumber industry.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the export of SARS to the United States by a North Carolina man, who had visited Toronto, is raising concerns at the World Health Organization. Yesterday a senior WHO official said that this sort of thing should not have happened.

Does the minister now regret that appropriate screening measures were not in place when this man left Toronto?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, appropriate screening measures are in place. We are in regular contact with the WHO. As I said yesterday and as has been confirmed by Dr. Megan Davies of the North Carolina department of health, when this person left Canada and entered the United States, he showed no symptoms of SARS.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister's obligation is to do everything she possibly can, and in that she has failed.

Yesterday the minister admitted that airport screening was not in place when this man flew out of Toronto in mid-May. WHO officials also said that they were worried and really concerned about what was going on.

How can the minister guarantee that we will not be hit with another travel advisory?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the WHO official indicated that he was concerned about the SARS situation in the City of Toronto. Obviously we are all concerned about that. I hope the hon. member is concerned as well.

Let me go back to the question of the gentleman who went to North Carolina. Dr. Megan Davies went on to say:

—the man was healthy when he flew out of Toronto...I don't think of this as Canada exporting a case. I think we have a worldwide epidemic of an emerging pathogen that none of us understands completely...

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the special court in Sierra Leone announced the indictment of Liberian president Charles Taylor for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Taylor was visiting Ghana at the time the indictment was released. Unfortunately, although the government of Ghana was given prompt notice of this indictment, it allowed Taylor to leave Ghana rather than arresting him.

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs express to the government of Ghana our concern and disappointment that Taylor was, at least in this instance, allowed to escape justice?

•(1445)

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the hon. member for his interest and his contribution toward peace and security in West Africa. He has made a personal commitment to this.

I want to say that it was partly thanks to him and his pressure that Canada took a leadership role in the creation of the special court, and has contributed significantly to its work. In fact there are many Canadians working in senior positions on the court. I have every confidence that justice will be served by the court.

On the other hand, we also look to President Kufuor of Ghana as chair of ECOWAS, to make peace in the region.

I want to draw to the attention of the House that I have just learned that today this matter will be discussed by the Security Council because there is a peace proposal on the table as we speak.

* * *

PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, it has been reported that former privacy commissioner, John Grace, has raised concerns surrounding the independence of the current privacy commissioner. Mr. Grace said:

I think there's an issue there. The more arms-length the commissioner can be from receiving gifts, arrangements and favour, the better.

After arranging the deal to generously line the pockets of the privacy commissioner, how can the Prime Minister continue to claim that the so-called independent position is arm's length from government?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is an officer of the House. Surely he will know that the individual is an officer of Parliament. That is the position which he holds by virtue of a vote that we have passed and by virtue of the appointment that has been made.

Insofar as the benefits in question, which the individual is afforded, I am told that those benefits are similar to those afforded to

Oral Questions

other government officials. As a matter of fact, other officers of Parliament have previously had similar arrangements. This is not something extraordinary, and those accusations are not correct. As a matter of fact—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, in early May the United States department of commerce made a softwood lumber proposal that provided a complete exit for the Atlantic Canada softwood lumber industry and for the remanufacturers. Then incredibly on May 22, the Canadian government made a different proposal that rolled these two industries right into the quota system.

How can it be that the U.S. proposal took into consideration the concerns of the Atlantic Canada industry, but our own government sold it down the river by not even trying to keep the hard earned exemption?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised by the question of the member who participated in a meeting I had with the Maritime Lumber Bureau last Thursday in Fredericton. I must say that we had a very good exchange of views. Both of us better understood one another's concerns with the proposal.

We are trying as a government to bring an exemption for all softwood lumber from all regions of Canada, but in any way we move on this issue, we will always take into consideration the special circumstances of the maritime industry.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

After the horrors of what happened in Rwanda 10 years ago, the international community vowed never again to stand idly by as a genocide unfolded. But as sad and surprising as it may be, it looks as though we are witnessing another genocide in the Congo.

France has sent out troops under UN mandate, but observers are saying that their numbers are insufficient to control the situation.

Why did Canada not do everything in its power to avert yet another genocide in Africa?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Just today, I spoke to Mr. Brault, our special envoy for the Congo. We appointed him a few years ago, and he has been working closely with the United Nations and Secretary Kofi Annan to bring peace to that region.

Oral Questions

We appreciate the seriousness of the situation, but Canada has offered to contribute to the force that will be sent to the Congo. We are confident that our measures and contributions, both military and in terms of humanitarian relief, will help bring peace and restore security to the region.

* * *

● (1450)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 125 people were laid off by Horne, in Noranda, after an 11 month strike. I asked a question last week of the Minister of Human Resources Development and have yet to get an answer.

Will the minister make these people who have been laid off by the company following an 11 month strike eligible for EI? The minister needs to act now.

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are happy to see that operations have resumed at the Horne foundry. My officials met with the employer and the unions yesterday and the two groups are preparing a joint submission on the production status so that we can determine employment levels and get those who are permanently laid off into pay through employment insurance.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works constantly tries to assure us that corruption centred around Alfonso Gagliano is being looked into. He mentions the Auditor General and the RCMP and claims that the activities of specific public servants are being pursued under the Financial Administration Act.

That begs the question: Does Alfonso Gagliano fall under the category of specific public servant, or is he beyond the reach of any investigation?

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, obviously I cannot comment on any investigation in detail but the issues that come under the purview of the Financial Administration Act were announced publicly some months ago and the first report thereunder has been referred to the RCMP. I cannot comment on the details.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister is consistent and keeps claiming he will not interfere in police business but the longer the kingpin keeps Gagliano in exile the longer it will take to ventilate this scandal.

Now Denmark is saying goodbye to its unwelcome visitor with some Danish takeout.

Did the Prime Minister authorize the farewell before the rejection by the Vatican, or are the Danes just wanting to get rid of Gagliano too?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is media speculation. As the Prime Minister has said in the House, Mr. Gagliano is the ambassador to Denmark and he remains to be our ambassador in Denmark.

* * *

[Translation]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, more than 100 aboriginal children from the Long Point Winneway first nation in Témiscamingue may not receive a proper education when classes resume in September because—arbitrarily, and without any explanation—officials from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development decided to give the band council only half of what it costs to educate these children.

How can the minister justify this behaviour by his department, while telling everyone who will listen to him that we must provide greater opportunity for the future to aboriginal children?

[English]

Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know to which particular community he is referring but I can say that the first nation education system is the top priority of the government. We have moved financial resources and have increased the budgets year after year as long as this government has been here in power, and we will continue to do so because it is important for aboriginal kids.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if this is a top priority for the government, can the minister follow up his everyday rhetoric with concrete measures, including giving the Long Point Winneway first nation in Témiscamingue the money it needs to run its school?

The need is urgent; plans must be made now for school in September.

[English]

Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know the specifics of the case in question. Obviously there is a byelection there, which is probably why he is asking the question. If I get the information I will make sure we do as we always do, which is prepare the young people for school in the fall.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the industry committee the environment minister gave no details on the spending of \$1.7 billion on climate change.

It is not just the opposition who are critical of the government not having an implementation plan. This past weekend the former finance minister said “We didn’t have an adequate plan then and we don’t have an adequate plan now”.

Oral Questions

Why is the government forging ahead spending \$1.7 billion when it does not even have a plan?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I tabled in the House in November, I believe it was 64 pages—and the hon. member can call it an outline, a structure, a plan or whatever he wishes to call it. Whether he regards it as adequate or not is a legitimate subject for discussion but to say none was tabled and there is none, is obviously complete nonsense.

• (1455)

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, obviously the future potential prime minister does not think there is any plan, so it is not just us. The government rolls out this dartboard of things with money for this and money for that. What that really leads to is patronage and corruption in the spending of this money.

I think we need to see exactly how this \$1.7 billion will be spent, not this hodgepodge that the minister talks about.

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Of course, Mr. Speaker, we agree. We should be very careful about how we spend the money. That just shows the contradiction in the hon. member's position.

We are taking time to make sure we find cost effective methods to reduce greenhouse gases. We are not trying simply to rush into the expenditure of \$1.7 billion without the proper analysis. That is why it takes a certain amount of time to put this in place.

* * *

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ovid Jackson (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have a concern about their air travel this summer. My question is for the Minister of Labour.

Could the minister inform the House with regard to the dispute between Nav Canada and the Canadian Air Traffic Control Association?

Hon. Claudette Bradshaw (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce to the House that the parties involved in the Nav Canada-CATCA dispute yesterday reached a tentative agreement. This agreement is subject to ratification by the union membership and we hope to have the results before the end of June.

I would like to thank the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service for its hard work in assisting the parties and helping them reach this agreement. I would also like to thank my colleague, the Minister of Transport, for his support during this very sensitive labour dispute.

* * *

COAST GUARD

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, a Coast Guard engineering report warns of serious corrosion problems on the hovercraft currently in use in Vancouver. After a recent trip, two and a half tonnes of water were pumped from the vessel. The corrosion identified in the Coast Guard report will not stop. It will not reverse itself. The leaks will only get worse.

What is the minister's plan to deal with this serious erosion of rescue services on the west coast?

Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member knows that the Siyay is a formidable craft, a great state of the art vessel. Any time a new vessel like that, which is comparable to how aircraft is commissioned, there are some technical defects and some technical adjustments that must be made. They are being done. They are being noted in case we build a new one like that in the future when we replace the one we have so that we have an even better craft.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, these are more than technical problems. The engineering report refers to them as serious problems, almost impossible to control.

We have a hovercraft based at Vancouver airport, which is in a questionable state of readiness, and last September the Coast Guard commissioner told us that it would take two years to put in service a used hovercraft to back up the Siyay. Without an operational hovercraft mariners are at risk and air travellers are at risk.

Why will the government not properly equip the Coast Guard on the west coast? When can we expect a replacement hovercraft for the Siyay and how much will it cost?

Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is completely irresponsible. The Siyay is performing very well. It is a reliable craft. It will serve the people very well for a long time. I have been working closely with the member for Richmond who wants to ensure that we have a second hovercraft there to help in the security of the people. We will continue to do that. We will get a temporary craft and we will start plans immediately to build a new replacement hovercraft.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the end of April the UPA of Grand-Pré and the Envir-Eau-Sol group, which consists of 72 businesses in the regional municipality of Maskinongé, asked the Prime Minister and member for Saint-Maurice personally to guarantee, in their words, “farm income protection systems by increasing the amount provided within the agricultural policy framework so that the Financière du Québec can cover the production costs of our farmers”.

Can the Prime Minister tell us if he intends to reply in the affirmative to the legitimate demands of these agricultural producers from his riding?

[*English*]

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working with the ministries and the representatives of the agriculture producers across Canada to put in place the announcement that the Prime Minister and I made last June of \$5.2 billion in additional new money to help in areas of food safety, business risk management, environment and to help build upon the work that is being done in the provinces already, not to detract from that, but to build upon that.

Points of Order

• (1500)

Mr. Larry McCormick (Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, concern has been expressed in the agricultural community that new products being introduced into the market could actually harm the market unless that introduction is done responsibly.

Could the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food tell the House what is being done to ensure the agricultural community does not suffer unnecessary market harm from such new products?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, we can all be very proud of the rigorous and science based regulatory system that we have that is world renowned and highly respected around the world. However, even taking that into consideration, we are aware of the implications that could happen, not necessarily that may happen, with the introduction of new products such as the member has referred to.

I have instructed my department to work with the industry and consult with the industry so we can come up with a process to address that. I believe officials from my department will be at the agriculture standing committee tomorrow and will be able to begin initial discussions on that if the issue is raised there.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when this government announced the four page Windsor-Detroit gateway action plan, it left public safety in the dust and holding a time bomb. Approximately 9,000 hazardous material trucks per year illegally cross this border breaking U.S. and Canadian laws. Despite the security risk, the industry and finance minister do not seem to care.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Why is the government so intent on breaking U.S. laws and why is it so intent on turning the Detroit River into another love canal?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I draw the hon. member's attention to the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act which covers all modes of transport, including trucks.

Transport Canada is quite vigorous in the application of this law and I vigorously reject the assertions of the hon. member.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on the weekend the Minister for International Cooperation criticized her own party because of what she saw as a democratic deficit that she could not reconcile to the fact that she advises other governments to practice good governance.

Does she not now think that the Gagliano corruption scandal also undermines her ability to speak about corruption in other countries?

The Speaker: I have grave doubt whether this question is in order since it does not appear to deal with the administrative responsibility of the government.

[Translation]

SOCIÉTÉ RADIO-CANADA

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Radio-Canada is proposing to change the time of its television broadcast of the Sunday mass. Older people and those with impaired mobility, who make up the majority of the audience, are distressed by this announcement, especially where luncheon is served at 11 a.m. and would conflict with the new scheduled time of the mass.

Can the Minister of Canadian Heritage intervene with Radio-Canada to have it change its decision and continue to broadcast the mass at 10 a.m. on Sunday, to respond to its audience?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question. I am happy to report to the House that the problem of 10 o'clock mass has been resolved. It will continue to be broadcast at 10 a.m.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, to skirt the Canadian Bank Card Association's non-duality bylaws, Moneris Solutions was set up to process both Visa and Mastercard accounts. I have in my hand many examples of Moneris overcharging retail businesses. Moneris refuses to pay back these overcharges.

Will the minister recommend that the finance committee examine Moneris' behaviour along with the appropriate government agency examining this type of action?

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members of the finance committee are free to examine whatever issues they want. I would suggest to the hon. member that I am sure the chair of the committee will take the member's words under advisement and will go from there.

• (1505)

The Speaker: Order, please. The Chair has notice that the Minister of National Revenue wishes to make certain submissions to the House.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER**HEATING FUEL REBATE**

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is in reply to a point of order that was raised by the member for St. Albert and refers to the funding of relief for the home heating expenses program.

In December 2000, the government confirmed through an order in council that it would provide *ex gratia* payments to individuals and families as a relief for heating expenses. The eligibility to receive the payment would be determined similarly to the eligibility for the goods and services tax credit, with some exclusions for dependants.

As is the case for the goods and services tax credit, the eligibility is founded on the information contained in the income tax and benefit returns filed under the Income Tax Act, in this case the returns for the 1999 tax year.

In order to ensure fairness to all Canadians, payments after 2000-01 have been required for: all eligible Canadians filing a 1999 tax return; Canadians whose 1999 tax returns were reassessed and are now entitled to the payment; or eligible Canadians whose addresses were invalid at the time of the initial issuance of the payment and were subsequently updated.

All of the RHE payments were made as ex gratia payments and charged to CCRA's Vote 1 operating expenditures, as approved by Parliament each year. The ex gratia payments do not require specific parliamentary approval or authority.

Funds for the program were appropriated by Parliament and placed in the CCRA Vote 1 operating expenditures through two Governor General's Special Warrants. No administrative or other limitations were placed on any of these funds other than the requirement to use them for operating purposes.

Subsection 30(2) of the Financial Administration Act deems the Governor General's Special Warrants to be an appropriation, in this case to CCRA's Vote 1 operating expenditures.

Subsection 60(1) of the CCRA act provides authority to carry forward its unused Vote 1 appropriations into the following fiscal year, and these carry-forward funds are the first ones to be used in any subsequent fiscal year, pursuant to subsection 7(2) of the Appropriation Acts. As mentioned earlier, the only limitation is that these funds had to be used for operating purposes. All ex gratia payments made by CCRA for the relief for heating expenses were properly charged in each year to general Vote 1 operating expenditures.

Consequently, CCRA had the necessary authorities to make the RHE payments, both in terms of an order in council for ex gratia payments and the necessary appropriations approved by Parliament. In addition, there is no basis to reduce the CCRA's main estimates as Parliament has already agreed that CCRA may carry forward its unused appropriations.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond, Mr. Speaker. I have tabled my statement, in both official languages, with the Clerk.

The Speaker: I thank the minister for her submissions. I will be returning to the House in due course on this matter.

THE ROYAL ASSENT

[Translation]

The Speaker: Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

June 11, 2003

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Honourable Ian Binnie, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy of the Governor General,

Routine Proceedings

signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 11th day of June, 2003, at 8:25 a.m.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Uteck

Secretary to the Governor General

The schedule indicates the bills assented to were Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, Chapter 9; and Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act, Chapter 10.

