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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, October 26, 2004

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 26, 2004

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

•(1000)

[*English*]

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 23(3) of the Auditor General Act, the report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the House of Commons for the year 2004.

[*Translation*]

This document is referred permanently to the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GENOME CANADA

Hon. Jerry Pickard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, on behalf of the Minister of Industry, the annual report of Genome Canada for 2003-04.

* * *

•(1005)

MIGRATORY BIRDS CONVENTION ACT, 1994

Hon. Jim Peterson (for the Minister of the Environment) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-15, an act to amend the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994 and the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the first report

of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade on Canada's relations with the countries of the Muslim world.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee is asking the government to table a comprehensive response to the report.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

CANADIAN FORCES HOUSING AGENCY

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the House's indulgence, I have two petitions to present this morning.

The first petition is yet another in a series of petitions I have been trying to present every day that the House sits and has routine proceedings. The petition is from concerned citizens in Mallorytown, Gananoque, Brockville, Ontario, and Golden, British Columbia.

The petitioners wish to draw the House's attention to the fact that the Canadian Forces Housing Agency provides on base housing for our military families. It serves a valuable purpose for those families. Housing accommodations provided by the CFHA are in many instances substandard and families of Canadian Forces soldiers living in accommodations have seen very dramatic rent increases and are due for another one November 1.

Therefore the petitioners call upon Parliament to immediately suspend any future rent increases until such time as the Government of Canada makes substantive improvements to the living conditions of housing provided for our military families.

TAXATION

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is also one in a series that I have been presenting on behalf of constituents in my riding from the small town of Mackenzie, British Columbia. This is signed by some 53 members and is added to a lot of other signatures I have presented previously.

It draws to the attention of the House that because it is a northern isolated town, Mackenzie faces many challenges and has far less amenities than nearby cities. Without the tax deduction available to residents of nearby communities, the district of Mackenzie and its businesses continue to experience difficulty attracting and retaining invaluable employees, including skilled tradespeople and health care professionals. The current geographic criteria used to determine qualification for the deduction unfairly discriminates against the residents of Mackenzie.

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The petitioners therefore call upon Parliament to immediately reinstate Mackenzie's eligibility for the northern residents' tax deduction.

MARRIAGE

Hon. Paul DeVillers (Simcoe North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I would like to present a petition signed by approximately 50 constituents in my riding of Simcoe North.

They are petitioning Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being a lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by 269 people from the riding of Québec and other ridings around Quebec City.

These people are calling on the government to maintain Canada's multilateral approach to security and to reaffirm its support for non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament and to reject any plans for the militarization of space or star wars, including the plans for a missile defence shield.

This petition has been signed by 269 people. There is no solicitation or visible message other than: No to the missile defence shield. Quebec and the rest of Canada are mobilizing to show the government which direction to take on the matter of the missile defence shield.

* * *

•(1010)

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

QUARANTINE ACT

The House resumed from October 22 consideration of the motion.

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed my pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill C-12, otherwise known as the Quarantine Act.

Canada has had a Quarantine Act for decades, but it has not been updated since 1872 to properly reflect the changing needs of today's world.

No longer do we rely on slow-moving ships to move people. No longer do we trade mainly with cities just down the road. Today's

world has millions of people moving across continents every day of the year. Containers by the thousands arrive on our shores with goods destined for every corner of Canada.

But it is not just goods, animals and people coming into Canada that we need to be concerned with; we also need to be concerned with what goes out of Canada. Whether it is the famous rabbits of Australia or the zebra mussels of the Great Lakes, we are all aware of several major problems resulting from careless trade practices. In addition, we all remember SARS and the avian flu problems in British Columbia. Canadians and their economy were devastated by their effects.

Some Toronto businesses say the effects of SARS still linger, and we do not know the actual dollar figure for what SARS cost the city of Toronto and the province of Ontario. In fact, there is a belief that SARS is still affecting the Toronto area.

Bill C-12 is legislation which, for many reasons, could be called a response to SARS. In the wake of SARS, Dr. David Naylor, chair of the National Advisory Committee on SARS and Public Health, made a number of important recommendations.

One of the major recommendations has already moved ahead, with the creation of the Public Health Agency of Canada. The agency has opened and Dr. David Butler-Jones has been appointed the first chief public health officer in Canada.

Another observation by the Naylor advisory committee was that there were insufficient quarantine officers sent to screen air travellers and provide information so that travellers were aware of the situation. Dr. Naylor also stressed that he felt the quarantine officers were sent into the situation with little information and inadequate support materials.

Unfortunately, the agency is not much good until we provide it with some authority, that is, legislation that lets the agency do its job. This is why the legislation before us is so important.

The Naylor advisory committee also said, "The Government of Canada should ensure that an adequate complement of quarantine officers is maintained at airports and other ports of entry, as required" and they should be "fully trained and informed".

Bill C-12 would give the minister the power to designate a wide range of people as officers, which does not necessarily mean that they would be suitably trained for a quarantine emergency.

Canada needs an updated Quarantine Act and trained professionals to meet challenges in our new world. That also means we must have our present medical officers and health care professionals state their opinions on this new bill.

The new act goes a lot further in granting health officials the powers needed to properly contain and address threats to public health from new and re-emerging infectious diseases.

Unlike the old legislation, the bill focuses on airlines as the primary mode of transport, instead of marine vessels.

The proposed act contains powers not seen before in the hands of health officials. Under the bill, they could commandeer any location or facility of their choosing for use in enforcing the Quarantine Act. Most times, this likely would mean the commandeering of a hotel for use as a containment facility for large numbers of people, but it could be anywhere. This in fact is one part of the legislation that concerns me.

The new legislation says market-based compensation will be provided for anyone who is affected, such as a hotel owner. This is similar to what has been promised to other sectors of the economy before, specifically, cattle producers in the wake of the BSE problems. Unfortunately, it was the political arm of government that decided what they were to receive for compensation. As well, I have watched as the CFIA has taken farmland out of production, causing producers great financial difficulty. The government waited until the market fell out of the specific industry and then compensated them based on new, lower market prices.

• (1015)

A key issue in the bill, which needs to be addressed, is the issue of compensation for conveyance owners. While it is somewhat addressed, there does not seem to be anything definite for individuals and their related expenses during the quarantine period.

Following the SARS crisis in Toronto, the cost of hotel rooms dropped drastically. One would expect the hotelier to be compensated for the cost of a hotel room prior to the outbreak. Do we really think customers will race back to a hotel after the quarantine is lifted?

Compensation must be based on the market price before the problem, not after, and that rate must be decided by an independent group, away from government control.

This legislation as proposed does not adequately address the mechanisms that would be used to access such issues and I hope the government will use some of its time to better explain its position and intentions.

As well, I want to make sure that in the government's efforts to address one crisis, it does not create another. We need to have assurances in place ahead of time or else people may not be willing to cooperate.

The new legislation does for the first time provide some initiative to cooperate. There would be severe penalties and jail sentences applicable to those who make disease management much tougher. I believe this is another good step in giving tools to our health officials to do their job effectively.

While health officials would have more rights and powers, so would the people affected the most. The protection of human rights while carrying out quarantine measures has also been of some concern to me. For example, the bill does not specify what individual or agency would determine the symptoms of each of the diseases listed or what symptoms the individual must exhibit in order to be detained by health officials. It should be noted that clause 62 would give cabinet the broad power to make regulations respecting health assessments and physical examinations.

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The new legislation would give those being examined and detained more of a say. When and where reasonable, interpreters will be provided. If possible, people will have the ability to request a medical examination by a physician of their preference.

These types of measures are in keeping with the charter, but I believe they do not handcuff our medical officials from doing their job effectively.

Part of doing their job effectively would be the ability to redirect passengers to other locations as necessary or to detain passengers as needed, and even to prevent travellers from leaving from Canada if necessary. They would be able to screen, vaccinate, disinfect, decontaminate and examine goods, animals and people as needed.

All these measures are designed to meet the new standards of the World Health Organization.

Last week I spoke on the need to be better prepared for emergencies in Canada. The proposed act would better address a problem when it arises, with better surveillance measures and better staffing.

We will be going through the bill thoroughly during committee and I will be bringing forward any necessary amendments at that time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address Bill C-12, the new Quarantine Act.

Members may recall—no one here was alive at the time, but I am making a historical reference—the first Quarantine Act dates back to the 18th century, more specifically to the year 1794. It is important that all countries have provisions allowing them to take swift action when infectious diseases are discovered or anticipated.

As the hon. member for Laval—who was making her maiden speech in this House on Friday—aptly pointed out, the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of the bill. We will suggest a few amendments to the Standing Committee on Health. However, as regards the principle of this legislation, we agree of course that taking action in such circumstances is a federal responsibility.

I would like to mention the main focuses of this legislation. If Bill C-12 is passed, carriers would be required to disclose all cases of disease or death occurring prior to their arriving in Canada. This means that it will be mandatory for a ship, a railway company or an airline to report diseases discovered onboard.

This bill would also make it possible to require travellers who have a communicable disease or have been in close proximity to a person who has a communicable disease to present themselves to a screening officer or quarantine officer. My colleagues will agree that this is more than reasonable.

As well, the use of screening technology would be allowed at the entry point into Canada. This may seem equally reasonable but we have a small question on this.

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I see that clause 14 of the bill allows “any person authorized by the minister”—this being the Minister of Health—“to use any screening technology that does not involve the entry into the traveller’s body of any instrument or other foreign body” in order to determine whether a traveller has symptoms of a communicable disease.

That strikes me as a bit general, an opening to abuse in certain circumstances. I wonder whether it might be replaced by the wording “any medically appropriate technique”.

In passing legislation, we must not betray the intent of the legislator. As much as possible, therefore, where appropriate, the bill needs to be precise so as not to allow any openings for abusive interpretations or confer upon the Minister of Health any powers we do not wish to confer upon him.

This bill would also permit the inspection of any conveyance arriving in Canada, and the disinfection and decontamination of the conveyance, its contents and cargo, if necessary.

This bill, which appears highly technical, certainly forces us to reflect a bit about globalization. When the first quarantine laws were enacted, back in the 18th century, 1794 to be precise, hon. members will agree that people’s mobility was relatively limited. Travel was not without discomfort; the means were not as highly developed as they are now.

I would like to make a quick aside here, to indicate that I strongly encourage the hon. member for Outremont to reintroduce former Bill C-26, which conferred powers of mediation on the Canadian Transportation Agency. I cannot understand that member’s lack of backbone. We need him to show a little more gumption in defending the interests of Quebec. This is very important.

Yesterday I was speaking with a woman mayor who sits on one of the committees of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, a very important lobby group. I believe that the leader of the NDP has had connections with this in the past. Railway transportation is an extremely important problem.

• (1020)

I have been told that the railways run through some 1,400 communities in Canada. It is quite incredible to realize that CP and CN are acting like railway delinquents.

In my riding, Hochelaga, CP works 24 hours a day, because it serves the port of Montreal. Some of our constituents, who live in residential areas near the tracks, find their peace is disturbed at all hours of the day and night, morning and afternoon.

I think the hon. member for Saint-Lambert has a similar problem. As I said, it affects 1,400 communities in Canada. We do not yet know what number the new bill that deals with this issue will be given; the previous one was Bill C-26. Our constituents know that the number of a bill corresponds to the order in which it is introduced in the House, and we do not know when this bill will be introduced. Nevertheless, I am not explaining myself very well with respect to the dithering by the member for Outremont. I hope he is not one of those servile ministers who blindly follow orders from the lobbyists for CP and CN, whose power all of us on the Hill are familiar with.

Luckily for consumers, there is someone like the hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, our transport critic, who is shrewd enough to understand the negotiations required in such circumstances. I hope that the Minister of Transport will soon introduce a new bill identical to Bill C-26 so that the Canadian Transportation Agency can intervene. As we know, it is a quasi-judicial body that issues official rulings.

We will recall that citizens of Oakville, Ontario, asked the Canadian Transportation Agency to make regulations allowing it to intervene in the operating conditions of the major national carriers such as CN and CP. Since the carriers have the funds needed to contest legislation, both the constitutional and more practical aspects, they contested the power and prerogatives of the Canadian Transportation Agency and they won in a Federal Court ruling, in 2001, if I remember correctly. Once again we are in a situation where, unfortunately, the railway companies have total control unless we, the legislators, can intervene.

That is the end of my digression, which was brief and really timely in this debate on quarantine and intended to remind hon. members that the mobility of persons is a consequence of globalization. One of our colleagues in this House looked into that matter. We are not talking about just an opinion. Our colleague gave it some thought and realized that the political boundaries of a state do not necessarily match its economic boundaries anymore.

Naturally, the mobility of capital, people and goods creates a flux, a constant movement of our fellow citizens. The border between the United States and Canada, for example, is one of the most open. The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles could perhaps remind me who said, “Geography has made us neighbours; history has made us friends”. This is how the relationship between Canada and the United States was described. I think it was by former Prime Minister Diefenbaker.

I will conclude, because I have only one minute left, by saying that we will support the bill in principle. While we understand that it is the role of the federal government to look at potential areas of infection, we are concerned because the federal government is trying to claim certain prerogatives.

For instance, I read in the bill that the federal government planned to deal directly with the authorities. These would be health officials. Clearly, that is not desirable. But, in principle, we will support the bill.

My hon. colleague from Laval and I will put amendments forward at the Standing Committee on Health. We will work with the sense of responsibility that has always been the trademark of the Bloc Québécois team.

• (1025)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Health.

(Motion agreed to and bill referred to a committee)

* * *

•(1030)

CANADIAN HERITAGE ACT

Hon. Andy Scott (for the Minister of the Environment) moved that Bill C-7, an act to amend the Department of Canadian Heritage Act and the Parks Canada Agency Act and to make related amendments to other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to rise to speak at second reading to Bill C-7, an act to amend the Department of Canadian Heritage Act and the Parks Canada Agency Act and to make related amendments to other acts.

The bill would give legislative effect to the government reorganization that was announced on December 12, 2003, as it affects Parks Canada, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of the Environment.

The bill would update existing legislation to reflect two orders in council that came into effect in December 2003 and July 2004, which transferred control and supervision of the Parks Canada Agency from the Minister of Canadian Heritage to the Minister of the Environment.

The bill would clarify that Parks Canada is responsible for historic places in Canada, and for the design and implementation of programs that relate to built heritage.

The legislation is primarily technical in nature. It updates the Department of Canadian Heritage Act and the Parks Canada Agency Act. As well, it amends the statutes that enable Parks Canada to deliver its mandate, notably the Canada National Parks Act, the Historic Sites and Monuments Act, the Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act, the Species at Risk Act, the Canada Shipping Act, and the Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act.

Canada's national parks, national historic sites and the national marine conservation areas represent the soul of Canada. They are a central part of who we are and what we are. They are places of magic, wonder and heritage. Each tells its own story. Together, they connect Canadians to our roots, to our future and to each other.

Responsibilities for safeguarding and celebrating heritage will continue to be shared among departments and agencies across government. The Minister of Canadian Heritage retains a key leadership role and overall responsibility for cultural heritage, and will continue to work closely with the minister responsible for Parks Canada and with other ministers to achieve common objectives for heritage.

I would like to assure the House that Parks Canada's organizational integrity has been maintained. Parks Canada remains committed to working with Canadians to protect and present

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nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage for present and future generations.

The hon. members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development should be aware that the committee's responsibilities are now expanded to include matters related to built heritage. This is fitting given the important links between the environment, heritage and sustainable development.

Built heritage includes sites, buildings, and monuments recognized for their historic value. These include battlefields, forts and citadels, shipwrecks, archaeological sites, cultural landscapes, bridges, houses, cemeteries, railway stations, historic districts, ruins, engineering marvels, schools, canals, courthouses, theatres and markets.

Responsibility for built heritage is managed through a number of programs, including national historic sites, federal heritage buildings, heritage railway stations, federal archaeology, heritage shipwrecks, and the federal role in the historic places initiative. These activities are of interest to all parliamentarians and to Canadians in general.

Through the Parks Canada Agency, the Minister of the Environment has responsibilities in three key areas: the management of Parks Canada's built heritage; federal government leadership in programs related to built heritage, and a Canada-wide leadership role in built heritage.

Hon. members are probably most familiar with the first of these areas, Parks Canada's role as a steward of heritage sites. Parks Canada leads the national program of historical commemoration which identifies places, persons and events of national historic significance. The program aims to celebrate Canada's history and protect associated sites.

•(1035)

Parks Canada administers about one in six of the more than 900 national historic sites, which speaks to the diverse and rich history of Canada. Parks Canada's stewardship role with respect to these places, and their historic values and resources is similar to its stewardship role with respect to national parks. Unfortunately, many of Parks Canada's built heritage assets are under threat.

The Auditor General's report on the "Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Federal Government" indicates that two-thirds of Parks Canada's national historic sites and federal heritage buildings are in poor to fair condition. The same is true for Parks Canada's assets more generally, which need \$140 million annually to be maintained but receive only \$40 million. This is a major challenge for the preservation of these irreplaceable national treasures.

Despite strong management systems that put care for cultural resources at the centre of planning and reporting for national historic sites, the future of many of these places continues to be threatened. Repair of masonry and wood structures, weakened by exposure to our harsh climate, like those repairs required at Fort Henry National Historic Site of Canada, are ongoing. Coastal erosion threatens to literally wash away significant parts of the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site of Canada.

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These examples are symptomatic, not exceptional, of the state of our cultural resources and of the infrastructure that supports the ability of Canadians to visit such sites. These resources, once lost, will be gone forever and with them will go their evocative testimony to Canada's dramatic past. Addressing the ongoing deterioration of resources needs to be a priority for this government.

Federal government programs relating to built heritage is the minister's second key area of responsibility. Through its leadership in the federal heritage buildings program, Parks Canada works with departments to protect the heritage character of buildings while the property is within federal jurisdiction.

The Auditor General has indicated that problems similar to those for national historic sites administered by Parks Canada exist for national historic sites and federal heritage buildings administered by other federal departments. The government is considering ways to respond to the Auditor General's concerns over weak conservation standards and accountability requirements, as well as the recommendation to strengthen the legal framework to protect built heritage.

For many years Canada has lagged behind other G-8 nations, and its own provincial and territorial governments, in the protection of historic places.

The minister's third area of responsibility is to provide Canada-wide leadership in built heritage. Only a small portion of historic places in Canada are owned by the federal government, so cooperation with others is key. Government alone cannot save Canada's built heritage. This requires participation by individuals, corporations and other governments across Canada.

Year after year, decade after decade, more and more historic places are being lost. The remaining historic heritage buildings and structures, cultural landscapes and archeological sites continue to be threatened.

Recognizing the need to deepen its resolve to protect built heritage, the Government of Canada has responded with the launch of the historic places initiative, the most significant conservation effort related to historic sites in our national history.

The historic places initiative is based on the acknowledgement that government alone cannot save all historic buildings and other historic places. The keystone of the initiative is a broad national coalition with provinces, territories, and municipal governments, coupled with equally valuable contributions involving aboriginal peoples, heritage experts, and a comprehensive number of institutions, organizations, communities and individuals.

● (1040)

In the field of heritage we are truly in an era of policy interdependence. The goals of the initiative are to create a culture of heritage conservation in the country by providing Canadians with basic tools to preserve and celebrate the historic places and by protecting historic places under federal jurisdiction. Strategies focus on helping Canadians build a culture of conservation.

The protection of Canada's built heritage is not only about saving what is meaningful from the past. It is also about sustaining strong communities for today and tomorrow, the rehabilitating of existing

buildings, capitalizing on the energies invested in the original structures and preventing unnecessary use of new materials and energy.

Less demolition means reduced pressure on landfill sites. Revitalization of historic downtown areas decreases the need for new civil infrastructure, such as roads, sewers and public transit. By contributing to such sustainable communities, public policy truly makes a difference in people's lives.

Consensus has emerged on the role that Canada and Canadians want historic places to play in our lives and communities. Among the common goals is the need to provide all Canadians with the practical information and tools they need to protect historic places.

The launch in 2004 of the Canadian register of historic places is a product of this collaboration. For the first time Canadians will have in one place a register of buildings and sites that are recognized as historic by any order of government. It is anticipated that the registry will contain approximately 20,000 historic places when it is fully populated.

The registry will be an important tool for policy-makers, community organizations, teachers, students and families who want to learn about and help preserve the past.

Another important accomplishment is the development of the standards and guidelines for the conservation of historic places in Canada. The standards and guidelines provide clear, accessible guidance on good conservative practice. This document was developed in consultation with federal, provincial, municipal and non-governmental stakeholders so there would be a common benchmark for conservation principles and practices in Canada. It has been adopted by Parks Canada and by several provincial and municipal jurisdictions.

The standards and guidelines are a model of promoting a new approach to the science and the technology of building conservation and promoting and circulating this information broadly for the benefit of all Canadians.

Parks Canada is also implementing the commercial heritage properties initiative fund. It is a new program announced in 2003 to engage the private sector in the conservation of historic buildings. The fund is a four year, \$30 million plan designed to tip the balance in favour of conservation over demolition. It provides financial incentives to eligible commercial historic places listed on the registry to encourage a broad range of commercial uses for historic properties within our communities.

Fiscal measures such as this program are central to helping to engage others to achieve the government's goal for built heritage. Historic places connect us to our past, to our future and to each other. They provide places of learning for our children and places of understanding for both new citizens and Canadians of long-standing.

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What we cherish as part of our national identity, we also recognize as part of our national responsibility. All Canadians share the obligation to preserve and protect Canada's unique cultural and natural heritage. Together we hold our national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas in trust for the benefit of this and future generations.

● (1045)

With the new reporting arrangement through the Minister of the Environment and clearly defined responsibilities for built heritage programs, Parks Canada will continue to work to safeguard Canada's built heritage, support protection of historic places within federal jurisdiction, and engage Canadians broadly in preserving and celebrating our country's historic places. It will continue to play a seminal role in the protection of Canada's heritage sites for which it is so well respected by Canadians and admired internationally.

I respectfully encourage all of my colleagues from both sides of the House to join me in passing Bill C-7.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague opposite on his concise and enlightening comments. Now, I would like to know whether his government can give us any indication of the amount or the percentage of the financial resources which will be taken out of the Canadian heritage department, should this legislation pass.

Besides, once the parks are taken out of its purview, would it not be more logical to change the name of the Department of Canadian Heritage and call it the Department of Culture and Communication?

[*English*]

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, first, I want to assure the hon. member that this is a technical amendment. It does not involve the issue of costs or policy change. Essentially, we are moving Parks Canada simply from Heritage Canada to Environment Canada.

The member makes a good point in terms of funding. As I said, we need more money. We are not losing any money by moving it from one department to the other. However, we will need the support of all members in the House to ensure that our parks continue to be the highest quality and are funded in a way which ensures that all Canadians will have access to and be proud of our national park system.

There are no cuts, but we are looking for more money. This simply moves the agency from one department to another, but there are no cost implications or policy change.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my honourable colleague opposite. There is probably agreement in the Bloc on this issue. The environment critic of the Bloc will explain why our party will probably support this bill.

But here is my question for my colleague opposite: what guarantee do we have that, under Environment Canada, Parks Canada will no longer be an instrument of propaganda on Canadian unity in the hands of the federal government?

Back in 1996, the Auditor General mentioned his concern that sometimes, management plans gave more weight to economic and social factors than to ecological ones.

Can we have a guarantee that, once Parks Canada is under Environment Canada, the environment will be protected and Parks Canada will no longer be used just to promote Canadian unity?

● (1050)

[*English*]

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the hon. member that in terms of the ecological integrity and the social and economic aspects of parks, that will be guaranteed. It is very important to stress also the ecological, the social and the business aspects. I tried to stress that in my comments. I look forward to the support of the Bloc with regard to this bill.

As far as the position that Parks Canada was used for propaganda or for furthering national unity, I would respectfully disagree with my hon. colleague. I have never heard it characterized in such a fashion. Nor would I give any legitimacy to such a characterization.

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member who just spoke on a good speech. Is the government considering including some reference to ecological integrity? Moving Parks Canada to the Ministry of the Environment calls for that in my view. It would be a wonderful opportunity for the ministry to recognize that we should go there. That kind of language will capture some of the concerns many of us have about some of the activities happening around and beside parks which have an effect on the parks. That is sometimes worrisome.

The other thing I would like to know from the member is this. Will moving Parks Canada under the umbrella of Environment Canada mean that more money will be put into that ministry? Over the last few years, those of us who have parks within our jurisdictions have seen a decrease in the resources and a diminishing of the ability of those parks to tell their story. Will the government now move to turn that around and begin to invest again in those kinds of important activities and protect those assets?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, I tried to stress in the presentation the ecological aspects, which are very important. According to my colleague, moving Parks Canada to Environment Canada is a technical amendment. It does not and cannot address all issues. However, the Minister of the Environment has stressed very strongly, and I as well on his behalf, the importance of ecological integrity. I am sure we will see that continued theme on a number of issues as we go forth. I had the privilege this morning to speak on behalf of the minister at Nature Canada. I talked about ecological integrity and those issues.

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The member makes a good point, but again, the bill is purely a technical amendment. However, I note his comments and want to assure him that is something to which the minister is very much committed.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that this is a technical amendment, moving the Parks Canada Agency under the Department of the Environment.

When the Parks Canada Agency comes under a new department, it may be that the attitude of the Parks Canada Agency will change in some respects and maybe we can get a bit of common sense in that system.

I will give the House an example. Prince Edward Island National Park falls under the Parks Canada Agency. I would encourage anybody to visit the P.E.I. National Park. It is a wonderful place. However, local residents in Prince Edward Island National Park have for generations picked bottles of cranberries. It is part of their culture. In the last three years Parks Canada conservation officers decided that would not be allowed. I can understand not allowing a commercial cranberry grower in there. That makes sense. For individuals who are residents of the area, it makes sense to allow that. Why let those cranberries fall off, rot and waste away?

Does the parliamentary secretary think it makes any sense that individual residents cannot use the park and pick the odd cranberry? There is nothing wrong with that. Might we also have an attitude shift and a bit common sense from Parks Canada now that it is shifting to Environment?

•(1055)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, I have been to that national park. Although I did not pick any cranberries at the time, I appreciate the member's concern. I know he had some colleagues here who have also made comments about their support.

In terms of attitude, the staff at Parks Canada are second to none. They are obviously top notch and are always look for and welcome input. I am sure the minister would also. I invite the member to put his concerns in writing so we can bring this issue to the attention of Parks Canada to see what we can do so that we do not come down too harsh on those who simply want to pick cranberries before they fall to the ground and rot. We will do our best.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-7. As has been pointed out, this would transfer Parks Canada from Heritage Canada to Environment Canada. In looking at this it seems that is the obvious place where it should be. It has been there in the past and that makes a lot of sense.

Let us review what parks mean and what parks are for our country. What do people think about Canada when we travel internationally? One of things that indicates our national identity is to say that we are pristine, that we have clean water, babbling brooks, lots of forests and all of those green things that represent Canada. All of us know there are some flaws in that thinking but as long as we are travelling internationally we will continue to promote the fact that Canada has all of those good things.

Our parks probably represent the focal point of that thought internationally and so very often when we are travelling people will

tell us that they have been to Pelee Island, Banff, Jasper or to one of the many resorts and parks that we have across Canada.

When Canadians are asked about our park system they will say that this is a place to preserve habitat for future generations to enjoy. It is for our children and grandchildren to enjoy. It is a place to protect wildlife and a place where wildlife can live, prosper and remain for future generations. It is also a living, breathing ecosystem that we can look at, understand better and sometimes it even provides great benefits for our own population in terms of pharmaceuticals and so on.

The controversy I think is what role humans have in parks. This has been something for debate. We have talked about it many times. We have attempted, as we have encroached on our park areas, to make them more friendly for the people, animals and habitat.

We have had some problems. I can think of the wildlife crossings that we have built over our Trans-Canada Highway. Those crossings are for animals but we forgot to put anything there for humans to get across the highway. As a result we have humans crossing on the animal crossovers, thus leaving their scent and sometimes their garbage, and obviously animals are not using the crossovers because they do not want to be where humans have had such close contact.

There are a lot of planning issues that we need to have in our parks so that humans play a role within that park system. That is open to a lot of debate. How much or how little humans use our parks can be discussed at much greater length but that is not the purpose of the bill.

Whether it is picking cranberries or whatever, the most important thing is the consultation process we need to have with Canadians regarding their parks. We need to promote consultation and cooperation as opposed to the confrontation which often leads to some very unpleasant things happening within our park system.

We must also be very aware that our park system represents a major source of foreign income for Canada and the many people who work in and depend upon the national parks have to be considered in any equation with regard to what we do. Many young Canadians have jobs in our parks system through the summer in order to pay for their university. They learn about the parks and they make them better for all of us.

•(1100)

As well, there is the wilderness experience. As more and more people live in urban communities, it becomes more important to have natural areas in our parks system for them to enjoy and experience what the real wilderness might be like.

I am talking about a balanced approach, one that takes science and the ecological integrity of the area into consideration and one that consults the people who are part of that parks system.

Government Orders

In speaking to the bill, obviously I think Environment Canada is better able to consider the environmental integrity and the use of the parks than Heritage Canada. For that reason, it makes sense to support the bill and to support the transfer.

We will always have people who are the extremes, people who do not want anyone to go into parks at any time, in any way. They literally want to build walls around these parks. They probably would go so far as to say they want such a pristine environment that we should all live in caves, not drive cars, be without electricity, et cetera. The other extreme of course are the people who say that we do not need parks so we should get rid of them and not preserve them. Obviously that is not acceptable either.

We need to have trade-offs. We must consider both sides of the issue. I am sure Environment Canada can come up with the ecological integrity in these parks and maintain them with humans using them.

As well, we need to look at some of the issues that parks face. One that I am very aware of is the situation where they have limited budgets, where their infrastructure has serious problems and has declined over the years. Some of the problems are due to a lack of money while others are problems of allocation. I guess the most obvious one is the fact that some of the highways being maintained by parks are throughways through parks.

Jasper Park in my province has a major highway running through it. The truckers and others who are on that highway do not want to drive through a park. They would rather use another road but with the mountains being where they are, they have to use that highway. Likewise, if they take the Trans-Canada Highway, they must to drive through Banff Park, which they do not particularly want to because they have to slow down for the animals and tourists.

Parks Canada's budget is used to clean the snow and repair the roads because the roads are inside the park. I do not know how much of its budget is used that way, but I think it is something that the committee can look at to say that money really is part of transport. This must happen right across Canada. The money should in fact stay in the parks and not be used for things like roads.

I think those are the kinds of examples where we can probably provide, even within the present budget, money to be used to improve those parks. I would hope Environment Canada would look at those things when Parks Canada becomes part of its new mandate.

I tried to find out what the concerns were with this transfer and who would not like it. I could summarize it in a couple of areas that we could look at. The first one would be Environment Canada's reputation. Some would say that within Environment Canada there are a number of fanatic environmentalists, people who would live in a cave and who do not want anyone within parks. That is a major concern because, as I said earlier, we want to be somewhere in the middle. Trade-offs have to be made. We do not want to live in a cave. We want our standard of living and we want to be able to enjoy the national parks.

• (1105)

It would be important to deliver the message to Environment Canada that it must find a balance. It cannot be 100% concerned about the pristine preservation of an area. Areas can be restricted and

people can be controlled but we cannot go so far as to keep people out. It is my general feeling that the minister will probably set the tone for that development.

Some members on the other side might agree with me that one former heritage minister set the tone for the parks and created a lot of problems. Ms. Copps created a real concern that the minister could stop development and prevent things from happening without any consultation. It became a very confrontational approach to how parks should be dealt with. That minister is no longer here and I do not believe the new minister will take that approach.

However it is a concern and one we need to address. We as parliamentarians need to be sure that Environment Canada understands there is a middle ground involved, the middle ground being what is acceptable, not the extremes on either end where parks are over-used or under-used.

The second concern I heard when I was researching this subject was about some of the heritage sites. I was asked what concern Environment Canada would have for an historic railway station and how that would mesh with that department as opposed to Heritage Canada. I did not have a good answer for that question. When I pursued it further I was told that Environment Canada would be the poor cousin and that it would not get the resources or the dedication by bureaucrats to preserve historic sites. If that were to happen that would be a major concern and a concern that should be addressed.

One of the historic sites in the former boundary of my riding is a very important part of the parks system and it is utilized that way. I understand there are other historic sites that may not be close to the park and may become poor cousins in Environment Canada. Because this would be all inclusive, we should ask those questions and ensure Environment Canada gets the message that this is not acceptable.

As we send Bill C-7 off to committee after second reading, it is important that it shows concern for all of the different stakeholders. The committee needs to look at cottage owners who live in many of our parks, the businesses that depend upon our parks, and the many students who are employed in our parks. This would be an opportunity for the committee to listen to what those people think and maybe use it as a lever to make sure there are different and better considerations for these kinds of things. There will not be a lot of other parks bills in the House in the upcoming years so this is an opportunity for the committee to look at some of the things that I have raised. This could be a real positive thing for the committee to look at.

Government Orders

Should the committee hold extensive hearings? The hearings do not have to be extensive but the committee should listen to all the stakeholders with the intention of working with Environment Canada to improve the administration of our parks. The committee must send the environment bureaucrats the message of what Canadians want.

•(1110)

Committee members need to listen and make decisions. The committee must send to the environment bureaucrats the message that this is what Canadians want.

We could use the example of the member who raised cranberries. That is a fairly small issue to the whole of Canada. However, it is likely a huge issue to the person who has done that for five generations. Obviously, we must tell Parks Canada that it needs some flexibility, it needs to be reasonable, and it must use common sense in its approach to how it deals with parks.

I would see the committee serving the function of sending that message to the minister and employees of Parks Canada and, of course, to Environment Canada who are the administrators of this whole thing. People are concerned about what happens to our national parks. People are concerned about the decline of the infrastructure. People are concerned about a number of things. I am sure that any members who have a park in their riding have heard of these concerns.

We must be sure that Environment Canada understands that there is a place for recreation, tourism and access. While it can be controlled and limited, it obviously must be a part of any plan. I think this is better off under Environment Canada. That department should be able to look at a broader base of considerations than possibly Heritage Canada could, with the exception of perhaps some of those heritage sites which I am still a little concerned about.

We really need a vision for where we are going. At the moment we are talking about parks. I think we could do it in a lot of other areas. That vision is extremely important to the kind of Canada that we want in 2050 and in 2100. Parks are not planned over short terms. They are planned over very long periods of time. Ecosystems do not develop quickly. It is a very slow process. Therefore, what we do with these parks then becomes important.

I would include a much broader range for Environment Canada to look at, everything alternate energy to garbage and how we deal with our garbage. All of that should be part of that long term vision which we should be able to develop.

We want to maintain the view of Canada as a green country, as a great place to visit with clean air, clean water, clean soil and where we really care about our environment. Unfortunately, we have signed over a hundred international agreements. As the environment auditor general has told us for about the last four years, we have not lived up to very many of those 100 international agreements. We talk a lot about it, but we really do not score very well on what we do.

We are likely to support this bill based on the fact that parks are better off under Environment Canada. We should use this opportunity to improve our parks, to look at some of the concerns, and make our parks better for all Canadians now and in the future.

•(1115)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-7, an act to amend the Department of Canadian Heritage Act and the Parks Canada Agency Act and to make related amendments to other Acts.

I remind the House that this bill was introduced and read the first time on October 8, 2004. The purpose of this admittedly technical bill is to transfer responsibility for the ParksCanada Agency from the Department of Canadian Heritage to Environment Canada. It is rather technical but we think it is probably time that some changes occur within the federal government in terms of responsibilities.

The people responsible for Canadian parks and their resources must strive to maintain the ecological integrity of those resources and protect our ecosystems. We have our doubts about leaving responsibility for ecosystems, which come under Parks Canada, with Canadian Heritage. Who better than the Department of the Environment to protect the ecological integrity of our resources and our parks, since its mandate is to protect and promote the ecosystems and to make the various ecological aspects of this environmental heritage more accessible to the public?

On December 12, 2003, pursuant to an order, control and supervision of the Parks Canada Agency were transferred from Canadian Heritage to the Department of the Environment. On July 20, 2004, another order concerning the heritage responsibilities had to be made to clarify the previous one. Following those two orders, the legislation had to be amended, which explains the introduction of Bill C-7 to bring about the required amendments.

Of course, the bill is technical in nature. It contains—let us be honest—no substantive provision, even though it will affect several other acts. I emphasize this, because it will be examined in committee. We agree in principle with the introduction of the bill. However, when a bill has the effect of making amendments to the Canada National Parks Act, to the Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act, and—note this third act—to the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park Act, to the Historic Sites and Monuments Act, to the Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act, to the Canada Shipping Act and to the Species at Risk Act, there is good reason to ask ourselves a number of questions. Indeed, this bill changes a number of acts, and this is quite important.

What we were told, and I certainly want to believe the government, is that these changes will have no organizational impact for the Parks Canada Agency, and that the organizational integrity of Parks Canada will be maintained.

