



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 23, 2005

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 23, 2005

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*]

• (1405)

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

CORNERSTONE AWARD

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Hamilton Health Sciences and the Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation has recognized three individuals as the 2005 Cornerstone Award recipients. These winners display tremendous leadership and commitment in the field of health care.

An orthopedic surgeon and a leader in his field, Dr. de Beer is dedicated to the research and learning of joint replacement and is also an assistant professor at McMaster University. One of his initiatives, the event “A Day in Arthroplasty”, encourages patients to learn more about their upcoming surgical procedures.

Social worker Diana Tikasz is the coordinator of the Hamilton Health Sciences Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Care Centre. She works tirelessly to raise awareness of sexual assault and provides necessary and crucial support to those who have been victimized.

Bruce Wilson, a volunteer at Hamilton Health Sciences, has Lou Gehrig's disease. He is an activist and a counsellor for the physically challenged. Bruce is determined to find a cure for his disease and is involved with several community fundraisers.

I congratulate these 2005 Cornerstone Award winners.

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, six minutes ago it was exactly 100,000 hours since I was first elected as a member of Parliament. What are my thoughts after 4,167 days?

It has been an extraordinary privilege to serve the people of Elk Island, and now Edmonton—Sherwood Park. It has been exciting to progress from the Reform Party, to the Canadian Alliance and now to the new exciting Conservative Party of Canada.

While this corrupt, tired Liberal government is missing the mark with respect to leadership of this wonderful country, I and my party are ready to govern with vision and insight. We are ready to offer Canadians a responsible, trustworthy government, an end to mismanagement, a new respect-based relationship with our American neighbours, a justice system that does a better job of protecting law-abiding citizens, effective democracy and much more. I can hardly wait until the electorate gives us the green light at the next election.

I anticipate with great excitement what the next six million minutes will bring.

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2005 SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, I rise today in the House to pay tribute to a young person in my riding, a young person of whom we are extremely proud. She is Sarah Brown of Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador. She participated in the 2005 Special Olympics in Nagano, Japan, February 25 to March 5.

Sarah returned home with a gold medal in the 4x400 metre relay race in snowshoeing and placed fourth in the 400 metre and 800 metre snowshoe race. She was the youngest competitor on the Canadian team, at age 14.

On behalf of all my constituents, we are very proud of Sarah and her accomplishments.

S. O. 31

[*Translation*]

OMER BRAZEAU

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, March 20, the people of eastern Quebec were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Omer Brazeau.

Mr. Brazeau's unmatched generosity, tireless work, perseverance and tenacity led to the creation of Rimouski's cancer treatment centre and regional hostel unit.

Mr. Brazeau, who himself fought a stalwart battle against cancer, but eventually lost it, never stopped working to improve the quality of life of his fellow citizens.

In 1985, Mr. Brazeau became the president of eastern Quebec's cancer association. He left his position in 2001 and, with André Casgrain, founded the eastern Quebec palliative care association.

The social involvement of this great man was eloquently recognized. Indeed, Mr. Brazeau was recently honoured with these prestigious honours, among others: the Quebec National Assembly Medal; the Order of Canada; the Queen's Jubilee Medal and the Paul-Harris Medal, which is the highest distinction awarded by Rotary clubs.

On my behalf and on behalf of my constituents and my Bloc Québécois colleagues, I extend our most sincere condolences to Omer Brazeau's family and friends.

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[*English*]

ANGLERS AND HUNTERS

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently I sent a document to all parliamentarians, describing the economic benefits provided to the country by anglers. To put those benefits in perspective, I offer this.

In 1999 anglers and hunters spent \$1.3 billion on overnight trips. That is three times the amount of money generated by all performing arts in Canada. Between 1984 and 1999, anglers directly contributed more than \$335 million to wildlife habitat conservation efforts. Anglers and hunters support more Canadian jobs than the Bank of Nova Scotia, our third largest publicly traded company. Each year, anglers spend more than \$6.7 billion on their sport. That is double the GDP of P.E.I., more than all the restaurant and tavern receipts in Quebec and more than the total retail value of all new vehicles sold in Alberta.

Anglers represent nearly 20% of our population and are some of the most ardent conservationists we have. I would like to thank them for their efforts to make certain that our children enjoy the outdoors as much as we have.

* * *

• (1410)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberals touted the 2005 federal budget as one for all Canadians.

After reading the fine print, we see agriculture got a kick in the teeth from the Saskatchewan finance minister.

The farm improvement loans program was quietly scrapped by the Liberals. Program loans had a special interest rate and special terms and provided farmers with a real option to regular loans. Lenders would set up similar loans using the program's low rates and terms.

With border closures and poor growing conditions, cutting this program hurt small farms and youth wishing to start farming. Farmers continue to wait for the 2003 and 2004 payments under the CAIS program. It is still not working, despite the announcements. Slaughtering plants are not being set up in a timely fashion.

Why do the Liberals continue to fiddle while Rome burns? That is called dithering.

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ABORIGINAL PEOPLES TELEVISION NETWORK

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network received the Canadian Women in Communications' Employer of the Year Award for 2004. The award was received on behalf of APTN by its president, Madeleine Adams. This award honours APTN's commitment to advancing equality rights for women in its inclusive hiring practices.

Since September 1, 1999, APTN has been the only national television network to provide an inclusive voice for Inuit, first nations and Métis, as well as solidifying their position as founding nations of Canada.

APTN has an impressive inclusive track record in promoting employment for women. Women make up 57% of APTN's management positions and 33% of senior management positions.

APTN is doing great work in advancing inclusive employment opportunities for women, as well as providing an integral voice for the aboriginal community.

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[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, each year, the use of farm tractors results in an average of 11 deaths in Quebec. The UPA, Quebec's farmers' union, the CSST, Quebec's occupational health and safety commission, and the occupational health network want to reduce the number of such tragedies. From March 9 to March 16, the UPA held a major awareness campaign among its members, as part of the prevention in agriculture week.

For the past several years, the UPA has been involved in numerous prevention awareness initiatives. This year, the union has offered training sessions on the safe use of tractors to producers, members of their family and employees. The UPA has also launched a contest on prevention initiatives on the farm, to reward the creativity of farm producers in the area of occupational health and safety.