* * *

• (1510)

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

That in the opinion of this House, Canada's infrastructure needs should be met by a regime of stable funding; and that accordingly, this House call on the government to reduce federal gasoline taxes conditional on an agreement with provinces that, with the creation of this tax room, provinces would introduce a special tax to fund infrastructure in provincial and municipal jurisdictions.

[Translation]

This motion standing in the name of the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam is a votable motion. Copies of the motion are available at the Table.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Privacy Commissioner concerning substantially similar provincial legislation. This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

* * *

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I am pleased to table the "Annual Report on the Law Enforcement Justification Provisions, Pursuant to Section 25(3) of the Criminal Code".

*Routine Proceedings***CLIMATE CHANGE**

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of the Environment and myself, and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I am pleased to table, in both official languages, the report that was requested by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development asking for integrated climate change information. The report is entitled "Climate Change: The Federal Investment 1997-2002, A Comprehensive Report".

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Stephen Owen (Secretary of State (Western Economic Diversification) (Indian Affairs and Northern Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under provision of Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2001-02 annual report of the implementation committee of the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement, the 2001-02 annual report of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement Implementation Coordinating Committee, and the 2001-02 annual report of the implementation committee on the Sahtu Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement.

* * *

[Translation]

FISHERIES ACT

Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-43, an act to amend the Fisheries Act.

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

* * *

[English]

INJURED MILITARY MEMBERS COMPENSATION ACT

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (for the Minister of National Defence) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-44, An Act to compensate military members injured during service.

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

* * *

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, as well as the financial report relating thereto.

The report deals with the meeting of the APF parliamentary affairs committee held in Sofia, Bulgaria, from May 17 to 21, 2003.

● (1515)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 38th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, in both official languages, regarding its order of reference of Tuesday, May 6, 2003, in relation to Bill C-34, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (Ethics Commissioner and Senate Ethics Officer) and other acts in consequence. The committee has considered Bill C-34 and reports the bill with one amendment.

I would like to thank the members of the committee and also and in particular the staff of the committee and the additional staff we had for this very important legislation. This was a very fine piece of work.

[Translation]

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

[English]

Pursuant to its order of reference of Monday, April 28, 2003, your committee has considered Bill C-32, an act to amend the Criminal Code and other acts, and has agreed to report it with amendments.

[Translation]

I also have the honour to table, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

[English]

In accordance with its reference of Wednesday, June 4, 2003, your committee has considered Bill C-205, an act to amend the Statutory Instruments Act (disallowance procedure for statutory instruments) and has agreed to report it without amendment.

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, entitled "Our Cultural Sovereignty: The Second Century of Canadian Broadcasting", concerning the state of the Canadian broadcasting system.

[English]

This report has been two and a half years in the making. I am exceptionally pleased that it was done by a parliamentary committee of the House of Commons. I would like to thank all the members who took part in the work, the researchers, the expert advisers and all the parliamentary team that helped put together this very comprehensive report.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): On this matter, Mr. Speaker, I was co-chair of that committee. I was very pleased with the input that we received from many Canadians. I pay particular attention to two from my constituency, Mr. Ken Collins and Mr. Roger Davies, who appeared before the committee in March 2002.

I am presenting a dissenting report and will be discussing this in full at the National Press Club theatre in a very short period of time, but I want to make particular note of the input of Canadians.

I mentioned Mr. Roger Davies, who was a tireless volunteer. He presented to the committee in March 2002. Unfortunately he passed away last summer and so he will never see this report. I would say that I would like to dedicate it to him, except that he and I had some pretty significant differences of opinion on this kind of issue, but I do want to acknowledge that Mr. Davies, along with all of the other people who came before committee, gave us so much to chew on and so much good information. I wish to thank all Canadians for their participation in this report.

* * *

FIREARMS ACT

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-442, an act to amend the Firearms Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this private member's bill is my own initiative. Frankly, it is my response to this government's approach to gun control via Bill C-68 and the registry. Currently the Firearms Act says that if in the past five years a person has committed a violent crime and has been convicted of a violent crime or of threatening to commit a violent crime, that person cannot apply to own a firearm for five years.

My private member's bill does not say after five years: it says if a person has ever committed a violent crime in their life never does that person get to own a gun. If a person has ever beat his wife or ever committed rape or ever committed murder and is released from jail, never in his life does that person get to own a gun in Canada. This is effective criminal justice and this is something the Liberals should put into law.

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

* * *

• (1520)

[*Translation*]**NATIONAL ACADIAN DAY ACT**

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.) moved that Bill S-5, an act respecting a National Acadian Day, be read the first time.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst on a point of order.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I would ask if you might seek unanimous consent of the House to proceed to the consideration of Bill S-5 at second reading, because Acadian Day is celebrated on August 15.

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, discussions are underway between the parties in this House about an agreement to perhaps deal with this tomorrow.

I am encouraged by these discussions. I might ask the hon. member to wait until tomorrow, because I think we will be able to come to an agreement.

The Speaker: This is not a point of order. The matter is actually being negotiated, and can no doubt continue to be.

* * *

[*English*]**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

HEALTH

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I think if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move that the second report of the Standing Committee on Health be concurred in.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

MARRIAGE

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition sent to me on behalf of several hundred people who live within the county of Mountain View in my beautiful riding of Wild Rose. They recognize that the House passed a motion in June 1999 which established the fact that marriage continues to be recognized as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others. The petition calls upon Parliament to uphold the decision that was made in 1999.

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition pursuant to Standing Order 36 from petitioners in the Leamington area in my riding of Chatham—Kent Essex. They ask that the House maintain the status of marriage between one man and one woman. They recognize that the House passed a motion in June 1999 which called for marriage to continue to be defined as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others. The petitioners ask Parliament to recognize that and pass a law in order to confirm that.

[*Translation*]

GAME HUNTING

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions on two completely different matters.

Routine Proceedings

The first one was signed by 92 citizens of my riding and the greater Quebec City area. These petitioners ask that the federal Minister of the Environment review the whole issue of waterfowl management and hunting in Quebec. They also call upon Parliament to undertake to correct the situation regarding various aspects of game hunting.

• (1525)

IRAQ

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my second petition was signed by 607 students at Académie Sainte-Marie, in Beauport, calling on the government—in light of the current situation in Iraq and given that the U.S. and Great Britain have achieved their objective of overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, in spite of the fact that there was no UN resolution to that effect—to put pressure on the United States and Great Britain to that the UN Security Council will oversee reconstruction in Iraq.

[English]

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting petitions on behalf of my constituents. The petitioners call upon Parliament to enact legislation that would provide legal recognition and protection of Canadian children from fertilization to their birth.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also have another set of petitions that call upon Parliament to focus its legislative support on adult stem cell research to find cures and therapies necessary to treat the illnesses and diseases of suffering Canadians.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions that I would like to present today.

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

IRAQ

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon Parliament to adopt a motion with the following purposes: to continue to oppose the U.S.-led war on Iraq and to play a positive role in finding a political solution to the crisis. The petition also calls on Parliament to recognize war as a crime against humanity and the need to follow any of the following alternatives to war: negotiations for mutual disarmament among all nations; respect for the basic principles of international law, including non-aggression and respect for national self-determination; and support for the International Criminal Court proceedings for crimes against peace.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, these petitions call upon Parliament to use all possible legislative and administrative measures, including invoking section 33 of the charter, the notwithstanding clause, if necessary, to preserve and

protect the current definition of marriage as being between one man and one woman.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Janko Péric (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 it is my privilege to present to the House a petition signed by hundreds of concerned citizens in my riding of Cambridge.

In Canada one out of four children dies before birth from induced abortion. More than half of all Canadians agree that human life needs protection prior to birth, yet there is still no law protecting unborn children.

The petitioners pray and request that Parliament enact legislation that would provide legal recognition and protection of children from fertilization to birth.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Richard Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present three petitions to the House today signed by hundreds of people from my riding of Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

The first petition is signed by petitioners who are very concerned about Bill C-250. The petitioners call upon Parliament to protect the rights of Canadians to be free to share their religious beliefs, whatever their religion, without fear of prosecution.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Richard Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from people in my riding who are very concerned about the pornography issue.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to protect our children by taking every step necessary to ensure that all materials that promote or glorify pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities involving children are outlawed absolutely.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Richard Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in the third petition the petitioners pray that Parliament legislate the definition of marriage passed by motion in the House of Commons on June 8, 1999 as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it may come as a bit of surprise that even though I support the positions that have been enunciated with respect to Bill C-250, I am actually going to present a petition on something else.

Pursuant to Standing Order 36 the petition is certified correct as to form and content. To illustrate the cooperative manner of members in the House, this petition relates to an initiative undertaken by a member of the opposition with respect to herbal care products.

The petitioners draw to the attention of the House that Canadians deserve freedom of choice in health care products, that herbs, dietary supplements and other traditional natural health products should be properly classified as food and not arbitrarily as drugs and that the weight of modern scientific evidence confirms the mitigation and prevention of many diseases and disorders through the judicious use of natural health products.

The petitioners are calling upon Parliament to support Bill C-420, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act.

• (1530)

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions that I wish to present to the House today.

The first petition calls upon Parliament to refrain from including sexual orientation as an amendment to the hate propaganda section of the Criminal Code of Canada. The petitioners are concerned that parts of the Bible will be considered as hate literature and therefore be in violation of the Criminal Code.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon Parliament to protect our children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities involving children are outlawed.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. John Maloney (Erie—Lincoln, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents of Erie—Lincoln.

The petition deals with former Bill C-15, now Bill C-250. The petitioners feel that passage of this legislation will lead to violations of freedom of speech and religious freedom in our nation. They call upon the House to strongly oppose the passage of Bill C-250 and not to allow it in any form to be passed into federal law.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents from Coldstream, Vernon and Armstrong.

The petitioners are calling upon Parliament to support, preserve and protect the legal definition of marriage as the voluntary union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others and if necessary, to invoke section 33 of the charter, the notwithstanding clause.

FIREARMS PROGRAM

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting three petitions under Standing Order 36.

The first one is with regard to the firearms matter. The petitioners have a long statistical preamble in terms of what they believe is wrong with the act and what we currently have. They are calling upon Parliament to abolish the national firearms registry for long guns and redirect our tax dollars to programs in support of health care and law enforcement.

Routine Proceedings

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my second petition has to do with pornography. The petitioners are calling upon Parliament to protect our children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities involving children are outlawed.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.): The third petition, Mr. Speaker, has to do with agriculture. Given the current state of agriculture, it is very appropriate that these people would put forward this petition.

The petitioners request that Parliament direct the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food in cabinet to use some of the APF promotion budget to inform Canadians that investment in adequate safety nets is a food security issue.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by 26 individuals from my riding.

The petitioners are asking Parliament to use all possible legislative and administrative measures to preserve and protect the Criminal Code by opposing the proposed amendments on the basis of freedom of speech and freedom of religion concerning hate propaganda contained in Bill C-250.

MARRIAGE

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today from constituents of the community of Athabasca. They ask the House to reaffirm the decision on the definition of marriage in the motion that was passed in the House in June 1999 defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman. The petitioners ask the House to reaffirm that definition.

CANADA POST

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today on behalf of rural route mail couriers in my riding. They are very concerned about their right to collective bargaining. They call upon Parliament to repeal subsection 13(5) of the Canada Post Corporation Act.

IRAQ

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour and privilege to table a number of petitions. The first one is signed by a number of people from Winnipeg who are concerned about war and international conflict following the situation in Iraq.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners call upon Canada and Parliament to pursue alternatives to war, including negotiations for mutual disarmament of all nations, respect for the basic principles of international law and respect for national self-determination, as well as support for International Criminal Court proceedings for crimes against peace.

● (1535)

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): The second petition, Mr. Speaker, pertains to constituents' concerns about the lack of funding from the federal Liberals for health care.

The petitioners believe that the federal Liberals have opened the door to two tier, American style health care. They call upon Parliament to increase the federal government's share of health care funding to 25% immediately and to implement the national home care and national pharmacare programs.

Mr. Speaker, the third petition, and I have several copies of this one, is from people concerned about the lack of action by the government with respect to Roy Romanow's commission on the future of health care.

The petitioners believe that the commission's report provides a blueprint for the future of health care. They call upon Parliament to encourage the government to adopt the recommendations of the commission's report as the best prescription for Canada's ailing health care system.

LABELLING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Finally, Mr. Speaker, I have a very important petition which comes from Winnipeggers and others who are concerned about the presence of fetal alcohol syndrome in our society today.

The petitioners call upon the government to recognize and tell Canadians that when pregnant women drink, there is the danger of fetal alcohol syndrome. They believe that affixing warning labels to alcohol beverage containers is an important solution to this problem. They call upon Parliament to enact the motion that has already been approved by the House that would prohibit the sale of alcohol beverages in Canada unless the container in which the beverage is sold carries a visible and clearly printed label stating "Warning: drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause birth defects".

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present 708 signatures of people in my riding who feel the gun registry has cost \$1 billion, is not supported by the provinces and has not reduced gun crimes. These 708 people have signed their names asking for the government to repeal the gun registry.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present.

The first petition contains 230 signatures. The petitioners call upon Parliament to protect our children by taking all necessary steps

to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities involving children are outlawed.

IRAQ

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the second petition, and I know my constituent, Mr. Peter Wood, worked very hard on this, contains 244 signatures and deals with the Iraq war.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to enact legislation to ensure that Canada and its armed forces take no part in the proposed war against Iraq.

BILL C-250

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the final petition is signed by 30 petitioners. The petitioners call upon Parliament to protect the right of Canadians to be free to share their religious beliefs without fear of prosecution. This has to do specifically with Bill C-250.

PARKS CANADA

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of 27 residents of Blackstrap, in the great province of Saskatchewan. The petitioners call upon this House to direct Parks Canada to implement a pest control program for spruce budworm, which includes the spraying of the townsite of Waskasoo with BtK, as soon as practical, and to provide Parks Canada with adequate resources for this program.

* * *

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. 217 and 228.

[Text]

Question No. 217—**Right Hon. Joe Clark:**

Between April 11 and April 24, 2003: (a) to which provincial premiers did the prime minister speak by telephone on the issue of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak; (b) who initiated each call, and what was its duration?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Because of the complex nature of federal-provincial relationships and the importance of these relationships to the management of the federation, discussions between premiers and the Prime Minister are confidential. Therefore, specific details of telephone conversations cannot be released.

Question No. 228—**Mr. Loyola Hearn:**

Can the Department of Fisheries and Oceans confirm if a Portuguese vessel was caught outside the 200-mile limit with a significant amount of codfish on board in December of 2002?

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Hon. Anne McLellan (for the Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved that Bill C-24, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act (political financing), be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to participate in the debate at third reading on Bill C-24, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act (political financing).

The key elements of this bill are the result of a tremendous amount of consultation. An important part of the consultation process occurred during the hearings of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The committee heard from some forty witnesses representing a wide spectrum of political parties, interest groups and individuals.

In my remarks today, I would like to focus on the key changes that have been made to the bill, all of which I believe have improved the legislation, while at the same time respecting the fundamental principles of this important initiative.

As I move forward to examine some of these changes, I think that it will become clear that not only have those principles been respected, but that the government has also been very sensitive to the concerns of political parties and individual members.

In the area of disclosure, I believe the discussion to date has clearly shown that there is a great deal of support for the extension of disclosure requirements to electoral district associations, leadership contestants and nomination contestants.

Interestingly, apart from the supporting commentary, the comments on the disclosure provisions have come from two different directions. Some have argued that the provisions do not go far enough, while others feel the provisions place too much burden on political participants.

I believe that, with the amendments, we have been able to address both of these concerns to a certain extent, while at the same time maintaining what are very reasonable requirements.

On the one hand, the bill now requires that political parties who receive the quarterly allowance would have to submit a quarterly report on the contributions they receive. This obligation would not come into force until January 1, 2005, to allow parties some time to gear up to this further requirement.

On the other hand, there have been a series of significant changes, which I believe will go a long way to appeasing concerns about the increased burden.

Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): The master of a Portuguese vessel was issued a citation by Canadian Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, NAFO, inspectors for exceeding the bycatch limit of 5% for cod while fishing outside Canada's 200 mile limit in December 2002. Of the 106.9 tonnes of fish aboard this vessel, there were 5.76 tonnes of cod in the inspection sample. This amounts to 10% of the inspected catch and is considered a significant amount.

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Notice of Motions for the Production of Papers No. P-39, in the name of the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam.