Government Orders

Unions seemed totally in favour of these amendments in principle. However, in committee, we will have to question officials to see if, in light of the various disputes that occurred in recent weeks, among others with Parks Canada, the government will actually be able to guarantee this organizational integrity. Even though we agree in principle, it is our intention, on this side of the House, to meet with unions and to ask them if these changes meet their expectations and if they do not have concerns on the organizational level.

● (1120)

The state of parks in Canada is a pretty major concern. There are two visions, which may not necessarily be competing but rather complementary. According to the first one, we should start by consolidating the network of parks across Canada which, in many cases, are in a pitiful state because of severe lack of funding in recent years. Even customer services have been greatly affected and, in some instances, resource preservation may be in danger. So, there is this school of thought which recommends that we start by consolidating the existing network.

There is another one, according to which we should increase the number of parks in Canada. There are not enough parks; there should be more. What does that mean for Quebec? This means creating more Canadian zones, more federal lands. We must never forget that these places managed by Parks Canada inevitably come under federal jurisdiction. That means that federal law, including the Species at Risk Act, automatically applies. We never objected to such legislation applying to federal lands or crown lands.

Increasing the number of lands under the authority of Parks Canada inevitably increases the federal presence in Quebec. But in Quebec, we have a similar structure, called Parcs Québec, which allows us to create our own network of parks and wildlife reserves.

In the coming years, strategic choices will have to be made. Should we consolidate, strengthen the existing networks of parks, invest public funds in greater amounts to preserve the ecological integrity of existing parks, or should we develop and increase the number of parks across Canada instead?

I think the ecological integrity of these lands ought to be preserved. I travel across Quebec; I am one of those who, each year, during tourist season, visit many parks that come under the jurisdiction of the federal government. I observe how rundown these parks are. Personally, I think we should reinvest in the parks, but in existing ones.

As indicated earlier, we must not forget that Parks Canada comes under the Department of Canadian Heritage. We must remember what the mission of these parks is. The Canada National Parks Act, 1988, states:

The national parks of Canada are hereby dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment, subject to this Act and the regulations, and the parks shall be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

We cannot but be pleased with this. In recent years we have seen Canadian Heritage's propaganda strategies at work throughout Canada. This was grounds for concern. So what could be more normal than for the parks, which used to come under Parks Canada, to move to Environment? Perhaps this will enable us to ensure that

the primary role that parks in Canada ought to play will be played, namely maintaining ecological integrity.

This is, in fact, precisely what is lacking in Canada at present. This morning Johanne Gélinas, Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, tabled a highly interesting report on the state of our environment. I would invite hon. members to pay particular attention to one chapter of that report, the one on strategic environmental assessment.

The majority of departments refuse to integrate strategic environmental assessment, not just into their policies but into their plans and programs as well. If they did, we would at last be able to apply a directive that has been around for 14 years now, yet is very often not applied by the departments.

● (1125)

The Minister of Natural Resources over there must know what I am referring to. I would invite him to read the commissioner's report, as well as Bill C-48. The commissioner considers this no more or less than an unacceptable legislative initiative that does not promote sustainable development. When major oil companies are given tax incentives through Bill C-48, is this a policy promoting a sustainable development strategy for Canada? The answer to that is no, and that answer comes, not from the opposition, but from the commissioner of the environment, a person whose very mandate is to analyze this government's policies, plans and programs.

We have every right to be concerned about the way federal departments maintain the ecological integrity of the various areas for which they are responsible. To transfer Parks Canada from Canadian Heritage to Environment Canada is quite normal. Why is it normal? Because we now have a direct link to the Department of the Environment, which is responsible for protecting endangered species for instance. What can be more natural than to enforce this legislation in our parks? Maybe we could ensure that the environmental impact assessments in Canada, which come under the Department of the Environment, are applied to our parks as well as to everything Environment Canada does.

We have demonstrated again this morning that the strategic environmental assessment is applied in very few departments. A lot of departments are dragging their feet. Therefore, it is a good thing that our parks come under Environment Canada. The Environmental Assessment Act might finally be applied to crown lands. What could be more basic than to have federal legislation applied to crown land? What could be more normal than to ensure that the species at risk legislation in Canada is enforced on the crown lands that make up our Canadian parks?

Government Orders

It is quite normal. If the government carried out environmental assessments, a process triggered by the Department of Finance in the first place, we might not be in the situation we are right now as far as the state of the environment is concerned. As early as 1993 the Auditor General of Canada pointed out some administrative problems, as well as a lack of reinvestment dating back to 1996. There has been no reinvestment for eight years. The Auditor General said eight years ago that planning did not always provide a clear link between ecological integrity objectives and initiatives.

He is one of her recommendations: "Parks Canada should ensure that park management plans are updated in accordance with the requirements of the National Parks Act and policy, and business plans should be clearly linked to those management plans. Parks Canada should also introduce a formal process for monitoring the implementation of management plans". The Auditor General also said in 1996: "Parks Canada lacks key information necessary for park management".

● (1130)

The number of visitors increased by 25% between 1988 and 1989, and also between 1994 and 1995. Canadian parks are getting busier all the time, but investment is down. Moreover, ecological integrity, which should be the main concern of the government, leaves a lot to be desired.

This transfer of responsibility from Canadian Heritage to Environment Canada will not ensure that those goals will be met, which was harshly criticized by the Office of the Auditor General as early as 1996. Why I am saying that? Because since I have been here, I have seen an increase in the number of legislative measures affecting the environment, be it the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act or the Species at Risk Act.

Therefore, it is not because there have been legislative initiatives that the federal government has necessarily enforced the appropriate laws which it enacted itself. It is not because there is an endangered species act in Canada that the federal government has enforced that act on the lands within federal jurisdiction, such as those managed by Parks Canada. It is not because there is an environmental assessment act in Canada that this government has necessarily enforced its own law on its own lands. Of course, this transfer from Canadian Heritage to Environment Canada is, I think, a real test for the federal government.

We shall see whether the intentions and actions behind the introduction of this bill on October 8 translate into tangible activities to preserve ecological integrity on the lands belonging to the federal government. I am skeptical. We are ready, in principle, to give the federal government a chance. We are ready to do whatever we can to help this government enforce its own laws.

I believe that this restructuring, while technical, shows the essence and spirit of this desire. But I shall remain skeptical. We must ensure that in coming years we can put all possible means at the disposal of public servants and all who wish to maintain this ecological integrity and protect and increase accessibility. Naturally, this involves a transfer of responsibilities. It also involves reinvestment in actual, existing parks, and not necessarily scattering zones that would be more protected by Parks Canada.

Let us begin by consolidating our network of parks in Canada which, as I have often said, is in a precarious state. We must put our resources where they are needed. We can begin a process of organizational change, which is desirable, and transfer this responsibility away from a department, namely Canadian Heritage, whose purpose in recent years has been political propaganda to a department that, finally, must shoulder its responsibilities to protect resources, endangered species and ecological integrity on the lands for which the federal government is responsible.

● (1135)

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his expression of faith in the Parks Canada system. I also congratulate him on his appointment as vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

The Bloc understands that this bill proposes technical changes. It transfers Parks Canada from Heritage Canada to Environment Canada. I wonder about Quebec's share.

Quite often, we hear our friends in the Bloc Québécois say that Quebec is claiming this or that because it does not get enough in a given sector. They talk about research and development, for example. I already heard this. They have also said that it was important that Quebec gets its share in equalization. The Bloc Québécois is omnipresent in many issues in order to claim a significant share for Quebec.

I wonder about Parks Canada. I have the feeling that Quebec does not get enough compared with the other provinces with regard to the number of parks belonging to Parks Canada.

I would like to ask my Bloc colleague what he is waiting for to join us, Liberal members from Quebec, to demand that more parks be administered by Parks Canada in Quebec?

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, I can see that the hon. member's emotions are running high. He is showing greater concern for the environment since the Bloc Québécois had a very good environmentalist candidate in his riding, during the last election campaign. This person announced last week, in his own newspaper, that he would continue to be a good spokesperson and that he would continue to force his MP to ensure environmental integrity. This shows the Bloc Québécois' strength and the effective campaign run by Mr. Ouellet in the riding of Brome—Missisquoi. He is a very good environmentalist and he is also a past president of the Parti Québécois' environment committee.

I too could ask a question of the hon. member. Are there not, in his region, areas administered by Parcs Québec and not necessarily Parks Canada? I invite him to tour his region. He will realize that, while Parks Canada is not present, Parcs Québec is providing the same environmental protection to certain areas.

Government Orders

We do not need to be lectured by the hon. member, because the Quebec government has assumed its responsibilities by protecting certain areas in his own region. The member opposite is even pleased to associate himself with it in the context of environmental protection.

This shows that we are perfectly capable of preserving the environmental integrity of certain areas under Parcs Québec's structure. The hon. member is well aware of what I am referring to, since there is an area run by Parcs Québec very close to his riding.

• (1140)

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a key issue. I am a member from Quebec, and all of us are extremely sensitive to the environmental issue. I therefore am of the opinion that the presence of Parks Canada is essential to the protection of wildlife and the environment.

Although he does not make it a habit, the hon. member declined to answer my question. He preferred playing the same old tune again, and I wonder why. We also agree with the role of Parks Quebec.

I would like to know whether the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie agrees that we should have more Canadian parks in Quebec.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. What I want to do is to protect the environmental integrity of special areas in Quebec. I am still of the opinion that Parks Quebec and the Quebec wildlife refuges can do the job very well.

The hon. member for Bourassa can understand that Parks Canada was under the Department of Canadian Heritage, which, in recent years, was more or less the propaganda arm of the federal government. You can understand my scepticism concerning the real mandate of Parks Canada, when it was under a minister that handed out flags throughout Canada.

Indeed, the federal government has demonstrated in recent years that its concern was not necessarily to preserve the environmental integrity, but to indulge in political propaganda for the Department of Canadian Heritage.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do keep in touch with the park in my province, Prince Albert National Park, and the people who work there. I can assure the House that the people who work in the park today and who have been in the park system for any length of time are relieved that they will get out from underneath the heritage department and into some other government department. They feel they have been used as political tools for far too long by the heritage department, so I can confirm what the vice chair of the environment committee had to say.

I have a question for the vice-chair of the environment committee. In my park there is no money left for simple maintenance. Parks Canada buildings are deteriorating. They have no paint on them. The roads are falling apart. There is extreme, excessive regulation of national parks and the entire maintenance budget of the park is being used up to comply with environmental and other departmental requirements.

There are no funds left to take care of day to day simple maintenance matters in the park. This is becoming a real crisis. The roads in the park are literally coming apart. The buildings are an eyesore. Tourists coming to the park shake their heads in dismay. This is one of our national parks which has visitors from other countries. They must be shaking their heads at what they see in the park.

I would like to ask the vice-chair of the environment committee, could his committee look at the capital cost requirements of our national parks and the crying need for simple maintenance of existing infrastructure in our parks?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

Indeed, we are currently considering the future work of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development of the House of Commons. Some members of the committee have asked that we study the state of infrastructure with a view to maintaining the ecological integrity of the parks. I have taken note of the hon. member's request. It will most certainly be part of our discussions on the future work of the committee.

I am well aware of the state of disuse of some of the parks. I talked about that earlier. I think it would make much more sense to consolidate the current network, rather than creating new federal parks here and there across Canada, especially in Quebec.

I agree with the hon. member. However, before doing we start scattering, let us make the current resources, under the responsibility of Parks Canada, available to the public and consolidate the infrastructure network. If not, we will just end up with a number of parks in Canada where services are in a poor state. The current network has to be reinforced, not expanded, as least as long as there is no guarantee of supplementary budgets.

• (1145)

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Canada—U.S), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I found it very interesting to listen to the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. I agree with him that the government should definitely consolidate our national parks and all their sites and monuments. I am also pleased that he supports the Canadian government's decision to transfer the responsibility and mandate for Parks Canada from the Department of Canadian Heritage to the Department of the Environment.

I think there should be greater investment. That is clear. I doubt there is a Canadian anywhere who does not agree. This has been the opinion expressed today, in the House of Commons, by every member who has spoken to this issue, regardless of their political persuasion.

Government Orders

I would like to come back to the questions asked by my colleagues, the member for Brome—Missisquoi and the member for Bourassa. They asked the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie whether he supported the proposal involving Parks Canada—and now involving Environment Canada—for protecting the federal national parks. Does the member support the idea that what is good for the rest of Canada is good for Quebec? We have land that come under federal jurisdiction—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): If the Parliamentary Secretary so wishes, we will allow the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie to answer the question.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. What my colleague opposite is asking is essentially to ensure that lands under the Quebec government's responsibility are transferred to the federal jurisdiction. In increasing the number of Parks Canada lands, the government is transferring provincial land to the federal government.

Let the member show that the Quebec government does not assume its responsibilities. I invite her to talk to her colleague from Brome—Missisquoi, who asked the question. He finds that, on the contrary, we must maintain and even increase services provided by Parks Canada in his own region. Has he ever suggested in this House that the activities of Parcs Québec should be transferred to Parks Canada? Never, since Quebec is assuming its responsibilities in this regard.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Canada—U.S), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to take part in the debate on Bill C-7 at second reading.

Before starting, I would like to go back to the question put to the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie by two of my colleagues and myself.

The member tried to turn our question into a political issue, distorting its goal. Nobody in the Quebec Liberal caucus wants the Quebec government to transfer national parks under its own jurisdiction to the federal government. That is not the case. What the member tried to say is not fact. The fact is that in Quebec there are national parks under federal jurisdiction. As a matter of fact, there is one in my riding. It is a tiny one located in an urban setting. It comes under federal jurisdiction. It is federal land.

In the Province of Quebec there is land which is not provincial but federal. The question was whether the member, in view of his concern for the environment and the ecological integrity of national parks under federal jurisdiction, wanted the federal government to create and manage other national parks in Quebec.

I now return to my speech. I'm quite sure that the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie will use the question and comment period to get back to the topic.

• (1150)

[*English*]

It gives me great pleasure today to speak at second reading of Bill C-7, an act to amend the Department of Canadian Heritage Act and the Parks Canada Agency Act and to make related amendments to other acts.

The bill would give legislative effect to the government reorganization that was announced on December 12, 2003, as it affects Parks Canada, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Environment.

The bill would update existing legislation to reflect two orders in council that came into effect in December 2003 and July 2004, which transferred control and supervision of the Parks Canada Agency from the Minister of Canadian Heritage to the Minister of the Environment.

The bill would clarify that Parks Canada is responsible for historic sites and places in Canada, and for the design and implementation of programs that relate to built heritage.

Permit me to take members back a few years to introduce members to what is meant by ecological integrity of our national parks. In March 2000 the independent panel on the ecological integrity of Canada's national parks tabled its report. The panel's report was quite comprehensive and contained more than 120 recommendations for action. As it was intended to be, the report was very frank.

The report was very frank in pointing out the challenges that face our national parks. In fact, it is perhaps a misnomer for me to say the challenges that face our national parks, but the deplorable conditions in which some of our national parks exist.

The report confirmed that most of Canada's national parks have been progressively losing precisely those natural components which they were dedicated to protect. Accordingly, the independent panel called for a fundamental reaffirmation of the legislative framework that protects the parks, together with policies to conserve these places and the appropriation of the funds necessary to support these efforts.

I was quite pleased, listening to my colleagues on both sides of the House, Conservative, Bloc, unfortunately the NDP has not spoken as yet at second reading but I am positive that someone from the NDP will speak at second reading on the bill, and the colleagues within my own caucus.

They have all made the point that this is a good piece of legislation that they support. They have also made the point that there needs to be, other than this legislation, the appropriation of proper levels of funding to ensure the ecological integrity of our national parks and monuments.

Parks Canada committed itself to implementing the report and its recommendations fully, that means all 120 recommendations, insofar as it was legislatively and fiscally possible. It is now being done in full dialogue with all affected parties and helped tremendously by the funding announced in the 2003 budget.

Parks Canada's first priority is to maintain or restore the ecological integrity of our national parks. This is prescribed by the governing legislation, the Canada National Parks Act, which was proclaimed in February 2001. For instance, clause 8 states:

Maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity through the protection of natural resources and processes, shall be the first priority when considering all aspects of the management of parks.

Why is ecological integrity so important, some Canadians may ask and some of my colleagues on both sides of the House may ask? I am sure I will never be able to answer it fully. There are others who have a lot more knowledge than I do in this area. I will make my poor attempt to answer it.

●(1155)

Ecological integrity is important because the loss of natural features and processes deprives Canadians of the opportunity to use and enjoy these places for the purposes for which they were intended. Loss of ecological integrity contradicts the very purposes for which our parks were set aside and constitutes an irreversible loss of heritage for both current and future generations.

[Translation]

By making ecological integrity a priority, we make human beings a priority through protecting our precious heritage sites today and forever.

[English]

Achieving the maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity also means putting science first. Parks Canada is committed to becoming a science based organization. This includes traditional ecological knowledge.

Our national parks and our national historic sites are very important symbols of Canada. Canadians, through personal visits and other learning mechanisms, can use these places to enhance their pride in and knowledge of Canada and Canadians.

Parks Canada is also committed to an expanded outreach program to convey accurate, interesting and up to date information to Canadians. The provision of information via the Internet is a priority for Parks Canada. This approach is paying off as millions are visiting the Parks Canada website on a monthly basis, not only from Canada but also from countries such as Australia, Japan, Italy and Germany. This type of proactive outreach continues to intensify and is aimed at our urban areas.

In effect, the objective is to bring our national parks and their values to people who may not otherwise have the opportunity to visit them or who may have an opportunity to visit them only infrequently. Let us just talk about local historical sites in one's town, community or city. When family comes to visit we tell them about those sites. In Montreal, we say they have to see the St. Joseph's Oratory, the Notre Dame Basilica in old Montreal or this place or that place, the various historical sites.

Most of the time, at least 5 times out of 10, when we speak to residents of that city, we find there is a good chance they have never set foot in particular historical sites, for a variety of reasons. If that is true when the sites are immediately accessible through a bus ride, a walk, the metro or a bicycle ride from where someone lives, we can imagine how inaccessible some of our parks may be to ordinary Canadians who perhaps do not travel outside of their immediate environment. By having this Internet website and the outreach program available, we bring the knowledge, the pride and the information, those parks and those sites themselves, into the homes of ordinary Canadians.

Government Orders

The marketing programs emphasize the primary conservation purposes of our national parks. Accordingly, visitors are encouraged to understand and respect these purposes and to plan their activities and visits to align with them.

Parks Canada is committed to improving ecological integrity in a number of ways: first, through communication, specifically, enhanced interpretation and education activities; second, reducing facility impacts; third and finally, implementing up to date environmental management practices and technologies.

●(1200)

[Translation]

In its tourism and marketing planning, Parks Canada must take fully into account the huge economic value and significant social contribution of our parks both locally and nationally.

[English]

I would stress that one cannot sustain economic benefits without enhancing both the natural environment of parks and the visitors' enjoyment of them. It is only common sense that we must maintain or restore the ecological integrity of our parks. People will simply refuse to visit our parks that are unacceptably degraded; I believe that was one of the points made by the independent panel on the ecological integrity of our national parks in its March 2000 report.

Equally, I would stress that any changes must be and will be implemented in full consultation with partners, including provinces and territories, national and regional tourism, non-governmental bodies and of course our first nations.

A priority area of the panel's report concerned the impact of elements that had their origins in places external to park boundaries. To deal with such factors, the panel called for renewed and extended partnership. Proposed transfers of land is one such partnership. In this respect, the panel was coming from a place that we are all familiar with: the notion that what I do in my backyard can have significant effects in my neighbour's backyard.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of these issues because, as we know, our national parks have many concerns shared in common by partners such as provinces, aboriginal people, private landowners and various other interests.

In particular, I have never known, and I do not believe there is an MP in the House who has ever known, nature to recognize or respect a human boundary. One day a grizzly bear may be in a national park and the next day in another jurisdiction. Likewise, rivers flow through jurisdictions. Acid rain from many kilometres away becomes a park problem when it impacts on our national park resources. The list goes on and on, so fundamentally, renewed and extended cooperation among neighbours who share common concerns is the only option toward maintaining ecological integrity.

Government Orders

The bottom line here is that we must improve the ways we work together if we are to safeguard the future of our national parks. The nature of the programs we devise to do so has to be established in cooperation and consultation with interested parties. Throughout the process, the prerogative of constitutionally defined jurisdictions—that is for my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie—as well as the rights of private property owners will be and must be respected.

I have just sketched a very broad overview of where Parks Canada is coming from and where it hopes to go. In summary, the panel report on ecological integrity was an important milestone for the future of the national parks of Canada. Parks Canada has taken it seriously and is moving forward to implement the directions it recommended. That implementation in a purposeful yet sensitive way is bringing benefits to us all. Its neglect would have meant untold costs to Canadians forever. The provinces, the territories and aboriginal peoples are, will be and shall be significant partners in achieving the protection of our national parks.

Viewed narrowly, however, in terms of jurisdiction alone, Canada's national parks and other federal protected places fall under the stewardship of the federal government, but really they belong to all of us, to each and every Canadian. They are the legacy of each and every one of us today to future generations. Let us in a very small way, by voting in favour of this legislation, enable future historians to say that on our watch at least we did what we could to protect this precious legacy and hopefully we left it in better condition than we found it.

I will close by saying that in the House during the debate someone said that the unions for employees of Parks Canada were in favour of this legislation transferring the Parks Canada Agency from Heritage Canada to Environment Canada, but the speaker was not sure, given the labour disputes that were ongoing, whether or not they were still in favour. That party intended to meet with members of the union.

• (1205)

I would like to say that I have in fact met with members of the union. I met with them early in September. I met with some constituents who are members of Parks Canada and members of the union. One of the subjects of discussion, besides the issue of the contract negotiations and their requests for their collective agreements, was in fact the future of Parks Canada, the future of our national parks. They were very supportive of the idea that the Parks Canada Agency be transferred to Environment Canada. They were very supportive of the fact that in doing so we have a better chance of preserving and enhancing the ecological integrity of our national parks and monuments.

However, I also have to say that one of their concerns was lack of sufficient funding and the fact that too many of the employees were not full time, permanent employees, the result of which is at times disjointed implementation of policies. One of the things they asked me to do was bring that message to the Hill. I have done so. I have spoken with the ministers responsible, with the parliamentary secretary and with members of our caucus.

In conclusion, this is, as everyone has said, a technical change, but it is an important change because it shows the vision that this government has going forward with regard to our national parks and

sites and monuments located within the parks. This is our vision for our national heritage. I encourage all members of the House to support this legislation. I look forward to the work that the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development will do with this piece of legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of her speech, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine said she wanted me to comment during questions and comments, since she made reference to some of the statements I made in my own speech. This is somewhat unusual.

I find the hon. member very good when she is reading her notes. I do not know if they were written by her or by senior public servants. Be that as it may, I notice a much greater spirit of cooperation when she is reading her speech than when she gets carried away here in this House.

At the beginning of her speech, the hon. member seemed to want the number of parks in Canada to increase significantly. She seemed to be saying that the federal government should establish even more parks. There is one thing on which I agree with her and that is the need to preserve environmental integrity. This is essential to Canada. How can we preserve the environmental integrity of several areas that have a rich biodiversity and also, sometimes, some endangered species?

So, my question is: Is this not fundamental? Moreover, if Parcs Québec, which is accountable to the Quebec government, is already protecting this environmental integrity, is the hon. member prepared to recognize that, in certain regions, where the Quebec government is assuming its responsibilities and creating protected areas, the federal government should take a back seat? Based on the comments made by the members for Brome—Missisquoi and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, the number of parks should be significantly increased. However, in 1996, the department provided the following reply on behalf of the government to the Auditor General:

The Department believes that Parks Canada has adopted a strategic approach. It is important to recognize that provincial and territorial, Aboriginal and local support must be earned through dialogue and consultation, always in conjunction with legitimate demands.

Therefore, this spirit of cooperation is necessary. The federal government cannot act unilaterally. If the provinces are doing their job in protecting resources and environmental integrity, why could they not fulfill this role?

• (1210)

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, one thing is certain: the ecological integrity of the national and provincial parks is the business of all Canadians, and it is only logical that, if parks are already under federal jurisdiction, we ensure that they are properly managed and that their ecological integrity is properly safeguarded. That is what we are dealing with today.

This does not in any way diminish the principle that it is also desirable for the federal government to envisage—whether today or another day—the creation of other national parks, when possible, desirable, and on federal land.

Government Orders

As for the question of working with our partners, I have said we agree with that, and the government has said so as well. The task force report also said so in 2000. The auditor general is not the only one to dispense information and knowledge. Each and every one of us can do so if we are involved.

The issue here is not a matter of whether the only actions are to be at the provincial level. No, I say first of all that we must be allowed to work within our own jurisdiction. For example, if it is a matter of national parks already in existence in Quebec, parks under federal jurisdiction, which we are administering as we should, and there is other federal land that could become national parks, then we should get to it.

In discussions with our partners, we might end up having to pass management over to the Aboriginal peoples, for instance, rather than the Government of Quebec. That is a possibility, as it was at the time of the Government of Quebec's historical agreement with the Cree community, and the one with the Inuit community some 30 years ago.

So there is nothing to prevent the federal government from perhaps at some point transferring management in the course of negotiations. We are not at that point yet, however. What we are dealing with is the ecological integrity of our present national parks.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while I applaud many of the comments my colleague has made, I would like to reiterate some of the comments made here across the floor with respect to consultation processes that take place within the parks. I was wondering if the hon. member would seek some commitment that the local communities, particularly the first nations, were brought more into the process.

Also, with respect to the budgeting, ecological integrity is waved around quite a bit, while in the auditor's report and other reports with respect to parks there has been a serious and significant lack of funding for parks. May I look forward over the next few months to a budget coming down in the wintertime that will have a significant increase? I would ask the member to comment on essentially making sure that this very noble cause of ecological integrity actually has some dollars behind it, because while it is a notion, without funding, it remains a notion.

We have heard similar promises before from the government with respect to parks. Meanwhile the latest labour dispute has highlighted many of the comments from the organizations showing that our parks and our heritage sites have been falling apart.

•(1215)

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, I truly welcome the member's question because it is an important one.

I am not sure if the member was here for my entire speech, but if he was, he would have noted that I talked about the necessity to make real investments. One of the problems in ensuring ecological integrity of our national parks is having the resources. Part of that is financial resources but part of it is also our human resources.

We have a whole class of employees who, because they work for Parks Canada in national parks, are unable to work 12 months of the

year. As a result for instance, they cannot get a pension after 25 years of service because they only work six months of the year. This has become a clear category of employee and that is a problem.

It is a problem when our agency which is required to ensure ecological integrity is not being funded to the extent that it should be. I share that concern. This is not the first time I have spoken to that issue. Perhaps in the House it is the first time, but let me assure the member that I have spoken about it to members of the cabinet, to the present Prime Minister and to the former prime minister. It is not a new issue for me.

I have not made my name on ecological issues except for the issue of cosmetic use of pesticides. I am in favour of banning it. I have had a private member's bill on that but I have left it to others to make their reputation on that particular issue and make it their priority.

I was pleased to speak to the issue today because I wanted to do so in a very public and vocal manner. Most members in the House know that I can be very vocal. I manage to win the voice votes for the government most of the time almost on my own, or it feels that way sometimes.

I welcomed this opportunity because I wanted my constituents and Canadians across the country to know that I think this issue is important and that I support it. However, I do not think that this is the only thing the government has to do. There are other things the government has to do. I will continue to push for it and work with anyone who wants to push that forward.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make my maiden speech, which I am proud to make with respect to Bill C-7. As the member who spoke before me clearly indicated, this is a technical bill. It also has very grave significance for our parks system.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Skeena—Bulkley Valley who placed me in this chair. I have a deep feeling of honour and respect for this place. I thank them also for the amount of trust they have placed in me, particularly as a young person, young by certain measures in this place, and that is clearly measure enough.

For those who are not familiar with my riding of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, it takes up the entire northwest corner of British Columbia. I would argue with any member in the House that it is the most beautiful corner of Canada. It is virtually the size of France and is a bit bigger than the entire British Isles. In that scope and region the diversity of views is matched by the size of the riding itself.

My riding is home to a number of first nations communities whose respect and honour I also hold dear. I thank them also for giving me the ability to speak on their behalf in this place.

Canadians have consistently identified parks as one of their greatest sources of national pride. In a recent poll, parks placed high, right up there with Don Cherry and the flag. This issue is serious and is of significant importance to many, if not all, members in the House. Management of this source of national pride is of significance also.

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While Bill C-7 is a technical bill, we hold some reservations about it. In essence, the NDP supports the movement of Parks Canada to the Ministry of the Environment. The fit is more natural and makes sense, particularly when we are constantly harping on about the idea of ecological integrity.

Oftentimes our parks are subjugated to other interests and means, but ecological integrity must remain of primary importance as to why a park exists and in its constant maintenance. We would hope that this one factor would continue to be essential in the management of our parks. The NDP was happy that this was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne.

With parks under the jurisdiction of the environment minister, we hope that the ecological integrity aspect will be a consideration in everything that happens within a park's boundary. This is not the case right now. Parks are perennially underfunded. There is always a temptation to make up for the budget shortfalls by encouraging activities that threaten the ecological integrity of the parks in my region and throughout Canada, by using off-peak seasons and encouraging increased tourist traffic, for example, in highly sensitive places.

Overall we are pleased that parks will find their place in the Ministry of the Environment. However, we are concerned with a few things which I will point out now.

The bill does not actually state that parks will stay within the Ministry of the Environment. That is of grave concern. It causes confusion for me and many members of my caucus as well as other members across the floor. If parks belong under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Environment, why not simply state it and place it in the bill in a permanent way? Parks have been moved between jurisdictions before. Every time this happens, it sucks up resources and valuable time from an already improperly resourced department. Why not firmly fix parks within the Ministry of the Environment, have done with the discussion and thereby not incur costs of \$20 million to \$25 million every time a minister decides that it needs to move again?

We will take up the issue of the language and the lack of clarity in Bill C-7 at committee. I look for support from all members of the House to make sure that we can clarify the bill.

Another concern with this legislation is it allows the governor in council to shift the parks mandate from one ministry to another without seeking the consent of the House. This is of grave concern because the decision of where parks, and therefore the ecological integrity of parks, end up is entirely at the whim of a very select body rather than by the House. Parks affect all members of the House in one way or another.

One also has to wonder if the government is going to make some quick cash by moving parks to industry or selling off specific lands. The decision to be placed in different ministries at the whim of the government is a problem, although finding extra cash does not seem to be a problem for this particular government. Moving the agency around costs a huge amount of money and puts a huge amount of effort on an already overly stressed parks staff. It distracts them from the important efforts that are needed with respect to maintaining ecological integrity.

● (1220)

Also of concern is that within the Privy Council, any member can be designated as the chief person responsible for parks. Within the Privy Council there is a wide assortment of people, some elected and some non-elected. For us that is a grave concern. The notion that at some future date we could have a non-elected official representing and leading parks in future directions is of grave concern, particularly when we talk about matters of ecological integrity. They can bump up against some other concerns such as financial matters.

Parks occupy a place both emotionally and mentally in the Canadian psyche. Parks are a place where many of us have gone to identify ourselves as Canadians. When we travel abroad, we place some identity of ourselves in the idea of wilderness and places far-reaching.

It has already been identified within the park structure that we do not have all the ecological areas of Canada captured within the park system. They are not representative of the most significant and important flora and fauna within the country.

As the bill goes forward, Canada now sits at a crossroads in a sense of either boldly going forward with initiatives that bring parks up to the proud place that we hold them or continuing the digression down a slippery slope, which has been presented already by the auditor's report and the hon. member, to a point where parks become an embarrassment for us or they become a place of scourge where we cannot go to rejuvenate or identify ourselves.

I strongly encourage the government to finally take strong measures, both fiscal and ecological, to ensure that parks maintain themselves as a proud place in the Canadian heritage.

● (1225)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to welcome the member to the House. He is in the riding adjacent to mine, and he will be a very effective member. We have already worked on some issues together. He gave an excellent opening speech. However, I would like to take issue with one of his points. At the beginning of his speech he challenged any member to challenge his assertion that he came from the most beautiful corner of the country.

In Yukon we have the highest mountains in Canada, the largest icefields outside the polar caps and the spectacular Dempster Highway through the northern tundra. We have the top of the world highway built on the mountain tops north of Dawson. We have one of the most beautiful river systems in the world with spectacular scenery. What evidence did the member use to make his assertion that he had the most beautiful corner of the country?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, one needs a certain amount of light to see the wonders of nature. I have visited the hon. member's riding a number of times. Part of the problem that exists with what perhaps may be a very beautiful part of Canada is we cannot see it for about 10 months of the year. One might put forward the suggestion of high powered lighting systems so we can see the great mountains and fantastic rivers.

Government Orders

However, my in my corner of the country, and we can cease this debate after this, we can see the beautiful mountains and fantastic rivers much of the year. One does not constantly run the threat of severe hypothermia while looking at those mountains.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will not get into the pros and cons of which of the two ridings mentioned is the more beautiful, having visited both of them. A good friend of mine has been a very strong advocate in Kitimat. Members may know Joanne Monahan, a former president of the FCM. She certainly would agree with the assertion of the member.

With regard to the placement, the member agrees at least in principle that the natural fit is for Parks Canada to be with the Ministry of the Environment. I am glad to hear that. Let us say that 10 or 15 years down the road or way into the future, after my lifetime, another government came in and wanted to create a super ministry, maybe natural resources and environment, and the whole lot are brought together. We would then have to come back and again, go through all the legislation.

It would seem to me that we agree the integrity of the mandate of Parks Canada is maintained in this ship. We know it is a natural fit, and the member agrees. However, it would be like spelling out the minister and we cannot do that. Unfortunately, ministers change from time to time, hopefully not this one, and the mandate changes. I am not sure how he thinks this would be more constructive in adding to what wants, about which we will no doubt have a discussion at committee. If the member could elaborate, I would be interested.

• (1230)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his support in my campaign to list our riding as the most beautiful in Canada.

With respect to the movement and placement of parts, the concern with the shifting around is exactly what the member said. Heaven forbid, a government would come in with not such a sound and strong consideration of ecological integrity, which would place parks in greater jeopardy.

While this is cumbersome in terms of placing a bill before the House, so goes democracy. It is an important cumbersomeness in making major decisions with respect to something as crucial and important as our parks and heritage. To bring it back to the House for full debate is exactly the point. If a government, with not such a fine understanding of the park system, were to make more irrational decisions, we would look upon that very disdainfully, particularly if we had not spoken at this point and said that it must be fixed.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was not going to follow up any more in the debate, but I am devastated that my colleague from Richmond Hill has not supported my riding.

Hon. Byron Wilfert: That was an interpretation.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: The member made a good point that we needed light. If we go to his riding in May, it can be quite dark. However, my riding has 24 hours of light. I would like people across Canada to know that. We get to see that beauty 24 hours a day. We have one of the most spectacular natural regions in the world, the

Kluane National Park, which is a world heritage site. How many world heritage sites does the member have in his riding that are they are more beautiful than Kluane?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I will be doing some fact checking to find out exactly how many. I know of at least two significant ones.

I have visited Kluane. Fortunately, it was during the time of 24 hours of light, and many Yukoners were out basking in the sun. I will be pushing for a great more number. Our riding is spectacular in its breathtaking beauty and deep history. I join the member in celebrating his world heritage site.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will not be splitting my time.

It gives me great pleasure today to speak at second reading of Bill C-7, an act to amend the Department of Canadian Heritage Act and the Parks Canada Agency Act and to make related amendments to other acts. The bill would give legislative effect to the government reorganization that was announced on December 12, 2003, as it affects Parks Canada, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of the Environment.

Other hon. members have spoken to the specifics of the bill, of Parks Canada's national parks program and its celebration of our national heritage. I would like to take a moment to talk about Parks Canada's cultural heritage program, the national historic sites program.

Based on the national historic sites of Canada system plan 2000, Parks Canada will continue to mark the historic achievements of Canadians, in particular aboriginal peoples, women and ethnocultural communities. The goal of Parks Canada is to bring about 135 new designations of national historic significance within a five year window, including 55 designations specifically commemorating the history of aboriginal people, ethnocultural communities and women.

It should be understood that while the Minister of the Environment and Parks Canada are responsible for officially honouring the designated places or people, the actual choice of designations is made by the minister on the advice of the independent Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Any Canadian individual, group or government can make a formal submission to the board. That said, it takes time, effort and extensive know-how to learn about the process and to complete the requisite submission. The process is rigorous because Canadians expect any national historic recognition to have deep meaning and importance.

Parks Canada has launched major efforts in the past few years to ensure that more Canadians know how to initiate and complete submissions. A good example is the major outreach program to ethnocultural communities launched last year. The program consists of both information, meetings and user friendly educational material.

Government Orders

Parks Canada is going to communities and asking for their participation rather than waiting for communities to come to it. The agency's recent efforts have ensured that sufficient nominations have been submitted to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board to meet its overall goal of an average of 27 new designations. I know one in my riding, the site of the Klondike River first nation, is an excellent new site.

