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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, November 17, 2004

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 17, 2004

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[English]

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

[Members sang the national anthem]

• (1400)

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1405)

[English]

OAK RIDGES MORAINÉ

Mr. Lui Temelkovski (Oak Ridges—Markham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ecological treasure known as the Oak Ridges Moraine, which forms a large part of my riding, is a natural system of water, soils and plants, animals, and various other organisms, interwoven over the course of thousands of years.

It is a natural habitat providing a home to numerous species and a system which acts as a powerful filter for the hundreds of thousands of people living within and around its domain, filtering otherwise deadly toxins from the water, land and air.

The aesthetic value alone of the moraine is something that should never be compromised, yet when wedded with its invaluable presence for our senses and our health, inevitably many would suffer if all those benefiting from this existence were not to assume a stewardship role in its preservation.

I look forward to supporting all efforts to benefit the moraine.

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GREY CUP

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker:

We are Lions, hear us roar, from our rugged western shore.
Vancouver will take Hogtown
and we will turn it upside down.

Our team will take the Argos by the heels and shake the pennies from their pants.
The roars across the west will smother eastern rants.
And when all is said and done in gloomy old Bytown,
we'll shake your hands and go back home
and leave you with your frowns.

B.C. Lions forever, Mr. Speaker, British Columbia is number one. The West is here to stay—at least long enough to get our hands on the Grey Cup so we can take it home. Go, Lions, go.

* * *

[Translation]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear that the mayors of the municipalities affected by the closure of nine RCMP detachments in Quebec will have the opportunity to be heard in Ottawa. I had written to my colleague, the chair of the Standing Committee on Justice, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, requesting this.

I am pleased to hear that the committee has agreed. I have met the coalition of mayors and share their opinion that these closures are unacceptable.

Like a number of colleagues in this House, I call upon the RCMP to make changes in its personnel reorganization plan and to keep the nine detachments open.

Our regions in Quebec need the RCMP presence. They want to have officers nearby, not hundreds of kilometres away. The safety of our fellow citizens is at stake.

* * *

JEAN-PHILIPPE BOURGEOIS

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Jean-Philippe Bourgeois, a resident of the Centre-du-Québec region, is making preparations for his fifth international mission under hostile conditions. This is a man who has spent more than 18 months in Afghanistan since 2001.

He has worked in Chad. During his time in Afghanistan, he was twice landed in the mountainous area in order to keep the routes for humanitarian aid open by any makeshift means possible. This year, the UN recruited him as a regional logistics coordinator for the Afghan election.

He has gone to Haiti to prepare for his next mission, which will be looking after the logistics for the forthcoming election in that country.

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In Afghanistan, he was responsible for overseeing some 22,000 people, but in Haiti it is estimated that there will be 4.8 million eligible voters. His task will be to see to preparations for the voting and to ensure that everything goes well on election day.

The Bloc Québécois congratulates Jean-Philippe Bourgeois on all his accomplishments and on his invaluable contribution to humanitarian aid.

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[English]

RED CROSS HUMANITARIAN AWARD

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tonight in Halifax the Red Cross Humanitarian Award will be presented to Mr. Fred Smithers, president and CEO of Secunda Marine Services Ltd. of Dartmouth.

This award recognizes the tremendous community work of Mr. Smithers, who in work, community and charitable ventures displays the characteristics of a true humanitarian. This award has previously been presented to Chief Justice Lorne Clarke, former Premier John Savage and Graham Dennis of the Halifax *Chronicle-Herald*.

Mr. Smithers is a well known entrepreneur who has given much back to the community. He is a member of the Nova Scotia Business Hall of Fame and an Atlantic Canadian Entrepreneur of the Year. His company has been named one of the 50 best managed companies in Canada. As well, Mr. Smithers is an Officer of the Order of Canada and the acting Honorary British Consul for the Maritime Provinces.

His volunteer work includes the boards of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Saint Mary's University, the Order of St. John, the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame, the Chambers of Commerce and the Halifax International Airport Authority.

His work with underprivileged children confirms what many of us know, that Fred is a real humanitarian who—

• (1410)

The Speaker: The hon. member for York—Simcoe.

* * *

GREY CUP

Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday all Canadians will be focused on Ottawa, not on Parliament, but on a great and unifying Canadian event: the Grey Cup. This year the remarkable Toronto Argonauts will play for the championship.

Bolstered by the committed ownership of Howard Sokolowski and David Cynamon and inspired by the positive and optimistic leadership of Mike “Pinball” Clemons, the Toronto Argonauts continue in a proud winning tradition. We anticipate the exciting on-field exploits of players like the explosive Arland Bruce, outstanding Canadian nominee Kevin Eiben and a team that wins through talent, discipline and determination.

Football is ultimately a team sport. The Toronto Argonauts embody the Canadian values of hard work, commitment and sportsmanship, values that will surely contribute to on-field success.

No institution is as uniquely Canadian as the CFL and no annual Canadian event is as unifying as the Grey Cup.

This Sunday, as always, I will be cheering for the blue team.

* * *

MARGARET HASSAN

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Canadians and the world were tragically and brutally reminded of the situation in Iraq with reports that Margaret Hassan had been murdered.

Mrs. Hassan spent 30 years helping the poor and children, as head of CARE International's operations in Iraq. Her life was dedicated to improving the welfare of the Iraqi people. That is why the world is so repulsed by the cold-blooded murder of this innocent woman, a Muslim woman, who worked tirelessly to improve the lives of her people.

Let there be no mistake, this senseless and barbaric act in no way represents Islam. Neither does it represent any effort designed to resolve the conflict in Iraq. It is simply that: an act of terror.

Margaret Hassan's death displays the evil that exists in Iraq today. However, her tragic loss will not deter the hope shared by the civilized world, that the people of Iraq will one day be able to live in peace and security.

On behalf of this House of Commons and Canadians, I offer our condolences to the Hassan family and to the people of Iraq who have lost such a glowing example of hope and inspiration.

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[Translation]

CHRISTIAN TREMBLAY AND BERNARD GAGNON

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw attention to the courage and determination of leading seaman Christian Tremblay and steward Bernard Gagnon, who are both from Saint-Aimé-des-Lacs in Charlevoix.

They were both crew members of HMCS *Chicoutimi*, which caught fire during its maiden voyage. Their calm and determination during the events that unfortunately cost the life of their colleague, Chris Saunders, were exemplary.

Despite the raging fire and heavy smoke that swept through the submarine, both men managed to stay calm and help their 55 colleagues limit the damage and keep the vessel afloat.

I hope a similar tragedy will never happen again and that the Minister of National Defence will take the necessary steps to ensure that our submariners can do their jobs safely. I hope Mr. Tremblay and Mr. Gagnon and their shipmates will soon recover. Their courageous teamwork prevented a more serious outcome.

The Bloc Québécois, the people of Charlevoix and all Quebec are behind them.

[English]

NELSON MANDELA CHILDREN'S FUND

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, December 2 the Ottawa chapter of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund will be having a one day youth leadership conference on Parliament Hill. I would like to congratulate the Ottawa chair, Mr. Zul Khoja of Ottawa—Orléans, for making this possible.

Forty-five teens from three local high schools will be exposed to the culture and history of South Africa through activity based workshops.

Literally thousands of young people are orphaned, live in abject poverty and/or are ravaged by AIDS in South Africa. Apartheid may be over, but the legacy lives on.

This conference is supported by the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, CIDA and the South African High Commission.

As a former educator, I strongly support this initiative and welcome every opportunity to bring the plight of South African children to everyone's attention. This initiative is kids helping kids. That is why I support it. That is why we should all support it.

* * *

SASKATCHEWAN

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Thomas Jefferson once advised his fellow citizens that the price of freedom was "eternal vigilance". These days, we take for granted the rights we have as citizens. Unfortunately, the Liberal government seems to think Canadian citizens are subjects to be exploited at will.

Saskatchewan has been subject to a number of curious attentions by the tax department. The revenue minister can never explain why Saskatchewan junior hockey players were taxed while every other province was exempt. In my riding, the arena in Wilkie was assessed back taxes on a phantom GST ruling, but the bureaucrat in charge cannot produce the rules he was using to create that charge.

The bureaucrats at CFIA also needed to be reminded that they work to solve problems in the food industry, not add to them while they build their own power base. We desperately need increased slaughter capacity for our cull cows. Conservative MPs are fighting for common sense and real action to help open these facilities while the Liberal government wastes our time and money with empty announcements.

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● (1415)

CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the year 2000, Nunavut has topped the list of donors among all the provinces and territories in Canada. To date, Nunavummiut are still the most generous.

Statistics Canada has just released its results of what Canadians gave to charity last year. The average donation Nunavummiut contributed to charity last year was \$410. That is almost double the

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national average. Canada's second most giving province is Prince Edward Island.

What makes this extra incredible is that we have one of the highest unemployment areas of Canada, but the people are caring of others and are sensitive to those in need. We believe in helping our fellow man and this is a trait carried from our ancestors.

I am pleased this is made factual for the rest of the country, even though we know it in our hearts.

I would like to take this time to congratulate my constituents of Nunavut for being the most generous donors in Canada.

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[Translation]

MEMBER FOR HALIFAX

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to pay tribute to the hon. member for Halifax, who was elected leader of the Nova Scotia NDP 24 years ago today. She thus became the first woman to lead an official political party in Canada.

[English]

As the iron angel, she stood up for ordinary Nova Scotians by leading and winning the fight to ban extra billing under medicare. As leader of Canada's New Democrats, she worked for real investment in education, better health care and national child care programs. As part of this new NDP caucus, her first as "just" an MP, she has embraced her critic roles of foreign affairs and post-secondary education with the same passion that has characterized her entire career. I look forward to seeing her across the caucus table sitting with us for many years to come.

I thank the member for Halifax for her unwavering commitment to public service, to her community, to her constituents, to her province and to her country.

* * *

CARLEY'S LAW

Mr. Randy White (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Carley's law has again been tabled in the House. Carley's law seeks to change the way we look at hit and run driving in Canada.

Carley Regan was a special young lady who lost her life at the age of 13 to an irresponsible driver who left her to die on the road rather than face the responsibility of his actions at the scene of the mishap. Carley's law would stop plea bargaining hit and run charges to the benefit of the criminal. It would equate hit and run causing death to murder, and hit and run causing injury to attempted murder. In addition, Carley's law would mandate minimum penalties of four years and seven years.

Mr. Speaker, fellow members of Parliament and Canadians, please join me and members of our policing community in preventing future deliberate deaths and injuries at the hands of hit and run drivers by supporting Carley's law.

I thank Carley's family and the communities of Abbotsford and Langley for their support in this initiative.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

LAC D'AMIANTE MINE

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to call the attention of the House to the terrible situation in which the Lac d'Amiante Mine workers and their families find themselves.

At the end of this week, 450 miners from the Thetford Mines area will lose their jobs due to the mine closure announced by LAB Chrysotile. Given the fragile and difficult situation of the region's economy, people are very upset by this announcement.

It would appear that the closure of the Lac d'Amiante Mine will be definitive, since the company refuses to set a date for returning to work. The local population is worried and starting to mobilize, because the whole region will suffer serious losses.

The economic and political stakeholders from l'Amiante regional municipality and the Government of Quebec are responding to the call for help. The federal government must also provide help for the mining industry, the workers, their families and the l'Amiante region.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 12 years ago in Calgary, Janis Lemiski was brutally murdered by a man named Enrico Grossi, who attacked her with an axe while she slept.

At first the murderer lied about his guilt, but later made a videotaped confession, incredibly claiming that his victim had asked to be killed with an axe.

In an outrageous example of runaway judicial activism, the trial judge threw out Grossi's videotaped confession as inadmissible evidence because his putative due process rights had been violated. Consequently, the Crown downgraded his charge to second degree murder on a plea bargain. To add insult to injury the parole board let Grossi out of prison one year ago, and granted him full parole last week.

The message of this disgusting case is clear. Under the Liberal justice system, the price for destroying an innocent human life is 10 years, and the rights of a vicious axe murderer trump those of an innocent victim.

My condolences go out to the victim's family for the pain caused by this perversion of our justice system, which has only compounded the pain of their tragic loss 12 years ago.

* * *

● (1420)

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to an outstanding member of my community.

Mr. Doug Summerhayes, a resident of Brantford, recently completed an assignment for the Canadian Executive Service Organization. Mr. Summerhayes went on assignment to Romania

where he assisted a company, which manufactures PVC frames, with the undertaking of a feasibility study on expanding into national and international markets.

Mr. Summerhayes is one of the many skilled volunteers of the Canadian Executive Service Organization who donate their time and skills with no expectation of payment.

I would ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Mr. Summerhayes for his extraordinary efforts and dedication.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE SENATE

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in less than a week, Albertans will choose the people they want to have as representatives in the Senate.

News reports today indicate that the Prime Minister may reverse his longstanding opposition and name some elected senators.

Will the Prime Minister confirm to the House that he will name the winners of the election to all three of Alberta's Senate vacancies?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, I have long been an advocate of Senate reform. However I do not believe that doing Senate reform piecemeal would bring us the desired result.

What it could quite well do is simply exacerbate a number of the problems. What I think we should do is look at Senate reform but look at it in its entirety.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we would all like to look at it in its entirety but over here we are prepared to do something as opposed to doing nothing.

Yesterday the Prime Minister refused to give some money back to Canadian taxpayers. In doing so, he broke yet another promise. I remind the Prime Minister that it was only three weeks ago in the House that he stood on his feet and voted to reduce taxes for low and modest income Canadian families.

Will the Prime Minister keep his word, fulfill his commitment and execute the promise in the throne speech?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have made it clear that it is our intention to further reduce taxes, as we have done. However we will only do so after the government has met all of its commitments, from health care, to child care, to defence. To do otherwise would run the risk of going back into deficit and then we would have to borrow to pay for the tax cuts the Leader of the Opposition is talking to. This country has been there, done that and we are not going back.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government already has four times more surplus than it said it needed to fulfill its commitments. It should give the money back to Canadians.

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I know it is Wednesday but we have to get through question period and we will not make much progress if we have all this noise. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Hon. Stephen Harper: Mr. Speaker, only a Liberal caucus could cheer that kind of over-taxation.

[*Translation*]

Once again, Liberal promises have been broken, even though the surplus is more than four times larger than expected and even though they voted to reduce taxes.

Why does the Prime Minister refuse to respect the promise made in his throne speech?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the finance minister for his management of the Canadian economy. He has decreased Canada's debt.

The Leader of the Opposition should know that what he is recommending consists of old policies, incurring a deficit and being forced to borrow to reduce taxes. We will never return to the kind of harmful practices now being proposed by the leader of the Alliance-Conservative opposition.

• (1425)

[*English*]

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think taxpayers are going to ralph if they hear any more of that.

The \$8.9 billion is not the Prime Minister's fun money to play with any way he wants. It belongs to Canadians. I remind him that he agreed three weeks ago in the throne speech to give some of that money back to Canadians.

The finance minister told us yesterday at the finance committee that he wants our input. Here is our input: tell the Prime Minister to fulfill his promise and give Canadians their money back.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a number of years ago, when the Prime Minister was the minister of finance, the government implemented the biggest tax cuts in Canadian history, \$100 billion.

The financial statement yesterday spoke about the value of a competitive tax system and the need to maintain that kind of tax system in Canada, and we will do that. That is all part of having the best fiscal record in Canadian history and the best fiscal record in the G-7.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, watching the government handle the surplus is a little like watching a *Father Knows Best* rerun. We have the Prime Minister over there playing big daddy telling Canadians that he will decide how to spend their money.

I am going to ask the Prime Minister to do something radically different. I am going to ask him to keep his commitment and give Canadians back their money.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what have we done with the country's fiscal strength?

We have had seven consecutive surplus budgets, \$61 billion in reduced debt, \$3 billion in lower interest costs every year, consistently low interest rates, low inflation, a AAA credit rating, the fastest growing standard of living in the G-7, \$100 billion in tax cuts, 10 consecutive cuts in EI rates and \$200 billion in the social and economic priorities of Canadians, like health care, Canada pension and early intervention for children. We are building the future.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec Aerospace Association, the FTQ, the Montreal Chamber of Commerce, the Quebec Employers' Council, basically Quebec's entire financial community is demanding a real federal aerospace policy. It is urgently needed, and the Bloc Québécois laid proposals on the table this morning, but the Liberals are continuing to drag their feet.

Quebec's aerospace industry needs a policy now. What is the Prime Minister waiting for to act?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has already announced that it would be presenting its plan for the aerospace industry. I should take this opportunity to tell the leader of the Bloc Québécois that one of the reasons why Canada and Quebec are so prominent in that sector is this government's industrial policies.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, they are so prominent and so good that the government is still waiting, and and does not know what it wants.

When it talks about help for the sector across Canada, the fact is that at least 55% of the Canadian aerospace industry is concentrated in Quebec. This is a reality that the Liberals must not forget.