That a humble Address be presented to Her Excellency praying that she will cause to be laid before this House a copy of all reports, documents, letters, internal documents, briefing notes, memoranda and electronic mail between Export Development Canada and Indofoods.

● (1540)

Mr. Speaker, EDC is a commercial financial institution and is not subject to access to information. EDC's obligations of confidentiality to its clients prevents it from discussing transactions, proposed transactions and rejected transactions. EDC implemented a disclosure policy in October 2001, which it believes provides more information than if it were subject to ATI.

EDC is voluntarily discussing disclosing information in a timely manner, seeking consent from its customers to disclose transactional information and is promoting compliance with policy. To date only one out of 301 transactions has not been disclosed.

Hon. members can visit www.edc.ca/corpinfo/disclosure/D2_e for more information.

I therefore ask that this matter be put over for debate, and I think you would find that the hon. the Minister of Health would be agreeable to this.

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that this Motion for the Production of Papers be transferred for debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The motion is transferred for debate.

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

First, for very small donations, parties would not be obligated to provide receipts. Initially, the bill had proposed that all contributions of \$10 or more would have to be receipted. Now, when parties have fundraisers where they pass the hat, no receipt would be needed for donations up to \$25. I would like to thank the member for North Vancouver for his work in the drafting of this motion.

Secondly, the threshold beyond which nomination contestants would have to file a report on contributions received or expenses incurred has been increased from \$500 to \$1,000. This change reduces the administrative burden imposed on nomination contestants.

The bill has also been amended to simplify the registration rules for electoral district associations following a redistribution process. Existing registered electoral district associations would be able to continue their existence in a new district upon the dissolution of their old districts by application of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act.

• (1545)

A pre-registration process would allow other associations to pre-register so that they can come into existence immediately when the representation order becomes effective.

Finally, electoral district associations would be relieved from the obligation to report contributions received since the 2000 election, when they register.

[*English*]

Limits on contributions from individuals and the prohibition on corporate and union donations form the backbone of the bill's measures, aimed at limiting the perception of undue influence from the wealthy, from corporations and from unions.

During the hearings, most witnesses made it clear that they felt the \$10,000 limit for individuals was too high. The committee ultimately accepted an amendment that would reduce the limit to \$5,000. I am confident that in the end the \$5,000 limit will provide an appropriate balance between achieving our objective of removing the perception of influence while at the same time recognizing the importance of financial contributions for a healthy electoral system.

I would like to add that another important amendment has been made to allow candidates to contribute an additional \$5,000 to their own campaigns, the idea being therefore concern about people influencing government or candidates and so forth, and we do not see the need to be concerned about candidates influencing themselves.

Another amendment accepted by the committee provides that leave with pay given to an employee who is running as a candidate would not be counted as a contribution by the employer during the election period. I want to emphasize that it is only during the election period and not before the election period. Furthermore, party membership fees of up to \$25 annually would not be considered to be a contribution.

With regard to the prohibition on corporate and union donations and the \$1,000 exception, we have seen a range of views expressed in the past few months. Some have argued that there should be no

limits or higher limits, while others have argued that corporations and unions should be banned outright from contributing.

As the minister and I have made clear all along, moving the prohibition or increasing the limit would in my view go against a fundamental principle of the bill. At the same time I recognize, as the government does, that the \$1,000 exception is important to political participants at the local level.

Taking everything into consideration, it is clear that we must take the strongest possible measures to ensure that the perception of influence is removed from the system. That can only be achieved through the prohibition.

That being said, there have been some significant amendments made to this section of the bill. Corporations, unions and associations would be allowed to make a second contribution up to \$1,000 when a second election was held in the same riding in the same year. Furthermore, corporations, unions and associations would be allowed to make a further \$1,000 contribution to a winning nomination contestant when a first contribution was made during that year to a nomination contestant who did not win the nomination contest in that riding.

In other words, if one person runs for the nomination and loses and a company gives a contribution to that first person and the person loses, there should not be a concern about that first contribution influencing the person who won. Therefore the ability is there to give a donation also to the winning candidate.

With regard to spending limits for nomination contestants, some members indicated the limit of 50% would still be too high to ensure that nomination contests were open and fair to all potential candidates. As a result, the committee accepted an amendment that would see the spending limit reduced to 20% of that limit allowed for candidates in the last election. This should result in a much more level playing field for nomination contest.

We heard a great deal of concern about this issue from witnesses, especially from some of our colleagues in the House, particular those who are women. They felt that allowing large amounts of money to be spent on nomination races too often gave an advantage to male candidates and disadvantaged women candidates. By limiting the spending on nomination candidacies or nomination campaigns to 20% of the limit in the last election should be quite a reasonable limit and should stop that problem in the future, and provide a much more level playing field.

Finally, I would like to turn to the issue of public funding which has received the most attention out of all the measures contained in the bill. During the committee hearings, public funding was clearly the key issue for many witnesses, and in particular, the public allowance. Many witnesses pointed out the important role of public funding and, in particular, the need for ongoing public funding for parties so they could undertake the important work they needed to accomplish in between elections.

Government Orders

• (1550)

With regard to the public allowance specifically, the discussion was not centred on getting rid of it but rather on different types of formulas that could be used. The end result of this discussion did not really produce a unanimous opinion on the best formula or on the right level for that allowance.

But as I have maintained throughout the process, and as the minister has maintained, while one of our key objectives is to eliminate the perception of influence through contribution limits, and the prohibition on corporate and union donations, we must accomplish this in a way that ensures that parties and candidates do not end up losing.

We need to ensure that political participants have the funds they need to be compensated for the loss in union and corporate contributions. Again, we have listened to their concerns and there have been a number of important amendments. The quarterly public allowance has been increased from \$1.50 to \$1.75 per year per vote received in the previous general election. Early in the process members expressed their concern that the allowance was not indexed. Some were concerned about the level of it and whether it was sufficient. We listened to those concerns and that resulted in the change in the level. But also there was a concern about the fact that it was not indexed. The minister has responded to these concerns and now the allowance would be indexed under the bill.

The Receiver General would be entitled to pay part of the public allowance to a party's provincial or territorial association if so authorized by the party leader. As a transitional measure to assist parties, the 2004 allowance would be paid in a lump sum as soon as possible after the act comes into force. Parties would be provided with a reimbursement of election expenses at a rate of 60% for the next election only, as a transitional measure. Thereafter the rate of reimbursement would be at 50% as originally proposed in the bill.

We know that this will be a substantial change in the way things happen. Usually, during an election campaign, parties are able to raise a considerable amount of money with fundraising efforts. In the past, money came from corporations, unions and so forth. That will not be possible any more so instead we have this process where at the beginning of next year the amount for next year will be given out at the beginning rather than on a quarterly basis which should assist parties with the transition. As well, we have the 60% rebate for the next election which should help with that transition process.

The rate of reimbursement of a candidate's election expenses has been raised from 50% to 60% across in all ridings. We can all agree that these are significant amendments which recognize the important role played by parties and candidates in our political system.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

With the important amendments that have been made, I believe we have been sensitive to the concerns that have come forward, and we have acted on them.

As a result, we have improved the legislation, while at the same time respecting the principles of the bill and achieving our important objectives.

In the end, we have a bill that builds on our political traditions, and that would go a long way to helping us achieve our objective of having an electoral system that all Canadians can believe in.

I call on all members to support this important legislation.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for his acknowledgement of my help during some of the drafting of the bill. I would not want that to be interpreted as support for the bill because, in fact, we do not support the bill.

It is a shame that we are not on questions and comments. I would have liked to ask the parliamentary secretary, when he mentioned the important work that parties do between elections that needs to be funded, what exactly is this important work that his Liberal Party does between elections that warrants the transfer of \$9.5 million a year to his party's structure, not to the parliamentary wing but just to the administrative arm of his party?

I would have wanted to ask him that question because frankly I would have difficulty identifying anything that the Liberal Party administrative wing does for anybody in Canada between elections. Frankly, it is going to use the \$9.5 million simply to run its offices and keep people on the payroll who are not actually contributing much to the running of the country at all.

I am not sure that this public funding can be justified on the basis of the important work. That is very self serving and it is certainly a judgment of the party itself. I would suspect that if we went out onto the street outside of this place and ask Canadians if they could identify some of the important work that parties do for them between elections, I bet they would not be able to identify a single thing. We may think it is very important, but I am not sure that the average taxpayer would think so.

If I had been able to ask him questions, I would have asked, what is the unholy rush to push this bill through the House? We barely had this bill back in the House from committee for less than three hours of debate and the government House leader was standing in his place moving time allocation on this bill and closing down the debate. What could possibly be the emergency that would require the closing down of debate in less than three hours? That averages out at less than half a minute of speaking time for every member of this place. Is that reasonable, Mr. Speaker? I think not and I can see you are almost nodding your head, so you probably do agree with me. It is unreasonable to be moving time allocation on a bill with less than three hours of debate in this place.

Government Orders

The fact is the bill would not be in force until January 1, 2004. There is a lot of time for further consultation and I will talk about the quality of the consultation of the government side a little later in my speech. There is plenty of time for consultation over the summer break while we are back in our ridings. We can talk with average Canadians instead of academics and interested parties or special interests. We could speak with our own constituents over the summer and we could come back here in September with the true message for the government. That is when we should be continuing the debate and passage of this bill. It should not be rammed through as it will be tonight. We are adding barely two hours this afternoon. Frankly, it is a disgrace, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure you feel as embarrassed about it as I do.

I am surprised that almost all of the members on the government side appear to feel no guilt whatsoever for the fact that they are making a blatant grab of taxpayers' money from the treasury to transfer it to the coffers of political parties. I cannot believe for a moment that average taxpayers would think that was a good thing to do. They would be shocked. I suspect many Canadians do not even realize what is happening with this bill. They are being asked to pay to vote because when they go to the polling station and cast that ballot, it is as if the poll clerk was asking them to open their wallet, slap down the credit card so that they could put \$1.75 on that credit card. That is the effect this bill would have. It would make voters pay for the transfer of money to political parties.

• (1600)

I suppose that taxpayers could protest this bill by not turning out to the polls because if no one turned out none of the political parties would get any money. In actual fact, this bill could have the opposite effect to the one that the government claims. It claims that it would reduce taxpayer or voter cynicism and encourage more people into the political process, and get them involved in the voting process. There is a potential for taxpayers to perhaps give us the Pierre Trudeau salute and not turn out at the polls. Thus they can deprive us of that \$1.75 that is going to be transferred.

If there was another question I could have asked the parliamentary secretary when he was up, it would have been about the nomination contestant rules. He mentioned the reporting requirements that would be required now for nomination races. The fact is they are very complicated. It would often require an auditor or a special agent. Records must be kept of all the types of donations, by category and class of donor. Reports must be filed with the Chief Electoral Officer. A special bank account must be opened to administer the files, records must be kept, and bank statements sent to the Chief Electoral Officer. This is an extremely complicated process. In fact, even for those of us who are used to working within a bureaucratic environment, it is quite a daunting piece of legislation when we look at what we would have to go through for our nomination meetings next time around.

When the parliamentary secretary claims that it would make it easier for women or any traditionally disadvantaged people to get involved in the race because they have restricted the amount of money people can spend, he completely fails to mention that the increased bureaucracy would turn off a lot of people. It would actually discourage them. In fact, I took a section of this bill home with me last weekend to north Vancouver and I showed a few lay

people that section of the bill. I asked them if they would be interested in running for office if they had to do this. Every single one of the people said that it would be a discouragement to run for office because of the amount of paperwork that would be required.

Certainly those who do not have a business background would be further discouraged. Someone who is used to working as a receptionist and might like to run for office or give it a try would take a look at this and say that what is being proposed in Bill C-24 is an administrative jungle. It may be too complicated for people to bother. We may be eliminating a number of people from the possibility of running for office who have the sorts of skills that would be useful here, but will not run because they do not have the skills that would enable them to run these complicated bureaucratic reporting rules.

I would like to talk about the consultation process because the parliamentary secretary mentioned that the key elements of this bill are a result of a great deal of consultation. The fact is there was virtually no consultation with taxpayers. I sat on the committee. In fact, I have been the Canadian Alliance critic for this bill ever since it was at second reading in this place. I sat on the committee with the other members, so I saw all of the witnesses who came forward. I even put forward a list of people to invite. The fact is the academics and special interest groups who came before the committee were not necessarily representative of average Canadians.

Last weekend while I was back in my riding I asked a few average taxpayers, friends, and relatives how much they knew about Bill C-24 and whether or not they felt comfortable with the notion of taxpayers' money being transferred to political party coffers. Again, people rejected this notion that it was a good idea to take taxpayers' money and transfer it to political parties.

When the government side says there has been consultation, it was very selective in who it consulted. It brought in a bunch of academics. With all due respect to academics, the fact is academics rely on taxpayers for their salaries and many of them have spent their entire lives being paid by the public purse.

Mr. Geoff Regan: Like the Fraser Institute.

Mr. Ted White: The parliamentary secretary yells out the Fraser Institute, but the Fraser Institute solicits for donations quite extensively for the work that it does, so I am not sure we can compare it directly with academics.

• (1605)

In any case, the academics who came before us claimed to know what was good for taxpayers and supported the idea that political parties should be funded by taxpayers, but I am not sure these academics really know what is good for the average taxpayer because they do not actually pay taxes.

I know many of them would take offence to that by brandishing their paycheques and saying "Look, there are deductions there, I do pay taxes". However the fact is that professors, publicly paid workers, people like myself, members of Parliament in this place, do not pay taxes because the money we receive in our paycheques comes out of this big pot of taxpayer money. We take some money out and we put some money right back in. That is not paying taxes.

Government Orders

The people who pay taxes are the private sector workers, the people who create the wealth in this country, and it is the deductions from their paycheques, it is the corporate taxes from the private sector that goes into the big pot from which we take our salaries. Those are the ones who are paying taxes.

When these academics come along and say that they pay taxes and they think it is a good idea that taxpayer money should be used to fund political parties, I think they have a conflict of interest.

In fact, I have always thought it would be a good idea if public sector workers did not pay any taxes at all and were only paid the net amount of their paycheques. Therefore professors, members of Parliament and public sector workers would only get the pay that comes in their net paycheque. They would pay no taxes and they would not have to file tax returns.

We can only think how much money the government would save every year if none of the public servants had to file tax returns because we were not playing this silly game of pretending that they pay taxes when they do not.

I do not think the government's side has consulted with real taxpayers, the people who create the wealth in this country, who actually will be paying the cost of Bill C-24.

If the government would have given us this summer to go back to our ridings and talk to the people in our ridings about the cost of this bill, I think there would have been a huge public uprising against it, and by the time we returned here in September the Prime Minister would not have been able to get his pet project through this place because there would have been too much public reaction.

On Tuesday, as I mentioned, less than three hours after we had begun this debate, the government House leader was up on his feet moving an end to the debate.

The fact is that Bill C-24 was the brainchild of the Prime Minister. It was clearly for him the most important piece of legislation on the agenda. That is incredible because we have issues like SARS, mad cow disease, youth crime, the definition of marriage and enormous budgetary overruns with the gun registry, into which we keep finding new amounts of money disappearing but for which the government failed to tell us. We also have the issues of corruption and bribery charges at Citizenship and Immigration, the need to establish a national sex offender registry, which has been dragging on for years and years, and an urgently needed revision of the Indian Act.

All of those things were taken off the table so the Prime Minister's bill, forcing taxpayers to pay for the day to day operations of the political parties, could be rammed through the House.

The bill will soon be in the other place. However, once it receives royal assent, the voters of Canada will have been placed in the position of having to pay to vote in a federal election. This will not be handing over cash to the poll clerk at the polling station. They will not have to pony up with their credit cards or open their wallets and bring out a toonie. It will not be by direct payment at the polling station but it will be via a raid on the public treasury by the government subsequent to election day.

For each and every vote cast, \$1.75 will be taken from taxpayers to be shared among the major political parties based upon their percentage of the vote.

What that means, if we use the year 2000 election figures, is that the Liberal Party will receive more than \$9.5 million from taxpayers starting in the year 2004 when this bill comes into force.

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew: Who will pay for your party?

Mr. Ted White: I heard a member from the other side ask what the Alliance will get. I am more than happy to tell him. My own party, the Canadian Alliance, on a percentage basis would be one of the biggest beneficiaries because the entire formula for this bill is based upon corporate donations.

• (1610)

The Liberal Party, which looked at its own corporate donations and realized that it would lose those donations because it was going to ban them, created a formula to replace, in fact more than replace, what it would lose in corporate donations.