Parks Canada is confident that it will achieve its targeted goal of 11 new designations a year specifically related to the achievements of ethnocultural communities, women and aboriginal peoples. To achieve these three strategic designated priorities, women, aboriginals and ethnocultural communities identified in the system plan, Parks Canada will maintain its focus on partnership efforts with aboriginal people, building awareness of the commemoration program, expanding its work with ethnocultural communities and strengthening its planning related to the history of women.

The target for designations will be reviewed annually with the aim to ensure that historic achievements of Canadians of both genders and from all backgrounds are appropriately honoured by the nation. As it moves forward with the system plan, Parks Canada can take pride in the achievements to date in celebrating the history of aboriginal peoples through the commemoration of significant people, places and events.

Let us look at a number of these sites in more detail. The Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung national historic site, known as Manitou Mounds, is near Fort Frances, Ontario. Parks Canada's partnership with the Rainy River first nation will ensure that this site, an important aboriginal religious and ceremonial ground for 2,000 years, is conserved and presented to Canadians.

• (1235)

Chiefswood national historic site on the Six Nations Grand River Reserve in southwestern Ontario is the birthplace of famed poet and performer Pauline Johnson. Chiefswood is being developed as a museum by Six Nations Council in partnership with Parks Canada.

Pauline Johnson herself has been designated as a person of national historic significance. As a published poet myself, I can tell members that Pauline Johnson is one of my favourite poets. I recommend to anyone in this chamber or watching on TV who has not read Pauline Johnson's poetry to take a look at some very beautiful renditions.

Kejimikujik National Park in Nova Scotia has also been commemorated as a national historic site of Canada, recognizing first nations use and occupation of lands.

The earliest inhabitants of Kejimikujik were Maritime Archaic Indians about 4,500 years ago. They were followed by the Nomadic Woodland Indians who set up seasonal campsites along Kejimikujik's rivers and lakeshores.

The Mi'kmaq, descendants of these people, have called this area home for the last 2,000 years. It is they who have produced the park's famous petroglyphs that represent the lifestyle, art and observations of the Mi'kmaq people in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The park is administered by Parks Canada for all Canadians but a Mi'kmaw network has been established to provide Parks Canada

with advice on Kejimikujik from band members, elders and political and spiritual organizations.

Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump was designated a national historic site in 1968. It is one of the world's oldest, largest and best preserved buffalo jumps known to exist. In 1981 it was designated a UNESCO world heritage site. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump has been used continuously by aboriginal peoples of the plains for more than 5,500 years. It is known around the world as a remarkable testimony to pre-contact life.

As a world heritage site, the jump is among such other world attractions as the Egyptian pyramids, Stonehenge and the Galapagos Islands. Parks Canada is only one of a circle of friends that has provided support for a first nations owned national historic site in Saskatchewan.

Wanuskewin Heritage Park was created to be both a heritage park and a first nations' centre. Wanuskewin became a reality in June 1992, and hundreds of thousands of people have visited this model of cross-cultural partnerships since opening day. Over 14,000 school children participate in cultural and educational programs at Wanuskewin each year.

Batoche was declared a national historic site in 1923. Its commemoration initially focused on the armed conflict between the Canadian government and the Metis provisional government in 1885. Today, Batoche also commemorates the history of the Metis community of Batoche, home of the Metis culture and heritage. Surviving portions of the Carleton Trail and river-lot system, and the roles of first nations in the northwest rebellion and resistance, are also commemorated.

Administered by Parks Canada, the site benefits from a formerly established shared management board with the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan.

Among persons of national historic significance, we might mention Mokwina, not a single man, but several who held the name as a hereditary title given to the chiefs of the Mochaht First Nation confederacy in British Columbia.

[Member spoke in Gwich'in]

[English]

Nagwicheonjik national historic site is in the Northwest Territories. It covers that part of the Mackenzie River between Thunder River and Point Separation. It is of national significance due to its prominent position within the Gwichya Gwich'in cultural landscape.

The Gwich'in people, for anyone who may not know, are a people in northern Canada and Alaska. I think there are around 18 communities that are spread across Alaska and northern Yukon, specifically in the Yukon-Old Crow, and then into the Northwest Territories into places that we know as Arctic Red River, Inuvik and Fort Macpherson, et cetera.

Government Orders

•(1240)

These people depend primarily on the Porcupine caribou herd which migrates past all their villages. Canada has made tremendous efforts to ensure that their calving grounds in the 1002 area of the Arctic national wildlife refuge are protected and we will keep up that fight.

The Nagwichoonjik historic site on the Mackenzie River is of national historic significance due to its prominent position within the Gwichya Gwich'in cultural landscape. The Mackenzie River flows through Gwichya Gwich'in traditional homeland and is culturally, socially and spiritually significant to the people. The Gwichya Gwich'in people express the importance of the river through their oral histories, which trace important events from the beginning of the land to the present.

Gwichya Gwich'in history is told through names given along the river, stories associated with these areas and the experience drawn from these stories. The river acted as a transportation route allowing the Gwichya Gwich'in to gather in large numbers to dance, feast and play games during the summer.

Everyone is missing something if they have not been to a Gwich'in square dance. Sometimes each individual dance lasts over an hour with jigging and square dancing. These dances in celebration can go far into the night until four or five in the morning and then the people are up for work at eight in the morning. The good thing about these experiences is that all generations of people are enjoying these celebrations, from the children to the elders who are given great prominence, and everyone has a good time. No one has any bad feelings.

It is an asset of another culture that we must always remember, which is one of the reasons I have worked so hard to protect the Porcupine caribou herd. We are not just protecting the caribou herd, we are protecting a culture in this very diverse and complex world full of conflicts.

We need answers from all cultures to help us survive in this technological age. Therefore it is important to preserve all the cultures that are left today. Some are extinct but ones like these, which can provide such other avenues and methods to provide happiness and a way to live for their people, are well worth preserving.

Archaeological evidence supports the Gwichya Gwich'in oral histories concerning the importance of the Mackenzie River. Sites along the river show extensive precontact fisheries and stone quarries which have ensured the Gwichya Gwich'in survival through the centuries.

Canada's national historic sites are part of a larger family of special heritage places, which include national parks and national marine conservation areas. They stretch from coast to coast to coast, from the Arctic to the Great Lakes, and from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Together the national parks, the national historic sites and the national marine conservation areas tell the story of Canada with each one contributing its own unique story and sense of place and time. These special places have been set aside for the benefit of all Canadians. Protecting our heritage is a national enterprise and can only be achieved through collaborative relationships.

Just as aboriginal people help Parks Canada advance its mandate, Parks Canada endeavours to assist aboriginal communities. Bill C-7 is a good example of just such an initiative and I ask all members of the House to give speedy passage to Bill C-7.

A couple of members mentioned integrity in national parks and integrity in the environment. I cannot agree more that it is a very important aspect of national parks that will be well served by Parks Canada being in the Department of the Environment. I have certainly made that same point as have other members of the House. It is a very important point for the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society.

•(1245)

As for where Parks Canada sits, that depends on the whole structure of government. To be flexible and not to incur the costs that were discussed before of going through this whole exercise again, the way the bill is written it would allow that, but it puts it in a place where I think all parties in the House agree at this time, within this structure of government, is where it should be.

Before I get to the results of some of the discussions earlier relating to the number of parks and protected areas, I should get to the costs. I definitely agree with the comments that there should be sufficient funding for parks for costs inside the scope of available resources to handle the various functions that Parks Canada provides for Canadians. This is a particularly difficult task at the present time because of the recent announcements made by the government concerning a number of new national parks and new national marine areas in Canada.

Those announcements have been celebrated by Canadians and by members of the House that these new national parks and new marine areas will be created, especially parks, to preserve some of the landscapes on the ocean floors that before this time did not have protection. It will also allow us to set aside areas particularly so that all the various species are at least in one place and protected as much as possible. Although erosion of species is a natural process, we need to mitigate as much as possible the man-made effects that exacerbate the diminishment of the number of species on earth. The new parks and marine areas are definitely helping to do that. They are great initiatives but, as members of the opposition say, we have to put adequate funding in those areas.

I am sure the environment committee, when it comes to the estimates, will be looking at those financial commitments to be available because that is where those items would be looked at.

Because I am talking about the heritage aspects of Parks Canada, which would also be transferred through the various attendant amendments in this bill with technical amendments to other acts, that the heritage benefits of these sites are a tremendous asset to my riding. I think there are few people in Canada who have not heard of the world's greatest gold rush in Dawson City. Parks Canada over the years has made tremendous investments to restore historical buildings. One of them, after the Parliament buildings, is the second most valued building in Canada because I believe it was done by the same architect. It brings tremendous knowledge of our history, the preservation of our history, and a lot of foreign currency because the vast majority of the tourists who come to Dawson City, as one area to see that history, would not be there if that history was not preserved.

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In recent years there has been investment in a gold dredge. After the hand miners mined the creeks in Dawson during the original gold rush, the huge corporations came in with massive machines called dredges. It is somewhat amazing how they ever got them there without any roads or railways at the time. These huge dredges were part of the history, and recently Parks Canada, with army engineers, has raised one that was stuck in the mud and refurbished it all. It is a great tourist site. As these tourist sites allow Americans and visitors from Germany and other countries to stay longer in Canada and invest in our hospitality industry and learn more about Canada, I do not think anyone would dispute their value.

I fully support the legislation and hope that other people in the House do.

•(1250)

Hon. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to participate in this debate and listen to the passion with which so many speakers today have expressed their interest in our natural heritage and culture.

The previous speaker obviously has demonstrated in words that in fact he has a great deal of interest in our aboriginal community, and the protection of their heritage and looking at various sites that he represents in Yukon. I am curious and would like to know from the member, what sites does he believe we ought to be looking at for future inclusion as part of the national parks system?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to prejudge the board of experts that individually looks at the sites and makes a very careful evaluation before any site is added to the inventory in Canada. I am not an expert in this area and have not been through this rigorous analysis.

However, I can suggest some particular areas. First, a recent site that I have been talking about is on the Klondike River. The original name of the Klondike River was *thorn duick*, given by the original first nations, which means "hammering stakes in the ground". This is right where Dawson City is located and where the gold rush took place. The first nations would hammer stakes in to trap the salmon. It was originally a salmon fishing site.

There have been some interesting recent discoveries in Yukon. I think this will be fascinating information for all Canadians. What was discovered only a couple of years ago is that up on the mountains there are certain patches of ice and snow that do not melt in the summer. Perhaps it is because of the darkness that my friend alluded to. However, the entire summer goes by and these small patches do not melt.

A person was up there walking around one day and saw all sorts of black goo. This black goo turned out to be caribou dung. However, it was not recent caribou dung. It was determined to be caribou dung that was older than any human establishments that have been found in North America.

On the north side of the hills the snow does not melt and the caribou would go onto the snow to get away from the bugs. Realizing this, ancient peoples would be hunting in these areas.

This person, who was walking through this area, began finding ancient artifacts. For the last few years people have been finding

ancient artifacts. They have discovered a number of these sites. Perhaps I should not be saying this because everyone will go there now and I apologize to the archeologists.

Archeologists have found all sorts of artifacts that are redefining the discovery of North America, the migrations into North America and the types of tools that were used.

To me this would be a perfect example of a site of ancient aboriginal people in Canada. A number of aboriginal people have been hired to work on these sites to preserve them so that the rest of Canada could see how people lived.

Another item and probably all members of the House are aware of the famous frozen person that was found in the Alps. This has been reported in *National Geographic*. Another frozen person was discovered in northern B.C., very close to Yukon and it was a Yukon first nation. The discovery of that preserved first nations person from approximately 500 years ago is another tremendous archeological find which gives us evidence about our history.

In Canada we have Parks Canada to preserve these historic facts for study so that we can learn about our past. We can then share that with not only our children, but with people from around the world.

•(1255)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Simard (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on the bill before us today. In my career and in the rest of my life it has been my good fortune to take a keen interest in the issues of conservation lands and parks.

This issue is close to my heart. I once was director general of the Union québécoise pour la conservation de la nature and I have taken part in coalitions to ask not only for better protection of natural spaces and ecosystems, but also the resources needed to truly protect them.

Long before that, as a student I worked in Forillon National Park. That was in 1982. I remember the dramas and tragi-comedies as the Quebec and Canadian governments each raced to create parks faster than the other, not to protect ecosystems, improve access to them or welcome visitors, but to get a foothold on Quebec territory.

I remember one employee meeting held in Forillon Park. The minister at the time, a Mr. André Ouellet, had come to address the employees, who had all left their tasks, and boast about how he stole the Mingan Archipelago from Quebec, where the Quebec government had been planning to put a park. He was as proud as a boy who has just played a great practical joke.

An hon. member: As a peacock.

Mr. Christian Simard: As proud as a peacock, indeed; he was proud of himself. He never mentioned conservation. He never mentioned improving access. He never mentioned protecting the land for future generations. No, what he talked about was capturing those islands from Quebec, like the spoils of war.

If it had only happened one time, I could have said it was just once, but even at that, it was one time too many. And yet, in the case of the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park, there was the same kind of friction. And for a long time, there were quarrels that delayed the creation of a Quebec park I am also familiar with, the Parc national des Hautes-Gorges-de-la-Rivière-Malbaie.

All these quarrels and, unfortunately, the entire history of Parks Canada are tainted in Quebec by expropriations of the people, as with Forillon Park with, unfortunately, the complicity of the Quebec government. There was a desire to create a park without people, despite the example of the town of Banff right in the middle of Banff National Park. Thus, Quebec has been the Parks Canada laboratory for testing centralization and testing interference, but certainly not a laboratory for testing investments and conservation for future generations.

The federal government did not think about environmental integrity. It did not think about what is now called migration corridors, the natural areas to be protected on the basis of the migration of animals, whether they are birds or mammals, which may find in one park or another a level of conservation that will maintain minimal level of viability. This is unfortunate. However, there was a time, before the Parks Canada Agency was created, when investments were made. Since this agency was created, the government has continued to create reserves and historic sites, but budgets are almost nonexistent and, in fact, shrinking.

Quebec employees of Parks Canada used to get some satisfaction. It must be said that it is Quebecers, proud professionals who manage these parks, and we pay them with 25% of our taxes. These professionals were proud and happy of the work they were doing. I met with Parks Canada employees recently. They were less proud after several years within the Parks Canada Agency. They told me that there was an abusive tendency toward centralization in the agency; that budgets were allocated to research projects at the central level; that there was no money in the parks and historic sites; and that an extraordinary expertise was being lost in Quebec, both in interpretation and historical research.

This is quite serious. Indeed, in Parks Canada, Quebec's history is being told. Interpretation is done. Unfortunately, this interpretation is beginning to be done by people who do not belong to this culture, who do not live by this culture. They can then impose a certain interpretation of history on us. For example, they may choose between promoting fortifications following the conquest or ruins of the Montcalm redoubt, which is in my riding. So choices will be made. These choices may be made to the detriment of Quebec's heritage.

● (1300)

What I would like, of course, is for us to have our own country. Indeed, Quebec is loved for its cultural diversity, its people, its history and also its physical surroundings, including its mountains, rivers, flora and fauna. Quebecers are extremely proud of their province.

I believe this comes from our origins. The love of the woods, the freedom our ancestors had when they arrived from France—where they had less freedom—is in our collective consciousness. It is this freedom of open spaces that Victor-Lévy Beaulieu described so well

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in most of his books and television productions: the big blue sky, the open spaces that make an impression on us and mark our lives and our collective spirit.

With this bill, what we are saying is that perhaps Parks Canada should be the responsibility of Environment Canada instead. Then maybe the federal government would realize that Parks Canada exists. Professionals from Quebec are trying to motivate them. If the parks were in the spotlight a little more, maybe there would be more money available.

It is a shame, but true that we are far from an integrated system of protected lands for which Quebecers would set priorities, and harmonize and integrate everything in an ecological approach. Our country has overlaps and, unfortunately, in this area, the overlap help in the conservation of land or the species that live there. It is extremely unfortunate.

I would like to quote what I read on the Canadian Nature Federation site—which cannot to be accused of having separatist or sovereignist ideas—concerning the underlying problems cited by the current management of Parks Canada.

The number of parks has increased and worsening environmental problems are posing serious threats to the parks in the system. Yet the Parks Canada budget has not increased to meet these growing challenges. In fact, the government has not even reversed the cuts it made to Parks Canada in the early 1990s, when the agency lost 25 per cent of its annual budget.

The result is that Parks Canada has been unable to ensure basic health and safety standards for its crumbling infrastructure, let alone monitor and mitigate the threats to nature within the park system.

And I read on:

In 2000, the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks estimated the agency would need \$328 million over 5 years to restore our national parks—none of that funding has materialized, despite the Canadian Heritage Minister's commitment to implement all of the panel recommendations.

One has to wonder if the intention is really to erase Ms. Copps' legacy everywhere. She had planned the creation of parks and the related funding. Perhaps the former Liberal ministers will soon be included on the list of endangered species.

Seriously, the sad thing is that the federal government has a \$9.1 billion surplus but it is not investing in the right places. It is ignoring the protection of places in Quebec, of its own parks. Making additions, creating park reserves or identifying future historic sites will not solve anything. It will simply encroach further on Quebec's territory.

This lack of funding is demotivating for the workers. Workers at La Mauricie Park have told me that they no longer issue tickets. They no longer patrol the back country. The undergrowth has become so thick that they have lost canoes, and backcountry campsites are no longer visited. Our parks are being neglected because of budget cuts.

● (1305)

By “our parks”, I mean those in Quebec. They may be designated as Park Canada property, but the fact remains that they are located in Quebec. The Quebec workers who used to be so proud of the conservation work they were involved in are now truly depressed by the lack of funding, the centralization within the agency and the loss of pride and trust.

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I have seen these workers. I have visited many parks and worked in Quebec's network of parks. There were workers who were somewhat envious of the funding the federal government allocated to its parks, figuring that some of the money ought to be invested in theirs. The situation is reversed now: funds have started to be reinvested in Quebec's parks. I hope that, one day, we will have an integrated network in a country with all the necessary powers. I hope that we will be able to get the job done without having to resort to fighting or relying on the misplaced pride of ministers like André Ouellet and his successors. Real consideration must be given to the ecosystem, the environment and its preservation.

My riding of Beauport—Limoilou may not be as big or spread out as that of the Yukon or those in Abitibi and Northern Quebec or again those not situated in the Saguenay—St-Lawrence Marine Park. It is however a beautiful riding, which is part of Quebec City and host to federal infrastructures. People in my riding regularly go to the plains of Abraham—by day—they also like to take a stroll along the Dufferin boardwalk.

There is in my riding as well a historic site I would like to talk about for a while. It is the Cartier-Brébeuf Park. It is a disgrace. It is a national historic site. Jacques Cartier spent his second winter there in 1535. It is in a shameful state of repair for lack of money and interest on the part of the government, which would rather create new sites and encroach on provincial jurisdiction rather than look after the sites it already owns.

A replica of Jacques Cartier's ship the *Grande Hermine*, was allowed to rot in that park. It had to be demolished because it had become dangerous. There are now huge Frost fences across the small park because the sewer outfall under this historical site is collapsing. Big Frost fences were installed, criss-crossing the park, to protect people. This is the place where Jacques Cartier spent the winter in 1535. It is an important site. There is an interpretation centre there that looks more like an old garage. In the centre, there is an exhibition, which has not been updated since its creation. It is a real shame. The park is located near the St. Charles river in Quebec City. The city is trying to clean up the river and bring it back to its natural state.

Soon we will celebrate the 400th anniversary of Quebec City, and nothing indicates that money will be invested in the park. I must admit that my riding may not be the most beautiful, but it is not a reason to humiliate its residents by letting a site of such historical significance deteriorate to such a degree.

Now, I hope that this bill will not be only a structural and administrative change and that the government will not continue with this same philosophy of hoping that an agency will be profitable. It is really a somewhat absurd vision to try to make the conservation of nature and wildlife profitable and to try to have it be cost effective by itself.

There are sectors where the state must intervene, protect land and invest public funds. The government must stop selling the environment short or making it a tourism sector that is not even ecological. One of the problems raised by major environmental agencies is this way of marketing natural areas intensively without planning their conservation or without planning enough staff to

ensure that it does not harm the areas and the sensitive ecological zones and to ensure to have enough equipment to welcome them.

I am a former environment worker, an environmental supporter and I am always an active participant. I worked at the Rivière Vivante foundation, an agency dedicated to the cleanup and naturalization of the St. Charles river, in my riding.

● (1310)

As an environmentalist and former director of the Union québécoise pour la conservation de la nature, of which the conservation of natural areas was an important priority, I must add that I became a little cynical with time about park management. I saw proud people become unmotivated. It is not pleasant to see people, at the end of successful careers as interpreters, historians, naturalists, finish it in disillusion and indigence. This is unfortunate. It is too bad for Canada's image. It is unfortunate that this image has been tarnished. In Quebec, we want to have a country, but we also want Canada to have its own and to stop neglecting its parks.

My love of the parks is nothing new. I especially love Forillon National Park. When I went there this summer, I noticed that the facilities were not properly maintained and in very bad shape. As a testimony of my love for the natural beauty of Quebec, and despite all the pains we had to go through to establish this park, to celebrate the year 2000, my in-laws, my friends and I all gathered at the tip of Cap Desrosiers, at the eastern tip of the Gaspé Peninsula, at 6 o'clock in the morning to see the sun rise over Quebec. It was magnificent, and very cold. We drank to the future of Quebec next to the magnificent lighthouse in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. We hoped that one day the sun would rise over a country that was independent and proud to be so. My remarks are intended to show that the very essence of a nation often lies in the way its culture and spaces are protected and passed on from one generation to the next.

I wholeheartedly hope that the various levels of government and the federal government realize that the creation of parks is more than just cutting ribbons and scoring victories at the expense of the provinces. It is about preserving historical, natural and human sites for the next generations of Quebecers.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I admit that I am in love with Quebec as a whole. I love Quebec's culture, the diversity of its inhabitants, but I am concerned about those who have gone to such lengths to encroach on Quebec's territory, abandoning Quebec and not doing the minimum required of them. I hope that funding will be allocated in the budget.

There are no ifs or buts about it; we will not oppose this bill. Perhaps it will enlighten the new minister on the natural spaces in Quebec and Canada. This is a minister who appears to have great designs for himself, no doubt, but also for the park network. Hopefully, adequate funding will follow. We will be watching. We will pass this bill and see whether it helps the Canadian government do a better job. Rest assured that, as members of the opposition and the Bloc Québécois, we will be watching.

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• (1315)

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the member on his speech. He made a number of excellent points that I would agree with. I have some questions on them, but to begin, I do want to go on record as taking issue with one point. First of all, of course, he said he hoped he could be where the sun rises over an independent country. I can assure members of Parliament that anywhere the sun rises in Canada it is over an independent and sovereign country. We will continue to make our decisions in Canada and in the world as a sovereign nation. We will make our own decisions.

The point I take issue with is the comment related to us paying money on our huge national debt so that we do not have to continue to pay interest. I am always disappointed to hear that the Bloc does not think Canada and the people of Quebec are strong enough and self-sufficient and resourceful enough so that we do not have to borrow money from other people. That is money that could go to children, to national parks and to health care.

I have always had the opinion that we are a rich country and a wealthy enough, resourceful enough and intelligent enough country that we do not have to borrow from others. We should be able to pay off that debt so we can continue to have the new parks that we have announced, so we can put more money into day care, as we are, more money into defence, more money into health care and more money into increasing the pensions of seniors. We can do that because we are not making interest payments.

The question I want to ask is related to an excellent point that the member made on migration: that if we are protecting a species we also need to protect where that species migrates. Just making a circle and putting a park there is not enough, because the species may move somewhere else. I think that is a very excellent point that the member made. I wonder if he could give us any examples of parks that have been designed in that manner, because we could use that as a leadership role. Has the Quebec government or any government in the world designed a park that would match the migration of a species? I think the member made an excellent point about that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Simard: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's question. This is very important right now, as the creation of a park network is being considered. It is a good idea to take that into account, as well as considerations relating to private lands.

I was an assistant to the president of the Fondation de la faune du Québec. This organization asked urban populations to create, in their backyards, gardens to attract birds, using fruit trees for instance to allow migrating species to stop over on their way to truly protected areas. Such protected areas were managed at the municipal level or at the provincial level—by Quebec, in our case—or were located in federal parks.

This needs to be well understood. This too is new. It is the kind of thing that organizations like the Union québécoise pour la conservation de la nature and the World Wide Fund For Nature stand up for, pursuant to the principles set out by the World Conservation Union.

The Quebec park network currently has that concern in mind. However, until now, the notion of conservation was not really viewed in these terms. These concerns are taken into consideration in the studies to create new parks and new areas. We try to determine who will be the winners and, eventually, who will be the losers in the creation of these parks, or in the awarding of related supply contracts. All these issues impact on the protection of species.

It is unfortunate that municipal governments, which come under Quebec's jurisdiction, do not speak at the level of the Quebec government when it comes to the creation of natural areas. It is unfortunate that park networks are suffering, as are other sectors in Quebec, from this duplication. It will be extremely difficult to think about conservation on the basis of the protection of species and ecosystems, and of sustainable use.

Quebec areas cannot all be fully protected. We do not live in a huge garden. People have to live in these areas. However, when we protect natural areas, we ensure that species living there can migrate and be protected during that process. This is what new tendencies in the conservation of protected areas are suggesting.

Then there is the issue of sustainable development and the hon. member will agree that this also applies to people. If we do not invest in national parks or in historic places, which are, more often than not, located in the regions—and I am speaking euphemistically here—we will not have many seasonal workers or naturalists. We will not have many people who work enough hours to qualify for employment insurance benefits. These people then leave their region to settle in the city. They are not so proud of their region, because the government did not invest in it.

Unless I am mistaken, the Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve is still not a national park, after all these years. I am referring to the famous Mingan Islands that were taken away from Quebec. However, the government never lived up to its commitment in terms of investment. Local people, who must make a living with two months of tourism at best, were disappointed. Up there, it is very cold in June and September, and there is often fog in August. So, the situation is really not ideal for these people.

Parks are tools of economic development, pride and human development. That is not taken into consideration by an agency that is centralizing, that is broke and that does not really fulfill its mandate.

• (1320)

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou for his fine speech. I would like him to expand on his answer to the hon. member for Yukon, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, who seemed to say in his remarks that the government should reduce its debt, and things of that sort.

The member for Beauport—Limoilou has delivered a simple message. He is telling the federal government to start looking after the facilities it has, to stop creating new parks and start maintaining the ones it already possesses.

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In my riding of Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, I have a fine example. You know, as I do, Mr. Speaker, about the Carillon Canal, which was a historic concept of a canal for the transportation of wood. You come from a family that did business up and down the Ottawa River and used the canal system from Carillon to Grenville. There was one on the Ontario side as well, used for forestry. A vestige of this design remains, the Carillon Canal. Believe it or not, the latest report by the Auditor General contains a photograph of the Carillon Canal, showing the state of disrepair in which the Government of Canada has left it.

And what has been done since the Auditor General submitted her report last year? Rather than repairing the canal, they buried it. Incredible! A geotextile was laid down; the canal was filled in; and more than \$200,000 was spent, with the remark, "Someday when we have the money, we will take all this away and be able to repair the canal!"

That is what things are like in the regions, because all this Liberal government wants is to have new things, put up new flags, but never take care of the facilities it already has.

• (1325)

Mr. Christian Simard: Mr. Speaker, the comments by my colleague make a lot of sense. They say they want to reduce the debt. Rather, they do not say so, they just change policy as they go. That is to say, they announce a little surplus and then say it is too late to put it toward the debt, but there is no debating it. They say that a given amount cannot go toward the debt, but do they have to always do the calculations wrong, come up with a huge surplus, and then put that toward the debt without debate?

They talk of reducing the debt for the sake of our children, but perhaps our children need to have endangered areas and species protected for their sake as well. This is also part of what we will be handing down to them. What they inherit is not only monetary; there is also a physical heritage. The member is absolutely right to raise this issue.

This morning, I was listening to the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Johanne G elinas, a woman of much vigour and much rigour. I came to know her when she was commissioner of Quebec's environmental public hearings office. Her report covered strategic policy assessments, assessments of progress. Was there any assessment when Parks Canada became an agency? Were the consequences of the budget cuts assessed? Was there any assessment of the impact on this and future generations? No there was not. The answer is no. No assessment, for instance, of the consequences of tax cuts for oil and gas companies, who really do not need them and are amassing huge profits because of the use of hydrocarbons. No assessment of the environmental consequences of subsidies to polluting industries. Was this assessed? No it was not. In this case, the Minister of Finance even adds insult to injury by saying that he will not do so and will not consider the commissioner's recommendations. She says such a reaction is virtually without precedent.

So, when it comes to making fundamental changes without any assessment, I have seen instances in the micromanagement of parks of people doing things first and then assessing them afterwards, which is not the way it is done.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very much enjoying following the debate. The questions that were asked of the last speaker are very important even though the bill is not directly related to some of the concerns and issues that members have raised.

I must admit that I was trying to put together a communication for the constituents of my riding about the 12 or 13 bills that have been tabled in this place by the government. I want to let them know what the issues are before the House and to give them an opportunity to receive further information or maybe ask some questions about the bills.

When I got to Bill C-7, an act to amend the Department of Canadian Heritage Act and the Parks Canada Agency Act and to make related amendments to other acts, I had some difficulty writing very much about the bill itself. There are no major policy changes and there are no additional funding requirements related to Bill C-7. Quite frankly, I have not heard of a lot of problems with the technical bill that is before us. I am pretty sure this matter will go forward.

What is extremely important is that the bill has given us an opportunity to reflect on our national parks and historic sites. We tend to take them for granted. We have heard from other members that there are some concerns about the investment made even to the point where the last speaker raised some concern about having surpluses which ultimately are dedicated to paying down debt and there is no money left over to invest in our parks which are calling for some assistance.

Canadians who have had an opportunity to visit some of our national parks, historic sites and marine conservation areas feel a deep sense of pride at the rich history we have. A fundamental part of being Canadian is to participate in the great outdoors in Canada. I know the Minister of Agriculture will agree as he is a great outdoorsman himself.

I do not want to comment on the bill itself. Members have adequately put forward the matters relating to the technical amendments. However, I want to talk briefly about the Parks Canada story.

Canada's national parks, historic sites and marine conservation areas represent what many call the soul of Canada. They are central to who we are and what we are. They are places of great wonder and heritage. Each tells its own story and together they connect Canadians to their roots, to each other, and to the future. This is extremely important because, as members from the Bloc have said, this is an integral part of what Canada is. It is inseparable.

As a Canadian, I own a little piece of each and every square inch of all of Canada, including Quebec, and everyone in Quebec owns a little piece of every other part of Canada. It is a very important linkage that we should make. It is a common bond of association, a binding element among all Canadians.

Government Orders

What we cherish as part of our national identity we also recognize as part of our national responsibility. All Canadians share the obligation to preserve and protect Canada's unique cultural and natural heritage. Together we hold our national parks, our national historic sites and our national marine conservation areas in trust for the benefit of this generation and future generations.

Canada has the distinction of having the first national parks service in the world. Over the decades our national parks system has grown to 41 national parks and reserves, preserving for future generations almost 265,000 square kilometres of land and waters and there are plans to add 100,000 square kilometres through the creation of eight more national parks. This legacy is possible in large part because the provincial and territorial governments, aboriginal people and local communities have worked with us to create many of these new national parks.

● (1330)

The creation and management of our national parks is a delicate balance between protection of ecologically significant areas of importance to wildlife and meeting economic and social needs of communities.

The Government of Canada is committed to working with the aboriginal people, local communities and other Canadians and stakeholders to protect our precious natural heritage through the creation of new national parks and national marine conservation areas.

In October 2002, the government announced an action plan to substantially complete Canada's system of national parks by creating ten new parks over the next five years. This is great news for Canadians. This will expand the system by almost 50%, with the total area spanning nearly the size of Newfoundland and Labrador. In fact, we have already created two of those ten new national parks, with work continuing on eight other proposals. Five new national marine conservation areas will also be created.

Canada is blessed with exceptional marine treasures. My daughter is in marine biology. She is an ecological engineer right now and has had an opportunity to travel all across Canada and experience so many places; I think a lifetime is too short to see and enjoy all that these protected lands and waters have to offer us.

The action plan calls on Parks Canada to work with all of its partners, the provinces and territories, aboriginal and rural communities, industry, environmental groups and others, to complete this effort. It is a good news story and it is an important point to make even in the debate of a bill as benign as Bill C-7.

In March 2003 the government allocated \$144 million over five years and \$29 million annually thereafter toward this effort. The action plan has already produced two new parks. The new Gulf Islands National Park Reserve of Canada protects 33,000 square kilometres of ecologically rare land in the southern Gulf Islands of British Columbia. At over 20,000 square kilometres, the new Ukkusiksalik National Park of Canada protects virtually an entire watershed close to the Arctic circle in Nunavut. I have had an opportunity to visit Whitehorse and other areas, but I have not been to Nunavut and I hope that one day my family and I will be able to visit that area.

Negotiations to establish the Tornat Mountains National Park Reserve in Northern Labrador are also nearing completion. This long-standing proposal will protect some of the highest mountains in North America east of the Canadian Rockies.

In March 2004, the premier of Manitoba and the former minister of the environment signed a memorandum of agreement identifying the boundaries for public consultation for a national park in the Manitoba Lowlands. They also committed to negotiating a national park establishment agreement by May 2005.

Both parks will make significant and magnificent additions to our world class parks system.

The government is also working with partners to establish five new national marine conservation areas, adding an estimated 15,000 square kilometres to the system. This will be a major step forward in global conservation of marine habitat. Canada has the world's longest coastline and 7% of its fresh water. This commitment to creating new marine conservation areas is consistent with the recent Speech from the Throne in which our government made a commitment to create new marine protected areas as part of the ocean action plan.

These national marine conservation areas will be located in ecologically unrepresented marine regions. Four sites have also been identified, including the Gwaii Haanas off British Columbia's Queen Charlotte Islands, Western Lake Superior, British Columbia's Southern Strait of Georgia, and the waters off Îles-de-la-Madeleine in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. While a site for the remaining national marine conservation area has yet to be finalized, Parks Canada has received a number of proposals from local communities, a testament to the growing interest in the conservation of our marine heritage.

● (1335)

In addition, the government will accelerate its actions over the next five years to improve the ecological integrity of Canada's 41 existing national parks. This will implement the action plan arising from the panel on the ecological integrity of Canada's national parks, whose report was endorsed by the government in April 2000.

These two initiatives, the action plan to expand our system of national parks and national marine conservation areas, and the action plan on ecological integrity, are the most ambitious initiatives to expand and protect national parks and national marine conservation areas in over 100 years, indeed, since Banff National Park of Canada, Canada's first, was established in 1885.

Parks Canada needs to get on with the job Parliament has assigned to it and I am sure we are going to have the support for Bill C-7 to enact these changes, these technical amendments.

Government Orders

The last reference I made is something that concerns me quite a bit. I want to use a little of my remaining time to make mention of it. It has to do with Banff, our first park, established in 1885. I have had an opportunity to go to Banff, to drive slowly, to visit Lake Louise, and to see the beauty of the Banff area and do some hiking, both in good weather and in bad weather, a little of each.

However, over the years one of the things I have noticed is that a tremendous amount of construction has been going on in the areas that lead into Banff. There has been so much that the dust, the rubble, the dirt and the disruption of the area are probably evident even to those who have no idea what the ecological concerns might be and what the impacts would be on wildlife.

I used to work for Trans-Canada Pipelines. I was the director of finance and was involved in a number of things, including the proposed Mackenzie Valley-Delta pipeline project, which ultimately, under the Thomas Berger commission, was shelved for some 10 years. A lot of that had to do with the impacts on the environment, on the flora, the fauna and the migration patterns. At that time, those who were responsible for the development were very sensitive to the impacts on the environment, on plant, animal and other species. I did not see it in Banff. I did not see that same kind of discipline.

The member from the Bloc spoke about the national park in Quebec and talked about some fenced off area where there is a sewer going underneath there and it is not well kept, i.e., it is not remediated to the point where we could have a park which all could enjoy. Something is wrong in terms of the discipline; I do not know what it is. It is not in the bill, but it has to be within our commitment to continuing to develop our conservation areas, our national parks, our wildlife preserves and our marine conservation areas.

In Banff there is now what is virtually a superhighway and a parallel highway in case there is a problem. There are now bridges over the highway, which are meant for the animals to use to migrate from one side of the highway to the other. I understand they do not work as well as they should, but at least there is a possibility for wildlife to migrate.

Now we hear that Banff development has been so saturated it has almost become a place where we need to have money to be there. It is not a place for ordinary Canadians and their families and kids. The houses there are enormous. The development there is enormous. It is hard to believe that this is good. There is wildlife walking through the streets in the evenings. We go there and suddenly there is wildlife; the deer walk through the streets in the evening light and nibble away at the trees. The reason is that we have encroached terribly on the natural habitat of wildlife because it is Banff and because beautiful Lake Louise is there. My goodness, anybody who has seen it knows how pristine and how beautiful it is. The hiking there is terrific and people can do a little horseback riding or simply walk some of the trails.