As a farmer and Bloc Québécois member, I wish to thank the UPA for promoting safe behaviour in the workplace. This is a fine illustration of respect for ourselves, those close to us and the rural community as a whole.

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[English]

PETERBOROUGH

Hon. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the 100th anniversary of the City of Peterborough. Ours is a community that has evolved from a lumber town to a focus for heavy industry to its present day status as a major regional centre.

We serve our region through the Peterborough Regional Health Centre, two regional school boards, Sir Sandford Fleming College and Trent University. We are a centre for agriculture and tourism services, the ministry of natural resources and other provincial and federal agencies. We are also the site of major low and high tech industries.

Peterborough, the home of GE Canada, was a pioneer in electricity. It was known as the “electric city”. It is still a pioneer in research and industry, for example the DNA Cluster which involves local educational and research representatives, the government and private sector organizations.

We are the home to the Peterborough Petes and we are the current Mann Cup champions.

I wish a happy anniversary to Peterborough.

* * *

• (1415)

PETER SCHIEMANN

Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the people of Stony Plain, Alberta for their compassion, community spirit, love of family and friends and faith.

I had the great privilege of being in Stony Plain to attend the funeral service for fallen RCMP constable Peter Schiemann, our hero and friend. I want to share with everyone what I saw.

I saw young men and women in their red serge gather in a small town that opened its homes and hearts to mourn with the RCMP and the Schiemann family.

I know hundreds of members of the congregation of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church gave up their favourite pews to make room in the church for Peter's RCMP graduating class so they could be close to him and pay their respects.

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I heard a brother and a sister, Michael and Julia, talk about their brother Peter, sharing with us their memories and assuring us of the love and faith that Peter had in God and in his fellow officers.

I saw a father and a mother beam with pride when talking about their son, inviting all of us to join them in their home any time for a coffee and stories about their hero and son, constable Peter Schiemann.

I feel very lucky and honoured to have been part of the ceremony.

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JOHN DOWDS

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay respect to a dear friend, the late John Dowds, who died on March 6, 2005. My condolences and sympathies go to his wife, Audrey, to his children, John, Kathryn, Greg and Carolyn, and to their close friend, Tena. All of Etobicoke North feels this loss.

During the second world war, John Dowds served proudly as a member of the Canadian Forces. He was very active in the community as a member of the Kinsmen Club and the St. Benedict Hockey League.

John Dowds was very involved in politics, especially at the federal level, for many years. He was an original member of the Etobicoke North Federal Liberal Association.

John Dowds was a dedicated individual, a loyal family man, a true friend to all and a great Canadian who bettered the lives of those around him. He will be truly missed.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago I met with farm women from India who came to Canada to denounce our government's attempt to overthrow the international moratorium on terminator seed technology. These women are the backbone of third world agriculture. They feed and sustain entire communities based on their ability to save and reuse seeds. They came here with a simple message: that their way of life is under threat thanks to our government's support for the terminator gene.

Terminator is not about improving agriculture. It is a gamble with the very essence of life itself. What kind of nation sets out to kill the productive capacity of its own crops?

The government has been a veritable terminator when it comes to watching the domestic destruction of our rural farm economy. Is it going after the very seeds in the ground and turning our farmers into sharecroppers from Monsanto?

I am calling upon the agriculture minister to stand and come clean with Canadians, to get off the island of Dr. Moreau and to say no to terminator technology.

*Oral Question Period***GIBSONS WATER**

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, good news is coming from the beautiful coast of British Columbia, and especially good news for people who like their water pure, fresh and ever so clean tasting.

Gibsons' water was recently recognized at the Berkeley Springs international water tasting contest in West Virginia. Sixty other municipalities entered samples of drinking water but it was Gibsons' water that won the coveted recognition as the best tasting tap water in the world.

Some countries export their spring water and charge more than we pay for gasoline. The good people of Gibsons and those lucky enough to visit can have all of the best water in the world they can drink and it is free.

We are a little wary about bragging too much about ours being the best tasting tap water in the world because the Liberals might want to tax it.

We have another reason to boast. It was at Gibsons where they filmed the *Beachcombers* and it is at Gibsons where with the mere turn of a tap people can savour the best tasting tap water in the world.

Why go to France for bottled water when everyone can drive to Gibsons and turn on the tap?

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[*Translation*]**MEMBER FOR VERCHÈRES—LES PATRIOTES**

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I pay tribute today to my colleague and friend from the riding of Verchères—Les Patriotes, who received the title of Chevalier de l'Ordre de la Pléiade on March 22.

This honour is bestowed in recognition of the tireless efforts of my colleague over the past several years to promote the French language throughout the world, but especially of his continuing efforts to have the Acadian tragedy recognized and to obtain an official apology.

Through his dedication he has also reminded us that 2 million Quebecers are of Acadian descent and that it is vitally important to strengthen the ties between the Quebec nation and the Acadian nation.

Like the star on the Acadian flag, I hope you will continue to illuminate the French fact in Quebec, Acadia and elsewhere in the world for years to come. Congratulations, chevalier and thank you.

* * *

• (1420)

[*English*]**INFRASTRUCTURE**

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon members of our caucus are meeting with 40 mayors and deputy mayors from around the province of Ontario.

They have come to share with our party horror stories about crumbling roads, sidewalks and sewers that are in such disrepair that

lives and the economy are at risk. Their needs are urgent but the government has ignored them, like it has ignored the pleas of Canadians across the country.

For the past 12 years the government has overtaxed Canadians and then hoarded the surplus. I am sure these Johnny-come-latelies will apply a little touch up paint here and there but where is the plan? Where has the urgency been from the government for the past 12 years?

More mayors could have been here this week if the Liberal backroom boys had not applied the pressure. Their actions are disgraceful.

Having failed miserably the people they claim to represent, they now act to keep them under their boot. Why must our tax dollars be given to their friends and special interests first?

The government is starting to act like cornered rats. Its actions are disgraceful.