However the Canadian Alliance has traditionally relied more on individual donations. In fact, our average contribution from corporations, in the five years to the year 2001, was only 25%, whereas the Liberal Party was well up around 60%. We can see why the formula worked in our favour. On a percentage basis, we benefit a lot from the bill. In fact, the Canadian Alliance will receive about \$5.5 million.

However that does not mean we support the bill. In fact, we have vigorously opposed this raid on the public treasury from the moment the Prime Minister introduced the draft.

Mr. Geoff Regan: How much will you give back?

Mr. Ted White: I hear the parliamentary secretary asking how much we will give back, as if that is even relevant to this discussion. How does that justify a raid on the public treasury to pay the day to day operations of a political party? How does that justify it?

However I will answer his question as to whether we will pay it back.

We do not make the rules of the game and we do not control the rules of the game. The government side makes the rules and if it thinks we are so stupid that we will not play by those rules and put ourselves at a disadvantage while it collects \$9.5 million and completely cut ourselves off from funding, well, give me a break. The government is just grasping at straws trying to justify the position it has taken.

I hear one of my colleagues talking about the bill being as dumb as a bag of hammers. There is a misconception out there that Stephen LeDrew, the president of the Liberal Party, called the bill dumb as a bag of hammers. However he did not actually say that. What he said was that the concept was as dumb as a bag of hammers. He did not like the idea that there would be no corporate donations. I am pleased to get that on the record. I am sure it has been very hurtful for the Liberal Party to have its president constantly misrepresented that way.

Government Orders

However let me get back to the transfers from the federal treasury. The position of the Canadian Alliance is that we believe that special interest groups and political parties should raise the money that they need for their day to day operations from the people they purport to represent. They should face their membership eyeball to eyeball, explain why they need the money and ask them for the money.

It is not good enough to simply stand in this place, the way the parliamentary secretary did, and say "Well, parties do important work between elections so we should have \$9.5 million a year to do that", without ever explaining what this important work is. I am certain there will be plenty of wining and dining on that \$9.5 million. I will bet there will be a lot of bottles of French champagne cracked open for that one. It will not be very good at all.

Mr. Geoff Regan: How many at Stornoway? Tell us about Stornoway.

Mr. Ted White: I hear the parliamentary secretary interrupting again and crying out and asking how many bottles of champagne there are at Stornoway. Obviously I do not have an intimate knowledge of the wine cellar at Stornoway, but I would expect the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition, just as I would expect the Prime Minister, to have an appropriate amount of appropriate liquors, wines and foods for the times when he entertains heads of state and important people from around the country.

The leader of my party has an important job to do as Leader of the Official Opposition and it is entirely appropriate that he have the correct tools to do his job. Part of that toolbox involves the wine cellar at Stornoway for the sorts of events that he might hold. He has to interact with the movers and shakers of the business community of the country, with international heads of state and with important people who are interested in the political process and who may want to make representations to him about the way the government is handling the portfolio.

Frankly, if the minister over there or in fact any of the members on that side think they can rattle me by throwing these things at me, they are completely wrong because I feel perfectly comfortable with the positions we take on bills.

• (1615)

I want to get back to fundraising. Raising money eyeball to eyeball from individuals is the way the Canadian Alliance has always done it. We have been very comfortable with that and we would have been happy to continue to work under those rules. Even the 25% average that we have collected from corporations over the past five years, most of it was from small corporations giving \$1,000 or less, which is the amount allowed in the bill anyway. When we look at those small contributions, the \$1,000 to \$1,100 amounts, they are often from mom and pop-type businesses that give a corporate cheque because their accountant only decides at the end of the year whether the money will go under their individual incomes or under corporate spending.

That was one reason that our party supported the \$1,000 figure for corporate donations, even though, on principle, we were not opposed to the idea of no political donations. We felt it facilitated individual donations to have that small limit there. I am not sure if it will

necessarily stand up to a charter challenge but, nevertheless, the concept is not particularly offensive to us.

As I mentioned, the Canadian Alliance has always raised its money directly from its supporters. When I joined the Reform Party back in 1987 it was very small party and it did not have the benefit of tax deduction status. We had to start from nothing with nothing and within 10 years we became the official opposition in the Government of Canada. That was a big achievement because a party needs a lot of passion from supporters behind it to raise the money to achieve that.

I am actually very disappointed in the bill that the government did not accept some of the recommendations that I made to make it easier for small parties to get started. One of those recommendations was the 50 candidate rule.

The government has consistently tried to prevent parties from having registered status, tax receipt status, by requiring them to run 50 candidates in ridings in a general election. The fact is that when the Reform Party first started we could not do that. This is unfair. It penalizes small parties. The fact is that a party needs 12 members for recognition as a party in this place,

During the hearings on Bill C-2, which was the overhaul of the elections act in 1999 and 2000, the committee, on which I was a member, had representations from most of the small parties operating in this country, the Green Party, the Communist Party, a whole list of them, and I had discussions with them.

There actually was a court case in Ontario that ruled that a party was actually two persons and that running two candidates was sufficient. Even the small parties agreed that was going to the other extreme from the 50 candidates.

Our committee reached an agreement that it should be 12 candidates. I went to the minister with that and said that in order to avoid any more tax challenges, which have already cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars fighting a ridiculous fight, why do we not make it 12 candidates. I told the minister that all the small parties had agreed to that number, that we could be put it into Bill C-2 and the issue would be finished. There would be no more court cases. The minister was absolutely bullheaded and would not do it. This fight has continued on and will go all the way to the Supreme Court and cost us an absolute fortune.

Bill C-24 gave us the opportunity to revisit the issue. I tried in vain to get the minister to go back to this and change it to 12 members but he would not do it. I cannot help but feel that he has not properly assessed the risk here and that he just does not care about taxpayer money. He seems oblivious to the fact that he is wasting millions of dollars fighting these battles which he cannot win.

One of the other battles in which he is currently involved and one which he cannot win is the one having to do with third party advertising. This is the right, in a free and democratic country, for third parties, that is people outside the political process, to bring up issues and spend money on supporting candidates or issues during election campaigns completely outside the electoral process.

Government Orders

The government has fought that for at least 15 years. First it was the Tory Party and now it is the Liberals. This has been ongoing. The minister has spent tens of millions of dollars fighting against this third party advertising which the courts keep striking down. His argument is that because of a ruling in Quebec, which had to do with the Quebec referendum and that there should be spending limits on the yes and no side in a referendum and no third party interference, that this is justification for applying the same rules to an election.

• (1620)

The fact is that is faulty logic. A referendum has a yes and a no question on the ballot. A person either votes yes or no. There is no other issue.

If a person gives some money to a yes side and some money to a no side to fight the battle leading up to voting day, I think most people, and perhaps all people, would agree it is entirely fair to then exclude third parties from that. Then it becomes unfair. If we want a fair fight, then we allow the yes side and the no side to fight fairly with limitations.

When this is applied to an election, an unlimited number of issues will come to the fore during an election. Political parties will not bring up the things they do not want to talk about. Therefore, it is only fair that third parties be allowed to intervene and spend some money on themselves.

Before I go on, Mr. Speaker, might I ask for unanimous consent of the House to split my time with the member for Surrey Central. If there is unanimous consent for that, I will split my time; otherwise I will not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I inform the hon. member for North Vancouver that he still has 14 minutes.

Mr. Ted White: Mr. Speaker, I will go back to talk about the raising of money. As I said earlier in my speech, we just simply do not believe that political parties should take money from taxpayers. They should be required to raise the money from the people who they claim to represent.

The Prime Minister said that we needed the legislation to remove the perception that the Liberal Party was giving lucrative contracts, grants and loans to political supporters, and he is right. Bill C-24 would remove the perception that these things are not happening because there will not be any corporate donor trails for the Canadian Alliance to follow to reveal the corruption. However Bill C-24 would not change the reality of political patronage and untendered contracts being awarded to supporters of the Liberal Party.

There will still be untendered contracts awarded to friends and relatives. There will still be payments for reports that do not exist. There will still be ministerial interference in the approval of loans and grants by government agencies, and it will be almost impossible for us to trace those connections.

The Prime Minister will still be free to make phone calls to the Business Development Bank of Canada and order them to give loans

to his friends. It will not change any of that at all. The bill is a fraud. It is an excuse to take taxpayer money and give it to political parties, and it will not make the slightest bit of difference to the awarding of untendered contracts and improper practices that are occurring daily on that side of the House.

While all this is going on, it will be taxpayers who will be watching the Liberal government shovelling money out of the treasury and into the coffers of political parties.

As I said, the Liberals claim they introduced Bill C-24 to deal with the perception that there were problems over there, but there are problems over there. Many of those problems are presently with the RCMP for investigation. The problems were revealed for the main part in response to attacks by opposition parties, particularly the Canadian Alliance, over what appeared to be links between the donations made by corporations and individuals to the Liberal Party of Canada and the subsequent awarding of contracts, grants, loans and special deals.

Let me give an example. The industry minister recently announced a \$60 million handout to two private companies in Ottawa headed by an Ottawa billionaire. He should be embarrassed to even ask for the \$60 million. A billionaire asked the government over there, the Minister of Industry, to give him \$60 million. He is Terence Matthews, an identified Liberal donor. He donated \$25,000 recently to the Deputy Prime Minister's leadership campaign.

The minister has claimed that the \$60 million awarded to the two companies of Terence Matthews is not a gift, that he expects every nickel to be repaid. How many times have we heard that. Unfortunately, the Technology Partnership Canada program, under which the \$60 million was awarded, has a less than satisfactory history of success. It has handed out close to \$2 billion but has only been repaid \$35 million.

It is hard for the average Canadian taxpayer to imagine how the government could have the gall to give \$60 million to a billionaire to fund something that he should have funded himself.

As if the handout was not bad enough just in itself, in return for the generosity, the minister and Technology Partnership Canada have agreed to accept share warrants for a pre-determined number of shares in Mr. Matthew's companies. Now we are in the share market business with taxpayer money. The problem is those shares do not trade on any stock exchange because they are shares in private companies. Their value will be decided at some point in the future by financial institutions and the government. It is unbelievable that we give \$60 million to a billionaire, then we take shares and we do not even know what they are worth. It is an absolutely incredible thing.

• (1625)

I figure that if and when Mr. Matthews takes his companies public, which he might do, either we will make some money on these shares or we will lose our shirt. Either way, we really have no business being in this part of the business.

Are you indicating my time is running out or to keep focused, Mr. Speaker?

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I am signalling to you that you are somewhat diverging from the subject at hand. We are discussing Bill C-24. Please come back to the matter.

Mr. Ted White: Mr. Speaker, my very next sentence was leading up to what all this really illustrates. There are problems on the government side and that is what Bill C-24 is really about. The Prime Minister is trying to deflect these problems by claiming that there is a perception of problems and that he has introduced this bill to take care of all those problems, but in fact it definitely will not take care of them.

Because it will not take care of the problems, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the word "That" and substituting the following therefor:

"Bill C-24, an Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act (political financing) be not now read a third time, but be referred back to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for the purposes of reconsidering clause 40 with a view to investigating ways in which all taxpayer subsidies for political parties could be completely eliminated".

• (1630)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): If I can get the attention of the hon. member for North Vancouver, given that there was no prior notice to your amendment, I will take it under deliberation and give you a ruling very shortly.

[*Translation*]

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Gasoline Prices.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will try to use my ten minutes to counter various arguments that the our hon. colleague from the Canadian Alliance has just made.

It is difficult—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Before the hon. member continues, I thought I heard him say he had ten minutes. The hon. member has 40 minutes.

Mr. Michel Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, the Chair's generosity is appreciated, except that certain agreements will enable me to share my time with my hon. colleagues in other parties. So, I will be very brief.

I simply want to review some of the arguments made by my hon. colleague who spoke before me. To those listening who might be outraged by the previous speaker's comments, I would say that it is important to consider the bill before us in its context.

First, since 1993, the Bloc Québécois has been demanding that the House pass legislation to make political party financing democratic. Such legislation exists in Quebec, and all the Quebeckers listening are well aware that this legislation is now part of our legislative heritage and that it is appreciated because it has helped avoid so many excesses with regard to political party financing.

So, as a result of our experience, we have made many recommendations to this House and to the government to encourage them to proceed with this kind of legislation. Today, as I said at second reading, I am pleased to confirm that the Bloc Québécois

supports this government bill, given the positive effect it will have on restoring order to Canada's political mores.

It is difficult to complain, on the one hand, that political parties will be financed in part using taxpayers' money—it would be hard to get upset with a bill that democratizes funding and prohibits companies from giving \$25,000, \$50,000, \$75,000 \$100,000 and more to a political party—and, on the other hand, explain to the public that we do not really agree and disapprove of the government and the Deputy Prime Minister having received \$25,000 or \$50,000—I am not sure exactly, but it was an impressive amount—from a billionaire for his leadership campaign. We cannot have it both ways.

We can make the choice in this country to prevent anyone, whether businesses or individuals, from gaining undue influence and control over the political parties. If we do, we must accept the bill before us.

Where do abuses come from? They come from businesses that in the past, gave \$250,000 or \$300,000. We have discussed examples of such abuses in this House. We have identified the businesses and major banks that give impressive sums to the government and political parties and who, consequently, have enormous influence.

So that everyone understands, if I am the president of a large corporation and I give \$250,000 per year to the Liberal Party of Canada, the odds are good that if I want to fix some problems politically, I will find a sympathetic ear on the government side. There is nothing strange about that. If someone gives \$250,000 per year and has a problem that needs fixing, they will expect their problem to receive attention commensurate with the amount of their contribution.

It must be understood that this kind of abuse must be avoided. When the citizenry is stirred up with cries of, "Listen, it is going to be awful. Public money will be used to finance some of the expenses of the political parties" and there is a public outcry, we must say that the corollary is that the undue influence exercised by a limited number of people will disappear. That is what will enable the citizens to take control of their democratic institutions.

• (1635)

If the financing is shared among the general population and is provided in large part from public funds, in accordance with specific rules, clearly this will give people the influence they thought they did not have or might not have had when individuals were financing political parties to the tune of \$25,000, \$50,000, \$100,000 or \$300,000. It seems to me that that should not be difficult to understand for our listeners, the members of the Canadian Alliance and the other members of this House.

Allowing large donations inevitably results in those making donations having an influence over the government which those who cannot afford to make donations do not have. If large donations are prohibited, the political parties must nevertheless be able to finance their activities. We cannot turn off the funding tap and at the same time announce that we will not be providing a cent, that political parties are expected to operate with so little funding that it would be tantamount to killing them. Their very existence would be jeopardized.

It is important to take positive action to ensure that political parties remain healthy and operate relatively at arm's length—everything is relative of course.

This is therefore the kind of action we applaud. What the government did here took courage. It could not have been easy. Witness the fact that, within government, there is opposition to this bill. It is public knowledge.

Those opposed are probably right in terms of being true to themselves, when they make comments like, “We do not want our own government to pass this bill because it is taking away too much leeway. We will not be able to operate anymore. What is provided in terms of public funds is insufficient and at the same time we are not allowed to raise money”.

When there is this kind of reluctance coming from the government side about a bill, it generally means that a worthwhile effort has been made. The bill will ensure that from now on, the members of this House, cabinet members and members of the various parties will be more independent vis-à-vis large corporations, big labour unions and all sorts of lobby groups which could previously have strong leverage through financing.

Who could argue against the principle of democratic institutions becoming more independent? Who could argue against citizens having greater influence over political parties?

I would just like to point out that the reality is that the citizens are well served by a bill such as this one. It will improve political mores. We will likely no longer have to rise in this House, as we have done in the past, to criticize the government for awarding contracts to firms that hand a large chunk of the money back to the Liberal Party, or other parties in this House.

This will no longer happen. It is already no longer happening in Quebec. The situation was regularized 25 years ago in Quebec. Everyone is pleased with that way of doing things. The cost of implementing this bill is around \$21 million, or \$22 million if we prefer a round figure. In a country the size of Canada, \$22 million to ensure independence for political parties, to preserve the quality of democratic representation, strikes me as very affordable. It seems to me that \$1.75 per voter is not a huge sum to ensure that our parties are less beholden to those who provide funds to them.

I would say in conclusion that I believe we are serving our fellow citizens well by voting for this bill. On the basis of principles, it is unassailable when we consider that we are preserving the quality of democracy. It is unassailable considering that the purpose of this bill is to prevent excessive financing.