● (1340)

However, now things are at the point where those in charge have decided that perhaps they have to stop development, perhaps they cannot have any more people sell their homes and that kind of thing. I think the Banff experience should be a beacon to all parliamentarians. It says that if we do not watch carefully, sometimes

we drift away from the reason why things were done in the first place.

I suspect if we ever went back and looked at the documents about why we should have national parks and why we should make one the Banff National Park, the underpinnings would be so that our parks would reflect Canada: the majesty, the soul, the peace and the naturalness of a country.

Yet now it has become so commercial. I do not know whether there is a report card on Banff, but I would think that a report card since the park was established in 1885 probably would not be a good report card. I think something has happened.

If that is the case, then I think the example the Bloc member raised has to be looked at in terms of the standards and the underpinning reliance that we place on those in charge to ensure that national parks and the marine reserves and the wildlife reserves, et cetera, are protected and allowed to flourish in the most natural state possible, giving us the opportunity to enjoy them but in a way that does not encroach on the natural activity within those areas.

Therefore, I think Bill C-7 is important not just for the technical amendments, which others have laid out for the House so I will not repeat them; Bill C-7 gives effect to order in council decisions that have been made in the past so it is housecleaning. It would have been very easy to come in here and say that Bill C-7 looks okay to me because it is doing what we have already done, or just noting in the legislation what has been done and how we changed the responsibility from one department to another so let us deal with it all in one stage in the House.

I guess we could do that, but I think it is important that members at least take the opportunity to realize that this is an opportunity to talk about something that is extremely important to all Canadians, not only today's Canadians but future generations. These are the jewels of our country from sea to sea to sea.

When we compare ourselves to other countries, we see that even a country such as Taiwan has more national parks than Canada. This is hard to believe, but there is a tremendous discipline in terms of combining the people's activities with the existence of national parks.

I am pleased that members have raised some of these issues about the condition of our national parks. Perhaps we should look to find out when things deteriorated. Perhaps we should ask who was responsible, what questions were asked, what monitoring was done, and what jurisdiction was involved. Where could members of Parliament be involved so that to the extent possible we can do our part to make sure we preserve these important sites for generations to come?

I appreciate the opportunity to comment briefly on Bill C-7. This is about all I would care to say on Bill C-7, but I am very pleased to have the opportunity to share a few of my thoughts and views on what I believe is one of the most important binding matters in Canada, and that is the preservation of our heritage properties, our national parks, our wildlife preserves and our marine conservation areas.

Government Orders

•(1345)

Hon. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address the House on the occasion of the second reading of Bill C-7.

On December 12, 2003 control and supervision of the Parks Canada agency was transferred from the Minister of Canadian Heritage to the Minister of the Environment. The transfer was given effect through an order in council.

On July 20, 2004 a further order in council came into effect relating to the responsibilities for built heritage. It was required in order to clarify the earlier order in council. First, control and supervision of the historic places policy group were transferred from the Department of Canadian Heritage to Parks Canada. Second, the powers, duties and functions related to the design and implementation of programs that have built heritage as their primary subject matter were transferred from the Ministry of Canadian Heritage to the Ministry of the Environment.

Bill C-7 updates legislation to reflect these changes. It deals with the machinery of the government and does not contain any substantive policy provisions. It simply gives legislative effect to the government reorganization that was announced on December 12, 2003 as it affects Parks Canada.

In addition to amending the Department of Canadian Heritage Act and the Parks Canada Agency Act, Bill C-7 also amends statutes through which Parks Canada delivers its mandate. They would be the Canada National Parks Act, the Historic Sites and Monuments Act, the Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act, the Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act, the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park Act, the Species at Risk Act and the Canada Shipping Act.

There are no additional funding requirements related to Bill C-7.

Parks Canada's organizational integrity has been maintained. The agency remains committed to working with Canadians to protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage for present and future generations.

I would like to take a few moments to talk about the Parks Canada story. Canada's national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas represent the soul of Canada. They are a central part of who we are and what we are. They are places of magic, wonder and heritage, and each tells its own story. Together they connect Canadians to our roots, our future and to each other.

What we cherish as part of our national identity we also recognize as part of our national responsibility. All Canadians share the obligation to preserve and protect Canada's unique cultural and natural heritage. Together we hold our national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas in trust for the benefit of this generation and future generations.

Canada has the distinction of having established the first national parks service in the world. Over the decades our system of national parks has grown to 41 national parks and reserves, preserving for future generations almost 265,000 thousand square kilometres of lands and waters. There are plans to add, as has been mentioned

earlier, an additional 100,000 square kilometres through the creation of eight more national parks. This legacy is possible in large part because provincial and territorial governments, aboriginal people and local communities have worked with us to create many of these new national parks.

The creation and management of national parks is a delicate balance between the protection of ecologically significant areas of importance to wildlife and meeting economic and social needs of communities. The Government of Canada is committed to working with aboriginal people, local communities and other Canadians and stakeholders to protect our precious natural heritage through the creation of new national parks and national marine conservation areas.

•(1350)

In October 2002 the government announced an action plan to substantially complete Canada's system of national parks by creating 10 new parks over the next five years. This will expand the system by almost 50% with a total area spanning nearly the size of Newfoundland and Labrador. In fact, we have already created two of these 10 new national parks with work continuing on the eight other proposals. Five new national marine conservation areas will also be created.

Canada is blessed with exceptional natural treasures and we owe it to Canadians and to the world to protect these lands and waters. The action plan calls on Parks Canada to work with all of its partners, the provinces and territories, aboriginal and rural communities, industry and environmental groups and others to complete this effort.

In March 2003 the government allocated \$144 million over five years and \$29 million annually thereafter toward this effort. The action plan has already produced two new national parks.

The new Gulf Islands National Park Reserve of Canada protects 33 square kilometres of ecologically rare land in the southern Gulf Islands of British Columbia.

At over 20,000 square kilometres, the new Ukkusiksalik National Park protects virtually an entire watershed close to the Arctic Circle in Nunavut. This park is a product of an agreement between the Government of Canada and the Inuit of Nunavut, forged over several decades of hard work all focused on protecting land, waters, caribou and polar bears for present and future generations.

Specific sites for more national parks have been selected in other natural regions across Canada: the southern Okanagan; lower Similkameen in the interior of British Columbia; Labrador's Torngat Mountains and Mealy Mountains; Manitoba's lowlands boreal forest; Bathurst Island in Nunavut; and the east arm of Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories. Sites for the two remaining national parks are being identified by Parks Canada.

Negotiations to establish the Torngat Mountains national park reserve in northern Labrador are nearing completion. This long-standing proposal will protect some of the highest mountains in North America east of the Canadian Rockies.

S. O. 31

In March 2004 the premier of Manitoba and the former minister of the environment signed a memorandum of agreement identifying the boundaries for public consultation for a national park in the Manitoba lowlands. They also committed to negotiating a national park establishment agreement by May 2005. Both parks will make magnificent additions to our world-class national parks system.

The government is also working with partners to establish five new national marine conservation areas adding an estimated 15,000 square kilometres to the system. This will be a major step forward for global conservation of marine habitat.

Canada has the world's longest coastline and 7% of its fresh water. This commitment to creating new marine conservation areas is consistent with the recent Speech from the Throne in which our government made a commitment to create new marine protected areas as part of the ocean action plan.

These natural marine conservation areas will be located in ecologically unrepresented marine regions. Four sites have been identified: Gwaii Haanas off British Columbia's Queen Charlotte Islands; western Lake Superior; British Columbia's southern Strait of Georgia; and the waters off Îles-de-la-Madeleine in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

• (1355)

While a site for the remaining national marine conservation area has yet to be finalized, Parks Canada has received a number of proposals from local communities. This is a testament to the growing interest in the conservation of our marine heritage.

In addition the government will accelerate its actions over the next five years to improve the ecological integrity of Canada's 41 existing national parks. This will implement the action plan arising from the panel on the ecological integrity of Canada's national parks, whose report was endorsed by the government in April 2000.

These two initiatives, the action plan to expand our system of national parks and national marine conservation areas and the action plan on ecological integrity, are the most ambitious initiatives to expand and protect national parks and national marine conservation areas in over 100 years; indeed since the Banff National Park of Canada, Canada's first, was established in 1885.

Parks Canada needs to get on with the job Parliament has assigned to it. I urge members of the House to give speedy passage to Bill C-7.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member in his eloquent dissertation talked about the marine protected areas. I would like him to elaborate on the items that will be protected in those marine protected areas, which is a new concept that has been asked for by environmentalists for some time.

Hon. Paul Harold Macklin: Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate that the hon. member brought forward that point. It really has been of interest to those who are interested in the marine area that certain species and habitat be protected for certain elements of our marine heritage. Clearly this has been done.

The new marine sites are being set forth and are soon to be added to our list of conservation areas. It is extremely important that the

matter be attended to as quickly as possible, and that we have full and complete contact with all of the communities of interest and the stakeholders. We must make sure when we designate a marine conservation area that it truly reflects the special interest of that particular area of our marine water system.

* * *

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to table the report of the Auditor General of Canada on the implementation of the Environmental Review Directive and other environmental review processes at Export Development Canada.

[*English*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g) this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

DUNC SCHOOLEY

Hon. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House of Commons to honour Mr. Dunc Schooley who passed away at 93 on October 10.

Born in Ridgeway, Ontario, Dunc was one of six children. He was an accomplished baseball pitcher who was respected by his teammates and opponents alike as the skinny southpaw with the sneaky curveball. Pitching for the Merritton Senior "A" ball team, he struck out 19 batters in one game. He could have had fame and fortune in the majors. Dunc remained in Merritton where he and his late wife, Eileen, raised their family and made a tremendous contribution to the community.

Dunc Schooley was a charter member and past president of the Merritton Lions Club, past master of the Adanac Masonic Lodge, a volunteer fireman, and past president of the Red Cross. He created a learn to swim program free to all participants and he was the driving force behind the Dunc Schooley Swimming Pool. Dunc lived by the adage, "Leave the place a little better than you found it". His community is a much better place today because of his devotion and hard work.

I extend heartfelt condolences to Dunc's brother Will, his children Arthur, John, Joanne and Marylynn, his nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

* * *

CURLING

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the mandate of the CBC is to promote and enhance Canadian culture. The sport of curling is very much a part of Canada's cultural heritage.

CBC, with the help of government subsidies, has managed to displace TSN from covering national curling events, namely the men's Brier and the Scott Tournament of Hearts. Curling fans across Canada will be most disappointed when they discover that CBC will be reducing the coverage of these events by 66%. Most Canadians will no longer be able to enjoy watching the evening or morning curling draws.

Let us review what has been accomplished here. Through Liberal government subsidies, the CBC has managed to squeeze out a quality private sector broadcaster. CBC, with the help of the Liberal government, is betraying its mandate while Canadians are being shortchanged on their access to a major Canadian cultural event.

The Liberal government and the CBC should be ashamed of themselves.

* * *

TERRORISM

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I add my voice to the many objecting to the comments made by Mr. Mohamed Elmasry in a recent broadcast and interview.

Mr. Elmasry acknowledged that he was invited to participate in the broadcast in his capacity as a representative of the Canadian Islamic Congress. His remarks did not bring honour to that organization. His comments about out of uniform Israeli military personnel, indeed all Israelis over 18, being legitimate targets at bus stops crosses a line that does harm to many: the Israelis, the Palestinians themselves, and the Muslim and Jewish communities in Canada.

Suicide bombers who target Israeli military personnel and civilians at bus stops must not only be stopped, but as well must never ever be legitimized as a solution to the conflict. Canadians do not condone the promotion of terrorism or the killing of innocent people. I would respectfully suggest that Mr. Elmasry unequivocally withdraw his harmful statements and apologize to all in Canada.

* * *

● (1405)

[Translation]

CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Council for International Co-operation, a coalition of more than a hundred voluntary sector organizations working to end global poverty, has just presented five policy papers that review Canada's international policy.

Knowing that the aid granted by Canada to developing countries has been considerably reduced and that we are only half way to the aid target percentage; that nearly half the world's population lives on less than \$3 a day; that a third of all deaths in the world—50,000 deaths a day—are from poverty-related causes; and that poverty is a major obstacle to security, we have no choice but to support the work of these agencies that fight for social justice.

The Bloc Québécois commends the members of the coalition and assures them of its support.

S. O. 31

FOSTER FAMILY WEEK

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the hon. members' attention to an evening of recognition that was held for Foster Family Week.

It was organized by Outaouais youth centres, represented by Pierre Deschamps, and the Outaouais Foster Family Association, represented by its president, Micheline Charlebois.

The evening had two purposes: first to recognize some 400 foster families that open their homes and hearts to young people in difficulty; and second, to present the premiere of a joint theatrical production by the foster parents and the youth centres staff.

Every year, Outaouais youth centres, directed by Gilles Clavel, provide a wide range of standard, consistent, high-quality social services to more than 2,000 young people.

The constituents of Hull—Aylmer are proud to be able to count on the generosity of foster families and the support of Outaouais youth centres. Foster families are an integral part of the Outaouais community and we appreciate them very much.

* * *

[English]

CANADA POST

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post's job is to deliver the mail, but the Liberals have abused the company for the benefit of their friends and donors.

André Ouellet's \$2 million in unreceipted expenses has cost taxpayers big bucks. The special hiring of friends and family, some unqualified or unable to do the job, has cost even more. Liberal friendly firms were awarded over \$35 million in sole source contracts.

However, Mr. Ouellet was not the only Liberal crony at Canada Post. We now find out that Liberal donor Gilles Champagne also racked up considerable bills on his world tours. When will we see his receipts?

The Prime Minister told us he was going to end cronyism, yet weeks ago he broke his promise and appointed yet another crony, the revenue minister's former colleague, Gordon Feeney, as chair of Canada Post.

Cronyism costs Canadians. This is an outrage that must stop now.

S. O. 31

PALLIATIVE CARE

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to announce that the Dr. Bob Kemp Hospice of Hamilton is working to bring the first centre for hospice palliative care to the city of Hamilton. This will be the first such centre not only for my riding of Hamilton Mountain, but for the entire province of Ontario.

This centre will provide terminally ill individuals with emotional and spiritual support. By also providing hospice residential beds, it will make more hospital beds available to patients requiring active treatment. A bereavement program at the centre will help the family and friends of terminally ill individuals to cope with the loss and grief they experience.

I would also like to recognize the generosity of Iris Berryman of my riding of Hamilton Mountain for donating the land upon which this centre will be located. I wish the Dr. Bob Kemp Hospice of Hamilton good luck in completing this admirable project.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DOMINIQUE BRISSON

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to emphasize today that, at the Gala Saturne designed to recognize the excellence and know-how of women farmers, Dominique Brisson, a sheep producer, was awarded the title of 2004 Woman Farmer of the Year by the Fédération des agricultrices du Québec.

I extend my warmest congratulations to Ms. Brisson on being so honoured. In fact, Ms. Brisson is following in the footsteps of my colleague, the hon. member for Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, who received this honour in 2003.

Ms. Brisson, whose farm business is located in Saint-Narcisse-de-Rimouski, deserves our praise, and it is my honour to convey it to her. She is an inspiration for young women farmers, obviously, but also for all those who, motivated by the desire to expand the frontiers of a promising commitment, are getting involved.

* * *

●(1410)

[*English*]

CANADIAN FORCES

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a number of ceremonies were held in 2004 to remember the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic. During that conflict, nearly 2,000 members of the Royal Canadian Navy sacrificed their lives, including 752 members of the air force and 1,600 merchant marines.

Sadly, this month another member of our Canadian Forces was tragically lost in the north Atlantic. Lieutenant Chris Saunders lost his life while serving aboard HMCS *Chicoutimi*.

On behalf of my constituents of Don Valley East, I would like to extend our deepest condolences to the family and shipmates of Lieutenant Saunders.

This Remembrance Day, I hope Canadians take the time to reflect on the sacrifices and achievements of our Canadian Forces, serving both in times of war and in peace.

* * *

MEMBER FOR FORT MCMURRAY—ATHABASCA

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am deeply honoured today to represent the riding of Fort McMurray—Athabasca. I am grateful for the trust that my constituents have placed in me. I will strive to represent them with wisdom, compassion and vigour.

I will work hard to find a speedy resolution to the BSE crisis, which has almost devastated our farmers, to lobby for federal funding to repair and upgrade northern Alberta's highways, and to press the government for funding to take into account the 20,000 shadow population living in northeastern Alberta using our facilities but not providing a tax basis for infrastructure.

I will work hard to find solutions to rejuvenate our health system, and to protect our environment and resources for the next generation, as well as to recognize our obligation to rehabilitate our criminal youth but not at the expense of the rest of society.

Finally, I pray that during my time here my mind will be quick, my humour always ready, and my tongue as respectful to others as those of my friends across the floor.

* * *

HYDRO ONE TRANSMISSION LINE

Mr. Lui Temelkovski (Oak Ridges—Markham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring attention to the construction of the proposed 230 kilowatt double circuit transmission line of Hydro One, set to run from the Parkway transformer station in Markham to the Armitage transformer station in Newmarket.

As members may already know, there has been a public outcry in relation to this project. In our riding alone, we have received in excess of 2,000 electronic petition letters requesting that the proposed plans not proceed.

In addition, I wish to add that the known risk to human health, including both flora and fauna, is too universal and substantiated by world leading sources to logically and humanly allow such a project to proceed as presently planned.

I look forward to any suggestions in exploring more viable and less dangerous alternatives to providing power across such an expanding region.

* * *

YOUTH

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am calling for an action plan to address the devastating impacts of youth out-migration in rural and northern Canada. The continual loss of young people from the north has created a crisis that threatens the very future of our region. How do we build a 21st century economy when our young entrepreneurs are the first to leave?

Northern College in South Porcupine, Ontario, has responded with the graduate alliance program. It helps place university and college graduates with northern businesses. This is a vital program in keeping graduates in the north.

Unfortunately, this program is being cancelled because it no longer meets federal priorities. We cannot afford to lose this program. We need to build on its success. Furthermore, we need a broad strategy to develop youth leadership, employment support and relief of student debt.

[Translation]

We have to work with young people to create a generation of leaders. They must know, understand and live their culture, develop resources and participate in the new economy.

* * *

[English]

TERRORISM

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we were all very disturbed to hear recent reports of hatred and anti-Semitism being spread in Canada.

Last week a recording surfaced of a sermon given by Sheik Younus Kathrada in Vancouver, who referred to the Jews as “the brothers of the monkeys and the swines, a people whose treachery is well known, who never keep their word”. He said there was never going to be peace with them.

We also were very disturbed to hear the comments of Dr. Mohamed Elmasry of the Canadian Islamic Conference who clearly said that any Israeli over the age of 18 constituted a legitimate target for terror. I was further disturbed to read the comments of the Liberal member for Don Valley East who said that “terrorism is the result of the policies of the United States”.

It is time for all Canadians to reject hatred and to end the habit of blaming the victims of terror for terror that takes the lives of innocent citizens.

* * *

•(1415)

[Translation]

GALART 2004

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to reward the work and involvement of artists in our region, the cultural development council for central Quebec will be holding its GalArt 2004 this evening.

For this second edition of the gala, the council received 65 nominations from the five RCMs in the region, 17 as compared to 24 in 2003.

To add to the festive atmosphere, guest artists will be performing on stage, including the Sylvain Marcotte jazz trio from Drummondville, Carolane Doyon from Warwick, the regional winner of the Cégeps en spectacle 2004 competition, and a wind trio from the Drummondville symphonic orchestra.

S. O. 31

Finally, the evening will be topped off by a showing of a video documentary by Productions Benoît Jean. The documentary will showcase the cultural wealth of our region, featuring some 25 artists and cultural stakeholders visited by the film crew.

On behalf of my colleagues, the hon. members for Richmond—Arthabaska, for Mégantic—L'Érable and for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, I wish the best of luck to all our artists.

* * *

[English]

A CAPITAL EXPERIENCE

Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week I am pleased to host 14 students in Ottawa as part of a program I call “A Capital Experience”. In this program two students from each of my riding's seven high schools get to visit the capital region for three days to learn about a variety of career opportunities in public life that could await them following their education.

These are not just any run of the mill teenagers. They are leaders on their student councils and exceptional young people.

Today I want to welcome to Parliament Hill Jill Lewis and Will Rea from Haliburton; Keith Marquis and Frank Parker from Brock; Katie Fallis and Leigh Sands from Crestwood; Anne Handley and Stacy Gudmundsson from Fenelon Falls; Anne Baxter and Dave Cavanaugh from LCVI; Kasey Hinton and Heather Drury from I.E. Weldon; and Zack Swain and Corey Smith from St. Thomas Aquinas.

It is often said that our young people are our future. Based on what I have seen over the past three days, I would say our future is bright. I salute these students seated in the gallery today.

* * *

TERRORISM

Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise before this House today with great concern over the appalling statements made by Mohamed Elmasry, national president of the Canadian Islamic Congress on October 19.

Mr. Elmasry had the audacity to state boldly that any Israeli in Israel over the age of 18, regardless of who they are or what they believe, is a valid target for homicide bombers. This is outrageous. It is a threat to one group, but is an insult to us all.

Today we must all stand in condemnation of Mr. Elmasry's statement and the incendiary views that they embody.

A number of Canadian Muslim groups have already separated themselves from Mr. Elmasry and demanded that he relinquish his role as president of his organization. I stand with them today and commend them for their actions.

Today we must follow the lead of these progressive calls from the Canadian Muslim community and together denounce Mohamed Elmasry's statements and all that they represent.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD***[English]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister went to Atlantic Canada earlier this year and had a deathbed conversion on the election trail. He said that he would give Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador 100% of the revenue from their offshore energy resources. Now he has reneged on that deal.

Will the Prime Minister and his Atlantic ministers admit they have a moral obligation to keep these promises: no caps, no clawbacks, no limitations, no conditions, no big exceptions in the fine print? Will the Prime Minister keep his word? Will his Atlantic ministers make him keep his word?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to ensuring that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador receive greater financial benefits from the offshore resources. The Government of Canada has offered Newfoundland and Labrador payments equal to 100% of its offshore revenues, payments which are expected to reach \$1.4 billion over the next eight years. That is what Premier Williams asked for in February. That is what he asked for in June. That is what we are promising.

• (1420)

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know Alberta has the full benefit of its resources. The Deputy Prime Minister should remind the Prime Minister that the Atlantic provinces should be entitled to the same benefits.

Because there are all these strings now, one of the conditions the Prime Minister wants is that Newfoundland and Labrador commit to a cap. In other words, it could only have the money if it promised to remain a have not province.

Why does the government want Atlantic Canadians to share in the poverty but never to share in the prosperity?

Hon. R. John Efford (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is absolute nonsense. Unlike the former Tory government in Newfoundland and Labrador that wrote the Atlantic accord and put the offset mechanism in there where Newfoundland would only receive 30% with no clawback and equalization, this government is allowing 100% revenues and 100% equalization. That is true.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government promised that when it was on the election trail, but now when Danny Williams asks for the cheque he does not get it. This party promised it then and sticks with that promise today.

The promise was 100% of the offshore oil revenues for Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador, and now the government wants to claw back revenue in other areas.

Will the minister admit that the only clawback here is the Prime Minister and all his Atlantic ministers clawing back on their promises?

Hon. R. John Efford (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely false. The Government of Canada does not intend to claw back revenues on the offshore oil in any other areas. Newfoundland and Labrador is receiving 100% of the revenues and it will receive 100% of the equalization, something that you would never commit to and something the former government took—

The Speaker: I remind the hon. minister to address the Chair. The hon. member for Central Nova.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is nonsense is the minister's answer to that question. We know that it was not just provincial premiers and Atlantic Canadians who believed the Prime Minister's promises. He promised that 100% of the offshore royalties would go to the provinces. His own caucus took him at that promise. The fisheries minister from Nova Scotia said that the offshore deal they were looking forward to was one that would allow each of the provinces to keep 100% of their offshore oil and gas royalties. That is not what is happening in this deal.

Why is the Prime Minister breaking his word to Atlantic Canadians on this deal?

Hon. R. John Efford (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I give my word, I give my word, unlike the hon. member.

Let me tell the hon. member this. The deal that was committed between the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Prime Minister during the election is the deal that is being given to the province of Newfoundland and Labrador today. It is no less and it is no more.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only person in Newfoundland and Labrador who believes this is a good deal is that very minister, who in a letter to his constituents said that the Prime Minister promised to finalize the deal to give Newfoundland and Labrador 100% of its revenues without affecting equalization. Every Liberal candidate in the election reiterated that promise.

Why has the Prime Minister not lived up to his commitment, and what part of 100% does the Prime Minister not understand?

• (1425)

Hon. R. John Efford (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador is receiving 100% of the revenues. Right now, the issue is equalization on top of the revenues. They keep referring to the revenues. The deal that was committed by the Prime Minister and the premier during the election is a deal that was negotiated.

Last Thursday evening, when they concluded negotiations between the finance minister of Newfoundland and the finance minister of Canada, the premier called me and said that it was going for sign-off and to make sure that sign-off was done.

I made sure the sign-off was done, not—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CHILD CARE

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following the OECD report noting the poor quality of child care services in Canada, but not in Quebec, the Minister of Social Development reiterated his position that he wanted to establish a pan-Canadian child care system.

Since the Quebec system is already in place and since it was highly praised by the OECD report, will the minister admit that he certainly ought not to interfere? He can copy it if he wishes, but he must not get his public servants involved in it, because it is a Quebec responsibility, and one which Quebec is doing a remarkable job fulfilling.

[English]

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been said in the House before that we will work with the provinces on the national child care system, acknowledging the successful child care system in the province of Quebec.

In terms of the OECD report, it has stated what we know. That is what we are looking at trying to change, in effect, beginning with our meetings next week.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister's problem is that he is promising federal funding for a pan-Canadian system, but the funding has conditions attached. The system that already exists in Quebec is very impressive. It is a model that he can use, but he must not interfere or impose conditions.

Can he tell us today, clearly, that the federal government's money will not come with conditions for Quebec's child care system?

[English]

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I can say to the hon. member is that those discussions are ahead. That is why we are having the meetings. Everybody will be at the table, and this is the subject of conversations.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's child care system has been lauded by the OECD. This system was created in Quebec, for Quebecers, in response to our needs and expectations.

Why does the Minister of Social Development not show respect for Quebec and why does he not state clearly that he has no intention of trying to intervene in the Quebec system on the pretext of investing money in a pan-Canadian, unified system?

[English]

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very respectful of Quebec, respectful of jurisdiction, respectful of the Quebec child care system and respectful of the ambitions that it expresses. Those are very much the ambitions we are looking at and trying to express in the rest of the country.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on November 1, the provincial ministers responsible for child care will meet with the federal Minister of Social Development.

At that meeting, does the minister intend to offer Quebec the right to opt out with full compensation and immediately put an end to the injustice to Quebecers, who are denied federal tax credits for child care, something which has cost us \$1 billion so far?

[English]

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I said in an earlier answer is that we will be having our conversations with the minister responsible in Quebec beginning on Monday and going on to Tuesday as the beginning of a longer process.

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's report on child care is a monument to Liberal broken promises. In fact, what we have seen is a whole generation of children left behind. The first promise from the Liberal administration on child care was in 1993. Now we see absolutely nothing except the most recent revelation by the minister that what we will have are conversations.

Is that what we have with Liberal commitments, conversations? I thought we were supposed to have action.

Will the minister deliver today on the promise to bring in legislation around a pan-Canadian child care program?

● (1430)

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a national child care system is a very big ambitious endeavour. It is something that is akin to education 100 years ago and health care 40 years ago. It is something that will take a lot of work by everyone, a lot of work by the federal government and by the provinces.

That is why those conversations are taking place and why those conversations are very important. They are conversations that will lead to action and to the right kind of action.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. When someone really feels that an issue is important, when a government feels it is important it takes action, which is why we had child care across Canada during World War II. What we are hearing now is that we probably will have to wait another generation, who knows how long, until this promise is kept.

Why should we have any faith? We have seen, in the case of the discussions with Newfoundland around the whole issue of the oil and gas revenue, that the statements of that administration are not worth the paper they are printed on.

The New Democratic Party of Canada in the election set out in writing our commitment to the people of Newfoundland. Will the Prime Minister honour his commitment to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Oral Questions

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind members of the House that what Premier Danny Williams asked for on February 27 of this year was that Newfoundland and Labrador would receive 100% of its offshore royalties, that the payments would be administered outside of equalization and the existing offshore accord, and that the payments would continue until Newfoundland and Labrador reached the same fiscal capacity as Ontario, thereby becoming a have province.

That is exactly what the Government of Canada is promising.

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SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps demonstrating a shameful failure to keep his word. Here is his rhetoric, “Parliament must again be where the great debates of our day take place”, but when it comes to important debate in Parliament over the Prime Minister's own involvement in the sponsorship program, he stonewalls. He waits until he is outside the debating chamber where he does not have to face his opposition. That is the reverse of what he pledged.

Why do the Prime Minister's deeds fail to match his words?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, the Prime Minister has acted decisively in terms of the sponsorship program, ending the program and moving to establish the Gomery commission. The government is cooperating fully with Justice Gomery.

Again, I cannot understand why the hon. member, a lawyer, would not understand the importance of the independence of a judicial inquiry.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians want to know is whether their Prime Minister understands the importance of keeping his word.

Here are the facts. The Prime Minister made calls to lobby for sponsorship money for Serge Savard who is not his constituent and does not have a business in his riding. Serge Savard is the Prime Minister's golfing buddy and bagman.

Is it not true that the Prime Minister was not acting as an MP on behalf of a constituent when he made these calls on the sponsorship program but on behalf of a crony who raised over \$1 million for his leadership campaign?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find this discussion about Serge Savard very curious because the fact is the contributions to candidates for the Liberal Party leadership were posted, transparently and openly, on the website for all Canadians to see, whereas the leadership contributions for the deputy leader of that party, when he ran for a party that no longer exists, were not posted. Furthermore, that leader did not post the contributors to his leadership campaign.

The fact is the Liberal Party is open and transparent in terms of the contributions but that party is not.

• (1435)

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works and Government

Services is the last person in the House who should be lecturing anyone on integrity.

For weeks the Liberal government has said that we must cooperate with the Gomery inquiry. This weekend Justice Gomery appealed to members of Parliament to be more open in giving answers and cleaning up this Liberal mess.

The Prime Minister said that he would be honest. Justice Gomery wants us to have answers. Therefore, when did the Prime Minister know that his office was making phone calls to secure money for his fundraiser, Serge Savard?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that party was wrong three times last week in question period. That was a mistake made on a day to day basis discussing the testimony before Justice Gomery.

We should wait for the truth and for Justice Gomery to table his report so that Canadians and the House of Commons will have the answers we need to move forward.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, the minister is making his own mistake by persistently failing to answer the simplest of questions.

Last week the public works minister stood in the House and specifically referred to specific constituencies and projects that were under the sponsorship program, but when it comes to the Prime Minister he has selective amnesia. How convenient but he cannot have it both ways.

Again, when did the Prime Minister know that his office was making phone calls to secure taxpayer money for his own personal fundraiser? When did he know?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think there is something more deep-seated in the Conservative Party's contempt for Justice Gomery's work. I think it reflects a greater contempt for the independence of the Canadian judiciary, in fact reflected by their justice critic's description of the situation when he said that there was a lot of distrust in general toward the judiciary right now and that it was leading a lot of people to be very fearful of giving powers to the judiciary.

Further, their own leader said that he agreed that serious flaws existed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and that there was no meaningful review or accountability mechanisms for justices.

They should let Justice Gomery work and have some respect for the independence of the Canadian judiciary.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we were amazed to learn from the Gomery commission that the Liberal government, via the Canada Information Office, had paid \$600,000 from Canadian unity funding for the design of a logo that has now disappeared without a trace.

How can we explain to the public watching that the government has paid \$600,000 for a non-existent logo? Is this not just a repeat of those three Groupaction reports that were never produced yet cost the government \$500,000 apiece?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the commission has a broad mandate to obtain all the answers it needs. We support Mr. Justice Gomery one hundred per cent. It is very important not to prejudge his work. I look forward to seeing his report.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister was reading from the wrong page of his briefing book. The logo is nowhere to be found, but we have found contracts for its design, and the buddies of the Liberal Party of Canada were indeed paid for it. The contracts in question went to: BCP, a Liberal Party contributor of \$123,000 between 1996 and 2003, Everest: a contributor of \$174,000, Compass: \$6,000, Vickers & Benson: \$102,000 and Palmer Jarvis, a contributor of \$125,000 to the Liberal Party of Canada.

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the hon. member is commenting on day to day testimony. We are cooperating fully with Justice Gomery. We are not afraid of the results of his work. In fact, we are looking forward to having his report and moving forward.

However we are not waiting for Justice Gomery's report to in fact make differences and positive changes in the way we are operating as a government. We are making positive progress.

Our ethics and integrity package in the Department of Public Works and Government Services is in fact the best practice model by the Conference Board of Canada for both the public and private sectors. We are making a real difference, not just trying to make a point.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is not just seasonal workers living in Canada who find it unfair to pay premiums without qualifying for benefits. Thousands of Mexican agricultural workers and their employers are contributing in excess of \$11 million annually to the employment insurance fund, but these workers do not collect any benefits, because they go back to Mexico once their contract is over.

Could the Minister of Human Resources tell us whether the Prime Minister raised the issue of premiums with the President of Mexico?

● (1440)

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for mentioning the success of this program. Of course, he wants to point out that thousands of seasonal workers who come here to work take money back home when they leave. The hon. member is well aware that, under the Employment Insurance Act, a person who is out of the country cannot collect benefits.

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think the minister did not understand my question.

Will the federal government stop making Mexican workers pay employment insurance premiums when it is perfectly aware that these people do not qualify for benefits, as is the case for students, women and others?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in order to collect benefits, a person must be out of work, reside in Canada and be unable to work.

Yesterday, the President of Mexico wanted to say that he really appreciates the fact that this program for seasonal workers in agriculture is so successful. He wanted to thank Canada for this opportunity.

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[English]

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of International Trade.

Last weekend the governments of the United States and Japan proudly announced the deal to restart trade in beef and set aside BSE concerns. That deal was sealed in just three days.

It has been 525 days since our border was slammed shut. A Japanese day of negotiation is therefore worth 175 Canadian days. This does not seem right.

Canadian cattlemen and farmers would like to know what the Japanese and Americans did to open their border, which the Canadian government has failed to do.

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the preamble of the hon. member's question is clearly inaccurate.

When I was in Japan two weeks ago, we received a very firm commitment from the Japanese government that it treated us, Canada and the United States, as an integrated North American beef marketplace.

Those arrangements that were being put in place for the United States would also be put in place for Canada in the same timeframe. What has taken place is good news for Canadian cattle producers.

Ms. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gets worse. Just hours ago Taiwan also announced it would open its border to U.S. beef.

Oral Questions

The BSE crisis has now reached a level of desperation in Canada. Since the minister is unable to negotiate the opening of our border, is the minister prepared to proceed with the chapter 20 claim under NAFTA to get the border open once again to Canadian beef?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me start by complimenting, which is something I rarely do, the Leader of the Opposition for the outstanding critic he has appointed for international trade. She brings to this portfolio a wealth of international business experience. I am very pleased that at long last the opposition will be devoting to international trade and investment the attention that it deserves.

I must say I look forward to working with the member for Newmarket—Aurora to promote Canadian interests around the world.

* * *

• (1445)

TERRORISM

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, calling a community “monkeys” and “pigs” is utterly unacceptable. The statements made by the head of the Dar al-Madinah Islamic Society are outrageous and offensive because they divide communities. In fact, Sheik Younus' comments threaten the multicultural fabric of this country. Also, the comments by Dr. Elmasry, calling all Israeli terror targets are against Canadian values.

My question is, why has the government not condemned these intolerant acts? Why?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in relation to the cleric mentioned by the hon. member, it is my understanding that a complaint has been received by the RCMP. The RCMP will in fact investigate that complaint, and is doing so.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to anti-Americanism the Liberals just cannot kick the habit. We have had Liberals refer to Americans as “morons”, “bastards” and “idiots”. Then last week we had Liberal ministers picking sides in the U.S. election. Now we have the Liberal MP for Don Valley East blaming the United States for global terrorism. In an interview she said terrorism is “the result of the policies of the United States”.

Why does the Prime Minister continue to tolerate these damaging anti-American outbursts and why do Liberals blame the victim when it comes to terrorism?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government and our country, Canada, have embarked on the fight against terrorism very closely. The Deputy Prime Minister is doing an outstanding job of making sure that we are squarely on side to fight terrorism in Canada and internationally, and we shall continue to do so. We are in the fight against terrorism.

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INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 21 the province of Ontario announced that \$680 million

from the provincial gas tax will be allocated to transit authorities across Ontario over the next three years.

Would the Minister of State for Infrastructure and Communities outline whether this deal will impact his approach to the delivery of a portion of the federal gas tax for sustainable infrastructure projects in cities and communities across Canada?

Hon. John Godfrey (Minister of State (Infrastructure and Communities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we welcome this initiative by Ontario. We work very closely with the Ontario government. We support its decision to invest in public transit. We have already done so for Toronto, for Ottawa and for other parts of Ontario. We will continue to do so as we start working with the gas tax dedicated toward sustainable development.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the environment, the government is racing George W. Bush to the bottom of the international heap.