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CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative convention was held over the weekend and what we witnessed was a party debating issues that the Liberal Party decided upon decades ago.

The leader of the official opposition can try to portray his party as forward-looking and moderate but its policies show otherwise.

Only the Conservative Party would try to turn back the clock on minority rights by using the notwithstanding clause to override rights and call this moderate and forward-looking.

Only the Conservative Party would agree to introduce a two tier health care system and call it moderate and forward looking.

Only the Conservative Party would congratulate itself for finally acknowledging official bilingualism, a debate the rest of the us decided years ago, and call it forward-looking.

Only the Conservative Party would think it is the party of tomorrow, while voting for a watered down resolution that turns back the clock on a woman's right to choose.

Clearly, that is a party of yesterday, not a party of tomorrow, and watching the convention made me proud to be a Liberal.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD[*Translation*]**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are the instigators of free trade, but today our Prime Minister ranks third in NAFTA.

*Oral Question Period**[English]*

At the North American summit today, Canada's trade issues were not even on the agenda. Canada's trade minister was not even there. Since they are not mentioned at all in the official communiqué, could the government tell us what exactly it did today to advance and to solve Canada's problems on softwood lumber, on beef and on our other trade interests?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to inform the hon. Leader of the Opposition and all members of the House that what we are doing in terms of softwood lumber is the team Canada approach is being pursued at this very instant in Toronto. Negotiations are being undertaken between Canada and the United States with a hope to bringing an end to the softwood lumber dispute.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have won every round, and the minister put forward an offer that gives away the store before we even get to the table.

Yesterday the Prime Minister refused to answer my questions on softwood lumber and on softwood lumber duties. I am going to ask the government again. Did the Prime Minister tell the President today that we will stand fast on the illegality of the Byrd amendment and insist that Canadian softwood producers get their money back?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition owes it to the House to state, when he says that we gave away the sink, that we gave away the store, what did we give away?

Does he object to our asking for 100% return of all the deposits on duties? Does he resent the idea that we would like to replace the duties as a temporary measure with a border tax going to Canada and not to the Americans? Is this what he says is selling out the store? I do not think he understands what we are doing at all.

* * *

•(1425)

BORDER SECURITY

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just to clarify it for the minister, the government is giving away the store and letting it all go down the sink.

[Translation]

Since September 11, the United States has added 1,000 border patrol officers to protect their borders. However, the Liberals are closing nine RCMP detachments that help protect the border between Quebec and the United States.

How can the government be improving our security when thousands of vehicles are crossing the Quebec border undetected?

[English]

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we put this in context, first of all the government is totally committed to safe borders and smart borders. In fact in Texas today the governments of Mexico, the United States and Canada announced the establishment of the security and prosperity partnership of North America.

Last year 71 million people were processed by the Canada Border Services Agency at our ports of entry. Our government continues to invest in the Canada Border Services Agency. In fact in the last budget there is close to half a billion dollars that is going to the CBSA to increase our security capacity at our borders.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did not bring his trade minister to Texas. Either he has no confidence in his cabinet colleague, or he has no interest in really talking trade.

Canada has lost roughly \$10 billion to the United States between BSE and softwood alone. Canadian business loses almost another \$10 billion a year in border delays. That is a lot of money that has gone down the drain.

Why did the Prime Minister not insist on parallel trade talks between ministers?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to know if the hon. member endorses what her leader says, that our offer on the table is selling out the store. It is an offer which would return 100% of the deposits to us and replace the duties with a border tax that is paid to Canada.

We are proceeding on the softwood lumber file. The negotiations are ongoing in Toronto. We are supported in these by the industry. We are supported by the 10 provinces. We are supported by the three territories.

This is the way we will act, in concert, to achieve the best result for all Canadians.

Ms. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if truth be told, the Americans are ignoring their own laws and NAFTA rules. The trade priority of the government must be to resolve the irritants because the rest is just two-stepping around the problem.

Does the minister's absence and the Prime Minister's failure to discuss BSE and softwood not prove that the minister has no influence with President Bush?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again the hon. member could not be further from the truth. In every single meeting that the Prime Minister has had with the President over the past year and couple of months, the issue of BSE and the issue of softwood lumber have been at the top of the agenda.

Yes, we have these ongoing disputes, but we are doing something about them. The opposition has not given one constructive suggestion.

Oral Question Period

[Translation]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on March 3, 2004, the Minister of Transport stated, and I quote, "We have no intention of campaigning with tainted money". However, the Liberal Party did exactly that. In fact, even though the Gomery commission's revelations are disturbing, as that same minister admits, to date, not one cent has been repaid.

To prevent the Liberal Party from running a fourth campaign with dirty money, could the Liberal government at least have the foresight to ask its party to establish a dirty money trust fund?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been clear, as have the minister, the government and the party: if the party received funds from agencies or individuals your found guilty, the party has volunteered to repay taxpayers.

However, this is not possible until all the facts are known. Therefore, we must wait for Justice Gomery's report.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that they continue to live with this dirty money. Agencies stuffed their pockets with it; there is ample evidence of this. In fact, the government is taking them to court. The Liberal Party lined its coffers with it. There is just as much evidence of this too, but the Liberal government is protecting its party.

Could the government at least have the decency to ask the Liberal Party to put the dirty money into a special account, as the Minister of Transport said in March 2004. Instead of doing nothing, could it not create a trust fund to ensure that the money is there and that another campaign will not be run using dirty money?

• (1430)

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, civil proceedings have already been launched to recover funds. However, the courts have not yet ruled, and Justice Gomery has not yet tabled his report. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the party will act, but only in full knowledge of all the facts.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the matter of the numerous individuals who received cheques from Commando Communication Marketing is so serious that one of these individuals had to resign from the cabinet of Jean Charest, in Quebec City, and others did not deny anything. That does not appear to be enough for the Liberal Party.

If these revelations are troubling, as he said, what is the Minister of Transport waiting for to put the sponsorship money received by the Liberal Party of Canada into a trust?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the transport minister has been clear, the Prime Minister has been clear, the government has been clear, and the party has been clear that in fact, any funds will be returned to the treasury, if they are proven to have been received inappropriately. However, we cannot do that unless we have all the facts.