It is also extremely important that this bill prevent examples such as those we denounced earlier of leadership campaign contributions to the tune of \$250,000, \$100,000 or \$25,000, depending on the situation.

• (1640)

This is a major victory for the Bloc Québécois because we have been trying to have this type of system implemented here in the federal government since 1993. This is a good thing that this is happening for democracy in the rest of Canada.

Government Orders

There is no opposition to this bill in Quebec, but in the rest of Canada, in some areas, there is. However, today, we can tell people who are listening that this type of legislation has been very much appreciated for 25 years now in Quebec and in some other provinces where financing rules are a little more civilized than they were here. We can certainly tell our fellow citizens that we are doing something positive, responsible and respectful of democracy, something that will guarantee that politics will be better in the future.

What we would all like to see is legislation based on honesty, justice and democracy. That is why we are pleased to support this bill and invite all our colleagues in the House of Commons to do likewise.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I declare the amendment submitted by the hon. member for North Vancouver to be in order.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place among all the parties with respect to tomorrow's supply day. I believe if you were to seek it you would find unanimous consent for the following order. I move:

That all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion under consideration Thursday, June 12, 2003, as well as all questions necessary to dispose of the motion or motions to dispose of the main estimates, pursuant to Standing Order 81(18) be put at 8 p.m. rather than 10 p.m.; and

That during debate that day on items in the main estimates between 6:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. no member shall speak for more than 10 minutes.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act (political financing), be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is a sad duty for me to rise today to speak to a piece of legislation that is being imposed on the people of Canada in the dying days of the spring session of the House. This is one of those bills on which we must all agree in principle but in which we find the real devil in the details.

At a previous stage it was my right hon. colleague from Calgary Centre who spoke to this legislation. He argued, and I agree, that had the government truly been interested in the process of reforming our system of political donations, it would have introduced this legislation in a manner that would have better ensured the full consideration of this great Parliament. Instead we have again been rushed in our deliberations.

Government Orders

One of the most significant concerns that I have about this legislation relates to the fact that it would put into place a formula by which the amount of money that a political party would receive would be based upon their results in the last election. As my friend, Mr. Irving Gerstein, has said, that would be the same as saying that we would calculate one's next mortgage based upon the value of one's last house.

This process would give the party of government a clear advantage over all the rest of the parties in the House and in Canada, even if its popularity had fallen significantly since the time of the last election. If the government of Kim Campbell had introduced this legislation prior to the 1993 election, the current Prime Minister would have opposed it vigorously. He would have said that given the place of the parties in the polls at the time, it would have been grossly unfair to award them funding based upon the results of the 1988 election.

There is another matter here that strikes me as being equally unfair. As the legislation currently provides, it will be the tax dollars of the people of Canada that will effectively be used to fund our political parties. In the past, we have said that people had a democratic choice in Canada. If one had wanted to support the Progressive Conservative Party, the Liberal Party, the Alliance Party or the Bloc, one had the choice to do so as a free-minded Canadian citizen. Now however, we are saying that the Canadian people will have to donate to every political party through their hard-earned tax dollars, even if they would never have supported four or five of the parties in a million years.

They are saying that the tax dollars of my son, who lives in Calgary, would go to the Bloc, to the Alliance, to the Liberals, to the PC Party, to the NDP. That is not how he feels about this, I can say that. He would pick and choose himself whom he supports. They are saying that Lucien Bouchard's tax dollars would go to the Canadian Alliance. I am sure the Bloc wants that and I am sure he does as well. My tax dollars would go to support the Liberal Party. Mr. Speaker, do you want to ask me if I agree with that? I can tell you right now it does not seem very fair to me.

When did we lose the freedom of choice in our democracy? When did we give that up in Canada? When did we lose the right to support our political party of choice and only our political party of choice?

I know that the government House leader would argue that all of us who received 15% or more of the popular vote in the last election received a certain refund from the government, but that was based upon the results of that election. The money returned was based upon the costs of that election, not of the 1997 election or even the 1957 election. There was a direct relationship between that rebate and the election at hand. This bill offers something completely different.

•(1645)

There is an issue that I have not heard discussed in this debate prior to today. It is the power that the bill gives to the Prime Minister and a select handful of people, the power to eliminate with the stroke of a pen any Liberal association that he wishes. That is not democracy.

There is a leadership convention taking place on the government side at this point in time. We know that if we pass the bill, the Prime Minister can eliminate a lot of the businesses that supported those who are running in the leadership. That is not right.

Section 403.2 allows, on the application of any party leader and two of its officers, the deregistration of one of the party's registered associations by the Chief Electoral Officer. This puts too much power in the hands of party leaders.

I do not believe that this important issue has been significantly considered by the House. We should not be making a decision on this at this time. We should be sitting down and discussing it. I think that if we went across this nation we would find that Canadians are very upset about the bill. Canadians do not believe that this is right. They never thought that in Canada the day would come when legislation such as this would be before the House.

What if the Prime Minister wanted to deregister all of the riding associations organized by the member for LaSalle—Émard? He could do it if we pass the bill. I cannot believe that anyone sitting on either side of the House could agree to this. It could be done and certainly we could conceive of it.

I have to say that the Progressive Conservative Party is very concerned about the bill. We are very concerned about the fact that it takes away from us our rights that we have had in the past for those people who wish to support my party. It takes away the rights of people who feel that some of us do come here to the House of Commons to represent them and our citizens back home. They feel very strongly that they want to support us. I have to say there are many people who do not feel that their tax dollars should be coming here and given to the parties in the House of Commons. That is now how many people see this.

Then there are people out there in the private sector who want to support a party. I am not opposed to the fact that perhaps the Liberal Party gets a whole lot more support than some of the rest of us. That is the system that is out there. That is the democratic system that is out there.

However, passing Bill C-24 and going to all Canadians is not right. I have stated that I do not think Lucien Bouchard wants his tax dollars to go to the Canadian Alliance or the PC Party or the Liberal Party. No, that is not what he wants. That is the situation with a lot of Canadians. I have used Lucien Bouchard as an example.

I am saying I want to see an honest and democratic process in place. If the Prime Minister feels that what we have had as a process is not fair and just, then there are ways to make changes. There are amendments that have been put before the House with regard to the bill. One was just moved. I also had an amendment, but because of the amendment that has been put forward I will not place my amendment on the floor.

I will say that having spent 10 years in the House of Commons, I really am dismayed that Bill C-24 is before the House. I ask that we not endorse the bill at this time. I ask that all members go back to the process that we had which was fair and just, and Canadian.

Government Orders

•(1650)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I want to heartily thank the hon. member for Roberval, who is the Bloc Quebecois House leader, for having allowed the other parties to have a few minutes to speak on Bill C-24.

[*English*]

In the final moments of this debate I want to say to the House leader of the Bloc Quebecois that I appreciate that he shortened his remarks in order to give the member for Saint John and me an opportunity to speak, because of course the bill is under time allocation.

I am pleased to speak at third reading of Bill C-24, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act. It is a bill that changes how we finance elections and political parties in Canada.

We as a political party have long called for the removal of big money from politics, so we have supported this legislation in principle throughout. Having said that, we recognize and will be pointing out that we still find there is some unfortunate and glaring errors with it, but on balance we believe it allows for better democracy and certainly greater transparency.

Prior to the clause-by-clause proceedings, when the committee on procedure and House affairs was meeting to discuss this in the spring, we heard from more than 70 witnesses. A number of them came forward and said that on balance this is good, supportable legislation. Many Canadians will have read the remarks of Ralph Nader who said that it is another example of Canada being first and should be quickly emulated in his country, the United States of America. When we see senators running for that institution in the United States, spending \$30 million and \$31 million to get themselves elected, Americans certainly need to see some urgent reform of their elections act.

The legislation goes a good distance toward getting big money out of politics. There has been a lot of big money in politics over the years. In the last election campaign, campaign 2000, the Liberal Party, which was returned as the government, took in almost \$12 million from corporate donations. Sixty per cent of the total that the Liberals raised was from the corporate side. They received almost \$700,000 from the chartered banks alone, another \$100,000 from Bombardier, almost \$100,000 from Canadian National and the list goes on. I would not want to lose sight of the fact that the Canadian Alliance, which claims to be the grassroots party, raised \$7 million from corporate Canada in that same election campaign.

The equation is quite simple, especially when a party is returned to the government benches. The companies hand out big money and they expect something in return. They hand a cheque to the Liberal bagman with one hand and expect to receive a lucrative contract almost immediately with the other. The Prime Minister has admitted as much with his ethics package of a year ago. Indeed, the heritage minister, who is seeking to replace the Prime Minister, has said from her perch within cabinet that the ratification of the Kyoto accord was delayed in this country because big money does matter and does talk at the cabinet table.

The Liberal Party has been the party of big business. As I mentioned, big business accounts for 60% of its donations. The situation is somewhat reversed for the New Democratic Party. It is significantly reversed perhaps because we received 60% from individuals. They are modest amounts in the range of \$50 or \$100 for the most part.

If we look at the financial returns that parties have to post every year, we will see that the New Democratic Party has far more individual donors than any other political party in this country. That will come as a surprise to those who claim that the New Democratic Party is financed only by big labour. We have a long and proud tradition with the labour movement. That is certainly true. When the party was founded in 1961, it was founded on a partnership between the old Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and the Canadian trade union movement. That has remained and it will continue to remain as a partnership, I am sure, once Bill C-24 takes full effect.

•(1655)

Labour will continue to work with the New Democratic Party and vice versa, but the focus in future I believe will be to encourage union members to become more directly involved in the party and, if they so choose, to make donations on an individual basis.

The New Democratic Party supports getting big money out of politics. Our party convention in January instructed us to pursue that.

The legislation before us today allows individuals to donate \$5,000 a year to a party. It was set at \$10,000, which was reduced. We would have preferred a more modest amount of \$3,000, which corresponds to the limits that are permitted in the province of Quebec and the province of Manitoba, the two other jurisdictions in Canada that have legislation along these lines, which essentially prohibits corporate and trade union donations from going to political parties. We would have preferred \$3,000, but certainly reducing it from \$10,000 to \$5,000 is a step in the right direction and is certainly supportable.

Our concern, however, is that if they so choose, people with deep pockets can donate \$5,000 to the Liberal Party and donate another \$5,000 to the New Democratic Party or the Alliance or any of the other registered parties. We would have said that this should be an amount in total, an aggregate amount of \$5,000, and all in and not spread around. I tend to agree with those who say this is unlikely to happen, but nevertheless it would have been better to close the gate before any chance of the horse getting out of the barn. Overall, this is a good improvement in the Canadian political system, because before this anybody with deep pockets could really have a significant influence on an election campaign and certainly in an individual election campaign.

As I mentioned, there is a prohibition on contributions to political parties from corporations and trade unions or associations, but there is a small exception. This legislation does permit organizations to contribute a maximum of \$1,000 annually to the aggregate of candidates, local associations and nomination contestants of a registered party so that all the contributions are combined under the \$1,000 limit.

Government Orders

Our first preference would have been that this not be in there at all. We do not think this is required. This is something that was not in the Prime Minister's mind when he floated this bill last fall. I think it is fair to say that some backbench members of his party were concerned, so this came back as an opportunity for trade unions, associations and corporations to still participate, but to a much more limited extent than they have been able to heretofore in the political process.

Our first inclination was to get rid of that altogether. We were not successful. Our second suggestion, then, was to level the playing field. We said that if franchised corporations like Dairy Queen or Tim Hortons, with units owned by different franchisees, if that is the right legal terminology, could each give \$1,000 then trade union locals should be able to give \$1,000. However, we have been unable to persuade the members opposite of the wisdom and the good sense of having that level playing field. As a result, unions are considered as one unit for the purposes of donations no matter how many locals they may have, but corporate franchises like Tim Hortons or Dairy Queen or car dealerships are each considered as separate units for purposes of political donations and each of them is able to make a separate \$1,000 donation.

The effect of all this has been to weight this class of political donation heavily in favour of corporations as opposed to trade unions. We think that will be proven very quickly when we look at this as the procedure and House affairs committee or some other committee to see the ramifications of Bill C-24. This will stick out like a sore thumb.

• (1700)

There are 16,000 locals in total in national and international unions in this country and the vast majority of them, we believe, will be excluded from contributing to and playing a part in the political process. We have put forward amendments on this, as I have indicated, and they have been voted down by members opposite. To add insult to injury, the House leader said in debate yesterday in this chamber that there is a fundamental difference between union locals and corporate franchises when it comes to exercising local control and independent judgment. I think in effect he was saying that local businesses have minds of their own and that local unions are simply sheep that follow the edicts of their national or international offices.

An hon. member: That's repugnant.

Mr. Dick Proctor: It is repugnant, and as the House leader considers those remarks I think he owes an apology to people in the trade union movement in this country.

I listened to the member for Elk Island a couple of days ago on this subject in debate on the bill. He was expressing his distaste for the fact that as a former member of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees he had no choice in that some of his dues went to the New Democratic Party of Alberta. He was insisting how unfair that was. Let me say to that member of Parliament that it was a decision made by the local union of AUPE at the institution at which he apparently worked in those days.

The obverse of that is to suggest that a board of directors at Bombardier, for example, is giving \$100,000 of shareholders' money to the political party of its choice. Does he really think there is more

democracy in that situation than in a trade union local deciding by a democratic vote of its members at a general meeting which political party it chooses to support? I think the member for Elk Island needs to reflect on that matter.

On the matter of public funding for elections and between elections, which is an important aspect of the bill, if we take corporate and union money away from parties, as Bill C-24 would do, then some of that money, we believe, has to be replaced. For the last almost 30 years, individuals have received a tax deduction when they donate to political parties but Bill C-24 would also provide for an annual public grant for parties based on each vote they received in the previous general election.

The previous proposal, up until last weekend, provided for an annual public allotment to parties of \$1.50 per vote, per year, for every vote they received in the previous general election. Based on the election in November 2000, the Liberals would have received \$7.8 million annually, the Canadian Alliance \$4.9 million, the Progressive Conservatives \$2.4 million, the Bloc Québécois \$2.1 million, and the New Democratic Party \$1.6 million.

We were assured that this had been looked at by the government, that it was revenue neutral and no party would suffer as a result of this \$1.50 per vote, per year, to replace moneys lost from corporations and trade unions. Now suddenly it has come back in at \$1.75. We have difficulty with that. We felt that if \$1.50 was good enough and revenue neutral in March when the bill was introduced, then surely it is good enough in June. We do not understand why the price of democracy has suddenly risen by 25¢, but that is what we will be voting on today at third reading.

We think it occurred because various Liberals rebelled. They sent their president to testify before the committee on procedure and House affairs, which was looking at this issue. They said it was not enough and they needed more money. As a result this amendment was pushed through and introduced early this week. We think the Liberals are used to relying on a rich corporate diet and seem concerned about being weaned away from it in any way. They apparently fear perhaps going out and having to go door to door to raise money from people on the doorstep and elsewhere. We believe that a public contribution of \$1.50 per vote to each political party is a fair and reasonable replacement for the loss of corporate and political donations.

Government Orders

•(1705)

As an aside, I note that the Canadian Alliance opposes this modest amount of money going toward political parties. I think it had an amendment to reduce the 43¢ roughly per quarter that would go to each party to 1¢. I just do not understand it. These folks stand up every day and grill the government about the latest scandal of Groupaction in accepting government money on one hand and getting a contract on the other. Perhaps the Canadian Alliance is concerned that it will actually have to get out and do some of its own research as a result of this cleaning up of the Canada Elections Act and the introducing of public money, which will have to be transparent at the local level and at the national level on a regular basis. But we can be sure that in any event, like the gold plated pension plan, the Canadian Alliance will vote against it but certainly take the money. On the matter of pensions, we happen to believe that people are fully entitled to pensions but the hypocrisy of the Alliance members on that issue, and again on this issue, is breathtaking.

I have only a couple of minutes left, and we are under time allocation, but we are saddened that we are unable to deal with current trust funds. I know that come January 1 everything will be transparent under this bill and trust funds will no longer be able to exist. We felt there should have been a way to have some reporting from the relatively few members of the House, as I understand it, who are in the business of trust funds, some reporting of trust fund money flowing in. We wanted to reinstate clause 71 on that. We debated it at report stage yesterday and we were ultimately unsuccessful in persuading the government.