Today the environment commissioner in her report denounced the government for a lack of leadership, a lack of priority and a lack of will. With a record this embarrassing, will the minister at least commit today to implementing the recommendations of the environment commissioner?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada welcomes the report of Madam Gélinas and is willing to act accordingly. Even today the Prime Minister announced that a new ad hoc committee on sustainability and environment will exist. It will be chaired by the Minister of Industry. It will bring to the table the views of natural resources, fisheries and oceans, health and myself. This shows how much we want to change the way the environment is taken into account in this country.

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COMMUNICATIONS SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, immense powers and resources are granted to the Communications Security Establishment with virtually no checks and balances, with no court order, no accountability and no specifics. CSE needs only the defence minister's authorization to listen to and record any communication from any Canadian to a designated country. To make matters worse, the oversight commissioner is a powerless part time watchdog. This is terrifying.

Where are the checks and balances? Why has the government failed to ensure proper accountability?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the House would appreciate, and I do not think the Canadian public would appreciate a former chief justice of Canada being attributed the title of being a powerless watchdog.

Oral Questions

I have met with Mr. Justice Antonio Lamer. He has eight people working with him constantly watching over CSE to make sure that it respects the law. I meet regularly with the director of CSE. I can assure the House CSE is watched. They are people with a culture of obeying the laws of Canada and recognizing privacy concerns. They operate within the law and they protect Canadians in that optic.

* * *

●(1450)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the OECD places us at the bottom of the environmental chart. Today the commissioner of the environment blasted the government for its environmental performance. I quote again what the commissioner said, "I am left to conclude that the reasons are lack of leadership, lack of priority, and lack of will".

Why has the government not lived up to some of its environmental commitments and shown some leadership, some priorities and some vision?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed the report said that the government has some improvements to make on the environment file. The Government of Canada welcomes this report and it is in fact what we want to do in order to increase our capacity to put the environment at the heart of the decision making process. It is why the Prime Minister created a new ad hoc committee to ensure that the environment and the economy go together in this country.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another committee just will not cut it.

In her report the environment commissioner studied five out of the more than 100 international agreements that this country has signed. She found most of them lacking. She said that Transport Canada does not know how much oil is being dumped in the oceans; Environment Canada cannot even define what wetland conservation is; and the DFO does not know how many fish we have.

The government is about to embark on the Kyoto implementation plan. It is about the government. It just does not know where it is going. Why do you not come clean with Canadians and tell them—

The Speaker: I remind the hon. member for Red Deer, who has a lot of experience in the House, that he must address his comments to the Chair.

The hon. Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although the report is far from being as negative as the hon. member wants to portray it, it is true that Canada has to improve its performance at a time when more and more the environment has become a condition to succeed as a sustainable economy. It is a matter of having a better environment and a better economy together, and it is what the Government of Canada will do.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Louise Pargeter's alleged murderer was granted day parole in 2000, but in 2001 Ms. Pargeter revoked his parole because of his violent

treatment of his girlfriend. Ms. Pargeter's murder was brutal and marks the first time a parole officer working with an offender inside the community has died or has been killed on the job.

Could the Minister of Public Safety tell us if CSC staff had any concerns about granting full parole, and if so, did the Parole Board take these concerns into consideration?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very tragic situation. On behalf of all members of the House we extend our deepest sympathies to the family of the parole officer, Louise Pargeter.

In fact there is an investigation ongoing. It would be inappropriate for me to comment in relation to that investigation, but the very matters raised by the hon. member will obviously be part of that investigation.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Jan Fox, the regional director for Correctional Services, reportedly stated that she did not know the risk category of Louise Pargeter's alleged murderer, but Ms. Fox said, "He must have been doing well on his earlier day parole since he had been granted full parole".

Does the Minister of Public Safety support her regional director's assertion? Did in fact Eli Ulayuk's behaviour warrant full parole?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is fully aware, the Parole Board makes independent decisions based upon the best evidence before it. I do not comment on any individual decision made by the Parole Board of Canada but, as I have indicated, this tragic situation is under investigation. I have further indicated that there may well be aspects of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and parole procedures that do warrant review in the name of public safety.

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●(1455)

[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all the stakeholders in the Quebec City area are wondering why the Minister of Transport will not fund part of the study to improve passenger transportation between Quebec City and Montreal and, at the same time, the feasibility of a high-speed train in that corridor.

Oral Questions

How can the Minister of Transport justify his refusal, when a consensus exists among the stakeholders in the Quebec City area, who are themselves prepared to assume half the costs, and when this connection is crucial for the economic development of both the region and Quebec as a whole?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. Quebec officials did indeed request funding for a study. Their request was considered among all the other projects, and it did not make the cut.

I can tell the hon. member, however, that the future of VIA Rail transportation is not dependent on additional studies. We have enough studies to fill all the libraries. What we need now are proposals, something that VIA Rail's board of directors will eventually come up with.

We are talking about a very substantial investment. There will have to be discussions with my finance colleague, at some more or less distant point in the future.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, given the significant financial involvement of Quebec City's social and economic sector and the major economic and environmental impacts of such a project, could the minister tell this House if he intends to provide an answer quickly, and when he plans to do so?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of wasting \$150,000 on a study as long as the funding for the high-speed train is not in place. We are talking about billions of dollars.

I do not have that kind of money. We are not going to waste money on conducting studies just for the sake of conducting studies. They may benefit consultants and chambers of commerce, but I will not waste taxpayers money.

* * *

[English]

FIREARMS PROGRAM

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal brain trust over there is giving away free firearms licences to 770,000 randomly selected gun owners and is charging the other unlucky licence holders \$60 each to renew their licences.

Does this Liberal lottery not violate their charter rights to be treated equally under the law? And for the 25th time in two years I ask, how much is the firearms program going to cost to fully implement and how much is it going to cost to maintain?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it slightly passing strange that the party that ridiculed the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the last election would now invoke it in this context, but I guess that is a party that is quite happy to have it both ways.

Let me reassure the hon. member that on this side of the House we remain committed to an effective and efficient gun control program. In fact we are working closely with firearms owners, users and other stakeholders to make—

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

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think everyone in this country already knows that the last part is not true. This is just the latest example of poor program planning and nine years of Liberal mismanagement.

When will the minister admit there are better places to put \$100 million a year than on a firearms program? How about clearing the backlog of more than 1,700 DNA cases in the RCMP forensic laboratories? How about clearing that away?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government's commitment to public safety is clear. That is why we are working on a number of fronts, including DNA. I guess the hon. member missed the press release from the RCMP recently indicating how successful our DNA identification program has been.

We are committed to public safety, whether it is DNA, whether it is the sex offender registry, whether it is gun control and dealing with smuggled guns and gun crime in our major cities. This government takes a back seat to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

* * *

MULTICULTURALISM

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after the francophone minority, it is now the turn of the Canadian Centre on Minority Affairs which has described the Leader of the Opposition's efforts to weaken Canada as "opportunistic and irresponsible".

Could the Minister of State for Multiculturalism provide assurances to our multicultural community that a Liberal government would never abandon our multicultural community by waffling them off to another level of government? This is very important because the Leader of the Opposition was seen chatting with the ambassador of Belgium as recently as Saturday night.

• (1500)

Hon. Raymond Chan (Minister of State (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that this government will always work to ensure that Canadians in all ethnocultural communities can participate in and contribute fully to our society. We will continue to remove barriers such that all Canadians can contribute and take an active part in Canada's social, cultural, economic and political affairs.

I will also strongly uphold the balance of equal opportunity and work to eliminate racism as laid out in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act and as protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Government Orders

[Translation]

BROADCASTING

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only is the Liberal government manipulating and censoring public and private broadcasters, now it is moving on to the primary schools. The pupils at École du Bois-joli de Trois-Rivières have just learned this to their great amazement, as their amateur radio station was brutally and arbitrarily shut down.

When will the minister reassure these exemplary parents and teachers by renewing their broadcasting licence?

Hon. Liza Frulla (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Minister responsible for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must admit that this is the first I have heard about this. We will look into this and find out whether the school administration is involved. If so, schools being under provincial jurisdiction, this is a provincial matter. If not, I will provide some reasonable response.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Queensway-Carleton, a hospital in my community, is facing a funding crunch as it attempts to serve 400,000 people in our community. Yet, year after year the NCC charges this small community hospital tens of thousands of dollars in rent. There is about to be a massive rent increase which the hospital itself says could cost as many as 40 nurses.

Why does the government simply not resolve this problem by selling the land to the hospital for \$1?

[Translation]

Hon. Liza Frulla (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Minister responsible for Status of Women, Lib.): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the hard work my colleague for Ottawa West—Nepean has put into this matter. She has also made a commitment to discuss it with the National Capital Commission and the board of the hospital in question.

And now, in answer to this question, the hon. member for Nepean—Carleton must realize that the amount in question, the rent, is based on the assumption that the charges for leasing the land are based on the value of the land. I am told that this will not be the basis for determining future rental charges.

* * *

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the mandate of the President of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is coming to an end. Rumours abound about his successors. In June 2003, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage recommended to the Minister of Canadian Heritage that the criteria and directives for CBC appointments be improved.

Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage submit the appointment of the future President of the CBC to the scrutiny of the members of this House, thereby reducing the democratic deficit so strongly denounced by the Prime Minister?

Hon. Liza Frulla (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Minister responsible for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome my hon. colleague. As for appointments, especially that of the president of the CBC, I can assure him that everything will be done according to the rules.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Matlapeng Ray Molomo, Speaker of the National Assembly of Botswana.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would also like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Rick Thorpe, Minister of Provincial Revenue for British Columbia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1505)

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-7, an act to amend the Department of Canadian Heritage Act and the Parks Canada Agency Act and to make related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to contribute to this debate and speak this afternoon on Bill C-7, an act to amend the Department of Canadian Heritage Act and the Parks Canada Agency Act.

On December 12, 2003, as we remember, control and supervision of Parks Canada Agency were transferred from the Minister of Canadian Heritage to the Minister of the Environment. This was done by order in council.

On July 20, 2004, another order in council regarding responsibility for built heritage came into effect. This was necessary in order to clarify the preceding orders. On the one hand, the control and supervision of the policy group on historic places were transferred; I will say something about that in a few moments. The powers and responsibilities and the functions of designing and implementing programs with built heritage as its primary focus, were transferred from the Minister of Canadian Heritage to the Minister of the Environment. Bill C-7 will amend the legislation to reflect these two changes.

Government Orders

I have the honour of representing the riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. I often talk about it in this House. It has a very significant place in the history of Canada. Indeed, it is in the Glengarry area that Sir John Johnson and his disciples, if I can use that term, arrived in 1784. These people were refugees from the war between the United States and England, the war of American independence. At least, this is what the Americans are saying, because the British called that same war by another name. In any case, in the aftermath of that conflict, around 1784, there was this exodus of people living in the 13 colonies, but particularly the state of New York, in the Mohawk Valley. These people crossed the border to get to the area of Lancaster and, later, Williamstown. Incidentally, that town is named after Sir William Johnson, the father of Sir John Johnson, who was the founder of that region.

Mr. Speaker, if I am not mistaken, you are yourself a descendant of these people, some of whom came to my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Sir John Johnson's manor is still in Williamstown, in the Glengarry area. Unfortunately, it is no longer part of my riding. Following the redrawing of the electoral map, it is now located in the riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. Most of the other sites are located in the riding that I represent.

Talking about interesting historic sites, I do not need to remind hon. members of the flour mill of father Alexander Macdonell, after whom is named the town of Alexandria, in my riding. I should also mention the Macdonell-Williamson house, which proudly bears a plaque attesting to its status of provincial historic site. It is located east of Chute-à-Blondeau, actually in Pointe-Fortune, where part of the town is in Quebec and part of it is in Ontario. The Macdonell-Williamson house is right on the border. These are some examples of historic places in the riding that I represent and in the Glengarry area in general.

It is also interesting to note that the Longueuil seigneurie, the one in Ontario, is located in the electoral riding that I represent. Jean Lemoine, the seigneur of Longueuil, owned that seigneurie, which later became the township of Longueuil. Indeed, after 1791, it became the township of Longueuil. We are talking about the region located in my riding. In fact, this means that a part of New France is now in Ontario, because this was a seigneurie, the seigneurie of Longueuil. I can see that some members opposite are surprised and even pleased by this.

• (1510)

I would also like to talk about some other aspects of the bill, which is, after all, about parks. I am among the lucky people who, because of my duties as a member of Parliament, have had the opportunity to visit a number of national parks, each one more beautiful than the last. I am thinking, for example, of some parks I visited in western Canada this summer, particularly in British Columbia and Alberta.

But I am also thinking about Grosse-Île, that extraordinary place in Quebec. That, of course, is the island that saw the arrival of many Canadians of Irish origin, including my wife's ancestors. The hon. members who have met my wife will have noticed her Irish heritage, which is particularly visible in the colour of her hair. My grandchildren resemble her, with those special features. I had the

pleasure of visiting Grosse-Île and I recommend such a visit to all my colleagues. It is a truly fascinating experience.

I have been describing some national parks as they exist today. I know there is talk of establishing new parks in a number of regions. For example, in the North there are interesting sites but there are other ecologically interesting areas that I think deserve to be national parks.

For example, here in the national capital region, there is a bog called the Mer Bleue. It is part of the National Capital Commission's lands. It is an NCC park. It is well protected. The NCC is doing a fantastic job and is well managed by its president, Marcel Beaudry, whom I salute and to whom I send my best wishes. The NCC's parks and areas are well protected.

There is another, still larger area of my riding, the Alfred bog. This is a highly sensitive ecological zone. Right now, it comprises perhaps between 15,000 and 20,000 acres of land. In recent years, unfortunately—but not this past year or the one before, for reasons I shall explain in a couple of minutes—an ecological disaster was shaping up in that region. A group of entrepreneurs had the idea of digging up peat and bagging it for sale to be used as gardening peat moss for vegetable and flower gardens, lawns and the like. This had a very devastating effect on the bog, and on the flora and fauna of the region. Suddenly the people in the villages started to find deer and other smaller wild animals on their lawns. These animals were not able to negotiate the huge ditches dug to drain the peat bog and then excavate the peat. This was a very sad state of affairs. I appealed to the Minister of the Environment, the hon. member for Victoria, who is no longer a minister but one of the benched former ministers, like myself. I got a great deal of help from him in this matter, and take this opportunity to thank him.

Thanks to him, a group known as Nature Conservancy of Canada, or Conservation de la nature in French, bought outright some 3,000 acres of this bog, thereby protecting this huge area.

• (1515)

Just a few months ago, thanks to the United Counties of Prescott and Russell which spearheaded this effort, another large stretch of what was left of the bog that was not already in the hands of the public or para-public sector was purchased. As a result, virtually all that is left of the Alfred bog, in eastern Ontario, is part of this property, either public or para-public, if we include Nature Conservancy of Canada. We have at least protected this very sensitive area.

I am one of those who think the time has come to go further on this issue. The time has come to join our forces to convince the Government of Canada to turn this ecological area, now partly owned by the public, through the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, the South Nation River Conservation Authority, Nature Conservancy of Canada and others, into a park.

With this plea, today, I am taking a first step in advocating in the House of Commons the creation of this park.

Many members go through my riding to get theirs. Many parliamentarians go to Montreal or elsewhere. When they leave Ottawa, they go through the beautiful riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. I hope that members making this trip will stop frequently and spend a lot of money to contribute to the local economy of my riding.

These members who travel in the region and go to the outskirts of Casselman or Saint-Isidore, before stopping to spend lots of money—I sincerely hope they will—will see this area. There is the Larose forest, the site of the *Écho d'un peuple* production, which talks about our Franco-Ontarian ancestors, and not far from there is the ecological area known as the Alfred bog.

The United Counties of Prescott and Russell and the others made these acquisitions with the support of yours truly and, of course, the then Minister of the Environment. I would like to reiterate my appreciation for everything the hon. member for Victoria did. Now that this has been done, I think it is time to move ahead to the second stage. In other words, the Alfred bog should become a national park.

Today is the first time you have heard this plea in the House of the Commons. It will probably not be the last because this is a very worthwhile project, in my opinion. Some might wonder why I did not raise this issue sooner. After all, I was a minister for a long time. As I just described in detail, the bog was not publicly owned at the time. It was private property.

Now that almost the entire bog has been acquired by government or quasi-government bodies, the project is possible. That is why we should now consider moving ahead with such a project.

Some might say it is not directly related to the bill before us today, but I say it is. We are creating, through legislation, the structure I described at the beginning of my speech and there is no better time to tell officials, ministers and anyone else interested, about the merits of the project I am undertaking for the Alfred bog.

● (1520)

[English]

I have thanked the minister and I thank colleagues for supporting the bill. I not only look forward to its speedy adoption by the House of Commons but I also look forward to the day when I can invite all members of the House to the official opening of the Alfred Bog national park.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's speech and his reflections about some of the historical sites that are in his riding and nearby and I wanted to ask him a question about those. I know the bill contemplates transferring responsibility for those sites to Environment Canada and that it has been back and forth a little between Heritage Canada and Environment Canada.

I also know that the Minister of Public Works has contemplated selling off some of the government's holdings in terms of buildings and other public facilities. Just this morning I had a phone call from one of my constituents who was very concerned about that possibility. He believes that those facilities are part of the birthright of all Canadians and that they should remain with the government, not be sold away only to be rented back or to be part of some other arrangement.

Government Orders

Does the member believe that this arrangement might actually protect historical sites, if transferring them to the Department of the Environment was a way of protecting them and ensuring they are part of the future of all Canadians?

● (1525)

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member seems confused about four or five different things.

First, nationally designated sites are not necessarily the property of the Government of Canada. A number of sites are privately owned by local organizations and are subject to a designation by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board.

Second, some sites are actually the property of the Government of Canada and are government assets. I have heard the discussion about those where the government feels that it should be selling them off, which concerns me as well. I share some of the concerns in that regard. I hope the minister is listening attentively to these concerns. However that is not the same thing at all.

Finally, what the bill would ensure is that the structure of Parks Canada is transferred from the Minister of Heritage Canada to the Minister of the Environment in terms of reporting and so on. I do not see in this bill how that would change an existing historic site from continuing to be an historic site. That is a very different proposition altogether. The bill does not deal with that, as far as I have been able to recognize.

Just to summarize briefly. First, I share the concern that we should not engage in a major way in disposing of government assets but that does not mean that they are all forbidden to be disposed of. That is equally wrong.

Mr. Speaker, you represent the beautiful and historic City of Kingston, where the city wants to acquire a vacant lot that is about eight feet wide and a quarter mile long. It somehow was divided that way 175 years ago and it needs to be transferred to the municipality. It is those sorts of things. Sometimes it could even be the private sector. We therefore cannot say that there is a blanket or should be a blanket interdiction in that regard.

The historic sites that we have are not always government owned. We are talking particularly about those designated by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board. These could be government owned, local government or agency owned, sometimes city owned, and sometimes they are completely in private hands, but they are still designated in the way that I have just described.

As the member can see, it is a little bit more broad than the way it has been described by the hon. member.

I do encourage the government to continue to protect our historical sites in Canada. I happen to have a bit of a passion for history, as well as rock music, but that is another issue. I do hope that we protect the historical sites that we have for our children and, shall I say, my grandchildren.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the concerns of the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell regarding a part of the land in his riding. He talked about a peat bog that had been farmed. His main concern seemed to be that, if this was sold or assigned to the private sector, the peat bog might be farmed again.

In Quebec, there are organizations called RCMs, regional county municipalities. They are responsible for unorganized territory. There is also an organization called Protection du territoire. In Ontario, I do not know the protection structures, but if one wants to protect a piece of land, an area or a sector, it is not a good idea to hand over that piece of land or area to the federal government to create a park there.

In that case, can the municipality, which is an organization that has managed the lands in its territory, bring in urban bylaws? However, there is also the provincial government, through the Department of Cultural Affairs, that could ensure the protection of this land, because it seems that the land is part of the member's main concerns. In fact, this is important to him, and he seems to be saying that this causes a problem when peat bogs are in operation.

My question is as follows: would there not be another land protection organization that would meet the concerns that the member just outlined, without necessarily transferring responsibilities so that the federal government would inherit a part of the land to create a park? We know that, if this park is managed by Parks Canada, it would entail investment costs. It would also be an intrusion of the federal government in provincial lands.

• (1530)

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, there are no unorganized territories in my riding. The territories I represent are all in existing municipalities, for the most part in the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, an entity which is roughly equivalent to an RCM in Quebec. There are also the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. Finally, the third part of my riding is the city of Ottawa, which I also represent, at least its eastern part. So that is not the case.

Currently, most of that land is owned by the South Nation River Conservation Authority. For the benefit of my colleagues, in Ontario conservation authorities are created under a provincial statute. So, that land is in part owned by the said conservation authority. Another part is directly owned by the United Counties of Prescott and Russell. Another part is owned by the Nature Conservancy. I believe some of that land is owned by Ducks Unlimited. So it is owned either by public or semi-public organizations, and that is good.

Today, on 90% of our territory, we are no longer faced with the risk of seeing mechanical cranes and other pieces of equipment come and cause havoc as we saw in the past. It will not happen again.

However the desire to have a national park in my riding is not tantamount to saying it is an intrusion. It is ridiculous to claim that the desire to create a national park is an intrusion. If I were to stand along highway 17 in Alfred and ask people if they want a national park in their riding, I would say that 90% of them would support the idea. It is not an intrusion when 90% are in favour of it and the other

10% would presumably want to keep on extracting peat from the bog.

However, we do not have a problem with intrusion in our area. As a matter of fact, there is nothing I would like better than to have the kind of resources the Government of Canada could offer us: a small interpretation centre, for instance, and the like. By the way, it is important to note that the Alfred bog was designated by the UN, the United Nations, as a significant ecological area. The group is called COSEWIC and I will try to spell it out later. It was designated by the UN.

[*English*]

Mr. Russ Powers (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure today to speak at second reading to Bill C-7, an act to amend the Department of Canadian Heritage Act and the Parks Canada Agency Act and to make related amendments to other acts.

The bill would give legislative effect to the government reorganization that was announced on December 12, 2003 as it affects Parks Canada, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of the Environment.

I would like to take the opportunity today to speak to the House about an important new initiative at Parks Canada; that is the creation of the historic parks initiative. This initiative is based on the recognition by the Government of Canada of the fact that historic places capture the meaning and values of Canada, as well as the drive, sacrifices, ideas and hard work of those who have shaped our country over these many generations. That is an understanding shared by all governments in Canada and by Canadians at large. This appreciation of the importance of historic places does not just apply to place with national designation, but to a large number of places in every community in every corner of Canada.

Heritage buildings make cities more interesting places to live in and can revitalize downtown cores. Historic places can also draw in tourism dollars to our rural communities, our small towns and hamlets and our urban centres alike.

Restoration and redevelopment of historic buildings help the environment by capitalizing on the energy invested in the original structures. It also provides well needed jobs and an opportunity to spur the economic vitality of the communities.

Most significant, historic sites and buildings provide places of learning for our children and our grandchildren and places of understanding for all of us. It is very difficult to determine where we are going to go when we do not know from where we have come. That is part of the rationale for making every attempt to preserve and where possible restore historic properties.

Government Orders

Despite this positive sentiment toward historic places, the reality is that year after year, decade after decade, more and more historic places are being lost for whatever reason. Recognizing the need to resolve and to ensure that Canadians can enjoy a rich heritage both now and in the future, the government three years ago announced plans to work toward a historic places initiative, initially with a \$24 million infusion by the government to kickstart the process. That has been in the works since first announced in May 2002.

The keystone of the initiative is federal, provincial, territorial and municipal cooperation coupled with equally valuable collaboration with members of Parliament. Yes, we as members of Parliament are part of the process. Aboriginal peoples, heritage experts and a comprehensive number of institutions, organizations, communities and individuals will all be part of the process.

Consensus has emerged on where Canada and Canadians need to be when the historic places initiative is fully implemented. Parks Canada will play both a leadership and partnership role to make that consensus move from concept to reality. Strategies will focus on helping Canadians to build a culture of conservation.

Among our common goals is the need to provide all Canadians with the practical information and tools they need to protect historic sites. The initiative for this historic places is the most significant conservation effort related to historic sites in our nation's history. Thanks to the excellent teamwork of all the provinces and territories, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Heritage Canada Foundation, we have begun this year, through consultative efforts, to see its first tangible results with the launch of the on-line Canadian register of historic places.

• (1535)

I remember this very well. In May 2002 the then minister of Canadian heritage attended the annual conference of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to launch this initiative. At that time she indicated that it was very important to do this not only for continuity in communities, but also from the standpoint of the potential for economic renewal. She started the consultation process. She made a presentation to the working group at the annual general meeting of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. She and her staff visited the meetings over the next year to consult with their economic development committee to work toward the development of the initiatives.

A number of times her staff visited community group and well established, well recognized community conservation business groups, whether it was work with the housing or commercial sectors, to develop the initiative. The first stage, the creation of the Canadian register historic places, is a culmination of lot of work and agreement by many people and organizations.

The Canadian register of historic places will for the first time in one place provide a register for all Canadians to inspect and determine those buildings and sites that are recognized as historic by any level of government. Whether it is from a federal perspective, or a provincial, territorial or a community perspective, they will be recognized and identified in a single location.

It is anticipated the register will contain approximately 20,000 historic places when it is fully launched. The register will be an

important Internet-based source for planners, policy-makers, community organizations, teachers, students and families who wonder how they can learn about and help preserve the past.

In addition, Parks Canada has already adopted the Canadian standards and guidelines for the conservation of historic places in its practices in the area of conservation. It is also encouraging all other jurisdictions to adopt them so that there will be a common benchmark for conservation practices in Canada. There is a real movement toward a very short period of time as those standards will become the norm in every one of our communities, provinces and territories.

In the year ahead Parks Canada will also implement the commercial heritage properties incentive fund, a new program which was announced late last year to encourage the rehabilitation of historic sites. In other words, this would be an opportunity for the commercial sector to work hand in hand with the communities to preserve buildings that are important to the integrity of their communities.

The fund is a four-year \$30 million plan to ideally tip the balance in favour of heritage conservation over demolition. Taxable Canadian corporations will be eligible for reimbursement of a portion of the cost of restoring historic properties for commercial use.

I know in my riding, involving part of the old city of Hamilton and a number of suburban and rural communities which date back well over 200 years, there are clearly identifiable historic properties. The old part of the city of Hamilton, which is an established old city, has buildings that are worthy of consideration for their restoration. In fact some developers are looking for the opportunity to work hand in hand and take opportunities for this. I know the city council of Hamilton is looking at ways to work with these developers to preserve these magnificent buildings that, for whatever reason, have been left to decay over the years. I would think, in anticipation of our program, they will tend to be oversubscribed and the demands will be filled quickly.

To qualify, buildings must be on the new Canadian register and the projects must follow the new standards and guidelines. Therefore, there is an onus upon the communities to get out ahead, to follow the standards to ensure that their properties are registered and to adopt within their cities the new standards and guidelines for the preservation and reconstruction of these heritage buildings. A new Parks Canada certification process, involving expert evaluation, will evaluate all submissions.

At the end of four years, Parks Canada will review results with the intention of determining the value of recommending permanent incentives for the government. Parks Canada will also strengthen the dialogue already begun with aboriginal peoples to meet practical needs so aboriginal people may be fully engaged in the historic places initiative.

Government Orders

• (1540)

I have lived in the same area for about 40 years. For me, standards have developed to which I have become accustomed. One thing about this wonderful country is the diversity. What is historical for me, may not be something that is historical for someone else. The importance is upon the abilities for each of the communities, provinces and territories to identify those that are important to their needs.

While many of Canada's other historic places are buildings, for aboriginal peoples, those places are far more likely to be ceremonial places, sacred burial grounds or images that are inscribed on stones. Parks Canada will draw upon the wisdom of the elders and others to find appropriate ways to ensure full aboriginal inclusion in the historic places initiative.

I would respectfully encourage all my colleagues from all sides of the House to join me in the passing of Bill C-7.

• (1545)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague's interest in this matter as a former municipal councillor. The Canadian registry of historic places is probably the most important initiative that has taken place in this file in more than a generation. The member talked about the 20,000 properties that will be listed, after much consultation with those in the historic community and experts.

The fact that the moving of Parks Canada from heritage to parks will have a real impact is very important. Could the member elaborate briefly as to how, in particular, under the environment department, the whole initiative can be better enhanced, with more attention given to it?

I am sure the member will also want to comment on the fact that to have the best parks in the world, we need more money. I am sure he will be with us in our discussions and deliberations to ensure that we maintain and continue to acquire more money. I think all members in the House realize that to have the best in the world, we need to maintain the stock by having the necessary dollars. It is something, unfortunately, we have not had in the past. I am sure the Treasury Board minister who is here today will agree with me.

Mr. Russ Powers: Mr. Speaker, perhaps at first blush, when we take a look at the legislation, a number of us would question the realignment of the responsibilities. Logically, it would fall under the purview of Heritage Canada. However, we should look at the properties in question.

It is interesting. Over the last two years I have been involved in an insignificant way, but I have been aware of the process involved in the consultation with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and other provincial, territorial and municipal partners. Realigning Parks Canada makes all kinds of sense from the standpoint of having the appropriate expertise in place.

As I have mentioned, we are not only talking about fiscal buildings. We are talking about the lands, mountain ranges, passes, sections of railways or whatever the case might be. It covers the total gamut. What I consider historical property, as alluded to earlier, is something that really might not mean anything to some of my other colleagues in the House.

Every possibility that is important for the communities, provinces or territories has been considered. Parks Canada has a great deal of expertise from the standpoint of the skill sets situated within that department, whether it is the curators of heritage properties or the ability to recognize the most important environment components of the properties in question, to ensure that the environmental integrity of the properties and the surrounding lands are preserved. It just makes logical sense that it comes under the purview of Parks Canada.

• (1550)

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my riding we have the Prince Albert National Park, better known as Waskesiu. It is one of the most beautiful parks in the country. Unfortunately, the infrastructure of the park is literally falling apart. Roads are in terrible condition. Buildings are unkempt and literally falling down.

I wonder if the hon. member could comment on where he sees Parks Canada going in terms of upgrading the infrastructure of national parks around the country and particularly Prince Albert National Park.

Mr. Russ Powers: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly not in a position to deal with this particular issue and concern. This purview comes under Parks Canada and along with it comes the finances and abilities out of the other areas. There will be no new money going into it, it will be a realignment of money within.

Whether it is municipal, provincial or territorial, all of our holdings are challenged due to the substantial costs involved. Parks Canada is undergoing a review of priorities for funding, determining where it could best put its efforts and best commit the dollars that are available through the estimates and their allocations.

There will always be challenges, whether it is Parks Canada or the public works ministry, or whatever the case may be. However, I am sure that within the means available, we will do what we can in order to enhance the recognized challenges that the member has identified. If there are things specific to his riding, we encourage him to share them with us and we will ensure they are looked at.

Ms. Bev Oda (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could clarify why historical battlefields were left with the Department of Canadian Heritage and not moved along with the other historical sites?

The most significant historical battlefield would be the Plains of Abraham. We want to ensure that if he says Parks Canada has the expertise, that this historical site gets the same care and attention as other historical sites.

Mr. Russ Powers: Mr. Speaker, I am afraid I cannot actually answer her question with regard to why those particular properties are left under the purview and are not transferred over. We will ensure that information is provided to her in a timely manner.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

● (1555)

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.) moved that Bill C-8, an act to amend the Financial Administration Act, the Canada School of Public Service Act and the Official Languages Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand before the House today to move second reading of the bill aimed at giving legislative confirmation to the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada which was created by orders in council as a result of the government reorganization of December 12.

As hon. members know, on December 12, 2003, the Prime Minister made some significant changes to the government structure and organization. The reorganization was intended primarily to advance the priorities of Canadians by improving services and their delivery, but also by making sure that the government has the tools it needs to restore the confidence of Canadians in their public service to sound fiscal management, more rigorous allocation of resources and, above all, implementation of the highest standards of ethics, openness, transparency, accountability and reporting to Parliament.

Such goals cannot be achieved without a modern, professional and responsible public service that is dedicated to the public interest, that is representative of the Canadian public and that serves Canadians with excellence in the official language of their choice.

To achieve these goals, we also need employees who are guided and supported effectively, and in accordance with the highest ethical standards in an effective workplace that is empowering, healthy and respectful of employees' language rights.

In other words, we need an outstanding workforce and a workplace guided and supported by effective and responsible human resource management throughout the public service, the kind of management that reflects best practices in this field.

That is why the government created the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada as part of its reorganization of December 12, 2003.

Created by orders in council, beginning with the transfer of certain functions of the Treasury Board Secretariat and the Public Service Commission, the agency has taken up the functions it needs to modernize and foster ongoing excellence in human resources management and leadership throughout the public service.

For example, with functions that have been transferred to it, the agency will oversee the effective implementation of the Public Service Modernization Act, which received royal assent in November 2003.

It will also work to set up integrated systems for human resources planning, oversight and accountability purposes across the public service.

It will encourage the training of highly skilled leaders who are guided by the highest accountability and ethical standards, and who are evaluated against those standards.

Last, it will continue to make targeted improvements in the area of employment equity and to promote linguistic duality, while putting in place better monitoring and reporting systems that will make results more accessible and transparent for Canadians.

The agency will thus make it possible to give the attention, direction and support needed to promote and maintain throughout the public service, human resources management that is exemplary and leadership that is constantly renewed and consistently more effective and results oriented.

In short, it will make it possible to put in place the conditions that public servants need to provide Canadians with efficient, quality services, while promoting the highest standards of integrity, transparency and accountability.

This is a turning point in the history of the administration of the public service which, for the first time, has a separate agency responsible for human resources management.

The work performed in the public service is of great value to the government and to Canadians. A highly effective public service contributes to the social, economic and cultural well-being of Canadians, as well as to their health and security. It also constitutes a competitive advantage in the global economy. Such a public service is made of men and women who devote their lives to serving the public interest and the Canadian public, and who promote fairness, justice, health and democratic vitality.

The best way to recognize their contribution, which will require increased effort in order to achieve excellence, is to give this new agency a legislative base. That is why I am presenting this bill today. Its purpose is simply to confirm the agency's existence through legislation.

Let us be clear on one thing. The bill does not in any way change the powers or functions already conferred on the agency by orders in council. The bill only enshrines in legislation what already exists in fact.

Essentially the bill does the following: first, it adds the position of president of the agency to the Financial Administration Act, in the same way the Secretary of the Treasury Board and the Comptroller General of Canada are already identified in the act.

Second, it specifies the nature of powers and functions that may be delegated by the Treasury Board to the president of the agency in the same manner stipulated in the act for the Secretary of the Treasury Board and the Comptroller General of Canada.

● (1600)

Third, it stipulates that the President of the Treasury Board is responsible for the coordination of activities of the Secretary of the Treasury Board, the president of the agency and the Comptroller General of Canada.

Government Orders

Although they are relatively modest additions to the Financial Administration Act, these amendments constitute a key step for public service administration. With this bill, the agency would benefit from having a legislative basis that sets out more clearly and visibly, both inside and outside the public service, its role and relationships within the portfolio of the Treasury Board and with the Treasury Board in its role as employer.

As a result of the addition of the office of the president of the agency through the Financial Administration Act, the bill would require two correlative amendments: an amendment to the Canada School of the Public Service Act to appoint the president of the agency as an ex-officio member of the school's board of governors, replacing the president of the Public Service Commission; and an amendment to the Official Languages Act to stipulate that it is the president of the agency, rather than the Treasury Board Secretary, who will provide the Commissioner of Official Languages with any audit reports that are prepared under the responsibility of the Treasury Board.

I want to stress the fact that, in addition to demonstrating the importance the government places on human resources management, the bill would also permit: first, the clarification of the perceived role of the agency within the system, including unions, and in particular of its relationships within the portfolio of the Treasury Board and with the Treasury Board in its role as employer; second, the better integration of activities relating to human resources management within the Treasury Board portfolio; and third, a greater visibility for the agency, both within and outside the public service, facilitating implementation of its policies, programs and services.

I would like to remind the House that the bill concerns the government's most precious resource, its employees, people who are in the service of Canadians.

I would remind members that as we advance into the 21st century, setting up a true human resources management agency for the federal public service, which is also the biggest employer in Canada, sends an unequivocal signal to all managers, public servants and union reps that sound human resources management is a priority for the Government of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall as a member of the this chamber the debate that took place on the original Bill C-25, the Public Service Modernization Act. The member to my left was heavily involved in the discussions.

We examined what we believe is a fundamental change in how we organize ourselves around the services we provide to our employees. I have said many times that all organizations lose when they do not pay attention to the people who work for them, that sound human resources management is not simply a matter of checks and balances over hiring, as was the foundation of the original Public Service Commission, but in the modern era it is bringing the tools of sound resources planning, helping people with their own career planning and helping to meet their education needs.

We talk a lot in the House about the need for continuous improvement and life long learning. In government we need a focus for those services, an organization that spends its time working with our employees, with government, agencies and departments to

determine their needs and constantly thinking down the road as to how we can become better at what we do as we serve Canadians.