Therefore, will the government refrain from sprinkling money about and make sure that Quebec gets the lion's share of the benefits generated by the federal aerospace policy, just as Ontario benefits in the case of the automotive industry? We are asking for equal treatment.

• (1430)

[*English*]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that there are 38,000 aerospace workers outside of the province of Quebec and we will not sacrifice them. We will build a policy that serves the aerospace industry all across the country. Yes, it will have tremendous benefits in the province of Quebec, but it will be a national policy. We are not buying a pig in a poke. We will do an orderly negotiation.

I am meeting tonight with the aerospace association of all of Canada to move that strategy forward.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all across Canada, companies and their employees, including Pratt & Whitney, Bell Helicopter and Bombardier, are concerned. They need a plan that will provide, among other things, a research and development support program, a sales financing commitment and a policy to support small and medium size businesses in the aerospace industry. The government must realize that it has to act before it is too late, because Bombardier, for example, must make a decision very shortly.

Does the government intend to announce specific measures in the near future?

[English]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are moving ahead on a strategy and we will announce the strategy once we have completed discussions and negotiations. We will not just throw taxpayer money at this problem. Many industries in this country are in a serious situation. We are moving forward with an aerospace strategy, and we will do it in a timely manner.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the aerospace industry has every reason to be concerned, considering the government's vague replies and the Minister of Transport's statements to the effect that he will not give in to a bidding war. The Bloc took time to consult stakeholders before tabling its policy for the development of the aerospace industry.

We are asking the government to make a commitment and tell us whether the plan that it has in mind for the aviation industry is along the lines of the proposals made by the Bloc Québécois. Will the Minister of Transport finally assume his responsibilities as the government's representative in Quebec?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is rather easy for the Bloc Québécois to come up with a so-called aerospace policy, when it knows that it will never have to implement it, because it will never be in office. Bloc members will always be irresponsible.

The truth is that this government will support the aerospace industry, as it has always done. If there is an aerospace industry in Quebec, it is thanks to this government and definitely not the Bloc Québécois.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we learned today of a very grave situation unfolding on the world stage. Vladimir Putin has announced that there will be the development of new nuclear weapons. This is on top of the hypersonic weapons already being tested by his government.

That is exactly the kind of arms race that George Bush's star wars missile defence will produce, and it is why a top scientist in *Scientific American* has indicated very clearly that the system is "useless".

Will the Prime Minister take a position on this issue and tell him that the arms race is unacceptable whether it is for George Bush or Mr. Putin?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government has made it clear from the very beginning that nuclear proliferation is a blight that all countries must work to stop. That is why we have supported the international Atomic Energy Commission and why we have supported inspections, whether they be in Iran or elsewhere in the world.

The world cannot afford a nuclear arms race. That is the Canadian government's position and one we will continue to defend. I will raise it in every international forum, and that will always be the position that this country will defend.

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is the position on star wars missile defence? I am sure he would have voted for the \$87 billion before he then turned around and voted against it.

What we have is a Canadian position that says that we are against an arms race but that we are willing to be part of one; that we favour multilateralism but that we do not mind tearing up multilateral arms treaties by Mr. Bush; and that we think star wars is bad but that we are happy to let Mr. Bush go ahead with it. It is unacceptable.

What we have on the world stage is an incoherent Canadian stance. This is the time for a firm stance and to say no to George Bush.

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are against nuclear proliferation. We are against the weaponization of space. What part of that answer does the leader of the NDP not understand?

* * *

● (1435)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the immigration minister helped a campaign worker jump the queue, someone who came here to work as a stripper on a temporary work visa, then married a Canadian and applied to stay. This supporter had never been ordered to leave, nor was her application turned down. She just did not want to wait in line like everybody else. Her husband said that normal channels were too frustrating so she volunteered to help the minister hoping to get a special deal, which is exactly what she got.

Is it not true that the minister abused her position to show favouritism to a supporter?

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue of immigration is one that is fundamentally human and everyone in the country, no matter who he or she is, is entitled to fair and compassionate treatment. I take these issues very seriously.

For the sake of transparency, I want everyone to know that I, no one else, personally contacted the ethics commissioner to demonstrate that my actions were beyond reproach. These findings will be shared very gladly with all members of the House.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good that the minister understands there is an ethical problem here.

The woman's husband said in the media nothing about humanitarian or compassionate problems. He said—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Calgary—Nose Hill is only 10 feet away and I cannot hear a word she is saying. We have to have some order in the House during questions and answers. The member for Calgary—Nose Hill now has the floor.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, this woman's husband talked freely to the media. There was no humanitarian and compassionate problem here. He said that he and his new wife were hoping that the minister could help with her landed immigrant application, so they volunteered for her re-election campaign.

He said he was desperate because he had been frustrated in his efforts to go through normal channels at the immigration department. The minister claims she is going to clean up the abuse of the system.

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in case my official opposition critic is not aware, the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley came to me in this House yesterday seeking my intervention. This is one of thousands of requests, including several that I have received in the very short time that I have been in the House.

This is one of thousands of requests I have received this year from members on all sides of the House. I can assure the member that I will look at all cases on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, and I will continue to do so.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the interests of being completely clear about that, the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley was not seeking input on behalf of someone working on his campaign. There is something completely different about that.

The conflict of interest code states clearly:

Public office holders shall not use their position of office to assist private entities or persons where this would result in preferential treatment to any person.

The ethics commissioner has been asked to investigate. Will the minister agree to table that report in the House and will she step down until this investigation is complete?

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe we need to do something with the audio on the other side. I clearly said, and I will repeat it in case he did not hear. For the sake of transparency, I personally contacted the ethics commissioner to demonstrate that my actions were beyond reproach. These findings will be clearly shared with the House.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us review this. The ethics commissioner has been asked to investigate. Here is how this allegation of preferential treatment works. The minister has not provided any information yet. This is the democratic

deficit at work. Once the opportunity to investigate has been complete, what does the ethics commissioner do? He reports to the minister.

In the interests of transparency and honesty, will the Prime Minister have the minister step aside until the investigation is complete?

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already answered the question twice.

* * *

• (1440)

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has already criticized the fact that the way billions of dollars in the surplus will be used is not subject to any public debate. Yet there is no shortage of priorities: unemployment, housing, economic development and agriculture. The government's attitude is proof of just how irresponsible it is.

Is the government prepared to admit that its choices for use of the surplus should be debated openly here in this House?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that opportunity happens many times during the year: the debate on the estimates, the debate on the public accounts, the debate on the budget, and the debate in the finance committee of the House of Commons and its prebudget consultations. Indeed, I look forward to the very learned and constructive contributions of all members of Parliament to the shaping of the future surplus.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the minister realize that, while he is congratulating himself on good administration and they are all busy applauding, agriculture in Canada, in Quebec in particular, is in desperate straits?

What does the Minister of Finance, in his demagoguery, have to say to that? What is his answer to the farmers, who are in such desperate straits and are asking for his help, which he refuses to give?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to answer that question as a former minister of agriculture in this House.

We have put on the books of this country a \$5.5 billion safety net system to assist farmers in difficult circumstances. We have, over the course of the last year and a half, put in place \$2 billion to be of particular assistance in the case of BSE. We are fighting the fight for farmers at the WTO in order to maintain their trade rights and their marketing rights around the world. Indeed, as further requirements arise in agriculture, they will get a very sympathetic ear from this finance minister and this Prime Minister.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

BUDGET SURPLUS

Mr. Guy Côté (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government has a huge surplus, not only in its budget, but also in its various foundations. It has billions of dollars it could use to help people.

Instead of continuing its bad habit of disguising the surplus, should the government not use it to solve the problems of unemployment, housing, regional development and agriculture, to name but a few?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed we do. I have already mentioned the money that has gone into agriculture, for example.

The honourable gentleman mentioned issues related to the environment. We have in fact invested \$2.7 billion to deal with climate change. We have invested another \$4 billion to deal with the cleanup of contaminated sites. We have invested in ethanol, wind power and carbon sequestration. We have a very elaborate agenda for dealing with the environment and under the environment minister, it will increase.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Côté (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our concern is that the government has applied all of its surplus to the debt, with no debate whatsoever here in Parliament. There are urgent problems that require choices to be made.

Will the government acknowledge that it is unacceptable for the entire surplus to be applied to the debt without debate, thus refusing to put his huge financial resource at the service of the people to whom it belongs, in fact?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, through the estimates process, the public accounts process, the budget debate in the House, and the work of the finance committee of the House of Commons, there are huge opportunities to debate the fiscal condition of the country and the priorities in the budget. If the opposition does not take advantage of those opportunities, that is not the government's fault.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the immigration minister about her employees' expenses during the election and she avoided my question, so I will ask her again.

Three of the minister's staff claimed expenses to be in her riding during the election period. One claimed expenses for a month as her ministerial liaison officer during the election. In fact, from May 21 to June 29, staff members claimed more than \$11,000 in travel expenses.

Can the minister assure us that her tax funded staff did not work on her campaign at all?

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that all ministers are obligated to fill their duties during elections. All of the expenses are within the appropriate guidelines.

• (1445)

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister's director of parliamentary affairs worked in the riding from May 28 to June 28 and charged approximately \$1,200 for transportation, over \$2,400 for accommodations, and almost \$2,300 for meals and incidentals. A total of almost \$5,900 was charged to the taxpayers by one staff person.

Can the minister guarantee to the House that her staff did absolutely no political work during the campaign?

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, ministers are required to continue to do their work as ministers. I can assure all members of the House that everything was done according to the appropriate guidelines.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the immigration minister seems to think that this country operates under two sets of rules: the rule of law for Canadians and an orgy of corruption for her and her Liberal friends.

According to an ATI, the minister cut short her family vacation when she was appointed to cabinet. Instead of paying the cost herself, she stuck the taxpayer for not only her personal expenses but that of her husband's as well.

Why is the taxpayer on the hook for the minister's travel plans?

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member on the other side of the House should get his facts straight.

[Translation]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no doubt convinced that she would not be in the cabinet, the future-ex-minister of citizenship and immigration decided to take a vacation outside Canada. She was so torn between her public and her private life that what it took to convince her was the reimbursement of travelling expenses for two, in addition to \$10.34 for her passport.

Can the minister tell us if she intends to use her passport a great deal in the weeks to come, to get some rest?

[English]

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fail to understand how this has anything to do with the responsibilities of the minister, as the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I would suggest to the member opposite that the minister is very focused on doing her job as the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, will continue to do that job, and will do so in a very effective way.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Infrastructure and Communities.

*Oral Questions***CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

On November 12 the minister met with his provincial and territorial counterparts in Toronto. Would the minister please update this House on the outcome of the meeting and the continuing progress of the new deal for cities and communities?

Hon. John Godfrey (Minister of State (Infrastructure and Communities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to report that the meeting was a success. The ministers I met with from every province and territory want to get on with the new deal so that money can start to flow from the gas tax after budget 2005.

We shared a tremendous amount of common ground regarding respect for jurisdictions, flexibility, investments, sustainable infrastructure, transparency, accountability, and the need for predictable funding. This is a continuation of the great new deal for cities and communities.

* * *

FINANCE

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the finance minister.

If he is grumpy that people do not believe him, maybe he should have reconsidered being a Liberal finance minister because people have had enough of Liberals making numbers up as they go along. That is why we in the NDP support an independent parliamentary budget office.

Will he support such an office, yes or no?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fully support every technique to improve the accuracy and the reliability of forecasts and projections. However, I would point out to the hon. member that the particular model that she refers to, while worthy of consideration, has generated a deficit, on an annual basis, in the United States bigger than the entire combined federal debt of the Government of Canada.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister just does not get it. He is the one who has been out \$61 billion in the last five years. People are sick and tired of not having numbers they can trust. Just look at the workers at Nortel and the people whose pension plans are invested in Nortel.

The United States has tough corporate accounting laws, not Canada. The U.S. has a common securities commission, not us, even though the Liberals promised it in two throne speeches.

Can he explain why, more than two years after the United States cracked down on corporate accounting crime, the Liberals have done exactly nothing?

• (1450)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am just peering down to see if the leader of the NDP has left the chamber because I have just heard that party's finance critic say that we should blindly copycat every policy of the United States of America which will necessarily be good for Canada.

The fact is that we have our own foreign policy, we have our own economic policy, and we are leading the United States on most of the most important economic indicators.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has difficulty understanding her job. There are thousands of legitimate refugees fearing for their lives and waiting years for their chance to come to Canada. Family reunification immigrants are waiting 53 months to enter the country, but the minister would rather look after queue jumping Liberal strippers. Her job is to focus on those who legitimately need Canada's help and compassion.

When will the minister set her priorities right, end political favouritism, and start doing her job?

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me tell the House about an important meeting that we had on Monday with the ministers of immigration for Canada. Let me tell the House a little bit of where we are going in the future when it comes to immigration. We are creating a system that we are going to develop together with the ministers of immigration across Canada. We are going to bring our immigration system into the 21st century. I look forward to participating in that and I hope the hon. member will assist as we move forward to putting immigration clearly into the 21st century.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, due to massive problems in the immigration department, thousands of immigrants are forced to wait years before coming to Canada, and wait even longer before being granted resident status, but apparently problems such as this do not occur if one is a Liberal supporter.

My question is for the immigration minister. Rather than giving political payoffs, why does the minister not simply fix the system and let all Canadians who want to come to Canada to do so in a fair and balanced manner?

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate that question. Exactly what I intend to do is move forward to bring our immigration system into the 21st century. That means developing a program and a process that clearly will see expediency and that will be able to help build this great nation of ours. I welcome all members on that side of the House to help us as we move forward with our new program.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Jim Prentice (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Monday the Deputy Prime Minister proclaimed her pride in the residential school claims program. Today the AFN condemned this system, saying that it is deeply flawed and that the government is re-victimizing aboriginal Canadians.

Now it is reported that the government has issued dozens upon dozens of contracts, suspiciously each in the amount of \$88,460, for management consulting services. The victims are not getting this money. Who is getting the money? Who are these consultants? Let the Deputy Prime Minister answer.

Oral Questions

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all let me thank the AFN for the report that it released today. In fact, that report is part of the ongoing discussions and consultations that we carry on with the aboriginal community as it relates to the residential school question.

I do, however, want to reassure the hon. member that our ADR process is in place. It is working and as of today, I believe, we have received over 1,000 applications for the ADR process.

Mr. Jim Prentice (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is bizarre that the Deputy Prime Minister would claim that this process is a success. Today the grand chief said that the system is biased, it is abusive, it is unequal, and it is going to take 53 years and cost \$2 billion in administrative costs. What a success.

Would the Deputy Prime Minister please stand up and tell the House why she did not tell the House that her own officials have admitted that the system is deeply flawed?

• (1455)

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated before, we have in place a new process, an ADR process. It is our belief and in fact the belief of many of the victims that this process is better and it is more sensitive. It can be part of the healing process as opposed to litigating thousands of claims in the court and taking millions of dollars and years and years to resolve these claims. That is why we have an ADR process and that is why over 1,000 people have applied to participate in that process.

* * *

[Translation]

MIRABEL AIRPORT

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 1969 the Liberal government decided to expropriate 100,000 acres of farmland to develop Mirabel airport. On February 20, 1996, Aéroports de Montréal announced that international passenger flights would be moved to Dorval. Finally, on October 31 of this year, the last international passenger flights left Mirabel airport. What a waste.

Is the government going to apologize to those whose land was expropriated and give them back the 11,000 acres they are asking for?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the Government of Canada has leased all Aéroports de Montréal properties to the ADM corporation until 2053. In the meantime, other offers have been made to everyone who now occupies the land, to extend their leases until 2023.

I believe that will give those who are occupying the land, for which they have already been paid, an opportunity to continue their agricultural and other uses of that land until 2023, while keeping all options open regarding the future of Mirabel airport.

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government must stop hiding behind ADM. It has the power and the duty to maintain the infrastructure of Mirabel airport. It has the duty to apologize for its monumental error to those whose land was

expropriated and it also has the power to sell back the 11,000 acres of land they are asking for.

What is the Liberal government waiting for?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if signing a lease has any meaning for the hon. member. For us it does. A lease for 60 years was signed by the Canadian government of the day.

Now, the people who occupy the land have been offered a lease extension until 2023. That gives them a long period of certainty.

We are convinced that Aéroports de Montréal, when it reviews its master plan in 2023, will be able to see things more clearly. Still, at present, we are keeping the future open, because, perhaps, in a few years, they will say thanks to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Battle River.

* * *

[English]

THE SENATE

Mr. David Chatters (Battle River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that western alienation is real and he would fix it. On Monday, Albertans are going back to the polls for the third time to elect their senators. The time has come for the Prime Minister to listen to Albertans. If he really wants to address western alienation, the time is now.

Will the Prime Minister commit to addressing western alienation by filling the three Senate vacancies from those elected by Albertans?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the way to deal with western alienation, or any kind of alienation, is to deal with the fundamental issues that people in western Canada want to see us address. That is exactly what we are doing.