On third parties, we all know about the destructive effects that third party money and interventions have had in the United States where groups like the National Rifle Association and others have intervened in a very undemocratic and unaccountable way in the political process. We all know about the soft pacts that have occurred there. Earlier I mentioned the enormous, unbelievable amounts of money that it takes to run for and win political office in the United States. In this country, the National Citizens' Coalition, just as secretive and unaccountable, has made similar interventions.

Bill C-24 does not deal with third party expenditures in any way. The assumption is that third party expenditures are going to be dealt with at the court level and the government is convinced that it is going to win that debate. I am not as confident, but we will have to wait and see. There was no opportunity to deal with that because these are amendments to the election financing act.

Once Bill C-24 comes into effect in January 2004, it will confine political parties to accepting only individual donations. Accordingly, it should follow that judges will find it more difficult to rule against legislation limiting spending by third parties in election campaigns. We hope that is the case but certainly there are no guarantees. I look forward to the first review of Bill C-24, and I hope and expect that by the time the courts will have ruled, the National Citizens' Coalition will have a much reduced role in the Canadian political electoral system.

In conclusion, the New Democratic Party believes that big money should be removed from politics and it largely will be removed from politics. Our party passed just such a resolution at its leadership convention in Toronto five months ago. Canadians are tired of a

political system where money has bought influence. They want the government and political parties to clean up their acts, and I fully concur.

The bill is not perfect. We think there are obvious flaws in the bill. We tried to get those flaws dealt with in clause by clause and at other stages, but there is no question that overall this will provide a big improvement over the system as it exists now.

•(1710)

On balance it is a significant step toward getting big money out of politics. It also provides for greater transparency and accountability for our political system. For that reason the New Democratic Party will be supporting Bill C-24.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to order made Tuesday, June 10, 2003, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and to put all questions necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

•(1715)

[*English*]

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

•(1750)

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

(*Division No. 190*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Bailey
Burton
Casey
Clark
Day
Duncan
Epp
Forsyth
Gouk
Grey
Harris
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hinton

Anders
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Cadman
Chatters
Cummins
Doyle
Elley
Fitzpatrick
Gallant
Grewal
Hanger
Heam
Hilstrom
Jaffer

Government Orders

Johnston
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
McNally
Merrifield
Moore
Pallister
Rajotte
Ritz
Skelton
Sorenson
Stinson
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Toews
Wayne
White (Langley—Abbotsford)

Keddy (South Shore)
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Obhrai
Penson
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Schmidt
Solberg
Spencer
Strahl
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Vellacott
White (North Vancouver)
Yelich — 62

Pagtakhan
Paradis
Patry
Peschisolido
Phinney
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Provenzano
Reed (Halton)
Robillard
Rocheleau
Saada
Savoy
Shepherd
Speller
St-Julien
Stewart
Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi
Torsney
Wasylycia-Leis
Wilfert

Paquette
Parrish
Perron
Pettigrew
Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon
Proctor
Redman
Regan
Robinson
Roy
Sauvageau
Scott
Simard
St-Hilaire
St. Denis
Szabo
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tonks
Vanclief
Whelan
Wood — 170

NAYS

Members

Adams
Anderson (Victoria)
Assadourian
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bélangier
Bergeron
Bevilacqua
Binet
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Bourgeois
Brown
Byrne
Calder
Cardin
Carroll
Catterall
Chamberlain
Chrétien
Collenette
Copp
Crête
Desjarlais
DeVillers
Dion
Dromisky
Duceppe
Easter
Eyking
Folco
Fry
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gaudet
Girard-Bujold
Godin
Graham
Guimond
Harvard
Ianno
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Knutson
Laframboise
Lalonde
Lebel
Leung
Lincoln
MacAulay
Mahoney
Maloney
Marceau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Matthews
McDonough
McKay (Scarborough East)
Ménard
Mitchell
Myers
Neville
Nystrom
Owen

Allard
Assad
Augustine
Bagnell
Barnes (London West)
Bélaïr
Bellemare
Bertrand
Bigras
Blaikie
Bonin
Boudria
Bradshaw
Bryden
Caccia
Caplan
Carignan
Castonguay
Cauchon
Charbonneau
Coderre
Comartin
Cotler
Cuzner
Desrochers
Dhaliwal
Discepola
Drouin
Duplain
Eggleton
Finlay
Fournier
Gagnon (Champlain)
Gagnon (Québec)
Gauthier
Godfrey
Goodale
Guay
Harb
Hubbard
Jackson
Jordan
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Laliberte
Lanctôt
Lee
Lill
Loubier
Macklin
Malhi
Manley
Marleau
Masse
McCormick
McGuire
McLellan
Minna
Murphy
Nault
Normand
O'Reilly
Pacetti

PAIRED

Members

Dalmond-Guiral
McCallum

Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Tremblay — 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

● (1800)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 191*)

YEAS

Members

Adams
Allard
Assad
Augustine
Bagnell
Barnes (London West)
Bélaïr
Bellemare
Bertrand
Bigras
Blaikie
Bonin
Boudria
Bradshaw
Bryden
Caccia

Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)
Assadourian
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bélangier
Bergeron
Bevilacqua
Binet
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Bourgeois
Brown
Byrne
Calder

Caplan
 Carignan
 Castonguay
 Cauchon
 Charbonneau
 Coderre
 Comartin
 Cotler
 Cuzner
 Desrochers
 Dhaliwal
 Discepola
 Drouin
 Duplain
 Eggleton
 Finlay
 Fournier
 Gagnon (Champlain)
 Gagnon (Québec)
 Gauthier
 Godfrey
 Goodale
 Guamieri
 Guimond
 Harvard
 Ianno
 Jennings
 Karetak-Lindell
 Knutson
 Laframboise
 Lalonde
 Lebel
 Leung
 Lincoln
 MacAulay
 Mahoney
 Maloney
 Marceau
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Matthews
 McDonough
 McKay (Scarborough East)
 Ménard
 Mitchell
 Myers
 Neville
 Nystrom
 O'Reilly
 Pagtakhan
 Paradis
 Patry
 Peschisolido
 Phinney
 Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
 Pratt
 Provenzano
 Reed (Halton)
 Robillard
 Rocheleau
 Saada
 Savoy
 Shepherd
 Speller
 St-Julien
 Stewart
 Thibault (West Nova)
 Tirabassi
 Torsney
 Wasylcyia-Leis
 Wilfert

Cardin
 Carroll
 Catterall
 Chamberlain
 Chrétien
 Collenette
 Copps
 Crête
 Desjarlais
 DeVillers
 Dion
 Dromisky
 Duceppe
 Easter
 Eying
 Folco
 Fry
 Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
 Gaudet
 Girard-Bujold
 Godin
 Graham
 Guay
 Harb
 Hubbard
 Jackson
 Jordan
 Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
 Kraft Sloan
 Laliberte
 Lanctôt
 Lee
 Lill
 Loubier
 Macklin
 Malhi
 Manley
 Marleau
 Masse
 McCormick
 McGuire
 McLellan
 Minna
 Murphy
 Nault
 Normand
 O'Brien (Labrador)
 Owen
 Paquette
 Parrish
 Perron
 Pettigrew
 Picard (Drummond)
 Plamondon
 Proctor
 Redman
 Regan
 Robinson
 Roy
 Sauvageau
 Scott
 Simard
 St-Hilaire
 St. Denis
 Szabo
 Thibault (Saint-Lambert)
 Tonks
 Vanclief
 Whelan
 Wood — 172

NAYS

Members

Abbott
 Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
 Bailey
 Burton
 Casey
 Clark
 Day
 Duncan
 Epp

Anders
 Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
 Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
 Cadman
 Chatters
 Cummins
 Doyle
 Elley
 Fitzpatrick

Private Members' Business

Forseth	Gallant
Gouk	Grewal
Grey	Hanger
Harris	Hearn
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hilstrom
Hinton	Jaffer
Johnston	Keddy (South Shore)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Lunn (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McNally	Meredith
Merrifield	Mills (Red Deer)
Moore	Obhrai
Pallister	Penson
Rajotte	Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Ritz	Schmidt
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	Spencer
Stinson	Strahl
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews	Vellacott
Wayne	White (North Vancouver)
White (Langley—Abbotsford)	Yelich — 62

PAIRED

Members

Dalphond-Guiral	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCallum	Tremblay — 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
 (Bill read the third time and passed)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

The House resumed from June 9 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 391, under private members' business, standing in the name of the hon. member for Joliette.

● (1810)

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

(Division No. 192)

YEAS

Members

Bachand (Saint-Jean)	Bergeron
Bigras	Blaikie
Bourgeois	Caccia
Cardin	Comartin
Crête	Desjarlais
Desrochers	Duceppe
Fournier	Fry
Gagnon (Québec)	Gagnon (Champlain)
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)	Gaudet
Gauthier	Girard-Bujold
Godin	Guay
Guimond	Jordan
Kraft Sloan	Laframboise
Laliberte	Lalonde
Lanctôt	Lebel
Leung	Lill
Lincoln	Loubier
Maloney	Marceau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Masse
Matthews	McDonough
McKay (Scarborough East)	Ménard
Minna	Nystrom

Private Members' Business

Paquette
Picard (Drummond)
Proctor
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
St-Hilaire

Perron
Plamondon
Robinson
Roy
Scott
Wasylycia-Leis— 56

NAYS**Members**

Abbott
Allard
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Assadourian
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Bailey
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Beaumier
Bélanger
Bertrand
Binet
Bonin
Bradshaw
Burton
Cadman
Cannis
Carignan
Casey
Catterall
Chamberlain
Chatters
Coderre
Copp
Cummins
Day
Dhaliwal
Discepola
Dromisky
Duncan
Easter
Elley
Eyking
Fitzpatrick
Fontana
Gallant
Goodale
Graham
Grey
Hanger
Harris
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hinton
Jackson
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Knutson
Longfield
MacAulay
Mahoney
Manley
Marleau
McCormick
McLellan
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Moore
Myers
Neville
O'Reilly
Owen
Pagtakhan
Paradis
Patry
Peschisolido
Phinney
Pillitteri
Proulx
Rajotte
Reed (Halton)
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Robillard
Savoy

Adams
Anders
Anderson (Victoria)
Augustine
Bagnell
Bakopanos
Barnes (London West)
Bélaire
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Boudria
Bryden
Byrne
Calder
Caplan
Carroll
Castonguay
Cauchon
Charbonneau
Clark
Collenette
Cotler
Cuzner
DeVillers
Dion
Doyle
Drouin
Duplain
Eggleton
Epp
Finlay
Folco
Forseth
Godfrey
Gouk
Grewal
Guarnieri
Harb
Hearn
Hilstrom
Hubbard
Jaffer
Johnston
Keddy (South Shore)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Lee
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Macklin
Malhi
Marci
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McGuire
McNally
Merrifield
Mitchell
Murphy
Nault
Normand
Obhrai
Pacetti
Pallister
Parrish
Penson
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Provenzano
Redman
Regan
Ritz
Saada
Schmidt

Sgro
Simard
Solberg
Speller
St-Julien
Steckle
Stinson
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews
Torsney
Vanclief
Wayne
White (North Vancouver)
Wood

Shepherd
Skelton
Sorenson
Spencer
St. Denis
Stewart
Strahl
Telegdi
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tonks
Ur
Vellacott
Whelan
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Yelich— 178

PAIRED**Members**

Dalphond-Guiral
McCallum
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Tremblay— 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[English]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed from June 10 consideration of the motion that Bill C-343, an act to amend the Citizenship Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-343 under private members' business.

● (1820)

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

(Division No. 193)

YEAS**Members**

Abbott
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Bailey
Bigras
Bourgeois
Cadman
Chatters
Crête
Day
Desrochers
Duncan
Epp
Fitzpatrick
Fournier
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gallant
Gauthier
Godin
Grewal
Guay
Hanger
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hinton
Johnston
Laframboise
Lanctôt
Lill
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Masse
McNally

Anders
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bergeron
Blaikie
Burton
Cardin
Comartin
Cummins
Desjarlais
Duceppe
Elley
Eyking
Forseth
Gagnon (Champlain)
Gagnon (Québec)
Gaudet
Girard-Bujold
Gouk
Grey
Guimond
Harris
Hilstrom
Jaffer
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lalonde
Lebel
Loubier
Marceau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McDonough
Ménard

Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Nystrom
Pallister
Penson
Picard (Drummond)
Proctor
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Robinson
Roy
Schmidt
Solberg
Spencer
Steckle
Strahl
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Vellacott
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Yelich — 99

Merrifield
Moore
Obhrai
Paquette
Perron
Plamondon
Rajotte
Ritz
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
Skelton
Sorenson
St-Hilaire
Stinson
Telegdi
Toews
Wasylycia-Leis
White (North Vancouver)

NAYS

Members

Adams
Anderson (Victoria)
Augustine
Bagnell
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Bélanger
Bertrand
Binet
Bonin
Bradshaw
Bryden
Caccia
Cannis
Carignan
Casey
Catterall
Chamberlain
Clark
Collenette
Cuzner
Dhaliwal
Discepolo
Dromisky
Duplain
Eggleton
Folco
Godfrey
Graham
Harb
Hubbard
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lee
Lincoln
MacAulay
Mahoney
Maloney
Marcil
McGuire
Mitchell
Nault
Normand
Owen
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Redman
Regan
Saada
Scott
Shepherd
Speller
St. Denis
Szabo
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tonks

Allard
Assadourian
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Bakopanos
Barnes (London West)
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Boudria
Brown
Byrne
Calder
Caplan
Carroll
Castonguay
Cauchon
Charbonneau
Coderre
Coppes
DeVillers
Dion
Doyle
Drouin
Easter
Finlay
Fontana
Goodale
Guarnieri
Hearn
Jackson
Jordan
Keddy (South Shore)
Knutson
Laliberte
Leung
Longfield
Macklin
Malhi
Manley
Marleau
McLellan
Murphy
Neville
O'Reilly
Pacetti
Paradis
Peschisolido
Phinney
Pillitteri
Proulx
Reed (Halton)
Robillard
Savoy
Sgro
Simard
St-Julien
Stewart
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Torsney

Private members' business

Ur
Wayne
Wood — 125

Vanciel
Whelan

PAIRED

Members

Dalphond-Guiral
McCallum

Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Tremblay — 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being 6:25 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

On a point of order, the Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among all parties in the House and I believe that you would find unanimous consent for the following motion, a copy of which has been circulated to all parties.

● (1825)

[Translation]

I move:

That, immediately before Government Orders are called on Thursday, June 12, 2003, the House shall proceed to consider second reading of Bill S-5 and, after no more than one representative of each party has spoken for no more than five minutes each, the bill shall be deemed to have been read a second time, referred to a committee of the whole and reported without amendment, concurred in at the report stage and read a third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from June 6 consideration of Bill C-250, an act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda), as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud today to speak to Bill C-250.

I would like to recognize and compliment my NDP colleague, the member for Burnaby—Douglas, for his courageous and tireless life's work in seeking equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people in this country.

I am proud to stand with him today and support Bill C-250 as a significant step in what I see as perhaps one of the last great civil rights struggles of our time. I wish to thank him for giving us all the opportunity to end this parliamentary sitting on a positive note by voting for an issue that I can be proud to support. I believe all of us should be proud to support the bill.

Private members' business

Bill C-250 seeks to amend the Criminal Code to include sexual orientation under the categories of hate propaganda. I think it is useful to examine what we mean by hate propaganda. One legal definition states:

Hate propaganda, as an exercise of expression, seeks to incite and encourage hatred and tension between different social and cultural groups in society.

It is a disreputable passion. Its purpose is to inflame, intimidate, and marginalize the individuals and the community at which it is directed. Hate speech serves to vilify and to undermine the dignity and self-worth of members of the target group, and erodes Canada's constitutional commitment to equality and multiculturalism.

Having said that, it is all the more important and admirable that we deal with this issue today in Parliament, hopefully before we adjourn for the summer. Every day in Canada, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people are at risk of being verbally harassed, physically assaulted, and discriminated against because of their perceived sexual or gender orientation.

Sometimes this violence is extreme and culminates in murder. In November 2001 Aaron Webster was brutally murdered in Vancouver's Stanley Park and police believe the perpetrators beat Webster to death simply because he was gay. On December 4, 2002, the badly beaten body of Christopher Raynsford was discovered in his Ottawa apartment. It appears Raynsford was also murdered because he was a gay man.