In doing that, we are always caught in this chamber with dual roles, of promoting good quality services to Canadians and also providing a level of oversight that guarantees to the people of Canada that resources are being dealt with properly, that we are paying close attention to the public purse, and that we are managing as efficiently and effectively as we can.

This is a discussion that came up on Bill C-11, an evolution in the role of the Public Service Commission. As we are discussing the legislation that puts in place and empowers the situation to deal with whistleblowing, we have talked a lot of how the role of the Public Service Commission, which traditionally has been the employing authority for government, is evolving and how it relates to other activities in government. This is another piece of that structure.

I believe that after 32 years of working within the existing structure, the government spent some two years studying, speaking to experts from all across the country, looking closely at how it managed its human resources, and then it made a decision that it would separate the functions and create an agency whose focus it was to spend its time working with our employees to ensure that they got the very best that they needed to do their job, the very best training, the very best services, and the very best support.

• (1605)

I think the public servants who are running the agency at this point and who have begun to give life to this vision have done an extraordinary job in a very short period of time at pulling together the resources they need to implement this vision. They believe it will take another year or two before things are up and running fully in the way that is envisioned. And that was contemplated in the act. Then we will come back to the House and ask the House if there is a provision there to review these decisions at the end of that period.

However what is fundamentally important about this is that it is a long overdue change. We spend too much time examining the problems, and rightly so. We need to look at the things that create problems. We need to look at the areas where there is always a need for improvement. We spend too little time celebrating the fact that there are 450,000 Canadians who do very good work on behalf of the citizens of this country and they deserve our support, encouragement and assistance every day.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to follow up on a question that I asked the minister in question period last week with regard to a person convicted of fraud who was actually lecturing at the public service school on ethics.

I am wondering if the Treasury Board president has taken any action on that and, if so, if he could inform the House as to what that action was.

Hon. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, yes, I asked the school to withhold payment on that contract until we have had a chance to look at it.

Government Orders

This is actually an interesting example because the member, in his question, is wrong. The individual concerned was never convicted of any crime. One needs to be careful about coming into this chamber and raising concerns about people without checking the facts. One cannot necessarily draw all one's information from an article in the papers.

It is true, however, that the individual did have a problem within the department for which he was working before and, as a result of some concerns that were raised, was asked to resign and did so.

It is also true that when this matter was referred to the courts the person was given an absolute discharge. The judge who looked at this gave the individual an absolute discharge.

The company that applied for the standing order in this particular case certified that the individual had—I am sorry, I am going to blank on the name—a security clearance form which he had in fact obtained. The Ottawa Police performed a standard kind of check and there was no evidence of any problem.

On that basis, the school went ahead with the contract. It was only when the person's name became apparent and somebody realized that there had been a situation with another employer that the situation was identified. The proper steps were followed. The public servant who undertook the file did the right thing. There is still a question about the evidence that was provided on the standing order and I am awaiting an opinion from officials on that.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully while the President of the Treasury Board praised the merits of civil servants. I have two questions for him.

First, why does it take so long to sign a new collective agreement with public servants, if they provide the best service possible to Canadians? Second, why are the correctional officers from Cowansville still without a collective agreement after two years?

Could the President of the Treasury Board answer those questions?

[*English*]

Hon. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, we have concluded a number of agreements with the vast majority of the public service. We are bargaining with different units within the public service on a continuous basis.

I am pleased to say that we have settled agreements with the parks branch, with the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and with all four tables at PSAC. It is true that at two of those tables negotiators are recommending to their employees not to accept the agreements that have been reached, and we will have to see what the employees do. However negotiations are not always easy. People put forward firm positions on both sides and that is the nature of that particular business.

The member raised a question specifically around correctional service workers and the fact that they do not have a contract. He may know that there was a change of bargaining units for the correctional service workers some time ago and there has been some confusion as it functions within the federal system. The bargaining unit, I have

been told, has misunderstood some of the rules under which it is bargaining. Our officials are working with the unit. I believe that once we sit at the table and start to talk we will arrive at a conclusion, as we have with everyone else.

As someone who worked in Matsqui Penitentiary in British Columbia for six months as a student, I have a huge amount of respect for the people who work in correctional services. I am confident that we will come to an appropriate settlement once we get to the table.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, setting up an agency to do human resources work in the public service would not necessarily change how human resources work would be done in the public service. Does the minister know whether there are new directives around how this work will be done? Is there a possibility for new creativity in the system? If it is the same old, same old, that would not address the needs and the importance of the work that is done by so many dedicated public servants in Canada.

Hon. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, the member's question goes to the heart of a number of issues with which we have been struggling for some time. He is absolutely right. I think it is fairly evident that some of the processes that we use to manage in government, not just in human resources but in a variety of areas, become somewhat time worn and in need of modernization.

I keep talking about this as the modernization of public management. It represents trends that are going on around the world. We have seen over the years that some of the ways in which we try to solve problems in public management have fallen out of step with the realities of trying to make decisions. Some of our checks and balances in the systems that we have traditionally used to provide checks and balances have become so onerous that they defeat the purpose for which they were first put in place.

A lot of the discussion that has gone on has been how, in a very large organization such as the Government of Canada, do we create a regime that gives us the oversight capacity that we want but allows us to function in a way that really is in real time.

I will give one very real example. This bill is an outcropping of an earlier suite of legislation, which was Bill C-25 three years ago. The bill concerned the modernization of government. One of the examples was when we wanted to recruit the best and the brightest. We went out into the community and told young Canadians that there were careers for them in the public service. However, once we identified someone, we found that it was taking six months before we could offer the person a job. That is unrealistic in today's world. The kids are scooped up immediately. The government was falling behind in its capacity to recruit.

When we look at some of the things, it is just too easy in a place that is built on the kind of conflict that exists here to ignore the needs of people. It is always easy to cut internally and make the public service bear the burden for some of our problems. Many of us recognized that what we needed was an organization that focused on quality in the public service, the development of our human resource because it is so vitally important to the quality of the work that gets done, and that we should de-chain that a bit from the oversight.

Government Orders

The Public Service Commission came into existence, I believe, in 1917 or 1918, to provide protection against political interference and nepotism in hiring. Its central role was to act as a check and balance to unmanaged political activity.

That is an important role and it is a role that needs to be fulfilled. We have made some changes in the Public Service Commission to strengthen it in that role. However, at the same time we need someone who is paying a lot of attention to a labour force that is big, where people are moving from department to department. The reason the agency came into being was to give you a guarantee, Mr. Speaker, that these things would be managed in a responsible and as positive and proactive a way as possible.

I would invite the member, if he wishes, to meet with me at any time on this. I love talking about it.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Mississauga South, Health; the hon. member for Calgary Centre-North, Aboriginal Affairs; the hon. member for St. John's East, Natural Resources.

[*English*]

Hon. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, with unanimous consent, I would take more questions.

The Speaker: Is there agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the nice sounding phrases of the minister today. He outlines great intent but the public service also has to understand that the Conservatives are the friends of the public servants, unlike the stories they are often told at the water cooler.

We certainly believe in a non-partisan, very professional and dedicated public service that serves all Canadians beyond politics. It also has been a commitment of our party historically to compliment the government when it appears to go in the right direction. However, if we complain we then have to come up with a constructive alternative.

Although at first blush I enjoyed what the minister had to say, we must look at the record of political interference where the issue of the Public Service Commission and proper oversight has been intervened by Liberal bad habits.

In view of all of the great things the minister has said today, will he be prepared to defend the non-partisan basis of the public service, especially in view of some of the past behaviour of some of the scandals that have been uncovered? We would attribute that not to a bad public service, but from higher up political interference. Will he defend the public service from that political interference?

Hon. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, I must ask to have at least a half hour just to begin to list the things that I would do in that regard. To deal seriously with this, the member raises a point to which a response is needed.

I call this the modernization of public management. Some of the excesses and concerns that the member identifies are more a product of antiquated systems and antiquated oversight. He has heard me speak many times about the lack of building modern financials when we began to delegate authority without any ability to bring information back.

My short answer to him is yes, I absolutely will, but I will go further than that. We have restored comptrollership. That was something which was taken out. I will not play the game of who took it out or under which government. We could go that way, but in a sense it is irrelevant. At the end of the day we want to get down to building something that is excellent: new comptrollership, new internal audit, new systems for disclosure, more proactive transparency and disclosure of the activities of government. It is in my term as president that we have started posting all the hospitality. Now we are posting all the contracting, I am talking about grants and contributions, and we are aggressively being transparent. That is an important feature in accountability.

As the member will know, I am coming down with the reports on governance, accountability and ministerial responsibility, but it goes beyond that. We are creating a whistleblowing tool. An interesting discussion is going on at the committee right now on how it gets fitted. I am rather enjoying the engagement of the committee as people are struggling with it.

One of the wonderful things about a minority government is that everybody in this chamber is responsible and shares in these decisions. We will craft legislation. When we get away from the heat of question period and get down to the work of actually building legislation that produces excellence. I think the House is up to it and we will do a good job. We all have an interest in that.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the bill is to make human resources management within the public service more consistent. Can the President of the Treasury Board assure the House that merit will prevail over partisanship and that bilingualism will really be taken into account during the hiring process?

[*English*]

Hon. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, without question and equivocation, what we want, and I think what every member in the House wants, is excellence in the delivery of public services.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say a few words today on Bill C-8, a bill to create and empower the Office of the President of the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency.

Government Orders

As the President of the Treasury Board said, that agency was created last year by the Public Service Modernization Act. Bill C-8 is essentially a housekeeping bill. It is part of the government's effort to implement its reforms of the public service which are laid out in detail in the Public Service Modernization Act. I am sure the Chair will forgive me if I spend much of my time discussing that act and the need for public service reform in general.

As the House knows, I was a public servant for 22 years. I served as the president of a union local and as a manager in four federal government offices in Ottawa, one in Sudbury and one in Cornwall. When I study legislation like Bill C-8 or Bill C-11, which deals with disclosures of wrongdoing, I am able to look at it from the point of view of a public servant. Often that perspective seems to be missing from the government's considerations when it drafts legislation.

Although I recognize the need for more rational and functional structure for the public service, I am somewhat skeptical when I hear about public service modernization. There were many positive steps taken in last year's Public Service Modernization Act which Bill C-8 would supplement. Many of the changes are long overdue improvements to the nation's public service. If carried out properly, they could lead to a much happier, less strike prone and more productive public service. As I said, I am very skeptical.

At the time it was tabled, the Public Service Modernization Act was touted by the government as the first major public service restructuring in 35 years. The government is being more than a little naive if it thinks it can make up for 35 years of neglect all at once.

The reality is other attempts have been made to modernize the public service. I was part of the public service during many of those attempts at modernization. I have lived through them. I have learned that the government is usually a step or two behind the pressures and demands of the public service. Somehow or another the government cannot seem to keep up with the public service. We must never fall into the trap of assuming that our work is done and that a single act of Parliament can instantly reverse the disenchantment in the public service over long-standing issues.

I asked the President of the Treasury Board in committee last week why he would not create an independent, external body to receive and investigate disclosures of wrongdoing and protect those public servants that he spoke so highly of, the ones who make disclosures. His answer was that the Public Service Commission would change and would become more independent and more respected by public servants.

It is fine to give that responsibility to the Public Service Commission. It is always dangerous to assume that the culture of the public service will change that quickly and dramatically because the government makes a few organizational changes. As I said, I was part of that same public service for 22 years. It does not change quite that easily.

The Public Service Modernization Act, and by extension the bill before us today, does make some steps in the right direction, and I am happy to recognize those important steps.

By the government's own admission over the past few decades, the public service has remained structurally and functionally a top-down organization, with too many isolated pillars of communication

and accountability. The Public Service Modernization Act provides for more flexibility in staffing and in managing people. It also stresses the need for a cooperative approach to labour management relations, which I fully support and which is long overdue.

The employees who actually deliver end products and services are the ones who know best what works and what does not work. They must have more say in the running of the workplace. If the intent of the Public Service Modernization Act becomes reality, the result will be happier federal workplaces.

The act also overhauls staff training and development and more clearly delineates the roles of key players in the human resources area, in Treasury Board, in the Public Service Commission and in the various deputy ministers and their equivalents. That is where the Public Service Modernization Act connects with Bill C-8.

● (1625)

Bill C-8 would allow Treasury Board to delegate its powers pertaining to human resources management, official languages, employment equity and values and ethics to the President of the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency.

Under Bill C-8, the President of the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency would replace the President of the Public Service Commission, an ex officio governor of the Canada School of Public Service, and would replace the Secretary of Treasury Board as the person providing the Official Languages Commissioner with reports on the monitoring and auditing of the federal institutions with respect to their compliance with official languages rules.

As I mentioned earlier, it is very difficult and dangerous to prejudge the impact of a reorganization like this. It needs to be considered in a broader context, in this case in the context of the Public Service Modernization Act which is very complex. At the end of the day the most important stage of any bureaucratic restructuring process is listening to the front line workers whose effectiveness is at stake.

If serious problems arise, the public servants will let us know, only if we are prepared to listen to them. Unfortunately, the government's track record has been poor when it comes to listening to front line public servants.

Government Orders

[Translation]

We can tell that the government does not listen to public servants just by the way it treats whistleblowers. Bill C-11 is supposed to address this issue, but it will not do the job unless it is amended, because the government has not taken into consideration what public servants had to say about the way the program would be implemented.

I believe that all the technical changes in the world will be for naught unless the government listens to and respects its employees. It will get respect from public servants only if it shows them some respect. Only through a relationship based on mutual respect will the government be able to rely on a modern, flexible and efficient public service.

• (1630)

[English]

In closing, I will support Bill C-8 and I will encourage my caucus colleagues to do likewise. However, my support comes with a cautionary note for the government. Do not make the mistake of thinking that mechanical changes will resolve all the country's public service issues in one fell swoop. The government has to be dedicated to working with public servants in a respectful way over the long term. The government has a tough road to hoe if it intends to overcome its record of the past decade.

Hon. Diane Marleau (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to hear that the Conservative Party will support Bill C-8.

I also want to remind the member, the official critic for this legislation and for Bill C-11, the whistleblowing legislation, that it is our intention to ensure that we listen and that we have the best possible bill. We feel that public servants do us a tremendous amount of good services. They work hard. They give of themselves unbelievably. I often think we, as parliamentarians, and as Canadians do not appreciate them enough.

I am lucky in my riding. I have had some great public servants. As a matter of fact the hon. critic actually worked at HRDC in Sudbury.

However, I want to emphasize that in all my years as a member of Parliament I really have not seen the politicization of the public servants in my riding at all. They continue to be very good at responding to any request from any party. I have been the MP, but there have been other MPs from other parties, and I think they do a very good job.

How would the member change that? The member seems to think we do not listen to people. How would he have us listen more than we are right now, trying to do the best possible job? The member has been a public servant. I am very interested in hearing what his suggestions would be to make this bill and Bill C-11 better.

There are no magic solutions. It will take some time before we see any improvements or we see massive change. However, governing is a work in progress. We take a few steps forward and if it works well, we build on it. If it does not work well, we change our way of building. I consider this a way of moving forward.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, I must admit I do agree with the hon. member. When I was working in Sudbury, there was a great public servant working there, and that was myself. There were many others. I must admit I enjoyed my time in Sudbury very much.

I also worked in Ottawa here as a public servant, and in Cornwall. We have been recognized as having one of the best public service in the world. Our public servants are dedicated, hard working people. This is not about them. This is about maybe making life a little better for the public service, and that is my concern.

I am glad to hear that the government is prepared to do anything possible to that end. I am glad that the member opposite agrees that we should give the public servants the tools that they need to do a good job. One of the ways we can give them that tool, as the hon. member mentioned, is with Bill C-11.

That is a bill that is before committee right now. We on this side are making some constructive changes that are coming actually from public servants, not only retired public servants like myself but active public servants who are doing the job today.

They are saying unequivocally that we need an independent commissioner. The way Bill C-11 is drawn is flawed. I was just talking to another public servant before I came into the House this afternoon and I got exactly the same report, that it will never work unless we have an independent commissioner.

I am really happy to hear the member opposite. Hopefully she will encourage, and make her comments and feelings known to the President of the Treasury Board. The ultimate goal is to end up with the most perfect bill possible.

• (1635)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to broaden the context of our discussion to the overall matter of the public service and zero in on the comments the hon. member has made with respect to whistleblower legislation because I do not believe these issues can be discussed in isolation.

My understanding of Bill C-11, as it is currently written, is that the disclosure mechanism is not independent from the political leadership of the country. That is an essential problem with the bill. Furthermore, through order in council the cabinet can remove different branches of the government from the power of this legislation. That means that if the sponsorship scandal had occurred and this bill had been in place at that time, and the government had been interested in concealing information, it very easily could have removed any agency that was implicated from protection under the whistleblower legislation, thus removing the protections on public servants who wished to speak out against the corruption.

Those are two essential flaws that I see: the lack of independence and the fact that the cabinet can exempt certain bodies of government.

Government Orders

Due to the fact that we now have a minority government, and that the majority of members in this chamber and in the government operations committee are in the opposition, that is the majority support true whistleblower legislation, does the hon. member believe that we can use this coalition of opposition members to put forward the necessary amendments to strengthen this bill, give it teeth, and give it meaning to our public servants and taxpayers?

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague's assessment that Bill C-11 will not work as long as the disclosure is not independent. Right now the way the bill stands, the government could decide to remove whatever agency it wants from the whistleblower legislation on a whim, and that is not healthy.

I believe that a good bill can come out of the House that will actually serve what we are trying to do. It will actually allow a public servant to report wrongdoing and feel comfortable in so doing. Every member in the House has agreed at one time or another that our public servants are our most valued resource. The President of the Treasury Board said that in his speech, and everyone in the House agrees with that.

Here is the perfect opportunity to show that faith in our public servants and to amend this bill so that it will do exactly what it is designed to do, and that is to protect people who report wrongdoing.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I suppose relevance is something we could invoke every now and then since we are talking about whistleblowing under Bill C-8. With regard to Bill C-8, the member has already stated that the bill is to basically enact an order in council decision and it likely will receive the support of the House.

The member is a retired civil servant. I thought I would ask him about an issue or a matter that came up when we did Bill C-25, the modernization of the public service. It was with regard to the culture of the civil service, that there was a bias or a cynicism about change and whether or not the change was going to be accepted and acted upon.

The reaction from the witnesses seemed to sustain the fact, or at least the allegation, that the culture of cynicism was still in the public service, one reason being that the Public Service Modernization Act was the first piece of legislation in some 20 years. Would the member care to comment briefly on the culture within the Canadian civil service?

• (1640)

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, yes, there is a culture. For the last five years of my career as a manager, we were called agents of change. The member is correct in his assumption that it is difficult to change the culture in a huge organization such as the Public Service Commission.

That is why it is so critical that we get this legislation as perfect and flawless as possible. I am convinced, and the public servants are convinced, that if we give them something to work with, they are willing to change. However, they have been let down so many times that we have to show them some integrity and credibility. It is really critical that we get it right.

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-8, whose purpose is to make legislative corrections to ensure the implementation of the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency, which was created last December, if I am not mistaken. The main objective of Bill C-8 is to reconcile three acts, namely the Financial Administration Act, the School of Public Service Act and the Official Languages Act.

At the start, I will say that even though the Bloc Québécois is not entirely satisfied with certain aspects of Bill C-8, we will support the principle of it. I think that it is important to say this right from the beginning for those who are watching us, especially Treasury Board officials who must ask themselves the question. Now they know. They will be able to continue with their tasks or perform others.

That being said, the specifics that we would like to see in Bill C-8 will focus on what I will say now. For example, we read on page 3 of Bill C-8:

(b) section 6 is amended by adding the following after subsection (4):

(4.1) The Treasury Board may, subject to any terms and conditions that it considers appropriate, delegate to the President of the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada

(a) any of the powers or functions in relation to human resources management, official languages—

You will see that, for us, in this bill, everything that has to do with official languages deserves to be specified.

This deals with the Financial Administration Act. Concerning the Official Languages Act, it says:

3. Section 47 of the Official Languages Act is replaced by the following:

47. The President of the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada shall provide the Commissioner with any audit reports that are prepared pursuant to paragraph 46(2)(d).

Consequently, under clause 47, the president of the agency is replacing the president of Treasury Board, who, until now, was the one who had to report annually.

Before I go any further, I need to explain a bit about the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada, and how it will ensure modernization of everything the President of the Treasury Board has said, as well as application of the Official Languages Act.

It would be pretentious to claim to have been searching the Internet, but my assistant has done so to get some information on the agency referred to in this bill. I will read a few excerpts about the agency from Part II. I will comment on them as I go along. You will see that, even in a minority government, they do not suffer from humility. No humility for the Liberals.

The first *raison d'être* of the agency is set out in a nice little box as follows:

Our *raison d'être* is to modernize, and to foster continuing excellence in people management and leadership across the public service.

No problem with that, but the problem arises with the second quote.

Thus, the Agency will serve Canadians by striving for—

Government Orders

Hon. members have probably heard the expression “the bestest in the world” in connection with our public service. In fact everything done in Canada is so described. We do nothing by halves. So, I have added a few words but the quote is officially:

—a workforce and a workplace second to none.

As you can see, there is no humility in this document, nor in this government. They will learn, slowly but surely, in the transition from majority to minority position, from a grand total of x members to x minus all the defeated candidates.

What we want is an efficient and effective public service, and one that is above all respected. I think that those working in our public service deserve better. I was joking about the public service being the bestest in the world, but the public servants in our respective ridings would never write like that. They have far too much respect for their work, and so do I.

I think that this is from the Treasury Board website, not the bill, but certain aspects might be corrected.

• (1645)

Later in the Treasury Board document we read:

Our strategic outcome is a modern, professional public service dedicated to the public interest and supporting ministers in democratic governance, representative of the Canadian public and serving Canadians with excellence in the official language of their choice, with employees effectively and ethically led in a high quality work environment respectful of their linguistic rights.

I will return to the official languages. With respect to ethics, some names have been overlooked, such as Guité and Tremblay, those who were implicated in the sponsorship scandal. Still that is what the Treasury Board Web site says about this agency.

Later on, in Part III, entitled Planning Overview, we read this:

While TBS continues to focus on compensation, labour relations, and pensions and benefits, the PSC focuses on staffing and the Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) focuses on learning and training services. As a result, the Agency works very closely with each of these partners—

Therefore they set up groups to implement the necessary action. The Treasury Board Secretariat was the agency that was supposed to ensure that everything was going well. This is now delegated to the agency. That is another thing that makes complicating accountability and responsibility in this government possible, but not for the first time. I am sure there was no malicious intent and that the president of Treasury Board at the time was not trying to dilute information by creating the agency. And the same is true of the foundations.

Later, on page 15 of the document, under the heading, “Achieve and preserve official language commitments...”

Following the restructuring of the Government on December 12, 2003, the Agency is responsible for directing and coordinating the official languages policies and programs for the 196 institutions subject to the Official Languages Act.

As a result, through its Official Languages Branch, the Agency will continue to oversee—

I will come back to that later. If the agency oversees the same way the Treasury Board Secretariat did, it will not continue to oversee very well.

—and foster the establishment of an environment that effectively supports each institution in the integration of official languages into the workplace—

This is how it should be in this country. It is important to point out that this is not a speech written by the Bloc Québécois. I am

quoting from the Treasury Board Secretariat, under the heading “Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada”. A little further, under the heading “A Representative and Accessible Public Service” the document says:

Progress towards employment equity and a more bilingual public service must continue in order for the government to meet its commitments to deliver effective quality services to Canadians and to develop a workplace respectful of diversity and linguistic duality.

The last two quotes are real gems. They should be included in the annals of the House. Indeed, we read the following on official languages:

On both fronts, considerable progress has been reported over the years. Achievements remain fragile or stagnant, however, and further improvements have to be made.

According to the Treasury Board Secretariat, “considerable progress has been reported”. The last quote is found under the heading “Key Priorities and Results for Canadians” and reads as follows:

The Agency will continue to strive for targeted improvements in employment equity—

This is also true for official languages.

What worries the Bloc Québécois and what worries me personally is when we read that the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada will continue to apply and take pride in the good results and progress achieved in official languages. At the same time, I made four complaints to the Treasury Board Secretariat and all four were deemed in order. These four complaints, which I submitted a year ago, are basically saying that the Treasury Board Secretariat is not complying with the Official Languages Act.

• (1650)

The complaints also say that the Treasury Board Secretariat is not accountable for or serious about its responsibility regarding the enforcement of the Official Languages Act in the various departments. The Treasury Board Secretariat is ignoring a number of regulations it put in place itself. Moreover, the Treasury Board Secretariat—the parliamentary secretary is listening and will certainly support what I am saying, otherwise she would contradict me during the period for questions and comments—has not delivered the accountability required under the Official Languages Act.

In one of the complaints I made, it was said, and I quote:

Regarding exclusion approval orders, if positions in the public service are designated bilingual, such positions or the person in those positions may be excluded from any language requirement, under certain exclusions or certain exclusion characteristics, including continuous service.

Government Orders

In the federal jargon, what is meant by exclusion as the result of a person being in continuous service? It is an order stating that anyone who, before April 6, 1966, had accumulated at least ten years of continuous service and who, since then, has been in continuous service, is excluded from language requirements. To meet such a requirement, and this is still in force, the person must have had 48 years of service in the public service as of April 2004. I bet you cannot find more than two or three of those, Mr. Speaker—and I am certain you are not one of them.

However, the Public Service Commission was monitoring the Official Languages Act provisions and the Treasury Board Secretariat was monitoring compliance with the Official Languages Act. The language rights of francophone communities have been ignored. I am not talking about the number of incomplete files, 2,521 in all—which is not much. According to the Treasury Board annual report, 2,521 persons hold a designated bilingual position in the public service. However we do not know if they comply with their hiring criteria, because their files are incomplete. Groupaction probably took care of their files. That is why they are incomplete.

Following that, I filed another complaint, which said that the Treasury Board is not properly carrying out its responsibilities as far as its supervisory obligations are concerned and which was also deemed in order.

Filling bilingual positions is quite another matter. I used to be our official languages critic, something I found both interesting and important. Therefore, I can tell the House that, since French-speaking Canadians account for close to 25% of the population, about 25% of the jobs are designated bilingual. I think that is quite normal. To fill a bilingual position—quite obviously—one needs to be bilingual. So far, so good.

Did you know, for instance, that over 60% of all jobs designated bilingual in the armed forces are held by unilingual people? That complaint was also deemed in order. I am not talking about 2% or 3%, but rather 60% of jobs designated bilingual being held by unilingual people. Throughout the public service, around 16% of jobs designated bilingual are held by unilingual people. I will not tell you what language they speak, I am going to let you guess.

I used to like to ask the previous President of the Treasury Board the following question, and I might put the same question to the current President of the Treasury Board: how many lawyers in the justice department are not really lawyers? How many income tax experts at the finance department are not really tax experts? None.

So why is it that unilingual people are hired to fill jobs designated bilingual as long as they undertake to taking language courses at some point in the future. That is still going on. Does the parliamentary secretary agree with me?

• (1655)

Why not hire social workers to fill lawyers' jobs suggesting they take the appropriate courses to become a lawyer at some point in the future? Why not hire mechanics to fill tax experts' jobs suggesting they take the appropriate courses at some point in the future? Positions are designated as such because they are important.

Why is what is important for a tax expert or a lawyer is not important for a francophone? I would really like someone to answer that some day.

Had the President of the Treasury Board given the agency, through Bill C-8, constraining powers, a real role in terms of accountability, perhaps the Official Languages Act could have started to be respected and enforced, after 35 years. But no, as I indicated earlier, quoting from the Internet site of the Treasury Board Secretariat, they will continue to be content with whatever progress is made.

Sixty per cent of designated bilingual positions in the Canadian Forces are held by unilingual individuals. Sixteen per cent of designated bilingual positions in the public service are held by unilingual individuals. Yet, the boasting is continuing. In making changes to legislation, attention ought to be paid to this sort of thing.

More specifically, in Bill C-8, special attention could have been paid to respecting the Official Languages Act. But no, instead the name of the President of the Treasury Board is replaced with that of the president of the agency, which will continue as before without changing a thing. They are even proud of doing nothing; they are proud when they receive complaints.

The complaints I have filed were not about not having been served in the language of my choice somewhere in Saskatoon. The complaints were against the Treasury Board Secretariat as a whole. I had complaints against DND as a whole. It is not about the priest from Bagotville, in the Lac-Saint-Jean region, who could not work in Moose Jaw, if I am not mistaken, because he was not allowed to speak French on a base that was supposed to be bilingual.

My complaints do not concern a single individual contravening the act in one place. They concern an entire government ignoring the Official Languages Act. At the same time, the Conservatives are telling us that the OLA is too constraining for unilingual individuals. That is the position of the Conservatives.

I cannot wait for the day when more francophones will fill designated bilingual positions in a department. Just try to find a unilingual English position filled by a francophone and you will see that he will have to change jobs quite rapidly. This is not the situation today.

The government will make the legislative reconciliation that must be made to Bill C-8, so this will apply, since it was created in 2000. Perhaps there are other improvements that could be made.

Before concluding, I would be remiss if I did not pay tribute to my colleague from Terrebonne—Blainville. I could have talked more about this, but, in this bill, we must refer specifically to everything that has to do with whistleblower legislation, with Bill C-25 concerning the modernization of the public service, which I did not do.

So, as I said, all this will enable my colleague from Terrebonne—Blainville to be heard on Bill C-451, which she introduced during previous Parliament and which deals with harassment in the workplace. I talked at length about official languages, but I can also talk about this. Harassment in the workplace affects one public servant out of five, according to a 2002 survey of 95,000 public servants.

Government Orders

This is why my colleague from Terrebonne—Blainville introduced a bill to protect victims of psychological and other types of harassment. First, the text defines psychological harassment and abuse of power and then it requires the federal public administration to provide public servants with a harassment-free workplace.

I believe that, if the government protects public servants from psychological harassment, if it allows public servants, through Bill C-11, to disclose wrongdoings in their department and their workplace, and if, on occasion, it complied with the Official Languages Act, Bill C-8 would modernize the public service and the government machinery in a positive way.

* * *

• (1700)

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed a bill to which the concurrence of this House is desired.

* * *

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-8, an act to amend the Financial Administration Act, the Canada School of Public Service Act and the Official Languages Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Roger Clavet (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I admire the eloquence of my colleague from Repentigny, who did a good job defining the essence of the legislative initiative in Bill C-8. He raised negative points, which is understandable. The Bloc Québécois supports this legislative measure, but with hesitation, as my colleague indicated quite well.

I want to ask him a question, since he is an expert. He has devoted his life to promoting linguistic duality and respect for francophone communities, which the government seems to forget at times—be it the Commissioner of Official Languages or others. Does the member for Repentigny not find it a little ironic that the person responsible for this new agency, who is in a way the sponsor of all of this, in other words the President of the Treasury Board of Canada, is himself a unilingual anglophone? Should the person responsible for supervising the respect of linguistic duality and bilingual positions not, first and foremost, be himself bilingual? That is my question for my colleague from Repentigny.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Mr. Speaker, let me reassure my hon. colleague from Louis-Hébert. I did devote part of my life to this cause, but I still have some strength left to go on.

On a more serious note, it is true that if we want to lead by example in Canada, members of the cabinet should be bilingual. The minister responsible for enforcing all or part of the Official Languages Act should set the example. I understand that the current President of the Treasury Board is working on that.

What I find rather amusing is precisely this responsibility the Official Languages Act. I may be mistaken, but I think that, pursuant to section 42 or 43 of the legislation, the Canadian heritage minister is responsible for implementing the Official Languages Act. Further

down, the responsibility for enforcing the Official Languages Act within the public service is given to the President of the Treasury Board.

If we look at what the government is doing here, we see that a minister has been made responsible for the Official Languages Act, who is neither the Minister of Heritage or the President of the Treasury Board. In this case it is the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, the minister responsible for official languages. There is no reference to this title in the Official Languages Act, because the coordinating responsibilities of the minister responsible for official languages are not recognized. That role is considered instead to belong to the Minister of Canadian Heritage. So, in the House of Commons, a question to the heritage minister will not be answered by her but by another person.

So, who is responsible? Everyone and no one. Who is answerable? Everyone and no one. Why, in the report she tabled last week, did the Commissioner of Official Languages say that little progress has been made in the application of the Official Languages Act after 35 years? This is somewhat contrary to what we read at the Treasury Board Secretariat site. She is not celebrating the progress made, far from it, because everyone is responsible for a part of the Official Languages Act, but according to this government, no one is.

For the benefit of the member for Louis—Hébert, with his great interest in official language issues, I will point out that further along in that web site may be found the form required for all reports on the respect of official languages. Never, under any minister, has there been any follow-up on these reports. So here we have, in Bill C-8, a continuation of what we have been seeing for 35 years as far as the Official Languages Act is concerned, particularly within the Public Service.

• (1705)

Hon. Diane Marleau (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, listening from my seat, I find it somewhat strange to hear members of the Bloc Québécois profess such deep love for the protection of official language minority communities. It sends shivers down my spine. I am a francophone originally from northern Ontario. My mother and my grandparents were also born there. I am therefore in a position to talk about the great challenges of continuing to speaking French. The members of the Bloc Québécois did not help, and they are not about to be of any help. What they want is to split our country, and to tell my ancestors, who are also theirs, that they played no role in building this great country. That is too much for me.

I have a question however. One of the reasons for establishing the agency was because it was too difficult for the public service to hire very qualified and very capable individuals. The chair of the Public Service Commission has indicated that some 500 young people who graduated either this year or last year were hired, out of the 2,000 to 3,000 who applied. In many cases, it takes up to six months before they are offered a job.

Government Orders

I can add that, here in Canada, there is no shortage of young people who are learning both French and English, who are enrolled in immersion classes and who are very bilingual. I am confident that, if we can get the agency can up and running, we will finally be able to hire our very capable young people. If we take six months before sending them a job offer, they will take jobs elsewhere.

Do you think that, with the agency, we may see some change and some flexibility, and our young people will be able to find good jobs in the public service?

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised by what the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board is saying. I do not have any doubt about her interest in francophone communities, but you and I sat twice a week on the Standing Committee on Official Languages over the last five years, and she never showed up.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the electors of Burnaby—New Westminster for their support on June 28. I would also like to underline the good work of organizations in my riding, such as the Hyack Festival, the New Westminster and District Labour Council and the New Westminster Chamber of Commerce.

I welcome the opportunity to present my views and those of my New Democratic Party colleagues on Bill C-8, an act to amend the Financial Administration Act, the Canada School of Public Service Act and the Official Languages Act. I would like to provide some background on the bill.

In November 2003 the Public Service Modernization Act, Bill C-25, received royal assent. The main intent of the legislation was to modernize the human resources management in the public service by adding the concept of merit, implementing a more flexible staffing system, incorporating learning activities, and this may seem hard to believe given the current state of affairs, improving labour management relations. The NDP supported Bill C-25 in principle but in the end voted against it.

Overwhelmingly, workers in the trade union movement, including the Public Service Alliance of Canada, strongly opposed many aspects of Bill C-25. The government refused to take into consideration their concerns and defeated at committee stage a number of progressive amendments. These amendments mainly dealt with the security of workers.

In came the new Liberal regime and on December 12, 2003, the Liberal government established by decree, or order in council, the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada as well as its functions. The agency was placed within the Treasury Board portfolio.

Government contended that the agency was the next logical step for implementing the Public Service Modernization Act, but since the agency was created by order in council, government had to follow up with Bill C-8, which was tabled this month, to confirm by legislative means the decree of the Prime Minister. This is therefore a technical or mechanical bill, as some would call it, which does not modify the functions or the powers given to the agency but which clarifies the role of the agency in the system.

●(1710)

[*Translation*]

The government maintains that Bill C-8 will allow for better integration of activities relating to the management of human resources within the sphere of operation of the Treasury Board. The government also maintains that this bill will ensure greater visibility of the agency inside and outside public services.

[*English*]

The bill adds the position of president of the agency but says nothing about the terms and remuneration of the president. I hope we can clarify this with officials at the committee stage.

More important, Bill C-8 confirms a potential significant delegation of powers to the president of the agency. The Treasury Board is relegated to the role of coordinator of the activities of the Treasury Board Secretariat, the president of the agency and of the new office of the comptroller of Canada. This office was reinstated after being canned by the Mulroney Conservatives in the early 1990s.

Given the track record of the Treasury Board on human resources issues, this may be a good idea after all. Maybe labour-management relations would finally improve, but it is fair to say it would be difficult for them to be worse. Bill C-8 keeps the door open to Treasury Board involvement. This makes me wonder about the capacity of the Treasury Board to effectively follow up and coordinate what it is supposed to coordinate. Perhaps some in the government think it would be a good thing to combine a junior partner and a senior partner to effectively deal with human resources issues.

Perhaps as part of the study of the bill in committee we should file access to information requests, targeting existing surveys and reports on job satisfaction at the Treasury Board. That information, I believe, would prove to be very interesting.