In addition, a substantial step was taken after the last election. When we take a look at the outstanding men and women who are on the government side, as members of Parliament and as ministers, then we begin to see the kinds of decisions that we are taking with a national perspective, and that is the way we will deal with western alienation.

Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knows that appointing any senator, elected or unelected, does not require a constitutional amendment, nor does it require approval from any province. It is very simple. It requires the same thing that happened 14 years ago when Stan Waters was appointed as Canada's first elected senator.

The Prime Minister is the only person who holds the power to make this happen. The Prime Minister told Premier Klein before the federal election he would look favourably at appointing Alberta's elected senators. Will the Prime Minister keep his word to Premier Klein and use his unilateral power to appoint Alberta's elected senators?

Oral Questions

•(1500)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Minister responsible for Official Languages, Minister responsible for Democratic Reform and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has indicated repeatedly that we are open to reform of the Senate, but we are not going to do it in a piecemeal manner. If we are to reform the Senate, it will be done entirely. For that, we need a consensus, a wide consensus across this country, which is obviously not present at the current time.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Earlier today there was an election in Brussels at the NATO meeting for a new chairman of the NATO military committee. Could the parliamentary secretary inform the House of the results of that election and the implications, if any, for Canada?

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for the question; he shows an enormous interest in foreign policy.

I would like to announce to the House that our chief of the defence staff, General Ray Henault, has been elected to the position of chairman of NATO's military committee.

This places a Canadian at the most senior levels of NATO. General Henault will be advising the secretary general of NATO. Most important, this reflects his qualifications—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary West.

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on December 18, 2002, RCMP Superintendent Dennis Massey died in my riding on the Trans-Canada Highway while on duty. The RCMP insisted upon a full regimental funeral and told the widow they would cover the costs.

How is it the government insists on a full regimental funeral, has officers claim they would cover the costs and then tries to stick the widow with a \$20,000 bill?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to answer this question yesterday. I want to clarify that it was not the government that made any decision in this case, but in fact the RCMP met with Mrs. Massey, as they do with all family members in these tragic circumstances. A decision was made as to the kind of funeral that would be held.

As I indicated yesterday, obviously there are some questions arising out of this funeral and some others. That is why the commissioner has asked for a review of the three cases that are presently in question.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with all the controversy surrounding payment for RCMP Superintendent Dennis Massey's regimental funeral, it sounds like a policy change is in order.

Could the Minister of Public Safety tell the House how many other families of fallen federal law enforcement officers have had to pay for their own regimental funerals?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I understand it the operational policy of the force in relation to funerals is quite clear and it has been applied consistently over the years. Because of the events that have arisen and the questions that have been raised, the commissioner has asked for a review of this policy and I am sure we all look forward to the results of that review.

* * *

[*Translation*]**THE ENVIRONMENT**

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Vermont Environmental Board has just authorized the Coventry landfill site to double its capacity. The neighbouring Lake Memphremagog risks being contaminated as a result. This is not a new problem. The Bloc Québécois had asked that it be raised with the International Joint Commission so that it could look into it. With this decision, Vermont is denying a request by the City of Sherbrooke and the RCM of Memphremagog to phase out the landfill.

Will the Minister of the Environment intervene?

Hon. Dan McTeague (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a question for foreign affairs. I am pleased to say it is an issue that we on this side of the House also take seriously. I know that there are members on this side who have worked very hard on this issue.

I must point out that it was no coincidence that the Prime Minister raised the issue with President Bush when he had the opportunity. We are very pleased to find ourselves in a position where the RCM of Memphremagog has now been given a status.

* * *

•(1505)

[*English*]**HEALTH**

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been considerable talk recently about the risk of a worldwide pandemic and the preparedness of different countries in dealing with such a problem.

Would the Minister of State for Public Health please explain to the House what steps the government is taking to protect Canadians against a potential pandemic?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of State (Public Health), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure the member that Canada has a comprehensive pandemic influenza plan which the World Health Organization has called a best model for other countries.

Points of Order

Today the Minister of Health and our chief public health officer for Canada were at the WHO in New York to launch the next phase of the global public health intelligence network. This made in Canada early warning system gathers and disseminates the reports of public health significance in real time on a 24/7 basis, in seven languages, at the Public Health Agency of Canada. The earlier we know about public health risks, the better prepared we can be.

* * *

[Translation]

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, members of UNESCO had until November 15 to state their position on the cultural diversity convention. We can assume that by now, UNESCO knows Canada's position.

Can the Minister of Heritage explain why the House of Commons was not informed before she submitted Canada's position, which, as we know, engages Quebec's cultural interests?

Hon. Liza Frulla (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Minister responsible for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members had until mid November, and November 19 is mid November.

We will send our written comments on UNESCO's preliminary convention by November 19.

In preparing this written submission, we have consulted—that is where November 19 comes into play—federal departments, the provinces and the cultural coalition. As soon as we have submitted it, we will provide hon. members with a copy as well.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the winners of the 2004 Governor General's Literary Awards: Ms. Roo Borson, M. André Brochu, Ms. Judith Cowan, Mme Emma Haché, Mr. Stéphane Joris, Mme Nicole Leroux, Mme Janice Nadeau, Mr. Kenneth Oppel, Mr. Morris Panych, Mme Pascale Quiviger, M. Jean-Jacques Simard, Mr. Ivan Steenhout, and Mrs. Miriam Toews.

[Translation]

I invite you to join them in room 216-N for a reception.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

• (1510)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

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

That, in the opinion of this House, the federal government should acknowledge processed trans fatty acids are harmful fats, which are significantly more likely to cause heart disease than saturated fats;

And that this House hasten the development of replacements to processed trans fats by urging the government to enact regulation, or if necessary legislation within

one year, guided by the findings of a multi-stakeholder Task Force, including the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada and following the consultation process with scientists and the industry currently underway;

Therefore, this House calls on the government to enact regulation, or if necessary present legislation that effectively eliminates processed trans fats, by limiting the processed trans fat content of any food product sold in Canada to the lowest level possible.

[Translation]

This motion, standing in the name of the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre, is votable.

Copies of the motion are available at the Table.

[English]

The Chair has notice of a point of order from the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley. I will hear that one first.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration said during question period that I asked her yesterday for a ministerial permit for my constituents, a desperate family of four in my riding, the Heidi and Holger Renner family, who are about to be deported. If the minister spoke truthfully, she would have said that I approached her on October 6 when she was in her seat in the House. Forty-two days ago I raised this issue with her.

Yesterday I received 19 letters of support for the family. I gave the letters to her for this desperate family, Heidi and Holger Renner. I think it is shameful that she would compare this desperate family with her problems with an exotic dancer.

The Speaker: It sounds to me like a matter for debate. I do not know whether the minister wishes to respond. The hon. member seems to have confirmed the statement. He apparently made an approach yesterday. He has clarified the facts and given more information on the matter. Whether we need to go further with this, I am not sure. It does not sound like a point of order to me.

Mr. Bill Casey: Mr. Speaker, all I want the minister to do is acknowledge that I first approached her in her seat on October 6, not yesterday.

The Speaker: The minister may choose to intervene. If she does, that is fine, but I do not think there is a point of order in respect of the proceedings in the House. The minister gave an answer. The member has made clear the position.

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the hon. member. It is a very important case. I am currently looking at it under humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order with regard to comments made by the Minister of Finance during question period.

In answering a question from my colleague from Winnipeg North, the minister suggested that I may not have been in the House. I believe it is against the practice of this chamber to refer to the presence or absence of a member who has not been recognized by the Chair. Therefore I would ask that the minister be requested to withdraw his remarks.

The Speaker: I appreciate the diligence of the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth in bringing this matter to the attention of the Chair.

I was very careful to listen to what the Minister of Finance said. What he said was that he looked to make sure that the leader of the New Democratic Party was there to hear the question. That is what I heard but I will check the blues. He said he had looked to make sure he was in the House. It was obvious to all of us that the hon. member was in fact here. He then went on to say he was surprised. He wanted to make sure he heard the question or the answer, I have forgotten which it was now, and went on from there. He did not say the hon. member was not here. Had he done so, he might have got in some trouble with me. I can reassure the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth on that point.

I will review the blues. If it says that the hon. member was not here, then naturally I will have the Minister of Finance on the floor in a minute and will deal with the matter.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during question period, while the member for Calgary—Nose Hill was asking a question, the President of the Treasury Board was yelling some perhaps unparliamentary comments across the aisle, but at the same time, he called her “sweetheart”.

I know her husband thinks she is a sweetheart, but I do not think she wants people to know that the President of the Treasury Board is her sweetheart. I would ask him to apologize for making that statement to the hon. member during question period.

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if that was what was understood, I certainly would apologize for it. I believe what I did was call the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough a scumbag, not a sweetheart.

The Speaker: I do not know who the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough is, but I see the hon. member for Central Nova rising on this matter. Perhaps he has a question of privilege.

• (1515)

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not even know that I have to rise to that kind of ridiculous unparliamentary language. Surely you as the Speaker presiding over the House, who wants to maintain decorum would not permit a minister of the crown to stand up and call another member of Parliament a scumbag, as we have just witnessed from the minister.

I know that he will now be invited to retract that comment and I know that he will rise in his place laboriously and do that immediately.

Hon. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, I am only too willing to retract the remark. I just wanted to clarify what I said.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: I am glad the hon. member has withdrawn the remark and we will consider the matter closed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICE INTEGRITY OFFICER

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the annual report of the Public Service Integrity Officer, for the year 2003-04.

* * *

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Chuck Cadman (Surrey North, Ind.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-287, an act to amend the Criminal Code (vehicle identification number).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am reintroducing my bill to amend the Criminal Code with respect to auto crime by adding a section that makes tampering with a vehicle identification number, or VIN, a criminal offence. It makes it a criminal offence to alter, deface or remove a vehicle identification number.

For years police have been asking for this. Auto theft is a major problem in many Canadian cities and this simple amendment would provide law enforcement with another tool. Auto crime investigators need a Criminal Code section prohibiting the obliteration, alteration or removal of a vehicle identification number to combat auto theft rings operated by organized crime.

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

* * *

WHISTLE BLOWER RIGHTS AND PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Newton—North Delta, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-288, an act respecting the protection of employees in the public service of Canada who on reasonable belief make allegations respecting wrongdoing in the public service of Canada.

He said: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Newton—North Delta and indeed all Canadians, I am reintroducing my private member's bill with respect to the protection of employees in the public service who, on reasonable belief, make allegations respecting wrongdoing in the public service.

This bill, written with the assistance of actual whistleblowers, is also known as the whistleblower rights and protection act. The public interest is served when employees are free to expose wrongdoing, waste and abuse within the public service without fear of retaliation and discrimination.

Routine Proceedings

Whistleblowers should be praised and rewarded, not punished or harassed. They should not pay for their public service by putting their jobs on the line. My bill would offer them protection from retaliation. This bill is a very important one and all members of the House should support it.

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

* * *

● (1520)

FIREARMS ACT

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-289, an act to amend the Firearms Act (criteria for firearms licence).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill brings into consideration whether or not anybody has been convicted of an offence under part III, section 264 of the Criminal Code, or has been discharged under section 730 of the Criminal Code. In essence this private member's bill would create a lifetime ban for firearms licence ownership for anybody convicted of a violent crime.

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

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CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-290, an act to amend the Criminal Code (consecutive sentences).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House to introduce this bill. This is part of the Conservative Party of Canada's platform and is something which the vast majority of Canadians support, which is to hold violent criminals accountable for their actions.

The bill would mandate in law that violent criminals have consecutive, and not concurrent, sentencing for their crimes. It would hold people accountable. There would be no discount, where the more crimes are committed, the less time is served. Every crime deserves its punishment. The bill provides for consecutive sentencing, not concurrent sentencing, for violent criminals, and it is about time.

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

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CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-291, an act to amend the Criminal Code (weapons trafficking).

He said: Mr. Speaker, unlike the firearms registry which the Liberals tout as real firearms control, what this bill does is it makes it a separate criminal offence and facilitates the distinction between possessing firearms and trafficking in firearms. It puts in place tougher penalties for people who illegally bring into the country firearms and ammunition that have been prohibited by the government.

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

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-292, an act to amend the Criminal Code (child pornography).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill enforces a minimum sentence of two years in prison for persons convicted of transmitting, making available, distributing, selling, importing, exporting, or possessing child pornography for the purposes of transmission, making available, distribution, sale or exportation of any sort of child pornography.

The Liberals have talked for a long time about getting tough on child pornographers. This bill would put real teeth into our laws so that children would be safe from the people who would abuse them for the sake of child pornography.

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

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PETITIONS

AUTISM

Mr. Chuck Cadman (Surrey North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by 59 individuals. They are asking Parliament to amend the Canada Health Act to include, as medically necessary, therapy for children suffering from autism. The petitioners also ask Parliament to contribute to the creation of academic chairs at Canadian universities, chairs dedicated to the research and treatment of autism.

* * *

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 would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

● (1525)

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS ACT**

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.) moved that Bill C-6, an act to establish the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and to amend or repeal certain acts, be read the third time and passed.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of Bill C-6, an act to establish the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and to amend or repeal certain acts.

[Translation]

First, I would like to congratulate the chair and the members of the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Over the past few weeks, the committee has had in-depth discussions on Bill C-6. These discussions allowed us to better understand the issues relating to public safety and emergency preparedness.

It became clear that the members of all the parties represented in the House of Commons share a deep and unflinching commitment to the safety of our country and its citizens.

Even though the government did not always agree with the comments made and the amendments proposed, we were aware that committee members were trying to make the bill as effective as possible.

[English]

I would also like to acknowledge the participation of the Privacy Commissioner who appeared as a witness at the committee hearings and also wrote directly to the minister. The Privacy Commissioner raised concerns about protecting the privacy of Canadians in the context of examining Bill C-6. She reminded us about the constant tension between privacy and other rights, including the right to security and how we need to strike an appropriate balance.

I would like to reiterate the minister's response to the Privacy Commissioner because I know many Canadians are concerned that the priorities of public safety may somehow compromise the privacy of personal information.

It is worth reminding the House that, like all legislation, Bill C-6 is subject to the Constitution and the Charter of Rights. We have drafted the legislation carefully to ensure that in the delivery of public safety, personal privacy is protected appropriately.

The proposed legislation provides no new legal authorities to collect, disclose or share information within or outside the agencies that are part of the Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness portfolio.

[Translation]

Indeed, the sole purpose of the provisions on the exchange of information is to ensure that all relevant and authorized information on public safety is communicated as it should be.

As the Auditor General pointed out last spring, Canada must be more efficient in the exchange of critical and timely information between the bodies that are responsible for our safety.

[English]

The proposed legislation would contribute to a better sharing of that information without infringing upon the privacy rights of Canadians in any way.

I would now like to comment briefly on the three amendments to the bill approved by the committee.

The first amendment concerns clause 5, the coordination and leadership of the Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness portfolio. The committee saw fit to approve an amendment that includes a non-exhaustive list of entities for which the minister is responsible. The government did not support the amendment.

[Translation]

We contended that modern legislation does not include all the various organizations that a portfolio may include. There are good reasons to respect this legal convention, particularly in the context of the responsibilities of the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

[English]

In a rapidly evolving security environment, where the government needs the flexibility to respond to emerging threats by adjusting structures or creating new ones, we believe it made more sense not to list any entities.

Even if the list had been clearly illustrative, we feared the casual reader may still believe such a list constituted the complete portfolio. We were concerned that, despite the best of intentions, an incomplete list might therefore lead to confusion rather than clarity. We also argued that other acts clearly spell out relationships between the minister and various agencies, such as the RCMP. As a result, we saw no value added to be gained by including the names of some entities in clause 5 of Bill C-6.

I would also like to make clear that Bill C-6 does not give the government authority to add or subtract names from such a list. This authority comes from the Public Service Rearrangement and Transfer of Duties Act.

All that said, the government does respect the will of the committee and accepts the amendment as approved.

The second amendment, which was proposed by the Bloc, was also problematic and once again the government did not support it. The amendment concerns clause 6, which explains the functions of the minister. The clause was amended at committee to state explicitly that the minister would exercise his or her powers "...with due regard to the powers conferred on the provinces and territories...".

Government Orders

In fact, the government has sufficient concern about the amendment that we sought an amendment at report stage to strike the wording from Bill C-6.

I would emphasize very clearly, however, that despite our concerns with this amendment, the Government of Canada fully understands that respect for provincial jurisdiction is a fundamental principle of our Constitution. It goes without saying that the Minister of Public Safety will continue to respect provincial jurisdiction in the exercise of her powers.

The public safety file is one on which there has been a strong history of cooperation between the federal government and the provinces. In fact, Bill C-6 contains a provision expressly calling for continued cooperation between the two levels of government.