Verbal abuse, whether it is taunts, epithets or threats often precede episodes of violence. In fact, verbal abuse is the best predictor of the physical violence that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people are subjected to based on their sexual orientation. This fact points to the urgency of Bill C-250 which would make illegal the promotion of hatred against these Canadians. In doing so, I predict this will save innocent lives.

Under current federal legislation it is illegal to incite hatred on the basis of race, religion, colour or ethnic origin, but not, incredibly, sexual orientation, even though the empirical evidence shows that over 62% of incidents of violence against identifiable groups in society are those incidents against the gay community.

In the absence of prohibitions under law, incitements to hatred against LGBT Canadians are able to flourish with few, if any, real consequences to the perpetrators. In fact, the absence of Canadian law that prohibits the promotion of LGBT hate propaganda lends license to the perpetrators of such abuse, both within and outside our borders.

I point to the tactics and the website of American Fred Phelps, the so-called reverend of the Westboro Baptist Church. Phelps and his followers routinely picket the funerals of LGBT people with signs that read "God hates fags" or "AIDS cures fags" or "No fags in heaven". These are some of their popular slogans.

Phelps' website features a memorial to Matthew Shepard, the Wyoming youth who was savagely tortured and murdered in 1998 because he was gay. The website features a photograph of Shepard burning in the fires of hell and stating the number of days he has been supposedly in hell since his murder. This is incredible.

● (1830)

Canadian police have been unable to do anything to prevent Phelps or people like him from entering Canada and inciting hatred against LGBT Canadians because of the absence of this reference in the Criminal Code. In 1999 Phelps visited Ottawa and prompted this response from Sergeant Pat Callaghan of the Ottawa-Carleton Police Hate Crimes Unit. He stated:

If this was done against a Catholic, a Jew or a black person, charges could be laid. If we had that legislation, we wouldn't have to put up with his nonsense on Monday. We could have told him, "If you show up and start spreading this hate, we'll arrest you".

A Criminal Code amendment would allow police the ability to charge and arrest people like Phelps, who incite hatred against LGBT people. One bystander at the Phelps demonstration in Ottawa said that in Canada we can be whatever we want and we do not like it when people come into our quiet community and spread their hatred.

The critics of Bill C-250 claim that religious teaching and expression would be severely curtailed by the Criminal Code if it were amended in this way. This argument is patently false. The fact is that religious freedom and expression are protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and, furthermore, the Supreme Court of Canada has established strict criteria for the prosecution of suspected hate crimes. For example, before a prosecution of offences can proceed, the Supreme Court requires the consent of the attorney general in the province in which the alleged hate crime has occurred. The Supreme Court criteria also ensure that prosecution of suspected hate crimes occurs only when the situation is serious enough to warrant such an intervention.

Further to that, even though we do not believe it was legally necessary, there is an amendment to Bill C-250 which would specifically, once and for all, state clearly that quoting from any scripture is not to be considered a hate crime for the purposes of this act. That should give comfort to those who have raised the concerns that their freedom of speech regarding religious matters may be somehow infringed upon by this bill. It is simply not true.

Protecting LGBT Canadians from hate propaganda has gained widespread support. In 2001 Canada's provincial and territorial attorneys general urged the federal government to implement legislation to include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground under federal hate propaganda legislation. Alberta Attorney General Dave Hancock stated:

I support the hate crime legislation which prohibits people from spewing hate against anybody for any reason. There are appropriate ways to discuss issues in our country...and you don't need to put forward hateful literature. It doesn't matter what you believe about sexual orientation.

The current hate propaganda laws in Canada that ban the incitement of hatred should include sexual orientation because of the overwhelming evidence that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people are the object of what we already considered a hate crime and these crimes should be prosecuted under hate crimes legislation.

I believe it is a proud day for the House of Commons to add to the issue of equity and equal treatment for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people. It is an honour for me to support Bill C-250 and I am proud to stand with my colleague from Burnaby—Douglas in his pursuit of equality for gay people in this country.

● (1835)

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to the amendment moved by the member for Scarborough—Rouge River which would add to paragraph 319(3) (b) of the Criminal Code the words:

...or an opinion based on a belief in a religious text;

I believe it addresses concerns raised by religious communities that presented to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights regarding Bill C-250. They were concerned that Bill C-250 would cause negative consequences for those who base their beliefs or opinions on religious texts.

However let there be no doubt whatsoever about my wholehearted support for Bill C-250, the private member's bill put forward by the MP for Burnaby—Douglas.

The bill would provide for the inclusion of "sexual orientation" within the already existing definition of an identifiable group found in subsection 318(4) of the Criminal Code. Subsection 318(4) reads as follows:

..."identifiable group" means any section of the public distinguished by colour, race, religion or ethnic origin.

All that Bill C-250 would do is add "sexual orientation" to that list.

I support the bill for many reasons. First, because of the hundreds of letters I have received from Canadians and organizations across Canada urging me to support the bill. Public health officers have written identifying gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities, especially youth, as priority groups that are specifically vulnerable, especially to suicide and depression.

A 2001 Ottawa wellness project found that 36% of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth had seriously contemplated suicide compared with 26% of other high risk teens. A 1995 University of Calgary study found that over 30% of gay male adolescents had attempted suicide. This is three times higher than the average for adolescents who are not gay.

Health status is as much dependent on social justice and mental well-being as it is on clean water and smog free air. I have had letters from jurists from across Canada. I will quote one such group, the Canadian Bar Association which represents 38,000 jurists. It feels that the bill, and I quote:

—would provide...complementary components of an effective legislated response to violence based on sexual orientation and to the fomentation of hatred which breeds that violence.

The bill is about equal protection under the law for all vulnerable groups and, as a member of a vulnerable group, I understand that need.

At present, the specifically homophobic nature of violence and harassment experienced by this community is unaddressed in Canadian law. I say specifically because many of the Charter of

Private members' business

Rights and Freedoms advocates cite the Canadian Human Rights Act as being sufficient protection. However there is a provision in the Criminal Code that refers to hate crimes and hate propaganda in which specifically it lists historically vulnerable groups but it does not name sexual orientation as one such group, yet.

As the Vancouver police department, which also advocates support for the bill, states:

In fact, the situation faced by members of the LGBT community causes great concern to police.

According to a two year study conducted on hate and bias type crimes over the period of 2001 and 2002 in Vancouver, it showed that "sexual orientation represents 38% of reported incidents, which range from homicide through assault, harassment, robbery, threats, theft and arson".

The Vancouver police cites that "in Vancouver sexual orientation forms the basis for 62% of the assaults and robberies against the groups protected under s 718.1".

The Vancouver police go on to say:

The simple truth is that a person identified on the basis of their sexual orientation is more likely to be the victim of an assault than any other group and is more likely to sustain an injury.

The risk to persons on the basis of sexual orientation extends to others and is entrenched through a pervasive stigma that could be corrected by government action to support Bill C-250.

Those are not my words. They are quoted verbatim from a brief presented by the Vancouver police department to the justice committee.

Resolution 02-15 of the Canadian Association of Police Boards specifically urged the passage of the bill.

● (1840)

However I have also heard from family service organizations in Canada, such as the Family Service Association of Toronto, which states:

From our daily work with a wide range of individuals and families, we know first-hand that [this group] are routinely the target of hatred by uninformed people. ...there is currently no legal protection against incitements to hatred and harm.

In case I am accused of only listening to the advice and arguments made by special interest groups, I want to say that I have also heard from St. Mary's Catholic Church in Yukon. Father Timothy Coonen states:

—I believe that there is nothing in the Bible that permits the promotion of hatred against other human beings, including gays and lesbians. They deserve the full protection of the law.

I urge you in the strongest terms to support this bill.

From the United Church, I quote Minister Warren McDougall who states:

Violence and other expressions of hatred directed toward people because of their sexual orientation is absolutely unacceptable.

Private members' business

Yet, as a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, it would be unfair of me not to mention that we also heard from many religious bodies that were concerned that the addition of sexual orientation to identifiable groups in section 318(4) would have severe and negative consequences on their beliefs and opinions of homosexuality as it derives from religious text.

I believe that section 319(3)(b) of the code addresses that concern adequately. However the amendment by the member for Scarborough—Rouge River does specify belief based on a religious text, which some have argued is not fully covered in the clause as it currently exists.

I am sensitive to these concerns and I therefore support the member's motion but I want to return to the principle of Bill C-250. I fully support it based, not only on the reasons given earlier but also because as a physician for 23 years I have seen firsthand and counselled many gay, lesbian and transgender patients, mostly youth who have suffered as a result of the discrimination, the name calling, the shunning, and especially the many of whom were depressed and often contemplated suicide. As I mentioned earlier, statistics show this to be true.

Finally, Canada is a signatory to the United Nations convention on human rights. Like all signatory states, Canada has an obligation under international law to exercise due diligence in preventing homophobic acts, investigating them and ensuring that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

Due diligence describes a threshold of efforts which a state must undertake to fulfill its responsibility to protect individuals from abuses of their rights. Canada has consistently shown due diligence in protecting most minority rights. The time has come for this extremely susceptible group to become part of that group and to be under the umbrella of Canada's protection.

I wish to end by quoting Gary Reid who is a survivor of a nail bomb explosion at a gay pub in London in 1997. He says:

The fear, loathing, hatred and ignorance culminating in these bombings is a warning to society and the world as a whole that racism, prejudice, homophobia and a fear of difference is out there and we should all challenge it at every opportunity.

Mr. Larry Spencer (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of thousands of people across the land who have written and stated their opposition to this bill perhaps more than any other bill that has passed through this place in the last few years.

Let me state first that the Canadian Alliance is against the promotion of hatred against any individual or group in society. The member opposite was right when she said that the Bible does not promote hatred toward any individual, and that is very true. It is sad, indeed, when people claim to be against these kinds of rights, such as Reverend Phelps who was mentioned earlier. I am sorry we have those kinds of people who take it over the top.

The Canadian Alliance does not support that kind of action because we believe every human being has the right to be respected.

However, although we respect them and even though the Bible teaches us to love them, it does not teach us to love things that are against the principles of God's word. Therefore we are not instructed to love the wrong that we might see but we are instructed to love the

person. I have great respect for some of the people in this House. They conduct themselves as gentlemen and as ladies in many situations but I do not have to agree with their lifestyle.

The Canadian Alliance believes that all individuals should be protected by law against hate crimes. In fact, we believe all groups are already adequately protected under the Criminal Code. For instance, let us think of all the people who would speak evil of politicians. There are many people in this land who basically stir up hatred against politicians and yet we would not want to be added to that group.

However we do believe in the freedom of religious expression and conscience according to section 2(a) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We believe in free speech. I personally am concerned about this. For the past 30 years I have stood in the pulpits across this land and in other places and have preached from the Bible text. I am concerned because it is my duty as a minister of the gospel, when I am fulfilling that position, to speak truly according to the Bible, which is the book that I view as the word that teaches us rightly how to live. I am concerned that some day I would not be allowed to read and speak freely from that book.

We are concerned that Bill C-250 would not ensure adequate protection for the freedom of religious expression; for teaching, preaching or speaking in these terms; standing up for what we believe is morally right or wrong; and that in some way those freedoms would be taken away from us in the future.

Although the sponsor of the bill, the member for Burnaby—Douglas, tries to convince Canadians that his bill would not threaten or impede religious expression, we all know that if the bill passes it will just be a matter of time before some pastor, some priest or some rabbi will be hauled before a human rights tribunal and prosecuted for promoting hatred based on his religious beliefs.

We do not believe the assurances of the member for Burnaby—Douglas and I will explain why.

Some time ago the former justice minister gave her assurances that the definition of marriage would not be changed. In this House, on February 15, 2000, the former justice minister said:

This definition of marriage, which has been consistently applied in Canada and which was reaffirmed last year through a resolution of the House, dates back to 1866. It has served us well and will not change. We recognize that marriage is a fundamental value and important to Canadians. That value and importance is in no way undermined by recognizing in law other forms of committed relationships.

● (1845)

Then a few days later, February 29, the minister also said this, "The common law of this country is equally authoritative with legislation. The courts have said over and over again that there is no need to make it any clearer because I think they cannot make it any clearer. They have said that marriage is the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others".

Private members' business

Now we are facing an attack on this traditional definition of marriage. Why do we not just lean on the assurances of the former justice minister that it will not change? However we cannot do that. No person can give anyone the absolute guarantee that things will not change. Not even the justice minister can do that. Nor can the member for Burnaby—Douglas give us those kinds of assurances that religious freedoms will be protected, nor that holy books of the different religions will be protected if Bill C-250 is adopted.

I have seen too many changes in my lifetime to things that seemed to be motherhood and apple pie, but they changed. We cannot buy that line of a personal guarantee or guaranteed protection. There is no assurance of protection of any kind. The fact is we are already losing many of our individual rights and religious freedoms. Let me just share a few examples.

First, let me mention a group in Canada called the Gideons. The Gideons, because of their religious conviction, like to hand out the new testament scriptures to grade six students in the schools across our nation. They no longer can do that on school property. They must do it outside of school property. They have lost that right to exercise their religion in that way.

Just last Christmas season, the Christmas tree in Toronto was not allowed to be called a Christmas tree. It was called the "Giving Tree". Anyone knows that at Christmastime it is a Christmas tree and that right of expression has been removed. "Merry Christmas" was removed the year before, in 2001. A friend of mine put on 80-some commercials on the radio station in Ottawa, Ontario, and that is somewhere near here. After they were recorded, he was called back to the studio and had to redo them. They could not use the words "Merry Christmas" on the radio station in this town.

In 1997 in London, Ontario, Mayor Haskett was found to be in violation because she refused to declare a gay pride day because of her religious beliefs.

In 2002 an Ontario superior court judge ruled against the Catholic school board of Oshawa, preventing it from carrying out its religious beliefs at one of its own school activities.

A printer in Ontario was fined \$5,000 and ordered to do work for a gay group, even though this was against his religious convictions.

In Saskatchewan, a man named Mr. Owens printed some old testament verses in an advertisement that he paid for in the newspaper. These biblical quotes were ruled to be hate literature.

It is already happening. We are losing the right to express ourselves according to our religion and according to the books that we believe are given to us by God and that will direct us in life.

We can talk about the hierarchy of rights. Why is the first section, section 2(c) granting religious rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, subservient to down the line section 15, which mentions these hate crimes?

We can talk about free speech and guaranteeing it all we want but I do not believe there is any guarantee, even with the amendments. The three amendments are not written strongly enough to assure us of guarantee.

The loss of religious freedom is already taking place. People are losing their right to practise their religion and to speak freely, It is about words. It is not about hate. It is not about crime. It is about words. This bill is suppressing free speech. words that enable one to freely express religious opinion or conviction on their issues of morality.

The religious rights of people in our country are being trampled on at the insistence of a very small group of people associated with some very vocal special interest groups. Thousands of people have written to members of the House. Thousands of people have signed petitions. Not one member in the House can ignore the fact that the overwhelming majority of Canadians oppose the bill. I will join them in the opposition of the bill.

● (1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying very clearly and plainly that the Bloc Quebecois supports this bill and will support it wholeheartedly.

When deciding whether or not to introduce a bill, there are two questions that need to be asked. The first one is whether there is a need for a bill. The second is whether the bill in question meets the need that has been identified by the first question.

Let us start with the need. I remind hon. members that Quebec is recognized around the world as a place of tolerance, a place that accepts and defends rights and freedoms. Quebec was the first jurisdiction in Canada to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, back in 1977. Quebecers are very proud of this.

Unfortunately, despite the fact that Quebec and Canadian society is more tolerant when it comes to homosexuality, there are still groups and individuals that perpetuate ideas that promote hate toward homosexuals.

This type of hate must be punished in a society that calls itself free and democratic. If we do not tolerate hate propaganda based on colour, race, religion or ethnic origin, then it makes perfect sense that we should do the same when it comes to sexual orientation.

Currently, there are five groups that are targeted by hate propaganda. Of these five groups, four are protected. The one group that is not protected is made up of gays and lesbians.

It is interesting, and particularly relevant, to note that according to Inspector Dave Jones of the Vancouver Police, in Vancouver, 62% of hate crimes target homosexuals. This percentage, 62%, is high when we consider that gays make up only one of the five groups identified as targets of hate crime. According to Dave Jones, it is unacceptable that sexual orientation is not considered an identified factor targeted by hate propaganda.