The fact is that the Prime Minister deserves tremendous credit for having established Justice Gomery's inquiry to do exactly that, to get the facts and to make a difference so that we can make the proper decisions on a go forward basis.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us look at some cold, hard numbers. The Liberal Party of Canada received \$270,000 from Groupaction and Gosselin Communication, plus \$100,000 from Lafleur, \$43,000 from Jacques Corriveau, \$173,000 from IDA-Everest and \$30,000 from Coffin. To date, in excess of \$600,000 has been identified and has ended up in the coffers of the Liberal Party.

Does the minister not find this troubling enough—troubling was his word—to put this money into a trust?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to quote from today's *National Post* editorial in reference to the party paying the treasury funds deemed inappropriate:

That may not require a separate lawsuit, as the opposition called for this week, if the party willingly returns however much money it obtained inappropriately.

That is exactly what we have been saying all along. The party has said clearly that it will voluntarily return any funds deemed inappropriate, once we have all the facts and once Justice Gomery has submitted his report.

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CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to return to the issue of the hidden agenda of the Liberal government vis-à-vis deep integration with the United States.

We learned virtually nothing from the press conference today by the Prime Minister. Everything is just as hidden as it was going in.

The fact of the matter is that Canadians do not want deep integration. They do not want to race to the bottom along the Wal-Mart way of George Bush with lower wages and lower environmental standards.

Why will the Liberals not tell the Canadian people what their agenda is: cheap labour from Mexico, Canadian oil and sovereignty be damned? Explain that one.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of explaining it because the hon. gentleman is just flat wrong.

What the countries of North America are seeking to achieve is greater security for the continent, greater prosperity for all of our citizens, a better quality of life for Canadians, and the bottom line for Canada is absolute Canadian sovereignty.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is funny because that is exactly what the Liberals said about star wars missile defence. The NDP was right that time and we are right again.

Canadians do not want George Bush's deep integration plan. The Liberals are signing deals now with George Bush, a free ride for the auto sector.

The Liberals are refusing to take action on Devils Lake. Why has the Prime Minister come back empty-handed from discussions in the U.S. when it comes to the Devils Lake program polluting Manitoba ecosystems?

• (1435)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have raised this issue many times and will raise it again. Devils Lake is a very important issue, not only for Manitoba but for the country and for many states in the United States.

I wish that the leader of the NDP would work with us on this national issue that should be above partisan posturing.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, due to mismanagement by the Liberal government the BSE crisis is approaching its second anniversary.

Canadians devastated by the U.S. border closure have been looking for leadership and positive action from the government. What they are getting instead is a prolonged crisis due to the government's choice of arrogance over statesmanship.

Canada's weakened position with our closest and largest trading partner is creating an ever expanding circle of hardship. How can Canadians possibly expect to see an end to trade irritants when the government's own actions have eroded its ability to effect change?

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that would be an interesting observation if it did not totally forget about the facts.

The reality is on the issue of BSE, Canada and the United States have exactly the same position, that the border should be opened, that it should be opened based on science, and that the Canadian regulatory regime protects animal and public health. Both the American government and the Canadian government agree that the border should be open. We are working collectively to deal with the legal impediments that were put forward by one judge in one state.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if BSE were a priority to the government, that minister would have been in Texas today.

Canadians are tired of empty promises. They have heard far too much talk while deadline after deadline for an open border expires.

While the Prime Minister stated there would be ample opportunity to discuss the BSE crisis with President Bush today, cattle were not even on the agenda.

When is the government going to realize that it is not embarrassing the hell out of the Americans, it is scaring the hell out of Canadian producers?

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe it is left over from the Conservatives' convention on the weekend when they were busily on TV, but on this

Oral Question Period

side of the House we are far more interested in making substantive progress than in having photo ops somewhere.

Quite frankly, the work we have done with the United States government has assisted us in having both countries look at this item in the same way.

More important, the government has provided \$1.9 billion of support for the beef and cattle industry. We will continue to stand behind that industry as we move forward.

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BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2004 thousands of vehicles entered Canada without reporting to customs. In one three-week period, 17 vehicles blew through a major border crossing in Quebec. Quite obviously, law-abiding citizens were not behind the wheels of those vehicles.

Despite these statistics the Liberal government insists on shutting down border RCMP detachments in Quebec. My question is for the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. Why?

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is very clear. Commissioner Zaccardelli of the RCMP said again very clearly at committee that this will improve and enhance the safety and security of Quebecers and Canadians.

The reason is that the RCMP is able to get a critical mass of its officers so it can target terrorism and the enforcement of drug violations. This is an operational decision of the RCMP. It is a very wise one, we were told again yesterday.

Our government is investing in our borders. We are going to build capacity as we go forward.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, concerned front line RCMP officers, in direct contradiction of the commissioner of the RCMP, insist that the closure of these detachments will result in more criminals crossing the border into Canada illegally.

Will the minister prevent the closure of the nine RCMP detachments along the U.S. border in Quebec as recommended by the justice committee and front line officers and allow the RCMP to simply do its job?

• (1440)

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite must have been at a different committee meeting than I was yesterday. The commissioner of the RCMP, Commissioner Zaccardelli, said very clearly that this consolidation of RCMP resources in the province of Quebec is going to increase the security and safety of Canadians and Quebecers.

I should point out that the commissioner is obliged under the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act for the effective and efficient enforcement of the laws and the administration of the force. This is an operational decision of the RCMP that will enhance the security of Quebecers and Canadians.

Oral Question Period

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is rather ironic to learn that the Canadian border has become a real sieve, as the Prime Minister is this very day meeting with presidents Bush and Fox and this matter will be at the heart of their discussions.

How will the Prime Minister be able to justify to his counterparts that the best decision to ensure a safe border is to cut manpower by closing down nine RCMP detachments?

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already said this on a number of occasions in this House.

[English]

This is not a reduction of the capability of the RCMP in Quebec. In fact, there is no reduction in the head count whatsoever. To put it in context, 71 million people were processed by the Canada Border Services Agency at land border ports of entry last year.