As I indicated in my remarks in support of the government's amendment at report stage, the Bloc amendment to clause 6, in the view of both the minister and the government, is redundant and unnecessary. It is redundant because ministerial powers must be exercised within federal constitutional jurisdiction in any event. It is unnecessary because clause 4(1) of Bill C-6 already sets out that "... the powers, duties and functions of the Minister extend to and include all matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction...". This wording establishes the scope of the powers of the minister under the Constitution and is the standard limiting formulation in departmental statutes. Clause 4(1) is a legislative drafting convention.

As members are aware, this matter was given full consideration and debate during report stage. In keeping with the principles of democracy that Canadians hold dearly, the hon. members in the House voted down the government's amendment at report stage and the government respects their decision.

The government will, therefore, treat the Bloc amendment to clause 6 as, at most, a for greater certainty clause, a reminder that the minister cooperates with provincial authorities in the exercise of their respective jurisdictions in areas of national and local importance.

In speaking to this matter at report stage, hon. members of both the Conservative and New Democratic Parties emphasized that the amendment pertaining to jurisdiction should not be viewed as precedent setting for other legislation, but rather, as indicated by the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh, amendments of this nature must be considered on a case by case basis. The government also endorses this approach for, as I indicated previously, how such an amendment would affect other legislation depends upon the very nature of the matter being legislated.

● (1530)

[*Translation*]

The third amendment deals with the last clause of the bill. Clause 38 is about the coming into force of the act. The committee felt that the original wording of that clause could allow the government to give effect to certain sections of the act at different times.

The purpose of the amendment was to ensure that all the provisions of the act, with the exception of sections 35 and 36, would come into force at the same time.

● (1535)

[*English*]

I am pleased to say that the amendment received all party support. This unanimity, to my mind, stands as a positive symbol for the cordial nature of the entire deliberations.

On that note, I would like to thank the committee members for their thoughtful analysis. Even if the government did not agree with all the proposed amendments, we never doubted for a moment that the committee had the best interests of Canadians at heart.

There can be no doubt that we must create the department of public safety and emergency preparedness. Our world, with its vast range of natural and man-made threats, demands a strategic and effective response to protect the safety and security of Canadians. The proposed legislation provides the necessary legal foundation for the department and it is my hope that, in the interests of all Canadians, it receive the full support of members of the House.

Hon. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. I said some things earlier in the House. I was caught up in some anger I felt about the kind of language that was used in the House and I was perhaps less than fulsome in my apology and withdrawal. I simply wish to say to the member for Central Nova that I apologize for the language that was used. It does not dignify the House for me to add to the cacophony.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the parliamentary secretary. I want to thank him personally for the efforts that were made on his own behalf and on behalf of the minister to involve members of the opposition in consultations on the very first bill that has come before the justice committee. I appreciate his cooperation in that regard.

I do, however, want to ask him, in a serious vein, with respect to these amendments that have been presented, he has referred, in particular, to the Bloc amendment as being redundant and therefore really of no substance and no relevance.

I am curious as to why the government has gone to such great lengths to continually oppose this amendment, where there is no harm and no consequence according to the member himself. What the Bloc sought to do, which was supported by the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party, was to enshrine and protect provincial and territorial jurisdiction with respect to the administration and the application of Bill C-6.

Therefore I am a bit at a loss and baffled as to why the government has so adamantly opposed and even taken the opportunity at third reading to again reiterate its opposition to what the parliamentary secretary himself has described as an inconsequential amendment.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Speaker, what we are trying to do in this Parliament especially, which is what we should do in all parliaments, is provide opposition members with the full opportunity to become engaged in the discussion and debate on various bills before the House. We will continue to do that.

Government Orders

The best way I can explain why the government moved an amendment at report stage to remove the amendment put forward by the Bloc and approved by the committee is that, in the context of the bill, the government felt that it was fairly innocuous and redundant since the powers of the minister are clearly laid out in the bill and the minister, obviously, would not intrude into areas of provincial jurisdiction because that would run counter to the Constitution of Canada.

The government was concerned that it might be precedent setting. In the area of emergency response or public safety, the cooperation between the provinces, the territories and the federal government is at a very high level. In fact, the critic for the Bloc talked about when he was the minister of public safety in the province of Quebec during the ice storm in Quebec and the flooding in the Saguenay and the high level of cooperation between the various federal departments and provincial agencies.

I was pleased that some of the members of the opposition were able to elaborate that this was not precedent setting, that each consideration of this clause would be looked at on every bill because it would not surprise me in the least if the Bloc would propose an amendment similar to this for other legislation. For other legislation it might prove more difficult because clauses that are in statutes are presumed to have a special meaning if it is already part of the bill. So that was the rationale behind that.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I realize that my question might require a longer answer, but it might move us to reflect upon the future of the department whose establishment we support.

When I go over the powers granted in clauses 4 and 6, I wonder what the parliamentary secretary might do in a situation where provinces ask for military support. Can the Department of Public Safety really ensure that our armed forces will be able to react rather quickly when police forces cannot keep up?

The question is not without merit. Members will remember a very painful period, the Oka crisis in Quebec, in the early 1990s. When I was minister, I was worried about having to face a similar situation.

I asked the military authorities, when they agreed to meet with me, how long it would take them to react if we had to request their support. They explained to me all the training the troops would need to carry out civilian duties where personnel that is better armed is required. I pointed out that the troops had to be trained to carry out this type of operation when they were sent abroad to take part in UN missions.

Clause 4 stipulates that “The Minister shall, at the national level, exercise leadership relating to public safety and emergency preparedness”. Does that mean that the Minister of Public Safety can go so far as ensuring that the staff of another department gets the training they would need to be able to react quickly if needed?

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his question. I will try to respond briefly, but this is quite a complex and difficult question.

[*English*]

With respect to the member's question, the bill has not in any way changed the current powers of the minister. There is a demarcation with respect to matters of national defence and public safety.

We felt the Bloc amendment was redundant because the minister is required by the act to act within the powers of the Constitution and within the realm of those powers that are within the jurisdiction of the federal government. The focus really is on dealing and responding to public threats in the sense of coordinating a federal government response. That threat could be a natural disaster, a man made disaster or an imminent threat to the safety and security of Canadians.

Ottawa has the operations centre which rises to a certain level of preparedness, depending on the threat assessment. All agencies and departments of the federal government are represented in that operations centre, based on advice from the threat that is determined to be posed to the security of Canadians. Within the operations centre, depending on the level of the threat, someone from the Department of National Defence would be there. If they had to be engaged for whatever reason, then that decision would filter up through a committee of cabinet and then ultimately to the Prime Minister in terms of how to respond. There is a vetting of the response.

When we are dealing with matters of national security, armed insurrection or a threat from outside the country, be mindful that this is an escalation and a threat which is clearly dealt with at the highest level of government through a very rigorous process as defined within the government itself.

• (1545)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask a question of the parliamentary secretary. My specific community has a crossing between Canada and the United States. With 40% of our trade going through it, it is the busiest international crossing in North America.

My question is specifically with reference to the supports necessary for the service at the border. I know our customs officials have been frustrated with the lack of supports. The municipality basically is doing the lion's share of protection of our border. We do have some RCMP, but it is deficient in what is necessary. With the restructuring, will we get the adequate supports that our men and women need?

Last, can we get a resolution to the current labour situation to a benefit so our borders are protected in a thorough way?

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity a few weeks ago to visit Windsor-Detroit and meet with the member and his colleague to discuss some of the issues.

Government Orders

Clearly, the border at Windsor-Detroit is a huge and important trade corridor for our country where much of our goods and people traverse back and forth between Canada and the United States. Resources are a never ending issue. We feel that the response is a pretty good one at the current time. These matters are always under review by the Government of Canada and the minister to determine if more resources would assist in the expediting of people and goods across that important crossing.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the report stage debate on Bill C-6. It is an important bill, given the current climate around security. It is an enabling bill, legislation that in essence puts in the place the legislative framework for the new Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. It is worth noting that the department has been operating for six months or more. The legislation is somewhat late in coming.

It is also worth noting that the bill itself will, for all intents and purposes, do away with the very traditional name of the Solicitor General. I hasten to add that I am somewhat saddened to see that label disappear, given that my father served in that office in the years 1984-85. I know the member for Calgary Centre sat with my father in the House of Commons, and I am pleased to be speaking in his presence today.

The bill brings together a number of departments under one umbrella. It is intended clearly to create a more coordinated effort, and one would hope that information sharing would be improved as a result of the bill.

As I noted earlier, I am encouraged by the efforts made by the minister and the parliamentary secretary to consult more broadly within the House, within Parliament, to ensure that on legislative initiatives, even a bill as technical, and one that could be described as a housekeeping bill, as this, to include the opposition. Given the dynamic and the numbers in the House, in the committee and in the chamber, the opposition already has played a more effective role in amending the bill.

The legislation will bring together, under a single department, departments such as the RCMP. CSIS will have efforts made to include a more coordinated effort around response to provincial disasters, as we have seen in the Saguenay region and even in my own province of Nova Scotia as recently as last week with a devastating snowstorm. Similarly, just under a year ago we suffered the effects of hurricane Juan. The ability of the federal government to intervene in a more meaningful and expeditious way will hopefully be aided and abetted by a more coordinated department such as this.

I would also add that the Conservative Party, under then Prime Minister Kim Campbell, had proposed a similar bringing together of departments such as this and it was vigorously opposed by the Liberal Party of the day. Therefore, we are pleased once again to note that an idea that was proposed some years ago, much like free trade and some of the other initiatives that were taken by a previous government, has now been endorsed and very much embraced by the government.

The legislation brings into being the new department. The legislation also touches upon areas of Canada's border security, which is an extremely important entity at this time. We hope to have

a more fulsome debate in the future around the issues of the border security officers themselves in terms of their own personal safety; the ability to carry firearms, for example sidearms, to issue vests and a more coordinated effort with their counterparts on the other side of the border.

The smart border initiative is something that will be the subject of further debate. More important, we hope to see implementation of some of the initiatives that have been discussed around the important issue of our border security, such as putting in place the necessary critical infrastructure and fast lanes, funding and resource allocation for the technology that will accompany the efforts to improve greater ease of traffic flow at the border and at the same time ensure the very critical level of security needed. In the future I would suspect we will also be engaging on the subject matter of a larger North American security perimeter.

Then we would get into the context of discussions around improving, in particular, our ports. This is perhaps the most vulnerable point of entry in the country today. I know there is reported activity of organized crime at ports like Halifax, Vancouver and even the port of Montreal. There is the ability currently, with the resources and technology, only to examine I believe it is in the range of 1% of the amount of container traffic that comes through the ports.

We had an incident in Halifax quite recently where an entire container went missing. That is alarming in the sense that those containers are large. We hear repeatedly of efforts made to bring contraband material and illegal immigrants into the country through the ports of entry.

● (1550)

While the airport security has been incredibly improved in the wake of 9/11, it is our ports now that need greater emphasis. The disbanding of the ports police by the Liberal government in 1994 has contributed to the vulnerability. That specialized police force was tasked solely with protecting and enhancing security in ports throughout Canada. I state simply for the record that this is an interest and a pursuit of the Conservative Party. We will continue to advocate for a greater degree of funding and protection of ports in Canada.

The Conservative Party and my colleague from Palliser as well as my colleague from Elgin—Middlesex—London have spoken out repeatedly against the proliferation of the long gun registry and the incredible waste that has flowed, now approaching \$2 billion. Under the questionable guidance of the previous finance minister, this legislation was brought forward back in the early nineties in the wake of a terrible disaster in Montreal. It was done at that time, I would suggest, for political posturing rather than actual public safety.

It was stated at that point that the cost of such a registry would be somewhere in the range of \$2 million. As it approaches \$2 billion that has been identified by none other than the very impartial and very able Auditor General, this is probably the largest fraud ever perpetrated on the Canadian public in the history of this country.

Government Orders

The bill puts in place or brings along with the new department the Canadian Firearms Centre. The reason we moved an amendment was to ensure that there was actual clarity and actual enunciation of the various departments as opposed to the way in which it was referred to originally, simply as entities. We want to be able to track the activities and in particular the monetary shenanigans that we have seen in the past when it comes to the firearms registry, the long gun registry, which we continue to oppose on principle, not because in any way, shape or form should it ever be misconstrued as the Conservative Party not being for effective gun control.

That is a completely different issue. Hon. members know very well that the Conservative Party of the day brought in some of the most effective public safety gun control measures ever seen in this country: issues related to safe storage, to the storage of ammunition and keeping that separate from firearms.

We have had handgun registration in this country since the 1940s. The biggest problem today on the streets of large cities, even in small towns and communities, is not long guns; it is not rifles or shotguns. It is handguns; it is nine millimetres that are coming into this country illegally.

We know that the resources that have been put into this useless fiasco of a gun registry, this bureaucratic quagmire, if that money had been placed into front line policing, training or even a registry of sex offenders as opposed to inanimate objects, the public safety, the crime control, and the ability of police to enforce crime control would have increased exponentially.

The bill itself, as I indicated, is one that the Conservative Party supports in principle. It is enabling legislation that will bring together these various entities, referred to already as the firearms centre. I hope it will also lead to a greater degree of sharing of information, in particular between the RCMP and CSIS.

There is as well an effort to set up an oversight body in Parliament that will allow for a greater review by parliamentarians of the activities of CSIS, the activities of CSE, and security information gathering within the country.

I note as well that Bill C-36, the antiterrorism legislation, will be back before a committee for a mandatory review. That was put in place and will require a review of the provisions and in fact the use of those new enabling powers that were put in place under Bill C-36. I look forward to taking part in the discussions in committee on behalf of the Conservative Party along with my colleagues and members from all sides of the House. There is certainly a need for a vigorous and vigilant review of security measures in the country.

• (1555)

It is our hope that this new department will continue in the same vein of cooperation that we have seen thus far. We hope that continues. We hope that the minister will continue to come before the committee, as she has already done in this Parliament.

We call upon all parliamentarians to be very vigilant and serious in their examination of issues such as this that pertain to the critical area of security, given the heightened degree of threat that exists in the world today. Canada has been specifically named by none other than Osama bin Laden as a potential target. We know that there continue

to be active threats in this country. The raising of funds to support terrorism continues, sadly, in Canada today.

There is much to do. There is much that we and the government can do with respect to our security forces in Canada today. Providing them with the proper resources, tools and support, first and foremost, should factor very highly on the parliamentary agenda. This legislation is now giving this department the mandate to do just that.

I see in this legislation wherein subclause 6(2) a commission or advisory committee will be set up. Given past practices, we have reason for skepticism, but it is certainly our hope that this will not become another area of patronage or an area in which the government will simply put people into positions without any form of consultation, at least not the token consultation that we saw in the appointment of Supreme Court judges. That is one other area that I highlight that appears in the bill itself.

We look forward, on behalf of the Conservative Party, to participating fully in the further discussion around this legislation.

• (1600)

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Central Nova touched on the gun registry, which of course generates a lot of emotion and different points of view among all Canadians. Certainly, all Canadians, I suspect, are worried and troubled by the cost overruns and the way the moneys were expended.

There is an adage that my mother used to tell me that I think still has some wisdom. She said if a house costs too much to build, does one burn the house down or look at where to move to, and what the forward program would be? There is a concept that I also learned in economics called sunk cost.

What we should be looking at as Canadians is the gun registry today. We should have accountability if there are cost overruns because people have mismanaged or not managed it optimally. I would like to inform the member of something he may not be aware of. Right now, the gun registry is receiving approximately 15,000 inquiries a week from the police across Canada. If there are 15,000 queries of this gun registry, does that not indicate that it is of some value to people? Why else would they be asking?

Second, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police have steadfastly supported the gun registry. Even now the Canadian Police Association has passed a resolution supporting the gun registry.

I am wondering if the member is aware that the government has committed and managed down the costs to a level of half of what the costs were. In fact, we committed to keeping the gun registry costs at an annualized basis of less than \$25 million a year and total program costs at around \$80 million a year.

I am wondering if the member is aware of that and the kinds of inquiries that are coming from police across this country.

Mr. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the commentary. I am astounded frankly that the government still tries to defend the indefensible.

Government Orders

To use his own example, and I say this with the greatest respect to his dear sweet mother, if the cost of his house was going to be \$2 million and it ended up costing \$2 billion, I do not suspect he would have to burn it down, he would have to go bankrupt. Thankfully, the Government of Canada has not gone bankrupt. We know that it has collected almost \$9 billion too much from Canadian taxpayers.

I want to get back to the real issue here. I have kept in touch with a lot of law enforcement officers who are still out there on the street doing the important work of law enforcement. What I hear from front line police officers is that they cannot rely on the gun registry. If they receive a domestic call where there is a suspicion of violence, it does not do them any good to go to the computer system to find out whether in fact there is a gun present or not. They should presume that there is a gun present in every case.

I have also heard the argument about the tracking of the gun and that it may help solve crime. I do not buy into that either because in many cases the weapon in question, if it has been stolen from a household, if it is traced back to the original owner and then determined whether it was stored safely or not does not do anything to prevent crime. It is a nice after the fact way to maybe attribute blame to somebody for safe storage. The difference here is that there has not really been an effective case ever made on behalf of the government that this has an effective prevention element to it.