The president of the agency is provided with lots of powers over human resources management and human resources issues, in fact, as many as the President of the Treasury Board wishes to transfer, including employment equity issues, ethics, and powers conferred under the Public Service Employment Act.

Given all that, would it not then be appropriate that government consult with Parliament before appointing the president of the agency? Why then not make the president of the agency an officer of Parliament? After all, this is supposed to be an independent agency. I would like to see an amendment to that effect in proposed subsection 3.1.

[*Translation*]

Once again, this is a technical bill. We are trying very sincerely to find valid reasons to support it.

*Government Orders**[English]*

However we must be absolutely certain, first, that the government is not building up unnecessary expenses. The underlying philosophy of Bill C-8, in its potential implicit and explicit costs, must be assessed or reassessed and scrutinized at committee stage.

• (1715)

[Translation]

We must be sure that this will not entail wasteful spending by the government.

[English]

Was there any prior consultation on this agency? None that I know of at least. There is no substantial background documentation. One must wonder whether we are making things up on the go.

[Translation]

Is it improvising first and trying to justify the decision afterward?

[English]

The onus is on the government to make and prove its case. How can we respect the credibility of the Liberal government on those issues when we all know its dismal record in human resources management. Certainly with the public sector strikes this fall, the fact that many of the contracts were delayed and negotiations left public sector workers without contracts up to a year and a half, the fact of a fall in real wages of public sector workers who have lost about 10% of their real wages over the past 10 years, and the fact that table 2, the one salary survey that was done, showed a wage gap of 20% between public sector workers employed by the Government of Canada and those in the other public and private sectors. All of those facts indicate that there is a serious issue around human resources management and the lack of respect with which the government treats public sector workers.

[Translation]

I have many other questions about Bill C-8. I would like to find out what it will really mean for us and better understand its consequences for the public service.

[English]

Is the government attempting to clean up the mess created by the multiple scandals and abuses of the political purse? Is the agency just a smokescreen or an effective tool for management, or maybe, as I mentioned, it is just an improvisation?

First, an agency was announced last December. Then the government created the evidence for its need. Why would the civil service be better off with this scheme? We need evidence. How will the agency affect other departments? We need evidence. How would this agency ensure a better service from and a better treatment of civil servants. We also need evidence.

[Translation]

As an hon. member already mentioned, the Treasury Board website provides an elaborate plan of action for this agency. On paper it looks fantastic. However, the real challenge will be to demonstrate that these changes will translate into positive and tangible results with respect to the way the government does

business. That has not yet happened. It will take years after Bill C-8 is adopted to find out whether the outcome is good for the people of Canada.

[English]

We must think of the challenge in trying to hold the government accountable to all of this. Again, there is no guarantee that this will work. The government has shown that it has difficulty in many respects controlling its own departments. How can it control the proliferation of agencies and related outcomes? The more separate places that exist, the less transparency we will have and the more difficult it may become to have effective control.

We are concerned about the proliferation of agencies. The Auditor General herself has commented on the lack of control and on the lack of accountability mechanisms. From Genome Canada, \$375 million were poured in for just a few dozen genomic research positions, to the Canada Foundation for Innovation and many others. These agencies are not under the same scrutiny. There is always the same pattern, a small overworked staff relying on outsiders, and none of that is subject to Treasury Board accountability and regulation.

We know the Treasury Board regulations themselves are in serious need of overhaul given the scandals during the election campaign, for example, the expenses for staff at Citizenship and Immigration who were put up in hotels here in Ottawa according to Treasury Board guidelines. It was a cost to taxpayers of more than \$30,000.

[Translation]

I am not saying that these agencies do not do good work. I am sure that many competent and dynamic Canadian men and women work hard in them. Still, there is taxpayers' money involved, and these agencies do not really have the means for supervision and monitoring.

[English]

There is much talk about the all wonderful program activity architecture, or PAA, to regulate accountability and record it. The PAA went ahead with virtually no documentation, no policy background and no consultation, again making things up on the go. I would not be the least surprised that not all government departments and agencies have officially submitted their PAA with the signature of the relevant minister.

I have another major concern. How will all of this affect the venerable Public Service Commission? We heard, during the introduction of Bill C-8, the President of the Treasury Board state that the Public Service Commission of Canada was moving away from a managerial role to an auditing role.

Effectively, through Bill C-11, the whistleblowing legislation that is currently before committee, the Treasury Board is giving the public commission a new mandate which is to deal with wrongdoing and whistleblowing in the public service.

Government Orders

The government decided not to create an independent body when in the case of whistleblowing there is indeed a compelling case in favour of creating an independent body to oversee the application of this important legislation. Responding to more calls for an independent whistleblowing agency, the Treasury Board president stated at committee that we should be working to modernize existing rules and procedures rather than add a new body to the public service. That begs the following question: Why is the government then creating a human resources agency when it clearly did not provide the rock solid evidence that was needed? Why is the government refusing to create an independent oversight agency for whistleblowing when there is compelling and overwhelming evidence in favour of such an agency?

I have more. During its presentation to the committee on Bill C-11, the Treasury Board admitted that by giving the mandate to deal with whistleblowing to the Public Service Commission, Bill C-11 would create a conflict of interest situation since the Public Service Commission, a body that holds executive powers over the public service, such as hiring staff, would also have to answer complaints of wrongdoings.

Does this confirm that the government is bent on stripping the Public Service Commission from its hiring powers? We already know that the HR agency proposed by Bill C-8 could be the recipient of many of those powers. Is the President of the Treasury Board paving the way for legitimizing the new HR agency that Bill C-8 would entrench into legislation?

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

It is strange that, while this government has so far been opposed to the creation of an independent agency to monitor whistleblowing, the same government has not succeeded in demonstrating that the agency created by Bill C-8 is necessary.

Canadians know full well that only an independent agency, operating outside the government, can effectively guarantee that public servants who blow the whistle on wrongdoings will truly be protected.

The government has said no. But this is simply a question of common sense. Unless, of course, someone is trying to protect the minister from the employees and not the other way around.

[*English*]

In fact, there could be an even better solution for whistleblowing supervision. Why not give such a mandate to the Auditor General? It would be a natural extension of the mandate of the Auditor General, not the job of the Public Service Commission or a human resources commission. This would mean that we may not even need to spend money on another independent agency since independence is the middle name for the Auditor General's office. It would be a win-win for our rights as Canadian citizens and a win-win for civil servants and taxpayers.

The non-partisan, venerable and effective Public Service Commission is losing influence due to the proliferation of agencies. Why are we tampering and improvising from one patchwork to the next and weakening government institutions?

We owe it to the taxpayers, the civil servants and the citizens of Canada to question the rationale for the creation of the human resources agency and to ask for evidence that its creation will actually address problems and not create them, and relate all arguments to the basic question: Why another agency if the government has difficulty controlling existing agencies and departments?

The case for the human resources agency proposed by the Prime Minister in December 2003, and which Bill C-8 seeks to legitimize, has yet to be made. I am looking forward to having all of these questions answered at committee.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member covered a fair bit of ground but not very much on Bill C-8. I want to make some comments about Bill C-25, the modernization of the public service.

Having been a member of the government operations and estimates committee since it was created some two and a half years ago and having served as its chair and currently as its vice-chair, I can say that the process we have been going through, starting with Bill C-25, has been a very complicated one because it has been 20 years since the public service renewal process was looked at.

The experts who have looked at this and the studies that were done over a two year period prior to the creation of the legislation, brought forward a bill that was not even the full strategy for the renewal of the public service. It went as far as the experts felt we could go in one swoop. Bill C-25 included within it two embedded bills. It was so complicated that very few people had the patience to go through the enormous binder of legislation.

The member seemed to indicate that the PSAC had made a number of recommendations that were rejected. The fact is that the PSAC recommendations were not rejected. They were not presented to the committee until the day that it was going through clause by clause. It was never proposed by any member of the committee to amend the legislation. Therefore the committee did not reject PSAC's proposals. I think I was the only member who actually proposed some changes, some having to do with civil servants seeking public office, some having to do with oaths of office and other matters like that.

I would simply say that this is a technical bill that would give effect to an order in council decision that has been made. There is no new money and no changes in responsibilities but it starts to clarify the position with regard to who is management and who is representing the employees. The problem is that the Public Service Commission still has two hats. It still is an employer and it still has representation in employee responsibilities, and that will not be resolved until we go through the next wave of public service renewal, which may be some five years down the road.

Government Orders

I raise for the member's comment and consideration that our job is not over. This is a work in progress. It has taken us a number of years already to bring us this far and there are many areas to go. Whistleblowing is another bill but it certainly is part of it in terms of addressing the culture issues that I raised earlier with another member. I am pretty sure the committee will address the concerns after we hear the witnesses.

However the government operations and estimates committee already received the bill in the last Parliament, had full witnesses and was prepared to deal with the bill then. Unfortunately, the House rose for the election and now we are dealing with it again.

However I want to assure the member that there is an appetite within the committee, not only to properly address the issues related to the whistleblowing issue, but to continue to work and to invest in improving management-labour relations as well as to boast about the excellent public service that Canada does have.

● (1725)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I would certainly hope that the committee will have broad input and consultations, and that our public sector workers who must be valued will be consulted fully on this bill as it comes forward for improvement and for changes that can be made.

The point to underline and underscore is the record of the past couple of years with this government and its public sector workers. We have seen an appalling lack of respect shown to public sector workers, issues that have not been dealt with, contracts that have expired, and with no meaningful negotiations undertaken.

We have seen the fall in real wages and the use of temporary workers. We have seen the wage gap grow and certainly the one area which was table two, where a salary survey was undertaken, showed a 20% wage gap.

With all of that background, we then entered into these negotiations a few weeks ago, where the government did not negotiate in good faith and there was no respect shown to public sector workers. This is the appalling legacy of the past 10 years.

Public sector workers give enormously to their country and work very hard on behalf of all Canadians. They have not had their issue of wages addressed. They have not had the wage gaps addressed. Hopefully, that will start to change if we allow for the types of broad consultation with public sector workers on bills such as this.

It is not a good legacy of which to be proud. I certainly hope that we will see a shift with this minority Parliament that will allow public sector workers to be fully valued as they should be.

● (1730)

Mr. David McQuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased this afternoon to speak to Bill C-8. Before doing so however, I would like to sincerely thank the people of Ottawa South for electing me as their member of Parliament in the House of Commons. I am most grateful to them for placing their confidence in me. To them I make a single and solitary pledge. I will work as hard as I can to serve the needs of the people of Ottawa South in order to ensure that our community continues to flourish.

[*Translation*]

I will work as hard as I can to meet the needs of the people of Ottawa South in order to ensure that our community continues to flourish

[*English*]

I am particularly pleased to speak to this bill today because of the deep respect in which I hold the public service. I have the great privilege of serving as a member of Parliament representing thousands of Canadians who dedicate their careers to improving public administration within the Government of Canada. As a former senior officer with the Canadian public service, I believe these changes are timely.

Indeed, as mentioned by the President of the Treasury Board, although this bill proposes relatively modest additions to the Financial Administration Act, its significance and direct effects, as well as its long term consequences, are vitally important to all public servants and as a result to all Canadians.

On this note I would like to congratulate the ongoing work of the President of the Treasury Board for his attempts to modernize our public management systems. I think that the results of the ongoing negotiations and discussions with Canada's unions involved in public administration is a testimony to his patience and his commitment.

[*Translation*]

For the first time since Confederation, the human resources management function within the public service of Canada has been raised to the level of an agency, and the bill before us today gives this proposal a legislative basis. Time has come for the federal public service to take this crucial step.

[*English*]

Such a bill issues a clear message about the government's priorities. Not only does it underscore the important role that human resources management plays in the creation of a modern public service that is better able to meet the needs of Canadians, but it also acknowledges and places even more value on the contributions made and the pride felt by the thousands of public servants, professionals, managers and union representatives who work within it.

But above all, beyond the symbolic nature of the message, this bill is a vehicle of change because it will make it easier to implement important priorities in the area of human resources management.

The number of challenges in this area are many, but they revolve around a common issue or a common theme, implementing concrete and sustainable changes in human resources management, which in tangible terms will mean better results for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

In fact, for several years now, the government has been actively committed to implementing major and long-awaited changes to the public service human resources management system. The system is burdensome, rigid and complex, and its obsolete processes are still regulated by legislation, which, in some cases, stretches back decades.

To address the issue, the government has made a commitment and taken measures that have led to the drafting and recent passing of the Public Service Modernization Act, which received royal assent on November 7, 2003. That legislation is an historical step, since it is the first of a series of major changes to the human resources management and hiring processes of the public service in more than 35 years.

• (1735)

[*English*]

As the House knows, this bill provides very solid foundations. However, as it is enabling and not prescriptive, it gives rise to possibilities that we must act on and develop. We must, therefore, forge ahead and build in close partnership with the departments and agencies, their staff, the human resources community, and the unions a new human resources management system. In other words, the most essential and difficult task remains, to ensure that the vision expressed in the Public Service Modernization Act becomes reality and that it leads to results for Canadians.

To succeed, the agency must be able to demonstrate new leadership that will be a determining factor in the successful application of this act, leadership that is unifying and that facilitates and supports the work of the departments and agencies. That, through a collective effort, will be required in order to implement the act while ensuring that the highest standards of ethics, transparency and accountability are met.

This brings me to my central point. By giving the agency a legislative basis, the bill presented today will give it the increased visibility, legitimacy and stability that only a legal framework can confer.

[*Translation*]

It is a legislative basis that can only facilitate the leadership needed to allow the agency to implement and provide long-term support for the effective application of the Public Service Modernization Act.

It is an act that, as we will recall, is one of the pillars upon which rests the government's action plan to improve human resources management and which also includes a large number of non-legislative initiatives, such as the reform of the classification system and the significant improvement of the human resources management planning and accountability systems across the public service.

Furthermore, the increased visibility legitimacy and stability conferred by this bill will also be instrumental in supporting this new leadership needed by the agency to facilitate the implementation and long-term support of all its policies, programs and services.

[*English*]

This work includes promoting values and ethics in the public service, which is another key element of the agency's plans. Indeed, in its effort to ensure that the public service is guided by the highest standard of values and ethics, the agency began in June 2003 to actively support departments and agencies in their efforts to integrate the new values and ethics code for the public service into the day to day functioning of their respective organizations.

Routine Proceedings

The agency was also given the responsibility of supporting the government in the writing and ultimately in the implementation of the public servants disclosure protection bill, our so-called whistleblowing act, which will be discussed in Parliament in the coming months.

The agency is actively committed to integrating and strengthening all of the important leadership and development programs that were recently transferred to its responsibility from the Public Service Commission. The resulting increase in coherence and consistency will contribute to the development of competent and talented leaders, who will be guided and assessed by means of the highest possible accountability standards.

Finally, the agency is very focused on improving human resources management policies and strengthening reporting systems. It continues to make targeted improvements in the areas of employment equity and the promotion of linguistic duality.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

Therefore, as one can see, the agency is working on a large number of files of the utmost importance, files that not only affect the public administration in general, but that also directly reflect the concerns of Canadians with regard to the functioning of their public service.

Across the public service, the agency is working to modernize, improve and integrate, into a coherent whole, all the functions conferred upon it. It seeks to improve not only culture, values, behaviours and practices, but also the tools that are essential to a modern public service that is capable of meeting the expectations of all Canadians and that is worthy of their trust and respect.

[*English*]

In conclusion, the agency's reason for being is rooted in change and the continued support for excellence in human resources management. Therefore, giving the agency a legislative basis can only support it and help it in its daily activities, and ultimately in the success of its mission.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

UKRAINE ELECTIONS

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Having held consultations with all the parties, if you were to seek it, I believe that you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

Government Orders

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should impress upon the Government of Ukraine to ensure a fully transparent election process by: (a) providing free access for Ukrainian and international election observers, multiparty representation on all election commissions, unimpeded access by all parties and candidates to the media, freedom of candidates and media from intimidation and/or harassment, and a transparent process for complaint and appeals through electoral commissions and the courts; (b) guaranteeing election monitors from the Office of the Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, other participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Ukrainian political parties, candidates' representatives, non-governmental organizations, and other private institutions and organizations, both foreign and domestic; and (c) providing unobstructed access to all aspects of the election process for the Ukrainian presidential election of October 31, 2004 and a potential second round election on November 21, 2004.

I would therefore ask for the unanimous consent of the House to adopt Motion No. 156 standing in my name.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): 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)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-8, an act to amend the Financial Administration Act, the Canada School of Public Service Act and the Official Languages Act, be now read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada is to ensure that the modernization of human resources management throughout the public service is carried out; human resources management needs to be rejuvenated, reinforced and modernized. Those are the functions of this agency and they are welcome when we look at the public service in today's world.

The agency has many areas of responsibility. Hon. members will allow me, as the Bloc Québécois critic for the status of women, to talk about employment equity, which is one of the agency's areas of responsibility, and respect for diversity. Employment equity for women and the disabled is a difficult concept to institute in the workplace. We want to do the right thing, but in working on employment equity for women and the disabled we run headlong into prejudice and a host of problems. What can I say about respecting diversity for Canadians of all origins? This remains truly difficult.

The agency also has to promote a workplace that allows for a balance between work and personal life. These are very interesting concepts in this bill. They are increasingly important concepts, because research shows that working conditions and quality of life

are much more important than salaries for many workers. Quality of life is essential. This agency will have to work hard in this area.

Harassment at the workplace should never exist. When it does exist, it should be denounced and stopped. We know we have legislation and protection, but often silence prevails because the victim finds it very difficult to criticize a superior.

In this sense, we can see why, in 1998, the International Labour Office included Canada among the countries that have the most serious problems of violence in the workplace, particularly as regards assault, harassment and sexual harassment. The rate of psychological torment and physical assault against women in the workplace is 19% higher here than in the United States. In an egalitarian and humanist society like ours, these numbers are scary. Moreover, we know that, according to a survey conducted in December 2002 and involving 95,000 public servants, one in five is a victim of harassment. So, we are talking here about a serious study on a very real issue.

Will the minister be able to assure us that the human resources management agency will create the objective conditions necessary to put a stop to all forms of harassment? I am talking about objective conditions, because, as we know, there is an act dealing with harassment. However, will we be able to ensure that a person who is being harassed can report his or her supervisor in the without fear of being fired. Can we believe that such despicable practices will end?

There is another aspect of this bill that is of particular interest to me, namely bilingualism. We know that Canada is making great efforts to ensure bilingualism in the public service. However, in her March 29, 2004 report, Dyane Adam, the Commissioner of Official Languages, made some essential recommendations. She told us that it is necessary for the agency to follow up rigorously on all managers. Indeed, it is nice to talk about bilingualism, but it is necessary to follow up on all senior managers rigorously, and this includes all those who will have to ensure that all their public servants provide services in both official languages.

● (1745)

Ms. Adam also told us that the School of Public Service will offer mandatory training courses, starting in autumn 2004, for senior managers and supervisors to make them aware of the impact the unequal status of the two official languages has in work environments and enable them to put in place the measures necessary to attain a work environment that respects employees' linguistic rights.

Without these measures, it will become difficult to have real bilingualism, and all the efforts that have already been made by Canada to ensure bilingualism in its public service will be in vain.

Ms. Adam also told us that the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada should make available, as soon as possible, second-language training courses, focused on reading and oral comprehension skills, to promote receptive bilingualism for unilingual employees.

These are only a few of Ms. Adam's recommendations.

However, I wonder if the minister will require that people who are really bilingual be appointed to bilingual positions. We should no longer see what we unfortunately see often—people filling bilingual positions without being really bilingual. These people are certainly not able to fully understand that bilingualism in the workplace is necessary.

• (1750)

Hon. Diane Marleau (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to correct something that was said in the House by a Bloc Québécois member.

I was accused of never attending meetings of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. It is true. I have never attended these meetings, because I have never been a member of that committee. So, the comment is true, but since it was not my duty to attend these meetings, I did not.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sure the parliamentary secretary knows that all members can attend committee meetings.

However, first I want to say that we all have in our offices a copy of the *Précis of Procedure*, which explains what a point of order is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): I do not think this is a point of order. The hon. parliamentary secretary has time available during questions and comments, and she was about to put a question to the hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

The parliamentary secretary.

Hon. Diane Marleau: Mr. Speaker, here is my question.

The hon. member talked about sexual harassment and all other forms of harassment, and how hard it is to prevent. I know we have laws against that and Quebec has some of its own.

Does she think that, because legislation outlawing harassment is passed, it means will not occur anymore? I can tell you, even with the best legislation, this remains problematic.

• (1755)

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Mr. Speaker, that is obvious. I agree with the hon. member that passing legislation does not eliminate problems overnight.

Nonetheless, it is for the agency to introduce working conditions that make it possible to complain, and to speak without fear to one's supervisor to report harassment problems.

That was my central point. Will we have working conditions in which an employee can complain without fear of losing his or her job?

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having been a member of the government operations and estimates committee since its inception, the issues related to the public service are extremely important to me. I am quite encouraged, and I think Canadians should be very encouraged, by the commentary of all hon. members who have participated in the debate on Bill C-8.

Government Orders

As the members know, it is a technical bill to enact a decision of order in council. However, when I listen to the debate, I hear concerns about harassment, whistleblowing and employer and labour relations. The public service should be encouraged to know that parliamentarians have taken this matter seriously and will work to the best of their ability to address some of those issues.

First, since we are talking about a particular bill, maybe we should say something about it just to reaffirm. We tend to invoke the relevance issue from time to time. The Chair's decision to allow members a little latitude to talk about the importance of the public service is very important.

The bill aims to confirm, by legislative means, the order in council which established the functions of the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency and placed it within the Treasury Board's portfolio. It also maintains the status quo and does not modify either the functions, or the attributions or powers that were formally given to the agency by orders in council which had already been put in place.

The main benefits of the bill include: (a) clarification of the role of the agency within the system, including unions, and in particular the relations with the Treasury Board's portfolio, as well as with the Treasury Board which is the employer; (b) it better integrates the activities relating to human resources management within the Treasury Board portfolio; and (c) it provides for greater visibility for the agency, both within and outside the public service, facilitating implementation of its policies, programs and services.

Essentially, the bill proposes to add the position of president of the agency to the Financial Administration Act in the same way the Secretary of the Treasury Board and the Comptroller General of Canada are already identified in that act.

It also specifies the nature and powers and functions that may be delegated by the Treasury Board to the president of the agency in the same manner as stipulated in the act for the Secretary of the Treasury Board and the Comptroller General of Canada.

Finally, it stipulates that the President of the Treasury Board is responsible for the coordination of the activities of the Treasury Board Secretariat, the agency and the Comptroller General of Canada.

A number of members have commented so far today that this is basically a technical bill that enacts some of the provisions related to an order in council appointment. However, as I said in my preamble, members have wanted to talk about the public service generally and about some of the concerns.

Government Orders

We talked in questions and comments about the whistleblower legislation, which is now before committee. We have had the minister before us already on this matter to provide some background. However, the important thing for members to know is that the bill has been sent to the committee after first reading. It is a very significant move that it goes after first reading. Once a bill receives second reading, the approval in principle is in place and one cannot start to change the fundamentals of the bill after second reading. The committee has the unique opportunity in regard to the legislation on whistleblowing, Bill C-11, or any other legislation that goes before any other standing committee after first reading, to really get down to the fundamentals.

I think members are familiar with the hon. members who are on this committee, and it is an excellent committee. The committee has expressed its views already in its conversations with the President of the Treasury Board. There is an appetite to look at this much more carefully than we might have otherwise done after second reading. However, the members, the public and the civil service should be assured of this. The important thing for the committee is to hear the witnesses from all the stakeholders.

• (1800)

I had the opportunity to fly home last week with someone who had been a whistleblower, Ms. Gualtieri. She wanted to talk about it. I am sure it will be coming before committee again as a specific example. There are many other aspects to this, the structure, et cetera. It is going to be difficult.

The committee is going to have one problem and that is the current structure of the bill. With all of the provisions that it sets up in terms of addressing matters under the whistleblower legislation, it pervades the entire bill. To change it, and this is the caution, it is going to be virtually an enormous rewrite of the bill. We have to be prepared for that.

I do not think committees have had much success in rewriting bills because there are so many tangents and tentacles that go through them. In fact what has happened historically is that when committees do not like a bill and do not believe they have the ability or the resources to do the rewrite, the bill is simply defeated at committee and the committee sends the bill back to the House, saying that the committee is rejecting it.

That is also a possibility. I do not think it is my preferred route though. I think the committee has the opportunity to do it.

I also wanted to comment very briefly on Bill C-25, the Public Service Modernization Act which came before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. The current President of the Treasury Board was the chair of the committee at that time. It was a tremendously complicated bill and had two bills embedded in it, as I said earlier in questions and comments.

The bill was the result of literally years of consultations, expert opinions from right across the country and consultations with all of the stakeholders. It was the best effort. One of the most important things that I found out from the witnesses and from the committee process was that the experts had basically said that the culture within the civil service was such that we could not move fully with the

restructuring and modernization of the public service in one step, in one bill.

It was decided that we could only take it so far. The reason was the culture within our civil service. There is a culture of some cynicism. Sometimes things happen. There is experience. There was some cautious optimism that the changes, as we fully implemented the changes that were contemplated under Bill C-25, would improve the environment in which the public service must operate.

This means we are going to go through another wave of renewal and modernization of the public service, once it is determined that we have brought it forward as far as we can under the provisions of Bill C-25. That is very important for members to understand.

Members may be interested to know that the government operations and estimates committee has a significant opportunity in its mandate to go where it feels it should go to deal with these things. From what I have detected so far, the committee members are very interested in pursuing certain aspects more rigorously.

I think there is going to be some special work done within the committee. I hope that once we get through the important process of the estimates and dealing with the whistleblower legislation that we will then formulate our agenda to continue this important work and to have some important input into the renewal process of the public service.

For the benefit of the public service representatives who are watching, the problem we had with Bill C-25 with regard to the whole modernization process was there was some concern that the consultation was not full consultation. We have to make absolutely sure that whenever there are changes being proposed and legislation being formulated that the stakeholders whom it will affect are fully consulted. That is an absolute necessity.

On top of that, the timeline within which we had to deal with that bill was very tight. Many of the witnesses, including PSAC which represents the employees, came forward with a myriad of suggestions and recommendations on how to amend Bill C-25, but it happened to be the day before we were going to clause by clause study on a bill that was the size of a telephone book.

• (1805)

It is extremely difficult for changes to be made to legislation at committee when substantive changes are not brought to the committee's attention until the day before clause by clause study is going to be done. Members need the opportunity to educate themselves about the nature of the changes and how they would impact things. They need to be able to do a little research.

I would simply send the message out to the stakeholders, whoever they may be, that real changes to legislation can be made at committee provided that committee members are apprised of the changes and sought to champion some of those changes themselves. Witnesses should not wait until they are before the committee to inform the committee that they have some concerns. That is a very important part of the legislative process.

Government Orders

Let me conclude by talking about culture. The stopper in terms of Bill C-25 going the full range of change that was necessary to do a proper segregation between management and representation of the employees was that, in the view of the experts, the culture of the public service was such that it could not take all that change. I am not sure whether or not that was the right decision. We can only speculate what it would be like.

In my experience the people I have had an opportunity to meet and work with at committee, people from PSAC and from the Public Service Commission and from other unions, have been very helpful and very sincere. They feel very welcome when they appear before our committee. All of those stakeholders with regard to the public service should know they have a place to go to in terms of expressing their views, and that is the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

That is reflective of the decision that we made to expand the mandate of the Public Service Commission not only to submit an annual report, but to report to Parliament and appear before the committee as often as it thought necessary. That was an extremely important change that we made. I understand it will be effective in December 2005, which is a while off but that is how long it will take before these changes can be made.

There may be some cultural problems within the public service, perceived or otherwise. There are also some cultural problems within the legislators. I want to assure our excellent public servants that the parliamentarians on the front lines who are able to deal with these matters are very open and sensitive to the concerns raised by them to date. I suspect they will be sensitive to other concerns as we move forward in the future.

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of Bill C-8 concerning the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada.

The government's ability to meet the expectations of Canadians depends first and foremost on the quality, commitment and integrity of its public service. I am proud to be part of a government that is taking such a leadership role in this regard.

This is also our opportunity not only to recognize the great dedication of our public servants, but to show that every effort shall be put in place to provide them with the tools they need to maintain the highest levels of service they have accustomed us to expect.

We need employees who are guided and supported effectively and in accordance with the highest ethical standards in a workplace that is empowering, healthy and respectful of employees' language rights. In other words, we need an outstanding public service workforce and workplace guided and supported by effective and responsible human resources management.

That is why the government created the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada as part of its December 2003 reorganization.

The agency will make it possible to give the attention, direction and support needed to promote and maintain throughout the public service human resources management that is exemplary and leadership that is constantly renewed and constantly more effective and results oriented. In short, it will make it possible to put in place

the conditions that public servants need to provide Canadians with efficient quality services while promoting the highest standards of integrity, transparency and accountability.

The agency was created through orders in council, transferring functions from the Treasury Board of Canada and the Public Service Commission.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

The purpose of this bill is simply to confirm the existence of the agency in a legislative document, but it will also contribute to the agency's success by implicitly reinforcing the leadership it needs to carry out its mandate.

For example, among the functions already transferred, the agency will supervise the implementation of the Public Service Modernization Act which received royal assent in November 2003. It will also implement integrated planning, oversight and human resources accountability systems throughout the public service.

It will promote the training of highly competent executives who will be guided by the highest ethics and accountability standards and who will also be assessed against these standards. It will also continue to bring in targeted improvements in the area of employment equity and to promote linguistic duality while implementing better oversight and accountability systems that will make the results more accessible and more transparent for Canadians.

[*English*]

Thus, although the bill simply enshrines the agency's function in legislation and proposes relatively modest additions to the Financial Administration Act, these amendments constitute a key step for public service administration. With this bill the agency will have a legislative basis that clearly sets out its role and relationship within the portfolio of the Treasury Board and with the Treasury Board in its role as employer.

The bill will permit the clarification of the perceived role of the agency within the system, including unions and in particular, the clarification of its relationship within the portfolio of the Treasury Board and with the Treasury Board in its role as employer. It will allow for better integration of activities relating to human resources management within the Treasury Board portfolio. It will give greater visibility for the agency, both within and outside the public service, facilitating implementation of its policies, programs and services.

[*Translation*]

This is a turning point in the history of the public service of Canada. For the first time ever, a separate agency will be responsible for human resources management in the federal public service.

The government has committed to a different approach and the establishment of the agency is a reflection of this commitment. This clearly tells managers, public servants and union representatives that the proper administration of human resources is a priority for the Government of Canada and a recognition of their important contribution to our country.

*Business of supply***BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—NATIONAL DEFENCE

The House resumed from October 21 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): It being 6.15 p.m., pursuant to order made Thursday, October 21, 2004, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion by the hon. member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills concerning supply. Call in the members.

• (1845)

[English]

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

*(Division No. 5)***YEAS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Batters	Benoit
Bezan	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Carrie
Casey	Casson
Chatters	Chong
Cummins	Day
Devolin	Doyle
Duncan	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Fletcher
Forseth	Gallant
Goldring	Goodyear
Gouk	Grewal (Newton—North Delta)
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)	Guergis
Hanger	Harper
Harris	Harrison
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Jaffer
Jean	Johnston
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lauzon
Lunn	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mark	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Pallister
Penson	Poillievre
Prentice	Preston
Rajotte	Reid
Reynolds	Richardson
Ritz	Scheer
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Skelton
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)	Solberg
Sorenson	Stinson
Stronach	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Toews	Trost
Tweed	Van Loan
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Adams	Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)	Angus
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Bélanger	Bell
Bellavance	Bennett
Bergeron	Bevilacqua
Bigras	Blaikie
Blais	Blondin-Andrew
Boire	Boivin
Bonin	Bonsant
Boshcoff	Bouchard
Boudria	Boulianne
Bourgeois	Bradshaw
Brison	Broadbent
Brown (Oakville)	Brunelle
Bulte	Cannis
Cardin	Carr
Carrier	Carroll
Catterall	Chamberlain
Chan	Clavet
Cleary	Coderre
Comuzzi	Côté
Cotler	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies
Demers	Deschamps
Desjarlais	Desrochers
DeVillers	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Drouin	Dryden
Duceppe	Easter
Efford	Emerson
Eyking	Faille
Folco	Fontana
Frulla	Fry
Gagnon (Québec)	Galloway
Gaudet	Gauthier
Godbout	Godfrey
Godin	Graham
Guay	Guimond
Holland	Hubbard
Ianno	Jennings
Julian	Kadis
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Khan	Kotto
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lapierre (Outremont)	Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lastewka	Lavallée
Layton	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Longfield	Loubier
MacAulay	Macklin
Malhi	Maloney
Marceau	Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
McCallum	McDonough
McGuinty	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLellan
McTeague	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Minna
Mitchell	Murphy
Myers	Neville
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	Owen
Pacetti	Paquette
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Perron
Peterson	Pettigrew
Phinney	Picard (Drummond)
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)	Plamondon
Poirier-Rivard	Powers
Proulx	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rota	Roy
Saada	Sauvageau
Savage	Savoy
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sgro	Siksay
Silva	Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)
Simard (Saint Boniface)	Simms
Smith (Pontiac)	St-Hilaire
St. Denis	Steele
Szabo	Telegdi

Temelkovski
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Thibault (West Nova)
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PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (1850)

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently I had an opportunity in question period to ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health whether the government would reaffirm its intent that human cloning in all forms and all techniques would continue to be banned, notwithstanding the passage of Bill C-6 in the last Parliament.

Question period does not give a member much time to elaborate on the reason for the question, so I thought I would like to come tonight and outline a couple of my concerns.

First, during consideration of the bill at committee, Dr. Dianne Irving submitted substantive documentation and gave a critique of the bill, including four examples of human cloning, which, according to her, were not covered by the definition included in the bill. Her recommendation was that the definition be updated. I believe one of the examples was called mitochondrion transfer.

Dr. Irving, who is an American citizen, was invited to the committee to deal with the matter on the day before U.S. Thanksgiving. However she could not make it and therefore she was never heard. It gets even worse. When the Senate committee was dealing the bill after it had passed third reading here in the House, it was recommended that it hear Dr. Irving because the issue was so important. However, the Senate did not call her as a witness because, from what I have been told, it could not find her.

This raises some concerns. About a year and a half ago there was a resolution I believe by Chile before the United Nations for a comprehensive ban on human cloning. Canada was not a signatory to that resolution but was a signatory to a resolution put forward by, I believe, France, Germany and the U.K. Canada was a co-sponsor of a resolution for a partial ban that would permit therapeutic cloning or somatic cell nuclear transfer.

The problem here is that it appears that Canada had one position in the United Nations and yet another position in Parliament. It raises some questions and concerns.

The somatic cell nuclear transfer or, as it is also called, therapeutic cloning has been the subject matter of debate in the U.S. presidential

Adjournment Proceedings

election as well. This is a process whereby a woman's egg is taken, enucleated, or the DNA is taken out, someone else's DNA is put in and we can harvest stem cells. If that egg were left in a nurturing environment it would become a born human being just like any other fertilized embryo.

I raise this question with the parliamentary secretary because I am seriously concerned that there is a threat to the position taken by Parliament that human cloning be banned in all forms and by all techniques.

• (1855)

[Translation]

Hon. Robert Thibault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to congratulate the member for Mississauga South for his interest and his expertise in this area.

[English]

I thank the member for keeping us aware of all sorts of facets and points of interest related to this question.

Canada believes that the health, safety and ethical concerns inherent in human cloning require a strong response from governments at the domestic level, as well as from the international community as a whole.

The Government of Canada has been unwavering in its opposition to all forms of human cloning. Our position is clearly reflected in the Assisted Human Reproduction Act which was passed by Parliament in March of last year. All forms of human cloning, for whatever purpose and using whatever techniques, are banned in Canada. This has been the Government of Canada's position since the very beginning of the legislative process with regard to assisted human reproduction.

The draft legislation proposed in 2001, which the then minister of health tabled with the Standing Committee on Health for study and recommendation, contained a proposed prohibition for all forms of human cloning.

The prohibition in Canadian legislation has been constructed to prohibit cloning by whatever technique. If the end result of any technique is a human clone, it is prohibited. This has the effect of prohibiting not only current techniques, such as somatic cell nuclear transfer, but it will also prohibit any future techniques that may be developed.

The legislation has also been carefully constructed to recognize the fact that in the scientific process of cloning, it is possible that a cloned embryo may not be 100% genetically identical to another organism, given that it is possible for slight modifications to occur in the cloning process.

The legislation does not permit a loophole by relying on the idea of "identical" in identifying a human clone. In fact, during report stage in the House of Commons, the member for Mississauga South proposed an amendment, which was passed, that further clarified the intent of the cloning prohibition.

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In his question, the member for Mississauga South raised the discussions at the United Nations. The Government of Canada has been actively engaged in and supportive of efforts at the United Nations to develop an international convention addressing human cloning.

Addressing this issue internationally in a responsible fashion requires that we carefully examine the proposals before the United Nations. We must ask not only about their policy direction, but whether they can be implemented and effectively enforced, both here in Canada and internationally.