Since 9/11 this government has invested \$9 billion for the security and safety of Canadians. As I said earlier, in budget 2005 close to half a billion dollars has been invested in the Canada Border Services Agency.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, not only have they closed down nine detachments, but the customs officers themselves are saying that they lack the resources to do their job and as a result thousands of cars cross the border illegally and unquestioned.

How will the Prime Minister justify to his counterparts the contribution these decisions have made to turning the border into a veritable sieve?

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a thorough examination of RCMP resources in Quebec has revealed a need to restructure and redeploy RCMP personnel in order to more effectively fulfill the RCMP's mandate as the federal law enforcement agency in that province. Resource allocation is an operational matter, and the commissioner needs to be able to deploy his available resources so as to fulfil the RCMP's mandate as effectively as possible.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the softwood lumber dispute, the Americans have collected \$4 billion in countervailing duties from the lumber industry. The courts have ruled that these duties violated WTO and NAFTA provisions.

Does the Prime Minister, who is currently in Texas, intend to bring to the fore, in his discussions with President Bush, the return with interest of the \$4 billion which was unfairly exacted from the softwood lumber industry in Canada and Quebec and which the American industry wants to keep for itself?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Of course, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the industry is justifiably concerned that the government might be attempting to buy peace with the Americans and be prepared to settle for a bargain deal.

As Canada is on the verge of winning across the board before the trade panels, could the Minister of International Trade clearly set out the bottom line conditions that have to be met for Canada to enter into an agreement with the Americans?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will never settle for anything that is not in the best interests of all Canadians.

* * *

[English]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are watching closely how this government is handling confessions of cronyism and corruption in the sponsorship program. They see the government now talking tough about going after ad agencies for improper billing. That is something that it allowed and encouraged, but the government becomes evasive when it comes to going after ill-gotten gains from its own Liberal Party.

Why is the government so eager to go after ad firms that did some of the dirty work instead of its own Liberal Party that got some of the dirty money?

• (1445)

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again I will bring to the hon. member's attention today's *National Post* editorial, which says that in terms of any inappropriate funds, retrieving these funds from the Liberal Party "may not require a separate lawsuit, as the opposition called for this week, if the party willingly returns however much money it obtained inappropriately".

The fact is that the party has voluntarily said that it will return any funds that were inappropriately gained once we have all the facts and Justice Gomery has presented his report.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Justice Gomery now has a growing list of confessions about money kicked back to the Liberal Party. Just days before the 2000 election, thousands flowed to the Liberal Party from one agency alone. The political minister for Quebec over there pledged that the Liberal Party would never campaign with tainted money, but that is exactly what it did.

Now, facing public outrage, the government's weak response is that the party will pay the money back if Gomery tells it to. Why would Canadians trust an IOU from a morally bankrupt Liberal Party?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would also draw her attention to the *National Post* editorial today which stated:

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It is to [the Prime Minister's] credit not only that he called the sponsorship inquiry, but that he has stuck with it....We trust that, once its work is finished, he will show the same integrity in acting upon its findings.

That is a promise made. That will be a promise kept by a Prime Minister who keeps his promises to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in its handling of the sponsorship racket, the Liberal government is applying a double standard: it rushes to lay criminal charges to retrieve the sponsorship money, but, curiously, exonerates the Liberal Party.

Has it got a licence to print money? Is the Minister of Transport going to tell us that the Liberal Party is vaccinated against prosecution or will he simply agree to clean out the Liberal stables?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do not need to prosecute the Liberal Party because the party has been clear. If, in fact, it has received funds from agencies or individuals who are found guilty, it will voluntarily reimburse the taxpayers.

[*English*]

I assume that perhaps the hon. members opposite have been cut off from the *National Post*. Perhaps the *National Post* has cut off their subscriptions for lack of payment, because usually they read the *National Post* and they quote from the *National Post* editorials. Today we have a *National Post* editorial that gives the Prime Minister fair credit for his courage in appointing Justice Gomery and supporting Justice Gomery's work.

Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new Liberal slogan should be money taken, money kept.

This government has double standards in the sponsorship scandal. Government members say to let Justice Gomery do his work and then they turn around and launch lawsuits. They launch lawsuits to recover stolen money, but not against the Liberal Party, which apparently has been granted some kind of special immunity despite receiving illegal contributions. This government is serving only its own interests by shielding the Liberal Party from lawsuits.

Can the minister tell us who, other than the Liberal Party, qualifies for special immunity from sponsorship lawsuits? Why does it continue to put its own interests ahead of the interests of Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess it has been a while since the hon. member, who once was a lawyer, actually practised law, but the fact is that while the party has pursued civil action against these firms and individuals to retrieve funds on behalf of the Canadian taxpayer, there is no verdict. As such, it would be inappropriate for the party to act without having some sort of verdict, or at least the result of Justice Gomery's work, to give us the facts so that we can act on the facts.

The hon. member is citing allegations. No responsible government acts based on allegations. We act based on the facts.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while it is clear that the opposition continues to be firmly and completely opposed to the Kyoto protocol, the government continues to work with Canadian stakeholders from all sectors to achieve meaningful greenhouse gas reductions.

In this regard, could the Minister of Natural Resources please confirm that the Government of Canada has reached a voluntary agreement with the auto industry on reducing vehicle greenhouse gas emissions?

• (1450)

Hon. R. John Efford (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce today that we have indeed reached a voluntary agreement with the Canadian auto sector in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This voluntary agreement is good for the auto industry and it is good for Canadians.

I want to thank my colleagues, the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Industry, for working with us in accomplishing this agreement. I also want to thank the chair of the auto caucus of Ontario for the role the caucus played in this.

This is a deal that we are proud of, based on 14 previous agreements, good for Canadians and good for the auto industry.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada reports that visible minorities will be the majority of the population in Canada's largest cities by 2017. Much of this growth will come from immigration.

We need immigrants for our labour force and population growth, but Canada must not have frustrated, disillusioned and increasingly angry new residents who are not able to work in their professions. We do not need an immigration system that gives points for education and training that cannot be backed up by a job.