It is just as if I took one of those little laser stickers that they are now putting on guns and put in on a chair, and then punched that number into a computer. It would not prevent me from picking that chair up and hitting my friend over the head with it. That type of thinking, and this type of Cartesian thought, that we can simply legislate away crime and put in place these convoluted systems is simply lost on the Canadian public.

More to the fact, the cost overruns are simply astronomical. It is absolutely beyond belief that they would be a thousand times more than were initially predicted by the government.

I am afraid I do not buy the argument. I have met with many police on the issue. I continue to maintain that the money would be better spent putting actual live, breathing, trained law enforcement officers on the street.

• (1605)

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address my remarks to the member who just spoke. He is shocked at the gun registry, which is now at about \$2 billion. He asks the minister's representative a question and is told that this is an emotional issue. I am sad to hear such an answer. We are concerned with how our money is being used. Yet, Liberals think that this is an emotional issue.

The question that was asked is far from being emotional. This is a waste of money, a waste of about \$2 billion, and the member is told that this is an emotional issue! For a taxpayer, for someone who lives in La Tuque, who loses his job and waits for employment insurance benefits, is it an emotional issue to have his money stolen in such a way?

I would like to ask the member if he is satisfied with the answer that he was just given. I think it was an insult. When does he think

that the government will stop trivializing these issues, when this is extremely important?

I think that no one is against the gun registry. I own two guns. I have registered them. Unfortunately, I have still received only one registration. I have paid the other one for nothing. Anyway, I recognize that this may be a means of saving lives.

However, when the government spends billions of dollars and say that this is an emotional issue, I am deeply shocked! I would like the member to comment on this.

Mr. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from the Bloc Québécois for his question.

I agree with him. He is absolutely right. The firearms registry is a waste.

It is a simple matter. Why does the government continue to take an ineffective approach? This can be an emotional issue at times since it touches on violence and violence prevention.

However, I think it would be better to invest money in the police force. The justice system needs more resources.

[English]

It seems to me to be very obvious that it is a clear question of priorities for the government. I fear greatly that this is a simultaneous face-saving and rear-end-covering exercise on the part of the government members right now. They do not want to admit that this system has not worked.

They do not want to admit that the money could have been more effectively spent by putting it into programming, for example, helping victims. I would suggest, and I believe my colleague would agree, that there is much more we could do in this country to fund a victims' ombudsman's office, which would allow victims to get the information they need in a timely fashion and to know when a parole is coming up and the person who violated their rights is being released.

It is clearly a strategic decision on the part of the government.

[Translation]

Unfortunately, this was a terrible decision for the country, for Quebec and for all the provinces. I think a new Conservative government would change this approach. It would cancel the disastrous firearms registry, invest the money and change direction. It would simply have a more effective approach. We could use the resources to support police officers in the important work they do every day in this country.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-6 is precipitated a lot from the dealings with the United States and having to coordinate our trade and other policies for national security. That is also going to require massive infrastructure and investment by the government because those policies conflict with our current streets, roads, bridges and tunnels, all those things.

Government Orders

My concern is whether the Conservative Party will support that infrastructure investment that is so necessary. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce, for example, said that the border in my area lost about \$4 billion this year alone because of lack of infrastructure. Will his party support that in a balanced approach as opposed to just tax cuts?

•(1610)

Mr. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, to my colleague from Windsor, there is no doubt it is an important issue and we absolutely support the infrastructure that is necessary to improve traffic at the border.

I was made aware of a recent study from the United States perspective. Its department of transportation study indicates that the costs attributed to border delays in that country is upwards of \$17.4 billion annually. That is from the U.S. side of the border.

I would suggest that in Canadian funds we are suffering similarly from the problems that are associated with delays at the border: the infrastructure change, the bridge in his area, the Ambassador bridge, has to be improved, and the border security around the city of Windsor has to be changed. They are talking about moving it back.

The Conservative Party is very supportive of the efforts to fulfill our obligations and to ensure there is a free flow of traffic that is safe and secure.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at first glance, one might think that, basically, all this bill is about is a change of designation, from Solicitor General Canada to Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada. Even just that would be an improvement. The responsibilities of the new department are certainly better defined.

As this bill is introduced, with the importance it is clearly given by the Prime Minister by putting in charge of this new department his Deputy Prime Minister, I think that it represents a significant change and I hope that it will continue to be considered as such within the government.

Before making my point, I will say that this is certainly a topic on which Quebec and the rest of Canada think very much alike. In fact, I think that the cooperation that we should be getting and that I hope to be getting in this respect would be a good example of the kind of cooperation that could exist between two sovereign nations within a real confederation, which is the objective I have pursued throughout my political career.

The reason this particular bill is so important is precisely because it is being introduced at a time when great challenges have to be met. After World War II—I was born in the early days of the war—I spent my life dreading another world war or, worse yet, an atomic war that might spell death for the planet. The greatest threat at the time was indeed clashes between the Communist bloc and the free world, while other countries stood by. That was the main military threat.

Canada, at the time, with the second largest landmass in the world but a fraction of the world's population and wealth, was perfectly aware of the fact that it was unable to provide adequate protection for this huge landmass and its inhabitants. Therefore, throughout the 20th century, Canada consistently relied on its participation in major international alliances, in which it has played a heroic part on

occasion and many Canadians have also played a part. In this spirit, it continues to support UN operations conducted under an international flag.

What is the greatest threat to the security of Canadians and Quebecers in this 21st century? Which countries are likely to threaten to invade us and deprive us of our freedom? Clearly, the cold war is over. There are new alliances. Unfortunately, at the dawn of the 21st century, more precisely on September 11, 2001, we discovered a new threat to civilized countries, and countries as a whole, namely terrorism.

Consequently, since terrorism is the greatest threat, we must refocus our forces and our defence system to counter this new threat.

As a matter of fact, it could even strike here. Terrorists who struck Bali could just as well strike Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver. Moreover, even if there is no immediate threat here, I think we all see it as our role to cooperate in the fight against terrorism and make sure that nobody on our territory is planning terrorist attacks on our allies or even other countries.

Essentially we do not fight terrorism with traditional weapons. If we take the terrorist threat seriously, we should expect a significant transfer of resources from the Department of National Defence to the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Whatever resources we devote to intelligence gathering, the fight against terrorism mainly involves the systematic gathering of information, secret information of course, since by definition terrorists operate in secrecy. Occasionally countries harbour terrorists. In such cases, the world community has every right to forcefully remove any government that is encouraging the spread of terrorism from its territory. That is what we did in Afghanistan with our allies under the United Nations flag.

•(1615)

Once that has been done, terrorism remains a secret activity and the way to fight terrorism is to establish networks of informants and to develop our secret services.

No matter what the resources we are going to devote to security information, we can be pretty well sure that they will never be enough to provide us with the assurance that we will never fall victim to terrorist attacks.

The only way to gain that assurance would be to live in an environment similar to the former communist regimes, with their multiple controls and lack of freedom. That, obviously, no one wants. I might add that the terrorists would have scored a great victory if they had managed to change us into that kind of a society.

Government Orders

We must therefore expect a major increase in undercover surveillance activities. This, of necessity, puts the respect of fundamental rights at risk. Even cooperation with our allies presents risks to individual freedom as we see it, and our respect for privacy.

We have seen the disastrous effects on Canadians of giving information to allied undercover services, disastrous effects we had not intended. The major challenge is to find a happy medium between increased security information gathering activities and the respect of human rights

There is a great fascination for such undercover activity. It has inspired numerous popular novels and films. It is far removed from reality, however. The reality is patient information gathering, it is patience, intelligence, the ability to link scattered information together so as to eventually identify groups, guess what they are planning, gather evidence, and take timely action. There is no room for failure.

Nevertheless, people involved in the secret service are a source of fascination for people. The fascination of seeing into others' lives, somewhat the way people are now fascinated with reality TV. There is a tendency to abuse this ability, which is why it is very important to set effective controls, not only to protect people's privacy and the values we subscribe to—freedom and respect of privacy—but also simply for the sake of efficiency.

As I said, there will likely never be enough resources. So the best use must be made of the ones we have. They are not to be used for frivolous purposes not to restrict the activities and freedom of people who have no intention of resorting to violence. We have to know when enough is enough.

It is also dangerous because it provides the government with powerful tools they can use against their political opponents. Since these activities are kept secret, the government might be tempted to use the resources put at its disposal to fight terrorism to get information about its political foes, which would give it an edge.

● (1620)

This is one of the concerns the committee on which I sat noted in Australia, New Zealand, Norway, the United States and England. Parliamentary controls were developed. So, there is a risk that we need to address here. The huge challenge facing the minister today has to do with balance.

Let me say, in all honesty, that I think the Prime Minister probably chose the best person he could to try to achieve that balance. As a former justice minister, a former law professor, a great supporter of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms adamant about its enforcement, she has maintained balance in her public life.

I do hope she realizes the importance and enormity of the task ahead. I also hope that she is aware she will have a tough time keeping abreast of the secret activities of her department, since secret services are usually wary about political leaders. What will make her work even harder is that the management of all the increased resources she is getting is too much for one person. It would be naive to assume that there will not be any abuses, hence the need to have monitoring agencies whose resources are already too limited.

We have them, but many people complain that budgets and resources are insufficient. They will obviously need even more resources if we increase the resources given to the secret services. Their increase must be proportional to the increase of the resources provided to these secret services.

It is also necessary to establish, as in other democracies, a parliamentary control, as promised by the Prime Minister. This committee must be representative of Parliament, thus of the people, of those who, although they want major changes to current institutions, pursue and have always pursued their action in a democratic and peaceful context.

It is not against even the major changes that the secret services must work, but against the use of violence to provoke changes. This is certainly an objective shared by all of us who are democrats in the first place.

This is why I am still a bit concerned when I see the minister's attitude toward the suggestions made by the privacy commissioner, Ms. Stoddart. She has rejected a little too lightly her suggestion to have an officer dedicated to assessing the unavoidable infringements on privacy that intelligence activities require.

For my part, I believe that having such an officer may be useful not only to ensure the necessary protection of privacy or limit the unnecessary violation of privacy, but also to ensure the efficiency of the secret service. As I said earlier, when you start to unnecessarily encroach on privacy, it means that you are not doing your work properly, that resources are not focussed where they should be focussed, resources that are, as I said, probably always scarce and should be entirely dedicated to counter plotting by those wanting to use violence to bring about changes. We are a democratic society able to bring about changes.

The minister is a good choice, but only time will tell if she is up to the important task she has been given.

● (1625)

Similarly, her ability to have important resources transferred from the Department of National Defence will be an indication of her political weight. It will also be an indication of whether or not the Prime Minister is truly aware of the new security challenges of the 21st century.

I will now go to the specifics. We put forward an amendment the government seems to say it will reluctantly accept. Let us be clear. If the federal government had never encroached on provincial jurisdictions, this amendment would not have been necessary.

Government Orders

I might elaborate on that at another time, but I sincerely believe that federal encroachment in provincial jurisdictions is somewhat of a natural phenomenon since it is the manifestation of the Canadian anglophone nation's will to give the government it controls the means to tackle problems it perceives as the most pressing.

Quebec also acts as a nation. Quebec would like its government, which it controls, to look after what it considers the most pressing problems.

I think the federal government's mentality also goes against the spirit of a true federation. According to its way of thinking, it is the senior government and, in areas where we have to work together, it has to take initiative and establish the rules. I do not want things to be that way. I want, as the parliamentary secretary to the minister said, for there to be cooperation between the provincial and federal governments. However, I want even more. I want there to be respect between the two parties.

It is certainly not impossible. I have seen this respect myself when we were working on the fight against biker gangs and we established the Carcajou squad. It was directed alternately by an officer from the Sûreté du Québec and an officer from the Montreal police, and RCMP investigators agreed to cooperate. I think they were proud of the work that was accomplished. We are one of the only places in the world that has succeeded not in completely eliminating, but in truly breaking up the dangerous Hell's Angels organization.

As the crown prosecutor said—and I agree with him—the fight against organized crime is like housework: it never ends. However, with the new legislation the Minister of Justice has given us, it will be more difficult to establish such a powerful organization.

Thus, it is possible for the federal government to act, cooperate and find its place while respecting provincial organizations.

In conclusion, we already have teams to fight against a biological, chemical, radiological or nuclear attack and we have here a good example for making these teams available to all Canadians.

• (1630)

Now you can understand our full agreement with this department's creation and our view of this department's importance. We are prepared to cooperate, but rest assured we will keep a close eye on you.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

[*English*]

I am always delighted to hear from the member opposite. He has vast experience in public safety and law in the province of Quebec and has experience of how different governments can cooperate, the federal government with the provincial government. I know he does that in a very non-partisan way. We understand the objectives of his party. He makes a very important point that it goes beyond just articulating powers. It goes to having mutual respect, and the member opposite demonstrates that.

The member talks about why he believes it would be natural for the federal government to try to intrude or get a presence in areas that

might be seen to be provincial. We could have a longer debate on that point.

I think the member would also acknowledge, maybe not publicly but privately, that given his political objectives, he would want to ensure that the provincial powers are asserted and maybe push the envelope on that the other way. This is part of the counterpoint and part of the balance that we strive for in debate in Canada.

I wanted to come back to the point the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin made about the privacy commissioner. I hear what he says about the delicate balance and the challenges that we all have, the minister, the government and all members of Parliament, to ensure we have the correct balance between our national security objectives and the privacy of Canadians.

There were long discussions with the privacy commissioner when she came before the committee with some ideas for amendments. In fact there is quite a good rapport with the privacy commissioner. The government and the minister understand the importance of privacy in relation to her portfolio. They see it as an integral part of what she does.

What the government had some difficulty with was enshrining a reference to the minister's responsibilities with respect to privacy, which already are dealt with in a privacy act and which would seem to present the position that privacy then would trump the Charter of Rights, access to information and the relations we have with other countries, the treaties and agreements with them. That was the only point.

The minister has responsibility with respect to privacy. The privacy commissioner respects that and will continue to respect it. We will continue to work with her in a very constructive way.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary very much for his question. I think that this is a field in which there are no great differences of opinion between Quebec and the rest of Canada. Therefore, we can collaborate on this.

I do not have much time to explain it, but you will understand why these political goals are not compromised by our attitude at present, if we allow for a number of things. I will not say much about it, but I believe I express the opinion of most Quebecers when I say that I do not hate Canada or Canadians. What I do not like is the Canadian Constitution because, while it was not intended to do so, its practical result is to ensure that we will eventually be eliminated. That is what we want to change.

In fact, I appreciate confederation so much that for my first mandate in Ottawa, I was assigned an office in the Confederation Building. That is what we really want. Even though we want a true confederation, each nation keeps its own sovereignty. Nevertheless, we have agreements among us and if we want to maintain our partnership or association, it is because we share common values with the rest of Canada.

Government Orders

Here is one area where we share common values. Respect for democracy, respect for freedom, and also respect for privacy. It is clear that there are differences between our attitude and that of our neighbours to the south and even of many other countries.

Still, I am quite pleased with it. I hope that the government's attitude to the Privacy Commissioner's warnings will translate into something—perhaps not an amendment to the bill, but an administrative structure that, without interfering with the collection of security intelligence, will be able to ensure that such intelligence is always used for its original purpose, the fight against terrorism and violence, and does not stray into unnecessary intrusions into private life.

When such intrusions are necessary, secrecy must be maintained. The information obtained in this way must never be made public or used for other purposes, even for purposes of the governing party.

That is why—

• (1635)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I would like to permit one more question. The hon. member for Windsor West.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know the member talked about partnerships and Bill C-6 really is about putting groups and organizations together and about reaching beyond our traditional partnerships. However one group that I have not heard a lot of discussion about and one that is very important for national security and being able to respond to emergencies is our firefighters.

Firefighters from many municipalities require training for emergency preparedness. They have requested some additional resources to be able to be trained properly to deal with that.

Does the hon. member support the proposition that our firefighters be brought into the fold to make sure that our first responders are very well-equipped and well-trained to ensure they could be on the ground level supporting men and women in our community in times of emergency?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I would say it depends on the province. Some provinces are large enough to look after the training of their first responders themselves.

Maybe you do not know, but of the major reforms I made as public security minister, was the fire safety system reform. Firefighters had been waiting for this reform for fifteen years, and they were quite glad of it.

Firefighters are more and more professional, and I think their development should continue, not only in firefighting, but also in prevention and everything that has to do with first response.

I hope that someday, we will be at a level similar to what I have seen in New York, where even medical procedures by firefighters are common. Firefighters are those most present everywhere and they are in a position to meet the needs more quickly. That is why they save many human lives.

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his outstanding speech. However, I was slightly disappointed by the contribution of the governing party in this debate. Personally, I felt the government was acting in bad faith when it wanted to change a decision made in committee.