All positions taken by Canada respecting human cloning, domestically and internationally, are guided by the Assisted Human Reproduction Act. We believe that it is worthwhile to continue the work among member states to identify a proposal that would have the greatest possible global effect.

Canada hopes that discussions can continue with the objective that a maximum number of other countries can achieve consensus on an approach for future work.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, Dr. Françoise Baylis of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research did a funded research study which showed that only about 500 human embryos were in storage at fertility clinics, half of which were still being used for fertility treatment. Of the 250 remaining, half of them will not survive the thawing process. Out of the remaining 125 that do survive thawing, only 9 will be able to produce any form of stem cells and, of those 9, only about 5 will actually be stem cells that will be of the research quality necessary to do meaningful research.

The bottom line is that there are not enough surplus embryos in Canada to sustain meaningful research. That means there will be pressure on Canada to go to somatic cell nuclear transfer to permit this kind of cloning. It is being done in the U.K. and the U.K. has already destroyed over 30,000 human embryos for this research, and the only way it has got it is through somatic cell nuclear transfer.

Those are my concerns. I hope this issue will not be coming back before Parliament and that Parliament's decision to ban human cloning is full and final.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Robert Thibault: Mr. Speaker, I entirely agree with the member. We certainly intend to make sure that all cloning, by whatever technique, is eliminated and prohibited.

● (1900)

[*English*]

The government has no intention of permitting cloning. The intention has always been that there will be the potential for research but that there will be no trade, no money exchanged and no creation of life for any purpose.

It is a fine balance and it is difficult. It is difficult on individuals across Canada and in Parliament to find that balance and to look at what is essential research that can assist Canadians in their daily lives with illnesses that they face while still respecting the moral values and beliefs of individual Canadians.

I think the act strikes a fine balance. It is leading internationally. I think it is a very good legislation but, and I agree with the member, it requires vigilance. It requires that Parliament always be ready to re-evaluate should circumstances change and should the intent not be maintained to prohibit cloning with any technique or in any form for whatever purpose.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Jim Prentice (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three weeks ago Amnesty International issued a report entitled *Stolen Sisters*, detailing the violence that far too many aboriginal women face in Canada today and the discrimination that often confronts them or their families when they seek the help of the police.

The report made it clear that the government has failed to protect aboriginal women. However, whether three weeks or three years ago, the government's reaction, or rather its inaction, never varies. The Amnesty International report painted a shocking and sobering picture of the plight of many aboriginal women in Canada today. It stated:

A shocking 1996 Canadian government statistic reveals that indigenous women between the ages of 25 and 44, with status under the Indian Act, were five times more likely than all other women of the same age to die as the result of violence.

That was in 1996. How much progress have we seen in the last eight years? Far too little. Clearly we need a new strategy for Canada's aboriginal people. Another 11 years of Liberal rule will just not do.

It is hard to know where to start, given the number of areas in which the Liberals have allowed aboriginal Canadians to languish so far behind the rest of the country in terms of wealth, health and opportunity. If we are going to begin to deal with the problems that afflict Canada's aboriginal communities, then we must abandon the failed strategies that the government has pursued for far too long. Amnesty International's report and the excellent work of the Native Women's Association of Canada confirms this stark point.

The Government of Canada spends in the neighbourhood of \$10 billion to \$15 billion each year on Canada's aboriginal peoples. It is simply astounding that with that level of investment the government has been unable to deliver basic services such as education, to say nothing of health care, housing and clean water.

The first step to a better future for Canada's aboriginal people is ensuring that the money we do spend is spent wisely. We need a legislative framework in place which prescribes a standard of service for the delivery of government services. It matters what we spend, but what really matters is what we deliver. We need to focus on delivering more.

Both aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians are entitled to complete transparency and accountability in the expenditure of all funds on aboriginal programs. It is only through accountability that this place can be assured that the federal government is getting the support to those who need it most, namely, aboriginal women and children.

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This is an indispensable aspect of ensuring democratic accountability, both within aboriginal communities and more broadly in this country. Aboriginal Canadians need to have the same tools available to them as are available to all other Canadians to identify and constrain any excess in the use of government power, or corruption, or for that matter, mismanagement.

I hope that we have seen the last of Amnesty International's report decrying Canada's neglect of its aboriginal people. Our party is committed to pursuing a new strategy to better the lives of aboriginal Canadians. We need a strategy that exchanges dependence for empowerment. We need a commitment to transparency and good governance. We need a government that will address seriously the issues raised in the Amnesty International report.

I, along with all other Canadians and the aboriginal peoples of this country, and indeed the world, continue to wait for the government's response to this damning report.

Hon. Sue Barnes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for raising this important matter before the House this evening.

The government recognizes the serious nature of the issue of violence against women and in particular, violence against aboriginal women. Violence of any kind in our society serves to negatively impact Canada and such actions remain unacceptable to the government and indeed to all Canadians.

As the minister has told the House with respect to this issue in the past few weeks, he has been meeting with the president of the Native Women's Association of Canada, Terri Brown, regarding this matter. In fact in the spirit of partnership, trust and respect there has been and continues to be a great deal of collaboration between this key group and the Government of Canada.

Together we are working with other aboriginal organizations and leaders to reduce the gaps in living conditions that continue to separate first nations, Métis and Inuit from other Canadians. This includes addressing the issues raised in the Amnesty International "Stolen Sisters" report and dealing with similar issues raised by the Native Women's Association of Canada through its "Sisters in Spirit" campaign.

These groups are to be commended for the work they are undertaking in this respect. They are rendering a great service to aboriginal women and indeed to all Canadians.

The Native Women's Association of Canada has been and continues to be a full participant in the work flowing from the Canada-aboriginal peoples round table launched in April of this year. In fact I was at the meeting when it started to talk about these issues.

The representatives of this group are members of the planning committee coordinating the follow-up activities of the round table in the six key areas including aboriginal health. They will be directly participating in each of the two day sectoral follow-up sessions scheduled to occur in the coming weeks.

In short, aboriginal women's issues are on the national policy agenda and efforts to deal with them are underway, working in partnership and collaboration with aboriginal women.

The work of the round table is but part of the efforts of the government to deal with violence in aboriginal communities. We continue to invest in the family violence prevention program. Last year in the federal department approximately \$16 million was allocated to three priority areas. Funding was provided for 35 shelters across Canada providing assistance for over 4,500 first nations people on reserve.

Education and outreach programs continue to be provided in order to increase public awareness, provide workshops and offer stress and anger management seminars as well as support groups and community needs assessments.

Contributions were also provided to the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence. This organization provides coordination and builds capacity among first nations shelter directors.

In conclusion, it is important to underscore the multifaceted nature of these important and compelling issues. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, I have outlined the concerns and efforts of our department. Work on addressing these needs is also being undertaken by other departments. I look forward to the cooperation of the member on this.

● (1905)

Mr. Jim Prentice: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member opposite and the government find the risks for aboriginal women to be unacceptable, it is hard to understand why they are not doing more to deal with this issue.

My friend has spoken of the excellent work of Terri Brown and the Native Women's Association of Canada. They are doing extraordinary work. They placed a proposal in front of the government in July of this year and they still do not have an answer.

I say to the government, and I will quote from the Amnesty International report:

In every instance, Canadian authorities could and should have done more to ensure the safety of these women and girls or to address the social and economic factors that had helped put them in harm's way.

Why will the government not act and do more to protect aboriginal women and children?

Hon. Sue Barnes: Mr. Speaker, in addition to the work underway at Indian and Northern Affairs Canada a number of federal government agencies and departments are working with other levels of government and aboriginal organizations on many initiatives to assist aboriginal women.

These include horizontal initiatives such as the Vancouver agreement which is developing alternative strategies and mechanisms to support urban aboriginal women. In particular, Status of Women Canada is making a commitment to fund national initiatives undertaken by women's organizations and the aboriginal community on the issue of violence against aboriginal women.

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Canadian Heritage is focused on addressing violence against aboriginal women in the aboriginal women's program which enables aboriginal women to influence policies, programs, legislation and decision making that affect their well-being.

The Attorney General of Canada has implemented a national strategy on community safety and crime prevention which provides support to projects supporting crime prevention and increasing the personal security of women and girls.

There is considerable effort underway with respect to ensuring that aboriginal women can achieve the quality of life which they so rightly deserve. We will work with our other colleagues across the departments.

I would like to thank the hon. member once again for having given me the opportunity to explain the current situation. That is not to say that we cannot do more and we will do more. We will look for the cooperation of the House so we can do more.

● (1910)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on October 21 in question period I reminded the House that during the election campaign the Prime Minister had promised to Newfoundland and Labrador that it could keep 100% of its provincial offshore resources. In question period I asked the Minister of Natural Resources, our minister in the federal cabinet, why the federal government was dragging its feet on this issue. The Minister of Finance answered saying that negotiations were ongoing and that he hoped to achieve a successful result.

Well, I gather the result today is a take it or leave it offer from the federal government, an offer that does not see the province get to keep 100% of offshore oil revenues, an offer that breaks the Prime Minister's election promise. We were offered an eight year \$1.4 billion deal, or 100% up to \$234 million of an annual cap, neither of which is 100%.

Given the current world price of oil at more than \$50 a barrel, the province's minister of finance said we would leave billions on the table if we were to sign that deal. I am given to understand that Nova Scotia has also rejected that offer from the feds, saying it falls far short of what was promised.

Yes, what has been promised is an improvement on the current situation, wherein the lion's share of the offshore revenues is clawed back by Ottawa through corresponding reductions in the equalization payments, but it is not 100%. Make no mistake about it, 100% of the offshore oil revenues is exactly what the Prime Minister promised. There was no talk of a cap, no talk of time limits, no talk of fiscal capacity.

Keep in mind the Prime Minister promised this at a time in the election campaign when things were looking pretty bleak for the Liberal Party. He promised it at a time when even our province's seven seats looked very important to him. Well, he went on to win five of the seats.

Now is the time for the five Liberal members from Newfoundland and Labrador to take their lead from the provincial Liberal Party, which says it supports the government of Newfoundland and

Labrador on this issue. This matter is bigger than party politics. This matter is about the federal government keeping its word to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. This is a matter on which all seven MPs from Newfoundland and Labrador should stand united in demanding that the Prime Minister keep his word.

To my colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, I say this is the stuff over which principled people resign from cabinet. Never again in my lifetime do I expect to see the seven members from our province in such a position of clout. It would be a terrible shame if that clout were squandered by not using it at all.

Hibernia has been pumping oil for several years now and the lion's share of the revenues end up in Ottawa. This is not what the Atlantic accord promised. This is not what the Prime Minister promised. The Prime Minister promised that we would get to keep all of the oil revenues, not all of it for eight years, not all of it up to a certain cap, but all of it, 100%. There were no financial caps or time constraints on this promise and there should be no doubt as to our resolve to hold him to his word.

We need allies in that struggle. As I said earlier, my colleague from St. John's South—Mount Pearl and I are doing all we can to hold the Prime Minister to his promise. Now is not the time for all good men to come to the aid of the party. Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of the province. I will be terribly disappointed if Liberal MPs do not join us in our quest for fairness for our province.

In summing up, why can we not, just once, stand united for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador? Why can we not, just once, stand on guard for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

● (1915)

Hon. R. John Efford (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this very important issue of equalization and the development of offshore oil and gas off Newfoundland and Labrador. Allow me to begin this way for my colleague on the opposite benches.

This whole discussion started several months ago. This evening they are expressing their interest, but on not one occasion have the members for St. John's South or St. John's North asked a Newfoundland MP or the Newfoundland minister to meet with them to discuss this.

This is a big issue for Newfoundland and Labrador. Newfoundland and Labrador will be and is receiving 100% of the revenues. As we produce more oil, gas and wells and as there is more industry investment, there will be continual growth of revenues. I have confidence that this will happen and Newfoundland and Labrador will become a contributing province some time in the future. It will no longer be an equalization receiving province. We feel really confident about that and so does everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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Not once since last Thursday night has the premier or the member from Newfoundland called to express their concerns. There has been a lot of rhetoric and name calling coming from the politicians from Newfoundland and Labrador. I have not responded to it. I am waiting for a phone call to understand what they do not like about the deal. At least have a discussion about it. As the hon. member said, it does matter to all the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. He and I are citizens of that province, and we will remain citizens until the day we die. We do want the best benefit out of this deal for the province.

The premier and the Prime Minister discussed the 100%. They discussed a time line and the Ontario threshold. We will receive not only the revenues, but we also will receive the equalization up to those revenues over that eight year period, and there will be no clawback. Let there be no mistake in that. Even when we get to the Ontario threshold, there will be no clawback.

If and when we develop more resources and become an equalization non-receiving province, then it does not matter anyhow. Awhile ago, the Minister of Finance and premier also said that to me. However, while we are below that standard, the equalization will come in, as well as the revenues from the offshore development, and we are asking for that. However, the discussions between the premier and the Prime Minister put time lines and put the Ontario threshold as a cap.

Let it be clear. We have to get beyond the rhetoric. We have to sit down and talk about this and find out exactly where this went wrong. The deal is still on the table. I am interested in learning from the premier, personally, and from the Minister of Finance exactly what the issue is and where the deal fell apart.

Mr. Norman Doyle: Mr. Speaker, I did not ask the minister for a meeting because I felt the Prime Minister of Canada had the integrity to keep his promise to the people in Newfoundland and Labrador. I did not need a meeting with the minister to confirm that. However, he did not have that integrity.

I am very disappointed with the Newfoundland's minister. I am very disappointed that Newfoundland's Liberal members are not coming to the defence of our province on this very vital issue. This is the one last hope the province of Newfoundland and Labrador has to get a fair share within Confederation. I would say to the minister that this opportunity will not present itself again.

This is one of the reasons why the people of Newfoundland and Labrador elected five Liberal members in the last election. Mr.

Martin's deal did not mention a cap. Mr. Martin's deal did not mention time limits or the fiscal capacity of the other province. It was not part of the deal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): May I remind the hon. member that names are not to be used, but rather ridings or titles.

• (1920)

Mr. Norman Doyle: Mr. Speaker. I will remember that. Let me say that the Prime Minister's deal did not mention a cap. The Prime Minister's deal did not mention time limits or the fiscal capacities of Ontario or anywhere else. It was not part of the deal. Now it is suddenly part of the deal.

I am very disappointed, as well, that the five Liberal MPs did not show up here tonight for this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): May I remind the member that we are not in the House to discuss presences or absences.

Hon. R. John Efford: Mr. Speaker, this is what disappoints me about using political rhetoric on an issue of major importance to Newfoundland and Labrador.

The hon. member did not mention that there are two options on the table. The first is the \$1.4 billion over an eight year period. That is factual. However, the province does not have to accept that one. The province can accept the formula which the premier and the finance minister put on the table. If the price of oil goes up to \$100 a barrel or \$200 a barrel, or if more wells come on stream, or if more investment is made, revenues will climb and the equalization will climb up to the Ontario threshold level. That is very clear. There are two things on the table: the formula or the province can take the \$1.4 billion now.

I find it strange that the premier, nor the finance minister, nor any member opposite has called me at any time over the last several months and asked for a meeting to discuss this important issue to Newfoundland and Labrador.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:21 p.m.)

APPENDIX

Address

of

His Excellency Vicente Fox Quesada

President of the United Mexican States

to

both Houses of Parliament

in the

House of Commons Chamber, Ottawa

on

Monday, October 25, 2004

His Excellency and Madam Vicente Fox Quesada were welcomed by the Right Honourable Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada, by the Honourable Daniel Hays, Speaker of the Senate and by the Honourable Peter Milliken, Speaker of the House of Commons.

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[*English*]

Hon. Peter Milliken (Speaker of the House of Commons): President Fox, Señora Sahagún de Fox, Prime Minister, Mrs. Martin, Mr. Speaker, Ms. Hays, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames et Messieurs, Señores y Señoras, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the Chamber of the House of Commons, though I know some of you are rather familiar with this place.

However, without further adieu I would ask the Right Hon. Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada, to say a few words.

Mr. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker of the Senate, Mr. Speaker of the House, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is a great privilege for me to welcome to Parliament the President of Mexico, Mr. Vicente Fox and Madam Marta de Fox.

At the very outset I wish to commend the government of President Fox for carrying forward its commitment to democracy, prosperity and to building the strong relations that exist throughout North America.

Under President Fox's stewardship, Mexico is making great progress in the fundamental process of promoting political and economic reform, of ensuring open, accountable and transparent government, and of instilling greater confidence among the people of Mexico in their institutions.

Mexico is ever more a model for peaceful, democratic development.

[*Translation*]

The most significant legacy of President Fox will perhaps include such achievements as solid democratic foundations, free and fair elections, macro-economic growth, stability, and greater confidence in government and public institutions.

My colleagues, we are welcoming President Fox and his delegation of ministers, parliamentarians and business leaders at a propitious moment in our bilateral relationship. This year we celebrate together a number of significant milestones.

The first of these is sixty years of diplomatic relations between our two countries. In January 1944, Prime Minister Mackenzie King and

President Manuel Avila Camacho established official ties, and ambassadors were exchanged.

[*English*]

It was a time when both of our countries lived under the cloud of war, when our government and people were focused on the hostilities in Europe. It was also a time when Mexico was experiencing profound change and transition at home. In spite of these circumstances, leaders in both of our countries had the vision and the foresight to see the value in cooperating as neighbours in North America.

[*Translation*]

Second, we are celebrating the successful completion of 10 years of the North American Free Trade Agreement with our partners in Mexico and the United States. Thanks to NAFTA, the three countries of North America have benefited from new jobs and enhanced prosperity.

Thanks to NAFTA as well, these 10 years have seen the value of our trade relations with Mexico triple to close to \$15 billion annually. Today, Mexico exports as much to Canada as to the European Union and Japan combined. Canada has grown to become Mexico's second largest export market, and Mexico is Canada's sixth.

The third milestone is the 30th anniversary of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP). This program was created in cooperation with Mexico and offers seasonal employment opportunities in Canada to Mexican workers, while meeting our need of workers.

[*English*]

Next year we will commemorate yet another important milestone, the 100th anniversary of the presence of the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service in Mexico.

President Fox and his delegation visit us today as true friends, good neighbours and strategic partners for Canada. As the three governments on this continent look to the future, we are identifying issues and solutions that will further enhance and build on North American prosperity and make our region even more competitive and successful in the global economy.

Our government hopes that the success of Canada, Mexico and the United States under NAFTA will also be the basis for a larger hemispheric trade zone, one that will generate greater prosperity and closer contact between all of the peoples of the Americas.

Canada and Mexico are announcing today a new initiative designed to further deepen and broaden our already impressive level of bilateral cooperation. This new Canada-Mexico partnership will not only build upon our government to government links, but more important, will fully engage and commit the business, social policy and academic communities in both of our countries in order to increase our common prosperity.

[*Translation*]

Fellow parliamentarians, the relationship between our countries cannot be judged only by its commercial success. It now includes relations and joint action in totally new areas. Canada has been a leading supporter of the reforms undertaken by President Fox in Mexico. It has worked with Mexico to implement the six points of the Mexican government's reform program.

In areas such as governance, our two countries have shared expertise and best practices for budget planning, improving the public service, access to information, privacy and federalism.

[*English*]

President Fox, I have just noticed that I have talked about how we are exchanging information on the best ways of making financial projections. Let me simply say to you, President Fox, that you and I have great confidence in the way that Minister Goodale does it but I am not sure that everybody else in this House shares that view.

In areas such as electoral cooperation, we have seen a long-standing exchange of information between Elections Canada and Mexico's electoral institute. And today it is most impressive that other countries send electoral observers to Mexico to learn how to carry out transparent, free and efficient elections.

We should all in this House take pride in noting that aspects of Mexico's recent access to information legislation were drawn from past Canadian experience and dialogue with Canada, and that we are about to embark on an exchange of information with Mexico in the area of privacy legislation as well.

I would also note the potential to expand cooperation in areas such as indigenous affairs, a high priority issue for our government and I know for yours and one where both countries have much to share.

[*Translation*]

On the international scene, our government is pleased to see that our two countries have begun to work closely in taking on global challenges, such as the international human rights program and the promotion of good governance, particularly in a multilateral context, the issue of overfishing in a global context, and the creation of a body like the G-20 for heads of state.

We applaud Mexico for its leading role in complex issues such as UN reform. In this respect, Canada has worked with Mexico to explore how the international community can effect change in UN institutions, and thus make them more effective and more representative.

In fact, in many areas, our international perspectives and priorities are becoming more and more alike. Like Canada, Mexico recognizes that certain issues, such as global environmental degradation, poverty and the terrorist threat, must be addressed by the international community as incubators, to a major extent, for the instability, conflicts and hunger the world is facing today.

Through their relations with the United States, both our countries are also striving to increase trilateral border cooperation to enhance the security of our people, while ensuring the free movement of goods, which is so vital to the North American economy.

[*English*]

Fellow parliamentarians, I would be remiss if I did not briefly mention the remarkable expansion of people to people ties between our two countries. Who would have ever imagined, even a few years ago, that one in every twenty visitors to Mexico today would be from Canada. Increasingly, Canadians visit Mexico, not only for the beaches in winter, but also to visit its cities and historical sites, to learn more about its experience, its vibrant history, its culture and its language.

Who would have imagined that nearly 200,000 Mexicans now visit Canada every year to enjoy our natural beauty and our vibrant multicultural cities, that Mexico would grow to become one of the largest sources of foreign students in Canada, and that we would have seen such an impressive expansion of Canadian studies in Mexico, with over 400 bilateral agreements joining our two countries.

Today, President Fox and I witnessed the signing of a number of new such agreements, agreements that will further collaboration and exchange.

[*Translation*]

Who could have imagined, with the movement of people from Mexico and other countries in our hemisphere to Canada, that Spanish would assume an increasingly important place in the linguistic landscape of Canada and, in some provinces, such as Quebec, would be the third language spoken.

We are also very pleased with the growing presence in Canada of Mexican artists—both in the visual arts and the performing arts—and the growing demand for Canadian culture in Mexico.

Last night, many of us had the pleasure of attending the magnificent performance of the Folklorico d'Amalia Hernández ballet. Concurrently, the Marie Chouinard ballet company of Montreal and the Boca del Lupo theatre troupe of Vancouver were representing Canada at the Cervantino Mexican cultural festival, which is world renowned and held in the Mexican State where President Fox was born.

[*English*]

As a parliamentarian, I wish to highlight the importance of our growing parliamentary dialogue and exchange with our colleagues from the Mexican congress, some of whom are with us today as part of President Fox's delegation. Canada would welcome more interparliamentary dialogue.

Between our two countries, in the next few months, I understand that Mexico will host a parliamentary delegation from Canada. We will be seeking to attend the 13th Canada-Mexico interparliamentary meeting. I am pretty sure, President Fox, that the Canadian side will be suggesting a venue in Cancun, perhaps next January.

Fellow parliamentarians, I am honoured to introduce to you the President of Mexico, Mr. Vicente Fox.

H. E. Vicente Fox Quesada (President of the United Mexican States): *[President Fox spoke in Spanish, translated as follows:]*

[Translation]

Thank you. Your message of welcome is an indication of the intense, powerful friendship and association of this country with Mexico. Thank you very much on behalf of the Mexican people.

Most honourable Right Hon. Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada; Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, Mrs. Beverley McLachlin; Hon. Daniel Hays, Speaker of the Senate; Hon. Peter Milliken, Speaker of the House of Commons; hon. senators and hon. members of Parliament, I am deeply grateful for the honour of being received by this honourable Parliament.

Here in the House of Canada, I would like to emphasize that this visit attests to the excellent relations of cooperation and joint work maintained by the governments of Canada and Mexico as well as the shared desire to further strengthen these relations and, more particularly, the affection and deep friendship that unite our nations.

This friendship has been the basis of more than six decades of harmonious, mature and mutually beneficial diplomatic relations. It explains the exemplary performance, for 30 years, of our program for agricultural workers and also the successful economic association we have maintained since 1994 within the framework of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The indissoluble Mexican-Canadian friendship is the pillar of the alliance we have formed, upon which both nations are building both a present and a future shared prosperity.

I would like to take advantage of this very valuable opportunity being afforded me by all of you to address three topics that appear to me to be of special interest. The first is the radical change taking place in Mexico. The second is how this change has marked Mexican foreign policy. Last is how all of this has further strengthened the friendship and the association between our two countries.

What is the change that characterizes today's Mexico? It is the attainment of full democracy, a regime by means of which the voice of the people is expressed through the ballot box and their vote is respected, a regime of civil liberties and respect for human rights, a regime in which respect for the law is the norm of our coexistence.

We Mexicans have opened the doors to democracy, to citizens' freedoms and respect for the decisions of the majority as well as the rights of minorities, and to the rule of law. These are, in fact, principal characteristics of Mexican democracy.

Today, my administration recognizes, values and respects the wealth of the nation's political plurality, reflected in the composition of our congress and in local governments of different political persuasions. As never before in our political history, the executive's power is limited to the provisions of our constitution, respecting the powers and duties of the other federal branches of government and thus making it possible for the system of checks and balances to be exercised and to be fully operational.

This is evidenced by the open dialogue with the different political forces represented in congress. This gives rise to intense debate,

which is not always easy but is always democratic and productive. Such is democracy. That is how the new Mexican democratic era is lived, intensely, with a great deal of political work, with a lot of dialogue, and with creative passion and enthusiasm.

Parliaments make it possible for the diversity that characterizes them to come to fruition in mutual compromises, for different visions to debate, explore and broaden their shared views, combining in a whole that seeks and favours the common benefit. Far from fearing political debate, my administration has fostered and channelled it by fully respecting the work of the democratic body par excellence: congress.

We are a long way from the period when the presidential will was complied with by express order or out of fear. Democracy has taken us far away from the times in which forming part of the government was associated with impunity. Today, being part of the government means work, commitment and respect for both citizens and the law.

On the basis of my administration's initiatives, our honourable congress has passed new, important laws that strengthen and root the democratic change and the rule of law under which we Mexicans live. The laws on transparency and on the career professional service, for instance, are aimed at ensuring that public servants' conduct always abides by an ethic of honesty, transparency and common good.

These laws, like many of those which were passed in the most recent years, foster and ensure the participation of society as a whole. Active citizen participation in all matters of public interest is also a significant result of Mexican democracy.

Democracy has enabled us to undertake initiatives to ensure not only the modernization of Mexico's political structures but also that of its economic, financial and social institutions. With the same determination as we reformed the political structures, we also undertook financial reforms, sought economic reforms, and furthered sweeping changes and the modernization of important social institutions.

It is a case of genuine reform of the state, which, little by little, we have been building and which, always within a democratic framework, we will consolidate.

As a result of this reform, as well as of great responsibility on the part of the federal government, Mexico has achieved a level of economic stability that had not been seen in decades, with historically low inflation and interest rates and also with growing levels of investment.

Mexico, in nine years, has doubled the size of its economy. In nine years, the Mexican economy has become the largest in Latin America. In these nine years, there has been a doubling of per capita income for citizens. In these nine years, there has been a reduction by more than 30% of the number of families in situations of extreme poverty, and there has been an improvement in the distribution of income.

In the social sphere, our democracy has allowed us to wage an all-out struggle against the adverse conditions faced by many of our brothers and sisters, such as the indigenous peoples. Today we have anti-discrimination laws and, in particular, with rules that protect the rights of indigenous peoples and other minority or socially vulnerable groups.

We also have an innovative social strategy which, by means of investments in education, health, infrastructure and housing, seeks to give people—every woman and every man—the opportunity to develop his or her talents and skills.

In an unprecedented effort, we are ensuring through a national scholarship program that no young Mexican child or student will abandon his or her education. We are creating the conditions for Mexican families to exercise their right to decent housing, and we have designed programs with a view to guaranteeing universal access to health care.

Today, democracy enables us to work successfully toward development based on sustained and sustainable economic growth, human development that translates into better living conditions for each and every family, from childhood to adulthood. Our objective is to ensure that each person has all the necessary tools in order to develop and take advantage of their skills and be happy.

That is the democracy that all Mexicans are building: an integral democracy, already full in the political arena, and developing in both the economic and social spheres. Democracy is an ongoing process, a task in progress which begins with the exercise and enjoyment of citizens' political and civil rights and which should also ensure enjoyment of economic and social rights. Achieving this demands constant and determined effort, both internally and externally.

This leads me to the topic of the Mexican democracy's foreign policy. Not only is Mexico one of the world's most open economies, as we have free trade agreements with 42 countries, it is also a nation which, like Canada, makes its voice heard on vital issues on the international agenda, issues such as the defence of human rights, respect for international law, the validity of multilateralism, the promotion of cooperation for development and international peace and security.

We Mexicans believe in dialogue, debate and the building of agreements at the domestic level; likewise, we believe in democratic dialogue and debate among nations to reach agreements that enable us to solve serious international problems.

In the area of human rights, Mexico has established cooperation programs with the UN High Commissioner in charge of this topic, and promoted initiatives to assure respect for human rights in the fight against terrorism, as well as the basic rights of indigenous peoples, migratory workers and people with some disability. We have taken the defense of Mexicans living abroad to the highest international forums. We believe in law and justice, and law and justice have proved us right.

Mexico promotes sustained, sustainable development shared by all peoples, as we showed in the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development. In a globalized world, self-sufficient development is not possible. It is necessary for each nation's efforts for progress to

find a favourable international environment. We must fight to reverse the international trend to reduce Official Aid for Development.

Like Canada, we believe in multilateralism as the best means to make the most of the advantages and face the challenges posed by today's world.

Some of our greatest challenges are overcoming poverty, combating major epidemics, the fight against international terrorism, environmental degradation, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, among others.

Today, all nations are compelled to reflect, in an unprecedented manner, on how to solve, together, the problems affecting us all. We have therefore declared ourselves in favour of a comprehensive reform of the United Nations to enable this organization to fulfill the lofty objectives with which we have entrusted it.

Together with another 14 countries, Mexico has initiated serious reflection on how to achieve this comprehensive reform of the United Nations with the cooperation of all its member states. We thank Canada for its participation in this Group of Friends on the reform of the United Nations. We are certain that our shared views and joint efforts in building a world of peace, security and development will allow us to reach conclusions which will be of great help in revitalizing the United Nations.

Mexico recognizes Canada's unwavering commitment in these and other vital issues on the international agenda, and celebrates our common perceptions and positions. On this basis, we will continue fostering our joint work in the multilateral sphere, in the certainty that our combined efforts will give greater strength and influence to our labours.

Over the course of six decades of harmonious relations, the Mexican and Canadian governments have been able to translate our peoples' friendship not only into a wide range of shared views on multilateral topics, but also, above all, in the bilateral and regional areas. Over the past decade, our links have increased progressively in political, economic and social matters.

Mexico's attainment of democracy has significantly strengthened and intensified this trend. This stems from the fact that we are two democracies whose fundamental concerns, at both domestic and international levels, coincide.

Today, the strengthening of democracy, federalism and good government, protection of human rights, environmental conservation, regional security, the growing furtherance of culture and promotion of educational and technological links are all areas of cooperation and mutual interest.

In the economic sphere, trade exchanges have increased by more than 150% over the past 10 years. Mexico has become this country's main trading partner in Latin America. The opportunities to multiply and develop trade are still vast, and we should take advantage of them.

The growth of mutual investments, the broadening of cooperation, and the strengthening of cultural and social exchanges between our countries in the most recent years encourage us to explore new areas in order to intensify our relations.

We must reinforce the complementarity of our economies and translate it into a greater strength in the region we share, and above all, into greater benefits for our peoples.

Through new cooperation and integration schemes, we must ensure that Canadian-Mexican friendship turns into a powerful engine of the North American economy and that the benefits of this growth reach all sectors of our populations. The only possible development at present is shared development.

We must also strengthen the growing exchanges and links between diverse social sectors of both countries: students and teachers, businesspeople and investors, workers and tourists, among many others.

Mexico's current reality makes Congress an increasingly active player in our country's foreign policy. Therefore, I sincerely hope for the growing interaction of our parliaments.

Today, we have taken a historic step in our bilateral relations with the creation of the Mexico-Canada Alliance. This alliance seeks to establish a bilateral cooperation scheme with the participation of the government and private sectors, with the aim of promoting investment, trade, development, and the prosperity of our nations.

As you know, on my last State Visit I established as a personal commitment the need to analyze the future of North America as a region of cooperation and integration. My administration has been attentive to the evolution of this topic in these last three years.

In particular, we recognize the efforts made by the Foreign Affairs Committees in both the House of Commons and the Senate, which point to the need to include Mexico in the discussions to strengthen inter-regional relations in North America.

Our nations share common objectives. We want to strengthen security in our region, guarantee the free flow of people and goods, and gain access to new, higher levels of development in benefit of our peoples.

Ladies and gentlemen of this honourable Parliament, I am convinced that the time has come to reflect on the best way to build a new Community of North America. I am also convinced that Canada and Mexico have much to contribute to the design and operation of this regional cooperation and integration scheme, as well as to the new architecture required by a world of peace and prosperity, and much to contribute to the reorganization of the United Nations.

A great Canadian and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, Mr. Lester B. Pearson, pointed out many years ago, and I quote:

We are now emerging into an age when different civilizations will have to learn to live side by side in peaceful interchange, learning from each other, studying each other's history and ideals, art and culture, mutually enriching each other's lives.

Today, these wise words remain absolutely valid. I am sure that with your invaluable help, ladies and gentlemen Members of Parliament, the peoples of Canada and Mexico will be able to forge a shared future of freedom, peace, prosperity and justice in our region and in the world.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Daniel Hays (Speaker of the Senate, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Excelentísimo Señor Presidente, Mr. Prime Minister, hon. colleagues, *distinguidos invitados*, chers amis, on behalf of all parliamentarians and all those assembled, I am deeply honoured, Mr. President, to thank you for addressing this joint session with such passion and eloquence and for reminding us so forcefully that our friendship rests on a solid foundation of shared values, common aspirations and strategic partnerships.

[Mr. Speaker Hays spoke in Spanish, translated as follows:]

[Translation]

The fact that you are present among us is no coincidence because it is along with the continuous celebration of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our two nations. This adds even more lustre to this occasion and highlights the importance of your words.

[Translation]

As we celebrate the 60th anniversary of our diplomatic relations and the 10th anniversary of the North American Free Trade Agreement, we also have an opportunity to highlight the values that unite us and consider our shared commitments.

Nowhere are these values and commitments better expressed than in the new program of bilateral relations adopted by our countries in 2001, a program that commits us to promoting democracy, strengthening civil society, protecting the environment, defending human rights and fostering peace and prosperity throughout the world.

[English]

Your words here today, Mr. President, the purpose of your mission, and the history of our relations remind us of the words of Octavio Paz, who said: "All our ventures, all our acts and dreams, are bridges designed to overcome the separation [between us] and reunite us with the world and our fellow beings".

We salute and thank you for your efforts in reaching across borders and over a continent to secure the foundation and build the bridges that will help guarantee a happier, more prosperous and peaceful future for us all.

[Mr. Speaker Hays spoke in Spanish, translated as follows:]

[Translation]

Allow me therefore, Mr. President, to thank you once again for having expressed the depth and the scope of our friendship in such clear terms, and for emphasizing your great confidence in the continued evolution, diversification and success of our bilateral relations in the years to come.

The Speaker: President Fox, Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, Mesdames et Messieurs, it is my happy duty to convey to you, President Fox, on behalf of all members of Parliament our thanks for addressing us today in the House. In their name I say—and my Spanish is nothing like Speaker Hays'—*estás en su casa*. I understand that means consider yourself at home, in case my pronunciation was incorrect.

The breadth and pace of your visit to Canada, in my view, Sir, speaks volumes about the relationship between Mexico and this country. In the three days you are with us, you will meet with Canadians from every sphere: ministers, business people, students, community leaders, all of whom share a bond of friendship and cooperation with their Mexican neighbours.

[*Translation*]

This is an easy friendship to maintain. We have many ties, and they are growing stronger all the time. Our cultural, educational, trade, diplomatic, and even parliamentary exchanges only serve to strengthen our partnership.

I had the pleasure, myself, of leading a delegation of parliamentarians to Mexico in 2001 to discuss the exchanges that link our countries, including the Mexico-Canada Parliamentary Group and the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas, among others.

It was a brief visit, but it enabled me to appreciate the warmth of our Mexican hosts—and of Mexican cuisine.

[*English*]

In addition to the many ties that bind us, we both must deal with the consequences of living next to the world's most powerful nation, the United States of America. Our proximity to this sometimes overwhelming neighbour has engendered a unique bond between us. The late Pierre Trudeau, a former prime minister of Canada, used to say that living next to the United States is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant: No matter how friendly and even-tempered the beast, one is affected by every twitch. I suspect this sentiment resonates with many in Mexico. It is essential therefore, as North America becomes ever more and more interconnected, that we learn from each other how we can best address these challenges.

The next few days will be a challenge of another kind. The Canadian media has described this visit as a “fiesta” of sorts, given the many shared anniversaries our two countries will be celebrating while you are with us. Certainly, the rhythm will be uptempo and the events plentiful. I hope, however, that you will enjoy your short time with us and perhaps return for a more relaxed visit.

Until then, Mr. President, *gracias y que le vaya bien*.

[*Applause*]

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