Where is the comprehensive plan to put new immigrants to work using their skills and training?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has already launched a multi-faceted plan. Members on both sides of the House will recall that there is already \$68 million in place for foreign credentials recognition, an effort to coordinate 14 different departments, 13 different provincial and territorial governments and 450 universities and institutions of higher learning, professional bodies and licensing bodies.

In addition to that, there is a \$75 million lump sum that was put in the health accord specifically directed to human health resource development, specifically for family physicians over the course of the next five years. I think that is a pretty good start.

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Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no comprehensive plan. There is no plan for Kyoto, no plan for child care, no plan to stop credit card medicine and no plan to recognize international credentials.

Canada cannot maintain its reputation as a first choice for immigrants if we continue to fail them. Newcomers are now considering abandoning Canada. This is an urgent daily crisis, dashing the hopes of thousands. Where is the plan? Where are the results?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought the specifics of that program were pretty good, but there is another one and that is the fact that the Government of Canada has created some three million jobs over the course of the last 10 years, 250,000 last year alone. Those are great draw factors that are great equalizers for everyone. They attract people. They bring people here.

We have reduced our deficit to zero. We have reduced unemployment to 7.1% nationally. These are draws that give people an opportunity to reach out and succeed and that is what makes for good immigration—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

* * *

[Translation]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the sponsorship racket is still going on, stronger than ever. We have learned that some officials of the aquatic games were recently still receiving their 15% on advertising and sponsorships.

Can the Minister of State for Sport assure the House that no government contributions to the Montreal aquatic games have resulted in commissions for Serge Savard, Yvon Desrochers or any other Liberal organizer?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again we have a member commenting on testimony, on allegations, and not on facts, which is really curious behaviour given that his own leader is saying that the testimony is flawed and in fact some witnesses are lying in their testimony.

If in fact his leader is right, that some of the testimony is flawed, then his leader ought to tell the hon. member that it is not a good idea to comment on what could be flawed testimony. In fact, a good idea would be to wait for Justice Gomery to complete his analysis and submit his report.

[Translation]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs swears that she did not know that Liberal organizers had been compromised in the sponsorship of the Corona theatre. The same Liberals were recently negotiating VIA Rail and Canada Post sponsorships and advertising for the aquatic games.

Can the Minister of National Revenue assure the House that there has never been any question of payoff for Serge Savard, Yvon Desrochers or any other Liberal organizer from these contributions?

• (1455)

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again I will draw the member's attention to today's *National Post* editorial which says:

It is to [the Prime Minister's] credit not only that he called the sponsorship inquiry, but that he has stuck with it...We trust that, once its work is finished, he will show the same integrity in acting upon its findings.

We will be keeping that promise because our Prime Minister keeps his promises to Canadians. That is why he had the courage to do the right thing in establishing the Gomery commission to do its work. We should support Justice Gomery and cooperate fully because we are not afraid of the truth on this side of the House.

* * *

CANADA POST

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been almost a full year since Canada Post asked the Liberal pork-master general, André Ouellet, to produce receipts for \$2 million of lavish expense claims without result. The government's total lack of effort on this file gives a strong indication that it has cut a damage control deal with its patronage pal. This is clearly a cover-up. It has nothing to do with accountability. It has everything to do with Liberals helping Liberals.

Since the government will not get the receipts, can it tell Canadian taxpayers when they will get their \$2 million back?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is speaking nonsense. The Deloitte report has been received. The board has an item by item list of the matters that have to be followed through on. I receive regular reports on this matter. The receipts are being sought after and the board is seized of this matter. The member can have every confidence that the board is doing its job in following up on these matters.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, due to DFO mismanagement, the Fraser River sockeye salmon are in danger of going the way of the Atlantic cod. Yesterday the fisheries committee tabled a unanimous report on the disastrous 2004 Fraser River salmon season.

Clearly, this fishery cannot survive any more Liberal dithering, so for a change of pace, will the minister actually implement the committee's unanimous recommendations, or will he just ignore them like every other report on Fraser River salmon that has crossed his desk?

Hon. Geoff Regan (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the members of the committee for their work on this report. I want to tell them I take this matter very seriously. Having been to B.C. seven times as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, I know how important people feel this issue is in that province, and it is an important one.

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I take it very seriously, but for the member who is talking, who recognizes and who realizes, as the report says, that one of the issues is water temperature and climate change, I am surprised his party is against Kyoto.

* * *

[Translation]

MONTREAL AIRPORT

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, despite major increases in revenues in recent years, the financial situation of the Montreal airport has deteriorated to the point of jeopardizing its future development. The rent charged by Transport Canada is so high that, last year, ADM had to use more than half its increase in revenue to meet an annual rent increase of \$15 million.

How can the Minister of Transport continue to demand rent hikes of 306%, when the Auditor General's last report criticized the length of time the department took in reviewing this questionable policy?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the situation of ADM and other Canadian airports is of concern to me. Obviously my colleague in Finance and I continue to hold discussions in order to come up with a more equitable formula so as to ensure that the rent is fair and in keeping with the Auditor General's recommendations.

I would, however, remind the hon. member that, when it comes to leases signed by airport administrations throughout the country, a lease involves two parties. These leases were signed by people supposedly with good heads for business. We will review the situation, of course, but those leases do, after all, bear their signatures.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Transport realize that these exorbitant rent hikes are a hindrance to the future development of the Montreal Airport, and that these excessive rents are just a backhanded way of taxing travellers even more?

• (1500)

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree that airport rents are an integral part of what is termed the development of aviation and air travel. Obviously, in the coming weeks and months, we are going to continue to work with our colleagues to ensure that there is a fairer formula. I believe the government is committed to that, as is the Minister of Finance, and we will deliver the goods, as usual.

* * *

[English]

TERRORISM

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to Unicef and other international groups, the Tamil Tigers forcibly recruit children and train them to become suicide bombers. Unicef has recorded over 3,500 cases like this.

In Canada the Tamil Tigers raise funds. Our allies, many other governments, have made it a matter of their foreign policy to ban the Tamil Tigers. The recruitment of children has continued even after the tsunami. Why will our government not ban this group?