For this reason, I would like to ask a question of my colleague concerning clause 6 of this bill which provides:

6. (1) In exercising his or her powers... the Minister may

(b) cooperate with any province, foreign state, international organization or any other entity; [...]

(d) facilitate the sharing of information, where authorized[...]

However, this clause does not specify who gives the authorization.

I would like my colleague to tell us if this issue has been discussed in committee and what prevented the change.

• (1640)

Mr. Serge Ménard: Mr. Speaker, numerous discussions took place in committee. Nonetheless, we mostly discussed some amendments to the act, which are quite simple.

I can explain one change that has not been much discussed up to now, but that is very important. Its importance will be seen later anyway. This change is on the last clause, that is clause 38.

It does not seem much but the changing of the last clause from “The provisions of this Act [...] come into force on a day to be fixed by order of the Governor in Council” to “This Act [...] comes into force on a day to be fixed by order of the Governor in Council” precludes the government's bringing all the provisions of the bill into force without the amendments it granted to the opposition. It will have to bring the entire legislation into force.

This is one item, but there are others.

[*English*]

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 Palliser, Sponsorship Program; the hon. member for Quebec, Child Care.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the bill before us has the unanimous support of all parties. It did not require a great deal of work to achieve that consensus. All of us have felt for some time that the need to deliver our security services efficiently, both domestically and internationally, has been wanting. When the bill was brought forward at the start of this session, all opposition parties with an open mind were willing to accept it with some minor changes.

Before I go to those, however, I would like to address why we needed this so badly. As a result of the terrible tragedy that occurred on September 11, 2001, we have learned that there are significant flaws in our system. These flaws have been documented by reports across all of our allies: the 9/11 report in the United States, the Bali report in Australia and the Butler report in England. Each one of those reports has shown that the services that we have show a significant tendency, and this may even be a human tendency, to build those traditional silos and then hide behind those silos, in fact defend them in a very territorial fashion.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, as much as one might admire some of the loyalty that is shown within those agencies to that silo defence, it leads inevitably, in each of those jurisdictions I just mentioned, to a lack of cooperation so that the loyalty that we see in terms of defending the agency is extended to the degree that it becomes dysfunctional. In fact, it prevents those agencies from cooperation. We have seen that in all three of those countries.

There is some indication, most of it anecdotal here in Canada, that similar things have happened. We certainly saw some evidence come out in the course of the Air India trial where because of the lack of cooperation, it would appear, and a reduction in the effectiveness of our intelligence services and security services in the investigation of that crime, it has caused the trial to be dragged out over a much longer period than it would have been otherwise had there been more cooperation. I do not want to overemphasize that particular case because it is, of course, still before the courts and we may get some indication at some point whether that is a complete reality.

However, we know that this is a problem. From my experiences in another committee on which I sat this past summer, our services are conscious of it. The committees and the inspector general that oversee this are very conscious of it. Attempts are being made to eradicate that lack of cooperation and, as a member of the NDP, I applaud those efforts.

This bill is one of the methodologies that we are deploying as a government to facilitate cooperation and to downplay any of this territoriality that leads to a dysfunctional service.

As a party we are quite pleased to support the bill and will be voting in favour of it once debate at third reading is complete. However I want to acknowledge that there were some flaws identified when the bill went to the committee and amendments were moved. I want to draw the House's attention to the amendments that were moved to clauses 5 and 6.

• (1645)

The amendment to clause 5 was to specify the agencies that would now be consolidated under one department and under one minister. They are: the RCMP, CSIS, the Canada Border Services Agency, the Canada Firearms Centre, the Correctional Service of Canada and the National Parole Board. These are the existing agencies and departments that will be incorporated.

I want to make this point because on this amendment there was criticism coming from the government side that it somehow would hamstring the minister. I want to be very clear that the amendment, and the bill as it is before the House, particularly clause 5, allow for additional agencies to be added. I have to say, again based on some of the experiences I had this summer, that I believe this should be happening fairly soon. I am not sure the government members are on side with that, but if they do come to that realization and wish to add additional agencies under the purview of the minister, they in fact are able to do so without amendments to the law that will flow out of this bill.

I want to perhaps applaud the opposition parties. In the course of that amendment coming forward, all three opposition parties supported it. There was a good discussion. It was a good example,

if I can put it that way, of the parliamentary committee system working.

Similarly, with clause 6, the amendment was brought forth provides for a direction, in effect, to the minister to exercise his or her authority and powers under this law in compliance with the constitutional jurisdiction of the provinces and the territories. Again there was a good discussion. The opposition parties, after listening to that discussion, are all supporting this amendment.

It is one that I believe is particularly important if one begins to appreciate what is going on in Canada at the present time in terms of the police forces of the provinces and the municipalities cooperating extensively with our national agencies in gathering evidence. In some cases, what has been traditional intelligence gathering is being assisted if not outright conducted by our provincial and municipal police forces in cooperation with and generally under the direction of our federal agencies such as the RCMP and CSIS.

The cause for concern as a result of this is that we want to be very clear that the provinces and the territories retain their traditional jurisdiction in the areas of enforcement, at the same time recognizing that right across the country we have been cooperating with the federal agencies and in fact taking on additional workloads since September 11, 2001.

We wanted that workload to be conducted in such a way that it always remained within the control of the provinces and the territories and that protocols were worked out with the federal government and its agencies on an ongoing basis. We did not want the jurisdiction of the provinces and the territories impugned. I believe that this amendment brought forward on clause 6 takes into account the reality of what is going on in the country right now within our police forces. It protects that jurisdiction of the provinces and territories. Again there was a good discussion in the committee, in the way that committees are supposed to function, we all believe, and perhaps in practice do not as often as they should. The committee did function well here.

Both of these amendments were put through and are now back before the House with what I believe to be an improved bill.

Along the same lines of the conduct of the committee, other amendments were proposed and were turned down. I want to draw to the attention of the House the fact that the Privacy Commissioner came before the committee as a witness and proposed two amendments, one that I would say she was not pressing for but one that she felt was in fact necessary.

After listening to her testimony, questioning her and having a thorough discussion in the committee, we determined in regard to the proposal she was making, although it was in its essence very valid, that is, concerns over privacy and how information was being used or could be used and in fact abused, it was not appropriate to deal with it at this time in this bill.

Government Orders

• (1650)

I think we all felt we had a sense of responsibility to the Privacy Commissioner to be very clear with her that we appreciated her initiative in this regard and that it is one she should pursue in other legislation, either in existing law or in fact some amendments to new legislation that should be forthcoming in the next while. We appreciated the initiative, but we felt that it was not in this law that it should be dealt with.

In that regard, there certainly was a good deal of discussion about the fact that a lot of our information at the international level is being shared. There were concerns expressed about whether the proper protocols are in place to protect Canadians from that information being abused in other countries.

Obviously the case that comes to mind is the Maher Arar case, and there are the suspicions we all have as to whether that happened in his case. Certainly at the superficial level it would now appear quite clear that it did. Who was at fault is unclear and that of course is the major subject as I see it of the O'Connor inquiry that is going on at the present time. Coming out of this, we may in fact get some recommendations that will invoke that concern of the Privacy Commissioner and we may pursue this at some point down the road. Certainly that is the intention of my party and it is one that we will follow quite closely once we have that report.

The additional point I would like to make is that this bill is just the start of the work that needs to be done to make sure that we do not end up as so many other countries have. Our traditional allies, the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia, all have demonstrated that within their services there is a need for ongoing vigilance, that the services are working at their peak efficiency, if I can put it that way. We as members of this House have a responsibility to see that there is an infrastructure in place which maximizes the likelihood of that occurring. This is one bill that we are quite happy to support as the first step in achieving that result, but it is certainly not the end.

• (1655)

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh represents an area that abuts the Windsor-Detroit border crossing, a hugely important corridor for trade and for individuals going back and forth.

When I was down there recently I met with the member, his colleague and the mayor. I went across the Ambassador Bridge and back through the tunnel. I met with all the customs people and other stakeholders.

The mayor, I gather, has a plan. I think he perhaps is unfolding the plan as we speak. I know that for the city of Windsor itself there are a number of issues in respect of the traffic flows, the environmental issues, and for Canadians in general and the business community to get goods to market and back and forth given the level of integration between the economies in that area. Goods come from Detroit, are sent to a plant in Windsor where more value is added, and then they are sent back to the U.S. They go back and forth.

Could the member share some of his insights and wisdom with the House on how we might balance local interests against some of the

national interests of people across Canada who rely on this border to move our goods and people?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, this issue has been the dominant issue in the Windsor-Detroit corridor since September 11, 2001. There is just no other issue at the same level of concern for the residents of Windsor and Essex County.

To answer directly the question that is being asked, I do not see an inherent conflict between the interests of the residents and businesses in the city of Windsor and the county of Essex and the international trade that moves within our municipal jurisdiction across that border in both directions.

What has happened is that the determination on the part of the U.S. government to place—I understand this and I am very careful about using these words—as an absolute its security above all other considerations has developed to such an extreme that it is imperilling the economic health of the region, and not just on the Canadian side of the border but on both sides of the border.

We have had studies done by the chambers of commerce on both sides showing losses, on an annual basis since September 11, on the Canadian side running between \$5 billion and \$7 billion annually to the general economy in southwestern Ontario, and losses of as much as \$10 billion to the economy in the adjoining states on the American side, in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana.

I want to point something out. I can recall this and I am taking some pride in saying, “I told you so”. The big problem was that the American side was not putting money directly into the border services. On the Canadian side we had, if I can use this figure, 10 booths open and allowing traffic to move onto the Canadian side, and only 4 or 6 operating on the American side.

To show how effective this has been, the American side just recently opened four additional booths. They were operating at full capacity as of September of this year and for the first time in three years we have not had consistent backups at the border. It was a relatively simple solution. It is not the end of it, because we need another border crossing and there is no question of that in my mind. But there were some simple solutions and that was one of them. The mayor has more.

You are signalling me, Mr. Speaker, to stop talking. I will leave it at that.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to repeat the question I asked a little earlier. I will try to be a little more precise to make sure that I am well understood.

We all know how this government can take advantage of the slightest opportunity to grab powers that the stakeholders are not necessarily ready to see it assume. The member for Windsor—Tecumseh said something to that effect. I have lived in his riding, in the French area of Windsor and I really liked it.

Government Orders

In the light of the Maher Arar case, the Bloc wanted the powers of the minister to be a bit more limited to avoid repeating the errors of the past. The Bloc recognizes that there has been an attempt to bring in some control by the addition of the words “where authorized”. However, the vagueness of this limit could cause a lot of problems. We should first define who can authorize the minister to share this information and ensure the credibility and impartiality of this person or entity responsible for privacy.

I would like to know if the committee fully considered this request.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Bloc for his question.

The answer is no. The committee has not done anything in this regard.

[*English*]

It is one that badly needs to be looked at. The difficulty in which the committee found itself was because the O'Connor inquiry was underway, it would have been presumptuous for us to do an analysis at this point.

I would also like to point out to the member from the Bloc that the proposal for a national security oversight type of committee is before the Deputy Prime Minister at this point, and coming out of that, the types of protocol that we need. We have them now. There is some suggestion clearly that they need revision, updating and strengthening as to the sharing of information with our allies. Perhaps it could be said that we share 100% of all our intelligence material with those four allies: the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.

Protocols are in place. There are some suggestions up to this point in the Arar case that they were not properly followed. We will get that from the commission when it reports. My sense is we need to do more and it should not be left exclusively in the hands of the minister. A parliamentary committee should be in place to review those protocols and see that they are proper, that they are in force and that there will be ongoing monitoring of them once they are developed.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh for spending his summer working on this file and for all his efforts to push the issue forward for our community.

In his speech he mentioned the approximately \$4 billion to \$7 billion approximately that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce estimated was lost every year because of border backups. He mentioned that four booths were added on the American side at a cost of about \$1.5 billion per booth.

I have been pushing the government to have a public border authority or commission. We have one of the few crossings in this nation that has any coordination from the central government, and also a public interest clause. Given his experience on the committee, would he be supportive of ensuring that we have a free flow of trade and good government policy and supports for all border crossings, whether they be public or private?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the work the member of Windsor West he has done. All three of the crossings, including the train crossing, are in his riding. He has led the way on a good deal of the effort we have put into play to try to resolve the issue.

Specifically, on the authority, there is no question that we need it and that it be coordinated very tightly with the U.S. side. There are constant decisions of an almost emergency nature that need to be made. From talking to our police forces and our fire services, we know it is very difficult for that cooperation to occur because we do not have a central body in the local area to make those decisions. I would be very supportive of us establishing an authority, the federal government being the initiator in that regard.

• (1705)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Ahuntsic.

I rise to speak in support of Bill C-6, which establishes the new Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. The legislation is essential to ensuring the safety of Canadians and our communities. It will help give police and other first responders the tools they need to make the right decisions at the right time on the front lines where it matters most.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-6 provides that one department, the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, will take a leadership role and coordinate the setting of priorities with other departments and with the agencies in the portfolio, in order to act as a central point for issues of public security and emergency preparedness and to strengthen accountability for the way the government assumes its security responsibilities.

[*English*]

Simply put, the legislation provides greater support for police and other law enforcement personnel. This is where I would like to focus my attention today.

This summer Statistics Canada released a study that found that 82% of Canadians said that they had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the police. This fall an Ekos survey showed that a full 90% had moderate or high confidence in the RCMP. These are numbers of which we should be very proud.

We need to ensure that Canadians continue to respect and trust these organizations and do so with good reason. We need to support our police and law enforcement agencies with the tools they need to do the job right.

We operate in a much different criminal environment than we did 50, 20 even 5 years ago. We are also entering a new frontier in law enforcement that requires us to think about policing and law enforcement much differently.

Government Orders

As a government, we must re-examine how we approach our safety and security responsibilities on a local, national and international level. We know that increasingly, situations that happen in one part of the world have far-reaching ramifications in other areas. In today's environment a small drug dealer who is arrested in a Canadian community could have links to a terrorist group halfway around the world.

This reinforces the need for governments and law enforcement agencies to work together locally, nationally and internationally to properly address common issues with a unified approach. Bill C-6 provides the foundation for our government to do exactly that.

[*Translation*]

Since the Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness portfolio was created nearly a year ago, the department and agencies have worked more cohesively to ensure the security of Canada and the Canadian public.

This bill will not change these new working relationships. In fact, it will provide an opportunity to solidify them and give clear direction to the department and the agencies within the portfolio.

[*English*]

When it comes to policing and law enforcement, there have been a number of recent accomplishments that I would like to highlight as evidence of this new and improved working relationship. These success stories are proof positive that when the Prime Minister created this new department last December, he did the right thing for Canada and for Canadians.

This October the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness met in Ottawa with then U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft for the eighth annual Canada-U.S. cross-border crime forum.

At this year's forum, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and Mr. Ashcroft made a number of important announcements that would reinforce the new era of more and better collaboration among law enforcement agencies at home and with our U.S. counterparts.

First, the two officials released the 2004 Canada-U.S. border drug threat assessment. This report examined the nature of drug trade between our two countries, highlighted successes achieved together and looked at how to better respond to this shared problem.

As a result of better international cooperation arising from the cross-border crime forum, this past March law enforcement officials from both sides of the border executed the largest single binational enforcement action ever taken against ecstasy traffickers. Over 130 individuals were arrested in 19 cities. Officers seized over 877,000 ecstasy pills, 120 kilograms of powder and \$6 million.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and Mr. Ashcroft also announced new measures to enhance intelligence gathering and information sharing to combat cross-border crime and terrorist activity. At four of our integrated border enforcement team, or IBET, locations, Canada and U.S. law enforcement intelligence officers will now be co-located. At two locations here in Canada and two locations across the border in the United States, Canadian and American intelligence staff will

literally and figuratively work shoulder to shoulder to secure our shared border.

The cross-border crime forum is an innovative vehicle to promote collaboration with our Canadian and American partners. It is co-led by the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada and the U.S. department of justice. It has been showcased as a model for cross-border law enforcement collaboration by other organizations, including the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the Organization of American States.

● (1710)

[*Translation*]

The accomplishments of this forum are but a few examples of the excellent work being done thanks to a better targeted approach that has made increased collaboration possible since the creation of the new department.

Among the very important questions for police forces, for this government and in fact, for the entire Canadian public, are the identification, disruption and dismantling of organized crime groups.

[*English*]

Organized crime is an issue that affects ordinary Canadians. While many of its activities seem to have no direct bearing on the lives of law-abiding citizens, the consequences of organized crime are far-reaching. For example, we are seeing a rise in marijuana grow operations, most of which have a direct link to organized crime groups. Grow ops defraud hydro and insurance companies. They are a serious fire risk and threaten the lives of citizens who live nearby. Proceeds from the sale of drugs are often used to buy weapons and allow criminal groups to branch into other illicit businesses.