There are all kinds of examples of hate propaganda. The Internet site, www.godhatesfags.com has been mentioned several times. On this site, there is a picture posted of the young man who was beaten to death and who is allegedly burning in hell because he was gay.

Private members' business

On that subject, I would like to reiterate what Pat Callaghan, from the Ottawa-Carleton police hate crimes unit, said about the visit to Ottawa by some followers of the godhatesfags site creator, the so-called Reverend Fred Phelps. He said:

If this was done against a Catholic, a Jew or a Black person, charges could be laid. If we had that legislation, we wouldn't have to put up with this nonsense. We could have told him, "If you show up and start spreading this hate, we'll arrest you".

So my first criterion has been met; there is a need to protect a group that is being subjected to hate propaganda.

For the second criterion, when we analyze this type of bill, we have to ask ourselves whether it meets the need identified in the first criterion.

Freedom of religion is what is at issue here. It is the primary objection to this bill. It was the objection raised by my colleague from the Canadian Alliance who spoke before me.

First, I think it is important to say that not all religious groups or religious individuals oppose this bill. I will not repeat what my Liberal colleague said before me about the letter from Timothy Coonen from St. Mary's Catholic Church in the Yukon, or the letter from Thomas Adams, the pastor at the Baptist church in Richiboucto, or even the editorial—to use another religious denomination—from the Jewish Bulletin of January 3, 2003 pointing out that the Bible is not hate literature. I would only ask people to read what was said.

However, I do not entirely agree with my Canadian Alliance colleague who spoke before me. He said that he would no longer be able to speak freely from the Bible to condemn homosexual activity—for lack of a better word.

• (1855)

I was baptized Catholic. I was raised in that faith and I even went to private Catholic school. At school, in our religion courses, we were taught—I am making an analogy; and I know that analogies are often less than perfect, but bear with me—that the Jews made a mistake in not accepting Jesus as their saviour. The theological position of the Catholic Church—and I think it is the same in all the Christian churches—is that Jesus is the Messiah. Thus, accepting Jesus as our saviour leads us to eternal life. The Jews, who did not accept him, committed a theological error.

That is what I was taught and perhaps they still teach it. It is possible to say, with respect, that one believes the Jews made a mistake in not accepting Jesus as their saviour. But to go from that to saying that because the Jews made a supposedly theological error, they can be subjected to hate propaganda is a major leap that our society has refused to make for a long time, for instance when provisions against hate propaganda were included in the Criminal Code.

On Sunday, I attended the opening of the Holocaust Museum. It is easy to see how far hate propaganda can lead. One can see the depths of baseness and darkness that human beings can descend to when hate is involved. I am very much aware of the hate that has been directed against the Jews.

In the same way, someone who believes in a particular interpretation of the Bible, a holy book, may well say, "We condemn

what homosexuals do". Someone might very well say that. But to go from this interpretation in good faith of a religious text to an incitement to hatred based on hate propaganda is, once again, a step that must not be taken.

I was using the example of the Jews who are protected by the Criminal Code because they are an identifiable ethnic group. Quite simply, the same reasoning applies in the case of homosexual, lesbian or transgendered persons. It is simply a matter of not crossing the line between interpretation of a religious text, with which one may agree or disagree, and incitement to hatred.

We know full well that freedom of religion is well protected in Canada. There is section 2 of the Canadian Charter, section 3 of the Quebec Charter and the supremacy of God, as stated in the preamble to the Constitution. No right is an absolute right in our legal system, but the only possible limitations are those necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Because these are factors that may affect a freedom very well recognized in our legal system, these limitations must be clear and narrowly interpreted to ensure that the freedom in question is subject to as little limitation as possible.

In a nutshell, freedom of religion is given prominent status in our law; nevertheless, it is not absolute. It is subject to limitations which must be clearly justified in law and come with safeguards.

I will conclude by reminding the House of three things. First, so far, there have been very few prosecutions under the hate propaganda provisions of the Criminal Code because the test is very difficult to meet. The disclosure that results in an infraction must be specifically designed to promote hatred against an identifiable group. The message heavily laden with contempt must spread hatred according to factors very clearly defined by Justice Dickson in the Keegstra decision.

I will let a non-partisan analyst, namely the Parliamentary Research Branch, conclude for me:

The drafting of the Code's hate propaganda provisions with respect to specific intent, the definition of hate propaganda by the courts, the special defences and the fact that the attorney general of the province needs to approve prosecution all contribute to ensuring that this kind of prosecution will be possible only for the most blatant cases and that the act is consistent with the Charter.

• (1900)

I read further:

These requirements meet the limitation criteria set out by the Supreme Court of Canada in cases relating to freedom of conscience and religion.

Adding sexual orientation to the list of identifiable groups does not have a negative impact on the principle of freedom of conscience and religion. It does not increase the limitation that may be placed on this freedom by lawmakers and courts or decision makers. Its impact is neutral.

In conclusion, we wholeheartedly support Bill C-250.

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on this bill.

In this regard, the Progressive Conservative Party has decided to lead by example. There is often talk of a free vote but, over the past two years, our party has held the most free votes.

Basically, I hope that most of the members of my party will support Bill C-250. I believe that this bill is a step, and I have never pretended otherwise. Personally, I am very open to same sex marriage and even allowing same sex couples to adopt.

So, I think that Bill C-250 is an essential step in accepting same sex marriage. But I hope that this debate will be quickly followed by a vote in the House.

This bill—and I do not want to repeat what my hon. colleagues have already said—updates the Criminal Code. Thirty years ago, no one ever talked about gays, lesbians, transgendered people and so forth. Today, they do, as we are doing now. So, there is an evolution in acknowledging people who are part of this country. Gays and lesbians are an integral part of this country and of our reality. So, this is an important subject. This group has a place and is making its own way. However, this group is the victim of hate propaganda and violence too.

Some people will say, “This means no more gay and lesbian jokes”. Gays and lesbians in Canada and Quebec have the same sense of humour as straight Quebecers do. This does not change anything. We are talking about hate propaganda. In my opinion, this is an acknowledgment, and a signal that the Government of Canada has to give as soon as possible.

I hope that everyone will agree with me: whether we fear for religious freedom or not, whether we support the bill or not, it is essential to ensure that all the political parties in the House agree, before the summer recess, to hold a vote on this bill. Whether the members support or oppose this bill, they must vote and quickly.

Of course there is the whole issue of religious freedom. Everyone has received an incredible amount of e-mails. I would, however, remind hon. members that the principle of the separation of church and state has been around for a very long time. Parliament is neither a church nor a synagogue. It is the forum for democracy in a country. I know that some of us hold to our convictions, but Parliament is not a Catholic or Protestant church, nor is it a synagogue. Everyone is welcome here. It is up to parliamentarians to decide on this matter, in accordance with their principles, of course. There is no question of blocking or delaying, a decision must be reached.

An amendment has been moved, and I personally believe it was unnecessary. But if more detail can be added in order to protect religious freedom, so be it. I would, however, remind hon. members that defining religion is a problem in and of itself. We must be careful. When reference is made to the Koran or the Bible, there is agreement. There was reference just now made to the Gideons. We in Quebec have the Raelians. Determining whether or not something is a religion could lead to very lengthy discussions.

That said, I agree that there should be more protection for freedom of religious expression. Exactly what would adding sexual orientation to the list take away from anyone?

Does this mean that the priest who has been camping out in front of Parliament since 1997, ever since I first came here as an MP, will be taken off to court? Absolutely not. He is speaking out against homosexuality. That is fine. “So what?” as they say. He is against abortion, and has a right to be. He has been camped out there since

Private members' business

1997 and is entitled to do so. This is just one example. And none of that will change.

● (1905)

He will not be charged under Bill C-250. Often, people need concrete examples, and I think this is a good one.

Another thing I want people to understand is that everyone has an opinion when it comes to same sex marriage, but that is not the issue here. That is not what the member for Burnaby—Douglas is asking for. What he is asking is that this important group in Canada, which has a different sexual orientation from others, no longer be subject to hate or hate propaganda. That is all he is asking. I hope that there will soon be a debate on the other issues, but that will come later.

How can anyone argue against Bill C-250 based on the principle of freedom of religion, when freedom of sexual orientation also needs to be protected? We cannot limit one freedom to uphold another. Too many wars have been waged because of that. It may seem silly to say, but this propaganda exists, it is out there, and we must protect these people against it.

If we want to maintain freedom in Canada, we must protect this freedom and the ability to enjoy it. Religion should not be called into it. Absolutely not.

Once again, I understand people's hesitancy, but with the amendment before us, we should be able to vote on it easily. We should be able to explain to our constituents, to those who send us e-mails and letters, that we want to ensure that people who are different by their sexual orientation are not subject to hate propaganda. It has nothing to do, at this point, with one's position on marriage or adoption. That can be explained.

We need to take the time. My colleagues and I did that this morning. The leader of my party, who is still our justice critic, explained it; he supports Bill C-250. He explained this to people, and yet they are aware of his opposition to same sex marriage. However, this bill is not about that.

We need to explain to people that their freedom of religion will always exist and will not be threatened. It is set out in the Criminal Code.

We know that there are problems. We heard from the Vancouver police. We see that regularly. It is time for action.

Our colleague from the New Democratic Party has been fighting for this for years. I know that it bothers some people when the member for Burnaby—Douglas rises in the House and rattles our cage with regard to these issues. It is somewhat disturbing for certain people. They say, “Oh, it is him, we must be careful. There must be something fishy here”. Absolutely not. He has this unique personality as a parliamentarian and his qualities have been recognized for years.

What he brings us today is strikingly realistic. It is very simple. If it gives people the opportunity to discuss the issue of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons, all the better. As heterosexuals or religious people, we cannot hide in the closet. Absolutely not. We have a role to play as parliamentarians.

Private members' business

In closing, with all due respect, I was telling my colleagues two things. We must vote. We know that Friday, Monday or Tuesday at the latest, we will be going back to our ridings to be with our families and friends. Let us vote quickly. I am convinced that, during the summer, we will have the opportunity to discuss this issue with our constituents. We will be able to tell them that Parliament has provided protection by adding sexual orientation to the definition of identifiable group in the Criminal Code of Canada.

• (1910)

[English]

Mr. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-250 which we are debating today proposes to extend the application of the hate propaganda provisions to groups distinguished by sexual orientation.

The purpose of the hate propaganda provisions is to prohibit the public communication of hatred against an identifiable group. An identifiable group is currently defined in the Criminal Code as any group distinguished by colour, race, religion or ethnic origin.

The bill came back to the House by means of new procedures adopted to ensure that private members' bills are given appropriate attention by the committees they are referred to.

In the case of Bill C-250, the bill was examined by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. The committee held meetings and heard from different witnesses. However due to unfortunate circumstances, the committee was not able to complete its study and conduct a clause-by-clause study of the bill. As a result, Bill C-250 was deemed to have been reported without amendments.

During the committee hearings, witnesses and members alike expressed concerns that excerpts from the Bible on homosexuality would be found to be hate propaganda if the hate propaganda provisions were extended to a group distinguished by sexual orientation.

The committee also heard testimony from Department of Justice officials who advised members that it was unlikely that anything in the Bible could meet the threshold established by the jurisprudence for deciding that a statement constitutes hate propaganda. Their comments were based on the interpretation of the elements of the offence by the Supreme Court of Canada in the Keegstra decision.

The Supreme Court of Canada also stated that the statement had to be made for the conscious purpose of promoting hatred. The Supreme Court said that promoting had to involve active support or instigation to hatred. The Supreme Court said that hatred connotes emotion of an intense and extreme nature that is clearly associated with vilification and detestation. I am not aware of any part of the Bible that would meet this threshold.

More important, justice officials brought to the attention of the committee the existence of a specific defence against the charge of hate propaganda. This defence exists currently in subsection 319(3) (b) of the Criminal Code and it applies to an opinion expressed in good faith on a religious subject.

The defence provision says clearly that no person shall be convicted of an offence of promoting hatred if, in good faith, he or she expressed or attempted to establish by argument an opinion on a religious subject.

By way of example, I am certain that the Bible is a religious subject. Therefore, the existence of this defence comforts me in the belief that quoting from the Bible would fall under this defence.

I am convinced that the Bible would not be found to be hate propaganda if Bill C-250 became law.

Throughout the committee hearings it became apparent that Canadians want it to be crystal clear that it will be possible to continue quoting and teaching the Bible or other religious texts without being concerned about being accused of propagating hatred.

Motion No. 1 as drafted provides this kind of reassurance. This amendment would clarify the application of the defence to an expression of opinion based on a religious text when the opinion is expressed by a person who believes in the text. I support the intent of this amendment and hope it will help to further reassure all those who have expressed concerns.

Motion No. 2 would extend to an offence under subsection 319(1) the requirement that any attorney general consent to the prosecution of this offence. The offence under subsection 319(1) is different from the other hate propaganda offences for which the attorney general's consent is currently required.

• (1915)

Specifically, the offence in subsection 319(1) is that of incitation to hatred which could result in a breach of the peace. Although at first glance this would seem positive, requiring the attorney general's consent for this offence could result in delaying police intervention in circumstances where physical violence against victims is imminent.

In addition, this provision could impact on provincial and territorial attorneys general, and they have neither been consulted nor given an opportunity to consider the implications of this amendment. In order to maintain positive relations, it is essential that they be consulted and be allowed to comment on a proposal such as this. With this in mind, I cannot support Motion No. 2.

The third motion amends the definition of hate propaganda in subsection 320(8) to exclude any religious text for the purposes of seizure and forfeiture of hate material. I submit that this motion is unnecessary and could result in excluding unintended material. Section 320 allows seizure and forfeiture of texts only where "the communication of which by any person would constitute an offence under section 319".

Private members' business

This means that the only texts that can be seized are texts which meet the high threshold established by the Supreme Court of Canada for hate propaganda offences and to which none of the defences, including the religious belief defence, apply. Under existing legislation, a text that expresses a bona fide religious opinion would therefore not be seized. Motion No. 3 might open the door to abuses in the interpretation of religious texts. It proposes to protect all religious texts from seizure, without a definition and without a bona fide test as exists in section 319. As a result, it would protect any writing that is claimed to be a religious text. It would not allow a distinction between bona fide religious texts and bogus religious texts. They would all be equally protected.

An amendment with such serious implications requires further examination to assess its impact, not only on hate speech based on sexual orientation but also on hate speech based on the existing criteria, that is, race, colour, religion or ethnic origin. This amendment should also be discussed with the provinces and territories because of the potential for negative impact. For these reasons, I cannot support Motion No. 3.

In conclusion, with the amendment from the member for Scarborough—Rouge River so that the necessary balance is struck between adding protections for this identifiable group and on the other hand ensuring that those who quote or teach in good faith the Bible or other religious texts are not accused of inciting hatred, I accordingly ask members to consider doing the right thing for all Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in the House to debate and to oppose Bill C-250.

• (1920)

I was told a long time ago that if one refuses to stand for some things, one may fall for everything. There comes a time when people need to take a stand, not only to represent their constituents but to take a stand for what they believe is the right side to stand on. That is what we are doing here tonight.

The law that has been proposed in Bill C-250 promotes the interests of some people over the interests of others. It poses a significant danger to freedom of speech and freedom of religion. This bill, as brought forward by the member for Burnaby—Douglas, is a “trust me” bill. Everyone we have heard speak in favour of Bill C-250 has said, “Just trust me”. They have told Canadians to trust them that there is a need for the bill and to trust them that there is a huge bitterness and hatred toward a certain segment of our society, basically the homosexual segment. They have said, “Trust us that we need something extra in the Criminal Code. Trust us that if someone is brutalized or assaulted we need this because there is no power in the Criminal Code at the present time”.

That “trust me” is not going to hold up here today.

Members of the Canadian Alliance do not support anyone making statements promoting hatred toward any identifiable people, to any group. The proposed amendments to the law raise a number of very

serious concerns about which thousands of individuals have written and called. Tens of thousands of petitions have been brought forward in the House.

I see that my time is up. The Canadian Alliance is proud to stand and say we will oppose this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 7:25 p.m. it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the report stage and third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

• (1925)

The question is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.
(Motion No. 1 agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: The next question is on Motion No. 2. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 3. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

Private members' business

Normally at this time the House would proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions of the report stage of the bill. However, pursuant to Standing Order 93 the recorded divisions stand deferred until Wednesday, June 18, 2003, at the beginning of private members' business.

[*Translation*]

It being 7:28 p.m., the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 7:28 p.m.)

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