Hon. Dan McTeague (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the LTTE has been listed in Canada pursuant, as the hon. member knows, to Canada's United Nations suppression of terrorism regulations since 2001.

I want to point out to the hon. member that this listing makes it an offence for persons in Canada or Canadians outside of Canada to provide funds to the Tamil Tigers, as well as fundraising on its behalf. The hon. member clearly knows this. We will continue on that assumption because it is the right thing to do.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a separate list and the member well knows that. That is not the list we are talking about in terms of banning the Tamil Tigers.

I will refer to comments made by a former director of Canada's intelligence service. He said that our government's policy of not banning the Tamil Tigers, and they are not banned under the classification that the member just mentioned, even puts the good people of the Tamil community in Canada here at risk. The Tamil Tigers as a group are not banned in Canada.

What does a terrorist group have to do that is more horrific than train children to become suicide bombers in order to be banned in this country?

Hon. Dan McTeague (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to state the question is to answer it.

The hon. member knows full well that the government is concerned about terrorism. It is one of the reasons we have spent a considerable amount of money toward ensuring that we have safe and secure borders.

The hon. member also understands that there are, in essence, certain considerations that he is taking into account, including the concern we all have to ensure that the people of Tamil origin in this country are not treated as if they are all terrorists.

The hon. member has the same objective that we do, which is to ensure that we keep a safe country and to work hard to ensure that in Canada we keep security as the number one issue.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the opposition parties are not giving taxpayers value for money by repeating the same line of questioning and not listening to the answer, I have a question of great importance for the north.

Recently, the United States senate voted in language in a budget bill that will allow for drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. This will put at risk the core calving ground of the porcupine caribou herd which migrates between Canada and Alaska. This majestic animal is vitally important to aboriginal and indigenous people on both sides of the border.

Will the Minister of the Environment guarantee that our government will continue to register our concerns?

Speaker's Ruling

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs intend to raise this issue with President Bush, as we have done many times. Because we have a sensitive Arctic coastal plain and the impact would be so bad to the calving ground of the porcupine caribou herd, Canada established a national park. It is too bad caribou do not know when they are in Yukon or Alaska. We urge the United States to protect this area, as we have done.

* * *

HUMAN RESOURCES

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the compassionate care program is failing Canadians. Olga Petrik of Ontario is another Canadian denied the compassionate care benefits to care for her dying sister. Olga appealed and the board ruled in her favour that a sister is a family member. Then the unbelievable happened. This minister is appealing Olga's right to take care of her dying sister.

How can this minister justify such a heartless act while claiming to be reviewing the program?

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very sensitive to the fact that some individuals have been denied compassionate care leave for various reasons. I should point out in passing that Canada is a world leader for having established this type of leave.

When we introduced it, we said that we would be reviewing the compassionate care leave program after one year. That is what we are doing right now, and we will certainly bring about some improvements.

* * *

• (1505)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Kolawolé Idji, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Benin.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[English]

The Speaker: I would also like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Greg Melchin, Minister of Energy for the Government of Alberta.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

POINTS OF ORDER

[English]

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, something disturbing happened during question period. I would

like to bring it to the attention of the Chair that in my question to the Minister of Public Works I asked about a particular scandal, which was the World Aquatic Championship scandal. Unfortunately, the public works minister thought I was asking about the sponsorship scandal.

I would like to give the minister an opportunity to get his scandals straight.

The Speaker: I am sure the minister appreciates the clarification from the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona, but I suspect it is more a point of debate than a point of order.

OFFICIAL REPORT

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my point of order is with respect to *Hansard* for Monday, March 21, page 4368 at 14:40, where I talked about the Liberals having hidden that they had stolen money from Canadian taxpayers, and you chastised me, Mr. Speaker, at the time. I would like to put on the record that what I intended to say was the Liberal Party, and certainly was not impugning the integrity of any of my colleagues opposite in an inappropriate manner.

PRIVILEGE

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on February 17 by the hon. opposition House leader concerning remarks made by the Hon. Minister of International Trade in relation to the defeat of the motions for second reading of Bill C-31 and Bill C-32, the bills that proposed to create a Department of International Trade separate from the Department of Foreign Affairs. The hon. opposition House leader contends that these remarks represent a contempt of Parliament.

I would like to thank the hon. opposition House leader for raising this matter, as well as the hon. member for Vancouver East, the hon. member for Calgary Southeast and the hon. government House leader for their contributions when the issue was raised. I also want to thank the hon. parliamentary secretary to the Government House leader for his intervention on March 8 and the hon. member for Edmonton—Sherwood Park, the hon. member for Halifax and the hon. opposition House leader for the responses to his comments.

The hon. opposition House leader in his original statement objected to comments made by the Minister for International Trade on the day following the defeat at second reading of Bill C-31 and Bill C-32. He pointed to articles in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Ottawa Citizen* which quoted the minister as saying that the two departments would continue to work independently even though Parliament had voted against the bills that proposed to split the two entities, the former Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Speaker's Ruling

The hon. opposition House leader alleges that the minister's words suggest that the passage or defeat of legislation was inconsequential to the separation of the departments and, in so doing, showed disregard for the role of the House of Commons. He argues that this shows such disrespect as to constitute, in his opinion, a contempt of the House.

There are two issues in the presentation made by the hon. opposition House leader. The first issue is the current status of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade given that on February 15 the bills containing the proposal that it be split into two departments were defeated at second reading in the House. The second issue is whether actions taken or statements made by the minister in the wake of the defeat of Bill C-31 and Bill C-32 constitute a contempt of the House of Commons.

• (1510)

[*Translation*]

Let us consider the first issue, the status of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

[*English*]

On December 12, 2003, a number of orders in council were made under the authority of several statutes, including the Public Service Rearrangement and Transfer of Duties Act, the Public Service Employment Act, the Financial Administration Act and the Ministries and Ministers of State Act.

I draw the attention of the House, for example, to order in council numbered 2003-2052 designating the Department of International Trade as a department. Other orders in council in this series address ancillary issues related to that designation, while the existence of the positions of Minister of Foreign Affairs and a Minister of International Trade both existed pursuant to the Salaries Act prior to that day.