Furthermore, the days of these organizations operating as independent, mutually hostile factions is ending. We are seeing a new level of collaboration among organized crime groups that calls for, in fact demands, a response that is even more cohesive.

Simply put, the security, intelligence and law enforcement communities must continue to collaborate, and in fact look to enhance this integrated approach if we as a country and as a society are to succeed in fighting larger, more sophisticated organizations.

The creation of the public safety and emergency preparedness portfolio brings greater collaboration and focus to the government's efforts. It provides a vehicle and foundation for the department and its portfolio agencies to work together more and work together more effectively in combating shared threats like organized crime.

Our police and law enforcement community has benefited from the leadership of one department and one minister who is dedicated to greater cohesion within our borders and greater collaboration with our allies around the world.

Government Orders

We must do what we can to enshrine this leadership and accountability into law. We must provide our policing and law enforcement community with the tools they need to continue to fight against issues like drugs and organized crime and whatever other challenges come our way. We must do what we can as a government to ensure our nation is secure from threats, natural or man-made, and our citizens are safe in their communities.

Finally, we must ensure we are reaching out to all of those with a vested interest and a role to play in our safety and security mandate with one voice, under one minister, with a clear set of priorities and a decisive path forward.

I am confident that with the passage of Bill C-6 we can do just that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have been closely following the debate since the beginning. I listened especially to my hon. colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, who shed a great deal of light on the purpose of the bill before the House. The previous speaker also tried to explain things.

This is a very important piece of legislation. It will put one minister in charge of six organizations. When I go through the list of the organizations the minister will be responsible for, I cannot help but notice the RCMP.

In his speech, the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin told us how human rights could be threatened by this otherwise important bill. He did say that he hoped and believed human rights would be upheld, but the legislation could still be used for political purposes, against political opponents.

I am not convinced. I saw what happened in 1970 in Quebec. I spent a period of time that seemed to me way too long between two armed men. Since the day I spent a whole hour between two armed men before they realized their mistake, I have had doubts about giving more powers to police authorities.

Let me ask this to the previous speaker. Since history has a tendency to repeat itself, does the member think that things have changed enough that such important legislation can be enforced in a non-partisan fashion with as much respect as possible being accorded to human rights?

• (1715)

[*English*]

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Madam Speaker, I was quite young at the time of the events in Quebec that the member mentioned and, yes, there are fundamental changes that have occurred since that time.

The previous member from the Bloc has said he respects change that takes place in a democratic way. There were very terrible events that took place at that time. Perhaps if there had been the sort of respect that exists today, for example, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the evolution that has taken place in our society since that time, the people who were caught in the crossfire with this type of agency, and the changes that have taken place, would not have faced the potential threat of being caught in that sort of crossfire.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I had the great honour a few years ago of visiting Kiev in Ukraine. I was asked to speak on the topic of corruption and money laundering as a threat to international security.

I have been involved over a number of years with the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption. I worked with the ministry of finance on implementing our anti-money laundering regime and FINTRAC. I was surprised that the meeting was put in the context of corruption and money laundering as a threat to international security. When I think about it, of course, it does make sense that corruption and money laundering are destabilizing. Money laundering facilitates terrorist acts. It deals with drug money and other types of laundered funds.

I wonder if the member could comment on the linkage that he might or might not see between corruption and money laundering, and public safety and security.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Madam Speaker, the amounts that we see in money laundering organizations and with these organized crime organizations are phenomenal. The threats that they pose because of the resources at their disposal can only be dealt with if we have a coordinated approach. That is why it is so critical that not just police forces but our intelligence community cooperate. A lot of these organized crime syndicates are in places, like the member had mentioned, in the former Soviet Union. They have very sophisticated methods and huge resources at their disposal. That is precisely why we need a coordination among our agencies to deal with those potential threats.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in this House to support this very important legislation, namely Bill C-6, An Act to establish the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and to amend or repeal certain Acts.

We all know that this bill is part of the government's strategy in response to the September 11, 2001, events, which raised public safety concerns all over the world, and particularly on the North American continent, to unprecedented levels.

I want to draw the attention of all members of this House by asking how we could contemplate imposing limits on the relentless fight against international terrorism.

All Canadians know that national safety knows no borders. We all know that the obligation imposed on all levels of government, in this country and in every other country, is to promote cooperation, partnership and the exchange of critical information to ensure the success of our common fight against terrorism.

Government Orders

The same is true in all areas of public safety and emergency preparedness. The fight against organized crime, drug trafficking and money laundering, for example, cannot stop at the borders of a country, a province or a state. On the contrary, all the authorities involved have an obligation to cooperate, to unite their efforts in order to succeed in deterring criminals, intercepting them and prosecuting them.

When we say that we are living in an era of globalization, we are not only referring to the economy, to trade or to the assistance provided to developing countries. No municipality, province or country can successfully overcome threats to public safety by acting alone.

This applies to emergency preparedness as well. If a natural disaster occurs, the primary responsibility lies with the provinces and local authorities, and the Government of Canada has never disputed that fact. We get involved when asked to do so by these authorities, under protocols that have been in place for a number of years.

This gradual response system works well, as we saw, for example, when the Quebec government, through then premier Lucien Bouchard, requested the presence of the Canadian army to help deal with the terrible effects of the ice storm in January 1998.

Natural disasters know no borders. Last summer, fires destroyed forests in British Columbia, Alberta, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. I saw that with my children, because I had an opportunity to be there, and it was an unmitigated disaster. This is the most telling example that collaboration between all authorities, local, provincial, territorial and national, is required, and it must be effective, in order to combat such disasters and assure the safety of all citizens.

Public safety and emergency preparedness are two components of the name for the entirely new department the government intends to create through the bill under consideration in this House.

Security concerns of all Canadian women and men, of all ages, and of all regions of our vast land have become global concerns, eliminating the traditional distinctions between national security and international security.

That this the great lesson, the unavoidable legacy of the September 11, 2001, attacks against the Americans, their territory and their institutions. We have all been called to reflect, no matter where we live on this planet, no matter what our ties are at the local, provincial or national levels.

Since these sad events, the Government of Canada has been working relentlessly to ensure the safety of Canadian women and men, together with all its neighbours, allies and provincial and municipal partners, non-governmental and private. It really is collaboration at all levels.

Bill C-6 marks an essential step in the effective integration of efforts by the Government of Canada to meet that fundamental objective of reassuring Canadians.

• (1725)

I also want, at this point, to reassure other people from the cultural communities who have some concerns about this bill. Yesterday, I

had the opportunity of meeting some representatives of the Canadian Arab Federation who came to Parliament Hill. I informed them that all the members of the House will make sure that this bill is not used to the detriment of any specific community or minority.

As for the debates at the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, even if I do not sit on this committee, I was given the assurance that this is the type of issue discussed by all members. We will ensure that this bill provides protection and respects the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the other laws of this country. I simply wanted to reassure all Canadians from other ethnocultural backgrounds because some of them are concerned about this bill.

Canadians, including those of other national origins, know very well that we need a collective security that goes well beyond our borders, real and imaginary. They know that cooperation from all stakeholders and governments as well as from all departments and agencies of the same government, must necessarily converge to be effective.

The establishment of the new Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness confirms this approach taken since the Prime Minister's announcement on December 12 last. This is a department integrating all federal efforts in these matters of security and protection, a department providing the leadership required for effective federal-provincial-territorial cooperation as well as the indispensable collaborative national and international efforts.

Crime, in any form, knows no borders. There are no borders defined where crime is concerned. It is well known that, today, with the new technology, there are fewer and fewer borders. Crime dictates that we cooperate in our efforts to fight crime beyond all borders, so that together we can efficiently flush out those criminals who are trying to hide behind them.

In matters of air safety, maritime safety, threats to public health, protection of essential infrastructure, cybersecurity, emergency measures management in the event of natural disasters, in all these matters, the security of all Canadians knows no borders, as I said. In all these matters, open and efficient cooperation between all the authorities is critical at the global, continental, national, provincial and local level.

All of our allies, neighbours, and national partners must join forces, be extremely vigilant and respond quickly, in the best interest of all the citizens of this country. In the moments following the events of September 11, 2001, all strengthened their ties of solidarity and networks of cooperation. We all worked together to ensure the safety and security of our fellow citizens.

The best examples I can give are very simple to understand. Just last weekend, another severe snow storm swept across Nova Scotia. Every effort was made by the authorities to ensure the safety and security of everyone. The hospitals, the streets, tens of thousands of people in shelters, no effort was spared to provide heat, food and comfort to Nova Scotians.

We are going to work on this bill. This is a bill that will not only ensure safety and security but also, at the same time, ensure that our rights and freedoms are respected, should some of our fellow citizens wonder.

Government Orders

Such is the price of efficiency, of safety and security, and even of freedom when under threat from malicious individuals or natural disasters.

For all these reasons, I encourage all the members of this House to support Bill C-6.

• (1730)

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, in this context of September 11, terrorism must certainly be eradicated. We certainly have to have controls and to ensure public safety.

However, I am concerned with the delicate balance that we must maintain between safety and freedom. We see this often in the issue of violence against women: when there is excessive control, all kinds of acts of violence happen. So I have mixed emotions about this.

I wonder about this and I would like to ask the member about it. When the bill was being developed, we heard that there was a possibility of having a privacy officer. Why was this measure rejected? We have organizations for the protection of consumers and all collective rights. It seemed essential to me therefore to have this privacy officer, because this excessive control may lead to major abuse.

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Trois-Rivières for her question.

I am trying to say, as the other speakers on this side of the House have already done, that no additional power has been given to the minister through this bill. At the same time, the commissioner appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to point out that she was satisfied with the bill. She still suggested other measures which, if I am not mistaken—I was not a member of the committee—were unfortunately rejected by the committee.

However, I can assure the member for Trois-Rivières that freedoms are not threatened. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms remains in force. We have means, through this Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is quite valuable, to ensure a good balance between public safety and freedom in this bill.

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his presentation. He talked like an expert on the topic.

I am pleased to rise today in the House to speak to Bill C-6, which seeks to establish the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

My party supports the bill. However, it has some concerns regarding measures that could jeopardize the delicate balance between security and the freedom of Quebecers and Canadians.

We will recall that on December 12, 2003, the Prime Minister created the portfolio of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, which combines the activities of the solicitor general aimed at protecting Canada from natural disasters. The department ensures policy cohesion among six agencies, namely the RCMP, CSIS, the Canada Border Services Agency, the Canada Firearms Centre, Correctional Service Canada and the National Parole Board.

Looking at Bill C-6, we realize that the minister has huge powers. He plays a leadership role relating to Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness while respecting the Prime Minister's prerogative in matters relating to national security and the statutory authorities of other ministers.

The minister establishes strategic priorities for and coordination of portfolio agencies, while respecting their distinct mandates, cooperates with provinces and foreign states, and facilitates the sharing of information among public safety agencies as authorized under current Canadian law.

I will now talk about emergency measures in case of disasters. In 1996, I personally lived through the Saguenay floods. When a major disaster happens, concrete measures must be taken quickly.

I speak about them first hand having spent all my professional life in Chicoutimi where I was involved in emergency measures planning. In case of an emergency or a disaster, my role was to coordinate.

We all remember the July 1996 flood in the Upper Saguenay, the Lower Saguenay and the majority of the municipalities of my riding, Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, including Chicoutimi, La Baie, Laterrière, Lower Saguenay, Anse-Saint-Jean, Ferland-et-Boileau and other cities and communities outside my riding, like the city of Jonquière and other surrounding municipalities, with a population of about 160,000 persons. This area includes two large basins collecting water used to produce electricity. I am of course talking about the big Lake Kénogami and the big Lake Ha! Ha!

• (1735)

For almost a week, we had heavy rains in the region covering the Upper Saguenay, all the cities that I just mentioned, and the Lower Saguenay. The two basins overflowed of course. They filled up just like this glass would fill up if I were to put it under a tap. It would of course fill up, and then it would overflow.

Rivers and waterways helped to drain off the water, but because of the dams holding back the waters, the basins were flooded and expanded. Large communities located on those waterways and basins were flooded. We had to relocate a lot of people. That brings me to the importance of quick emergency response.

This happened on a Saturday when I was on holiday. The public safety authorities in my area and the emergency planning committee called me. We got together to evaluate the situation. After a few hours, of course, the situation was so bad that already there was a real overflow. We immediately contacted the mayor of Chicoutimi who was an active participant in emergency planning.

A few hours after becoming aware of the situation, he declared emergency measures in Chicoutimi because of the flooding and the overflow of the main reservoir. In the case of Chicoutimi, it was Lake Kénogami. Other municipalities in similar locations made the same decisions at about the same time: to implement emergency measures or to implement an emergency plan, which meant evacuating the population, setting up structures to accommodate and feed them, and all the other details such a plan requires.

Government Orders

A great deal of cooperation is also required among all levels involved. Since I am here in this Parliament, which has responsibility for the federal services available in my region, I can state that I am aware of this great collaborative effort and the great responsibility these emergency plans entail. They are implemented by Quebec emergency preparedness, by a delegation in each region. The emergency plan, under the direction of the mayor of the municipality and all the municipal departments, is where the responsibility remains. The federal services in that area were the army—we have a base at Bagotville, in Haut-Saguenay—and the RCMP and weather services. These all put themselves under the leadership and responsibility of the emergency measures plan. As far as the army was concerned, more specific measures were involved, and it was mandated to look after a specific area of intervention.

All this shows the need for collaborative efforts, and there certainly was cooperation. An emergency measures plan was put in place, and put in place promptly. As a result, the population was spared a good many problems.

I was also able to see what help was provided by the various players in society. As you remember, all of Canada was made aware. In my region of Quebec, the population was mobilized to help our community, our people. When a disaster hits, political allegiance does not count any more.

● (1740)

I can bear witness: there is simply cooperation and it is important in this type of situation.

Indeed, who is in a better position than the people who live in regional county municipalities and who work with the Government of Quebec to monitor the arrangements made to ensure the safety and the operation of those emergency measures.

Let me go back to the emergency measures. In municipalities, they are periodically reviewed. Needless to say, when an emergency plan is redone, it is as if, tomorrow morning, a disaster will happen. That means that some people are in charge in that structure and their telephone number and address must be available so that they can be contacted rapidly.

The Government of Quebec has established public emergency measures in cooperation with community stakeholders in order to have in place the means to better forecast such incidents. The Government of Quebec has the tools to manage the procedures to be followed in case of a disaster in the province.

At home, we had the flood, the flood of 1996 and the ice storm of 1998, which have contributed to making the population aware that it was exposed to certain risks.

These two events also gave rise to serious questions as to the ability of the Quebec civil security system to ensure adequate protection of people and property in the case of major disasters.

The Quebec government thus elected to have both these events analyzed by a scientific and technical commission called the Nicolet commission. This body made recommendations, of a technical, as well as a legal and legislative nature. It led, on December 20, 2001, to the creation of a new law which replaced the Act respecting the protection of persons and property in the event of disaster. The

implementation of this legislation concerned citizens as well as businesses, municipalities as well as the government.

Today, Bill C-6 seek to create a national security structure. Its objectives are legitimate and we understand them. We simply want to stress that the Government of Quebec possesses a department of public safety which is already in tune with the situation in Quebec and that public safety comes under the jurisdiction of Quebec.

Nonetheless, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of Bill C-6. We remain concerned, however, by measures which could imperil the balance between the security and freedom of Quebecers and Canadians, as well as by intrusions into the public safety activities of the Government of Quebec.

Today, I ask the Liberal government to explicitly recognize in this bill respect for the jurisdiction of Quebec. On June 28, Quebecers and Canadians demanded changes in the way the country is being governed and more compromise in our policies.

The availability of a Canada national safety policy might lead the federal government to interfere in areas of Quebec's jurisdiction. It is time for federal intrusions in the areas of jurisdiction of the provinces and of Quebec to stop.

● (1745)

Today, the federal government spends more in areas under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces than in its own areas of jurisdiction. We must draw a line somewhere to avoid confusion.

Fortunately, concerning emergency plans, as I was saying, this has not happened, nor will it, I hope. Emergency plans come under the jurisdictions of municipalities, and municipalities are the creatures of the Quebec government. Emergency plans become the responsibility of the Quebec government.

We believe in the principle of Bill C-6, because it will allow for better cooperation between the various government organizations. It will facilitate the exchange of information between the various public safety organizations that enforce Canadian laws.

However, we have some concerns about the exchange of information between organizations and states, because this may have an effect on Canadians' right to privacy.

Since 1993, the Bloc Québécois has steadfastly denounced the ever-increasing federal interference in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction. We were elected by the people to represent their interests. We are in favour of this bill, but we will ensure the respect of jurisdictions and of citizens' individual freedom.

I conclude by reminding members of the House that the Quebec government must still be responsible for the implementation of emergency plans. Under these plans, there must be cooperation and integration of the federal government services that we find in a region affected by a disaster.

Government Orders

• (1750)

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to what my colleague had to say. I really appreciate his concern for the balance between general rights and personal rights.

It seems to me that organized crime in every generation is different. Organized crime develops so that it can operate in whatever governing sequence of the day. I do not really know, for example, what organized crime was like in the Roman Empire, but I am sure it adjusted to it and had ways of working throughout the Roman Empire.

As Canadians, we live in North America and are next to the richest nation in the world. It is very important that we are aware that there are organizations which are trying to use our best technology and our concern about human rights to their best advantage.

I would simply ask my colleague, in the Confederation that we have and knowing the experience that some provinces have had with organized crime, what his thoughts are about what we can best do in this country to deal with organized crime?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Madam Speaker, of course there needs to be cooperation. I can well imagine an independent Quebec. An independent Quebec would have its own organization to fight organized crime, as it did to fight biker gangs.

I believe we will cooperate with English Canada that will form a country. There will be cooperation and sharing of information. However, Quebec will, of course, have its own set of rules.

This afternoon I wanted to warn this government, those who will be responsible for this law, that Quebec has specific responsibilities concerning disasters. My intervention was mainly based on this.

Quebec has exceptional expertise in this field. I experienced it. I can therefore talk about it. I have trouble seeing a government or a minister intervening in this area of jurisdiction which belongs to Quebec when it comes to implementing an emergency plan.

There is an entire structure to assist people facing a disaster, be it a flood or an ice storm.

• (1755)

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord very much for his comments.

[*English*]

I followed the member's discussion about the degree of cooperation that exists between the federal government and the provinces and territories when it comes to dealing with natural disasters or emergencies. I was very interested in the way that he described that.

I know it is consistent with his colleague, the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, and his role and the degree of cooperation that exists

with the Quebec government. When people are threatened, they throw down all their political alliances, all their other thoughts, and they work together to alleviate pain, suffering and threats.

I had the great opportunity a few months ago to visit Washington, D.C. and the department of homeland security. It has an operations centre where it evaluates threats on an ongoing basis. It collects information from all the various agencies around the United States. The level of participation and involvement ramps up depending on the threat assessment and the risk profile. All the various agencies would be there.

If it was a very large threat, it would involve the department of defence, the coast guard, and the people that are dealing with infrastructure. In fact, here in Canada we have a parallel or similar operation in our operations centre and threat assessment unit. There we bring together these various agencies and departments. So there is a coordinated response to the threats.

The member might recall that a couple of years ago we had the big power outage in the northeastern U.S., parts of Ontario, and I think parts of Quebec were affected as well. However, I would not swear to that. It would be fair to say that the impression created was that there was a lack of coordination. We had various departments and governments saying various different things. The citizens of this country were confused.

Therefore, the intent of this operations centre is to have a more coordinated response to threats such as that, so that everyone is on the same page, if I can use that expression, and that there is a balance between the amount of information that is needed to communicate to Canadians and Quebecers in a reasonable fashion. There is also the demand to have timely information.

It is a careful balance. I do not imagine it is a science. It is more of an art. However, if there is a better coordination where the people are together and sharing the same information and doing that kind of analysis, I am sure that helps. I know the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord has some very specific experience with the flooding of the Saguenay and the toll that it took and the level of cooperation with the various agencies dealing with it.

We now hear for example in Nova Scotia that people are upset with the power corporation. They say that the corporation should have anticipated the kind of snowfall and the effect it would have on the transmission lines and the trees. Has the member studied at all the situation in Nova Scotia? Does he think that the citizens there have a right to be angry at their public utility for not anticipating and preparing for this type of emergency?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Madam Speaker, I am not in a position to comment on what the member opposite just said. However, I would like to clarify my comments about the emergency plans. Indeed, I described the facts surrounding the flood that affected the Saguenay region in 1996.

The government opposite is often tempted to interfere in the jurisdiction of Quebec and other province. These past few days, we have been discussing—I will digress for a moment—the establishing of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec.

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The real disaster in case of a major natural calamity in a region of Quebec would be to have, in addition to an emergency plan established by the Government of Quebec and delegated to the municipalities, another emergency plan established by the federal government. I can tell you that that would be very bad, even unacceptable and inconceivable, given the necessity to act extremely fast in such cases.

In any emergency situation, there has to be an order of command and direction, and it must order remain one of the responsibilities of Quebec. All the government services in place for security and safety purposes must fall under Quebec's emergency plan.

• (1800)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Madam Speaker, if you were to seek it, I think you would find unanimous consent to proceed immediately to the adjournment proceedings.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Shall we see the clock at 6:30?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): Madam Speaker, as much as the Liberal government would like to portray those who knew about, accessed, and benefited from the sponsorship fund as isolated individuals far removed from the corridors of power in Ottawa, it has become increasingly clear that this is not the case.

Liberals in cabinet knew about the sponsorship fund and used it. We now know that when the Prime Minister was finance minister, his office intervened on behalf of a Liberal supporter seeking federal sponsorship money.

The proceedings of the Gomery inquiry cannot and should not prevent the Prime Minister nor members of the Liberal government from standing up and answering to Canadians. That is their job. It is why they receive a paycheque. It is why they should be accountable to the millions of Canadians who want to know why their hard-

earned tax dollars have been funnelled away from real priorities and into the back pockets of Liberal cronies.

Unfortunately the people of Canada have become accustomed to the government's lack of accountability. They have watched the government blow over a billion dollars and counting on a gun registry instead of getting tough on crime, or waiving the CAIS deposit for struggling producers.

If the sponsorship scandal was just about the waste of 100 million taxpayer dollars, that would be bad enough, but in fact the scandal is about more than waste. The scandal has revealed cronyism, a blatant misuse of public tax dollars to reward friends of the Liberal Party, and the blind pursuit of narrow, political self-interest. It has implicated senior government officials and elected members of the Liberal Party in what can only be described as an enormous misuse of public funds for personal and political purposes and it has uncovered criminal activity.

The longer this scandal drags on, the more it undercuts the faith and trust that Canadians have invested in their government. That is why the Prime Minister is obligated to answer the questions being posed by the opposition.

Previously the Prime Minister claimed he never made use of the national unity fund. In this very House he said, "Mr. Speaker, first, the answer to the question is: none. I have not used it". That is in *Hansard* of March 10, 2004. However, documents reveal that the Department of Finance, headed by the now PM, had accessed the fund for \$1 million in 1999-2000.

It has also come to light that in 1999, when the Prime Minister was finance minister, his office called Alfonso Gagliano's office about a sponsorship request that came from Serge Savard, who headed a sports group, seeking \$600,000. After the phone call, Serge Savard's group was given \$250,000. The Prime Minister defended this by saying his office was helping a constituent. That is simply not true. Mr. Savard is not a constituent. He is, however, a prominent benefactor of the Liberal Party and was a major fundraiser for the Prime Minister's leadership campaign.

The question I posed to the Prime Minister was simple and straightforward and it deserves a straightforward answer. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister's designate, the Minister of Public Works, chose not to answer that question on October 22.

Instead of responding to an inquiry made on behalf of the hard-working residents of Palliser, whose courage in the face of a BSE crisis and a crop disaster deserves better than Liberal game playing, the Prime Minister's designate avoided the question.

Instead of being straight with the people who send their tax dollars to Ottawa to fund noble causes such as the defence of this great country and not Liberal slush funds, the Prime Minister's designate instead chose to delay and deny. I will give the Prime Minister or his designate another opportunity today to answer by repeating my original question.

Did the Prime Minister's office make any other calls to Gagliano's office to secure sponsorship money for any other benefactors of the Liberal Party who did not reside in the Prime Minister's constituency?

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1805)

Hon. Walt Lastewka (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the member for Palliser. I welcome the fact that he asked for an adjournment debate on this question.

It is important that members of the House and Canadians as a whole understand how determined the Prime Minister and the government are to get to the bottom of this matter.

Today I want to remind everyone of the countless actions that the government has taken and continues to take. Let me remind hon. members that the Prime Minister's first act following his appointment in December 2003 was to cancel the sponsorship program and to announce that Communications Canada would be disbanded.

Following that, on February 10, 2004, minutes after the Auditor General tabled her report on sponsorship, advertising and public opinion research, the Prime Minister announced a comprehensive set of measures to get to the bottom of the matter and to ensure that nothing like this would ever happen again.

These measures include: an independent commission of inquiry headed by Justice Gomery; a special counsel for financial recovery; whistleblower legislation; measures to strengthen the audit committees for crown corporations and the possible extension of the Access to Information Act to crown corporations; reviews on changes to the governance of crown corporations, on changes to the Financial Administration Act and on the accountability of ministers and public servants.

In addition, the RCMP continues to look into this matter. Charges have already been laid and the RCMP is continuing its investigation and will follow every lead wherever it may lead.

With these various measures and investigations, I ask hon. members, does it look like we want to hide from the issues? No way. Does it look like we want to get to the bottom of it? I think the answer is clear.

Our actions do not end there. Last February, following the tabling of the Auditor General's report, we allowed the public accounts committee to be struck early so it could begin the review of this matter. The House will recall that when the Auditor General reported on February 10, committees had not yet been struck. The government cooperated with the opposition and allowed the public accounts committee to be struck early. The government cooperated fully with the committee's work. We took the unprecedented action of providing it with cabinet documents dating back 10 years. Does that look like we are trying to hide information? Of course not. In my office, three and a half feet of information was available to all the members of the public accounts committee.

May I add that the information commissioner, in his 2003-04 annual report applauded the government's openness. The commissioner commended the government's policy of proactive disclosure of the travel and hospitality expenses of ministers and senior officials and the government study on making crown corporations subject to the Access to Information Act.

Canadians are outraged by what happened with the sponsorship program, and rightly so. The Prime Minister, the Minister of Public Works and the government as a whole will not rest until we get answers. We believe that with the many actions taken and with the investigations under way, we will get our answers.

Members on all sides of the House have repeatedly called for a judicial inquiry. The Prime Minister set up the inquiry to get to the bottom of the matter. Justice Gomery is doing his work and we should be encouraging him. It is important that we allow Justice Gomery to do his work and the government looks forward to his final report.

•(1810)

Mr. Dave Batters: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member being here to participate in the debate. Unfortunately, that was not the question that was asked of the member. It was a simple, straightforward question about a call to Mr. Gagliano's office. The question was: Did the Prime Minister make any other calls to his office to secure sponsorship money for any other benefactors of the party of the member opposite who did not reside in the Prime Minister's constituency?

Justice Gomery does not preclude the highest minister of the land from standing up and answering this question.

It is unfortunate that the member opposite, the Prime Minister and indeed the entire Liberal government continue to evade responsibility and accountability for the sponsorship scandal. Now the people of Canada are being forced to endure non-answers in addition to the inaction of the government.

As we saw on Monday night, the government has no interest in allowing testimony from the public accounts committee to be utilized by the Gomery commission for the purpose of examining witnesses. Given the opportunity to allow the Gomery commission to have full access to the facts of this scandal, the government, aided by the NDP and the Bloc, chose instead to keep Canadians in the dark. It is a simple question. The Prime Minister's Office—

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

Hon. Walt Lastewka: Madam Speaker, I am very disappointed in this member saying what he just said about the public accounts committee. In fact, the chairman of the accounts committee and his party voted, the same with the opposition and the government, that parliamentary privilege should be maintained within Parliament. To say that they did not is totally wrong. He should go back and talk to his chair. His chair was very clear on privilege in the past and is very clear on privilege now. I am sure he will also be very clear in the future.

May I repeat, Madam Chair? We cancelled the program. We disbanded Communication Canada. We set up an independent commission. We have a special counsel financial recovery report coming. We have done everything as far as access to information is concerned.

Adjournment Proceedings

We should be taking the politics out of this and getting to the root of the problem and fixing it. The final report that was stuck in the public accounts committee was there because the opposition's chair left the country and did not allow the committee to finish its work. We should be tabling those 30 recommendations on governance in this House today.

[*Translation*]

CHILD CARE

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the child care network, the new national child care program the federal government wants to set up. Several times, I have asked the minister quite simply how he intends to answer Quebec, which wants a national child care program that would fully respect provincial jurisdictions and the principle regarding the conditions that would relate to this system.

Quebec and the minister for employment, social solidarity and family welfare are asking that no conditions be attached to this new federal program.

Therefore, the answers provided by the minister have left us dumbfounded. Here is what he had to say in answer to questions put to him in the House. The social development minister told us it was too soon to talk about money, that the principles were still being examined and that a new meeting could be held in January where money issues would be addressed. He maintains that his meeting with his counterparts, the provincial social development ministers, in September was a huge success.

Why did the Quebec minister of employment, social solidarity and family welfare leave this meeting saying there was no agreement and that never in two weeks, two months or two years would he agree to the conditions? He said he did not want any strings attached to the money promised. I am talking about some \$1.25 billion for Quebec over five years.

To set up a child care system in the rest of Canada it is \$5 billion over five years. They know full well this is not a lot of money, but Quebec can possibly do more. We know that since 1998 Quebec has put \$1.7 billion in its child care system.

We know they are trying to buy time. They know what Quebec wants and that is how they have operated since I arrived in this Parliament in 1993. I know how this government works. They say they have a program, that it will take time and that we will come to an agreement. However, in the end, it can take years before anything is signed or before any money goes into the provincial coffers.

A motion was passed unanimously in the National Assembly stating that we want money with no strings attached. The Parti Québécois, the Liberal party and the ADQ voted in favour of this motion.

The government is also saving \$1 billion. The Government of Quebec covers \$20 of the cost, and families pay \$7 for using the child care service. Thus, there is \$1 billion less in tax credits claimed by Quebec families that use the child care service in Quebec.

What is the federal government doing? It is keeping this \$1 billion in its pockets rather than giving it back to the province that is being used as a model throughout the world. The OECD recently

recognized it as such, which is why the federal government decided to implement its national child care program.

• (1815)

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it was clearly expressed in the election platform and particularly by the Prime Minister, that early learning and child care were a priority for the federal government. The government confirmed that by making a commitment in the Speech from the Throne in October, 2004.

We have promised to invest \$5 billion over five years to lay the foundations for a truly national system of early learning and child care, with the help of the provinces and territories.

As we stated in the throne speech, we intend to collaborate with the provinces, including Quebec, and the territories, as we have in the past, in order to create a new national initiative that will lay the foundations for a national system.

On November 2, as the hon. member knows, the Minister of Social Development held a very productive meeting with his provincial and territorial counterparts. They laid the foundation for what will eventually become a national system that will ensure better access to quality child care services for Canadian and Quebec families and all children everywhere in the country.

They also agreed on the need to establish a long-term vision based on common values, measurable objectives, and well-defined accountability. All the ministers agreed that early learning and child care must be based on the principles of quality, universality, accessibility and development.

• (1820)

[*English*]

They also agreed on the over-arching need for provincial and territorial flexibility. We have found a way of working in partnership with Quebec, as in the past, while respecting its jurisdiction over childcare and we will continue to find a way.

I would like to remind this House and the hon. member that in 2003 we were very successful in putting in place, jointly, a multilateral framework on early learning and childcare. Quebec was sitting at the table when we were having very important discussions around a system to be put in place. Although Quebec did not participate in the agreement, it does receive its share of funds through the Canada social transfer.

[*Translation*]

Under this initiative, Quebec will receive \$247 million over five years. The new national program will also give the provinces and territories the necessary flexibility to plan and implement activities based on their own needs and priorities.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*English*]

Quebec's childcare system, as everyone knows, is exemplary, and I can attest to that, being from Quebec, and our ambition is to have one throughout Canada.

[*Translation*]

I think that we could all benefit from their experience and that, with the substantial investment of new funding by the federal government, we could again help Quebec deal with some of the pressures it is facing in developing its own system.

[*English*]

We have been successful in the past and I am confident we will continue to be.

[*Translation*]

Obviously, for us to live in a federation like this one, the federal government has to work closely with its provincial and territorial partners because, together, we want to ensure a better future for our most precious resource: our children.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Madam Speaker, the hon. member opposite is saying that the federal government made it a priority. I remind her that the Quebec government made it a priority in 1998. Currently, the program is funded to the tune of \$1.7 billion.

We do not want to hear that the federal government will cooperate with the provinces and that the Quebec government will have the flexibility that it needs. What we want to hear is that there will not be

any conditions attached to the program set up by the federal government.

As for this \$1 billion, the billion that we are lacking in tax credits, we want the federal government to send it back to the Quebec government, because it is the latter that made a contribution by setting up a daycare program.

Indeed, there are principles involved and it is Quebec that respected them. I am thinking of universality, quality and accessibility. Therefore, we would not want the federal government to tell us what to do. The Quebec government did its job, but when a service is provided, it should be paid for.

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos: Madam Speaker, according to the minister responsible, who is a federalist, the funding issue was not discussed at that first meeting. We are at the beginning of the process. Another meeting will be held in January. All the provinces will be present, and Quebec said it would be there too.

I want to assure the hon. member that we will negotiate with the federalist government in Quebec.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*English*]

Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a. m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:23 p.m.)

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