The Public Service Rearrangement and Transfer of Duties Act provides that the government, by order in council, may reorganize existing functions of government for which Parliament has voted funds. In short, existing statutes grant the government considerable leeway in proceeding with any reorganization it chooses to pursue. The Canadian custom has been to complete or confirm such rearrangements by way of legislation.

[*Translation*]

The House will note that these are some of the very points which were emphasized by the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the government House leader when he spoke to this issue on March 8, saying, in part:

In reorganizing or organizing a cabinet and making use of the Public Service Rearrangement and Transfer of Duties Act, the government does not create new statutory authorities or powers. Rather, the government rearranges pre-existing authorities that have already been created by Parliament and does so in accordance with a legislative mechanism that has also been created by Parliament.

[*English*]

It would appear to the Chair that in general the power of the government to reorganize, and specifically this latest reorganization, is not very well understood. The House will recall that as far back as March 2004 questions related to the reorganization were surfacing in the House.

For example, I remind hon. members of the question of privilege raised on March 10, 2004 by the hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl with regard to the form of the main estimates for 2004-05. I refer hon. members to the debates for that day at pages 1310 and 1311.

I also refer hon. members to the text, *Organizing to Govern*, Volume One, by the Hon. Gordon F. Osbaldeston, former Clerk of the Privy Council, who explains at page 24:

For a variety of reasons—ministerial preference, better organization fit, and other reasons...—governments may decide to rearrange their organizations. The chief legislative tool for accomplishing this type of organizational change is the Public Service Rearrangement and Transfer of Duties Act. Orders in council pursuant to this act are used principally for two purposes:

transfer of organizational subunits...from one organization to another...

transfer of responsibility for acts or parts of acts from one minister to another...

On page 25 he goes on to confirm:

Strictly speaking, these tools are meant only to reorganize existing functions of government for which Parliament has voted funds—any new activities must be authorized by Parliament.

[*Translation*]

So, too, in the case now before us, whether or not the House is convinced of the case for reorganization, the government nonetheless has at hand the tools to execute those plans; legislative measures like Bill C-31 and C-32 merely complement them.

[*English*]

I trust that the background I have just presented will assist the House in better appreciating the current situation. Here, existing functions, notably international trade, are being reconfigured and those rearrangements have been carried out by orders in council. I should say that this is what distinguishes the current situation from the one cited by the hon. opposition House leader on which Speaker Fraser ruled in 1989. In that case, a new tax, the GST, was being proposed by the government of the day, but enacting legislation had not yet been adopted in the House.

In the opinion of the Chair, the authority to begin the process of separating the departments rests on the series of orders in council adopted December 12, 2003 pursuant to existing statutory authorities granted to the government by Parliament. That authority is set out in the law and it is not for me to judge whether it is sufficient in this case.

Following a search of our precedents, I am unable to find a case where any Speaker has ruled that the government, in the exercise of regulatory power conferred upon it by statute, has been found to have breached the privileges of the House. Indeed, the hon. member is not arguing that. He seems to be suggesting that the minister's comments amounted to a breach of privilege, but if the minister was stating the legal position, it could hardly constitute a breach.

Speaker's Ruling

To recap then, since I promised the hon. member for Halifax that all would be made clear in this ruling, statutory authority, namely the Public Service Rearrangement and Transfer of Duties Act, already exists to proceed with the changes that were originally made in December by orders in council pursuant to that act. When the government introduced legislation, specifically Bill C-31 and Bill C-32, since, as explained the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader, it was as a complement in keeping with "...Canadian practice...to confirm major changes in government organization through legislation". We can think of these bills as similar to the miscellaneous statutes amendments bills that come before Parliament from time to time.

From a reading of the bills, it appears to me that they enshrine in statute the new names of the departments and ministers and spell out the mandate of international trade, not in the cryptic language of the order in council but in the more Cartesian vocabulary of legislative drafting. Furthermore, Bill C-31 appears to create a new post of associate deputy minister of international trade.

Thus, as the House well knows, on December 7, 2004, Bill C-31, an act to establish the Department of International Trade and to make related amendments to certain acts, and Bill C-32, an act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, were introduced and read a first time. These bills were debated at second reading in early February, each coming to a vote on second reading, that is to say a vote on approval in principle of each bill, on February 15. Both bills were defeated at second reading.

Where does that leave matters?

The procedural consequence is clear. Bill C-31 and Bill C-32 will not proceed further in this session.

The legal consequence is not for me to address. The Chair is unable to determine what future legislative measures the government may bring forward to complete or confirm the division of the two departments. That is for the government to determine.

• (1515)

[*Translation*]

As my predecessors and I have pointed out in many previous rulings, where legal interpretation is at issue, it is not within the Speaker's authority to rule or decide points of law. This principle is explained on pages 219 and 220 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*:

—while Speakers must take the Constitution and statutes into account when preparing a ruling, numerous Speakers have explained that it is not up to the Speaker to rule on the "constitutionality" or "legality" of measures before the House.

[*English*]

If the Chair cannot pronounce on the legality of government action, it is up to the Speaker to examine the situation and to weigh the arguments of the hon. opposition House leader to determine from a purely procedural perspective whether the privileges of the House have been breached.

I can only assume that the minister, in stating his intention to continue with the establishment of the Department of International

Trade, is planning to proceed for the moment under existing authorities.

In a similar vein, the Chair has noted and draws the attention of the House to the form of the main estimates for 2005-06. Those documents present separate budgets for foreign affairs and for international trade, though the formal name Foreign Affairs and International Trade is still invoked.

Is there cause for concern, however, that the privileges of the House are breached where the government continues with its departmental reorganization by orders in council after confirmation of these initiatives was not approved by the House? Am I to find here a *prima facie* breach of privileges of the House?

It seems to me that in making the statement outside the House, which gave rise to the point of privilege of the hon. opposition House leader, the minister might only have meant to indicate that the reorganization by orders in council continue to have legal effect. If that was the intent of the minister's remark and the actions taken are legally valid, which I must assume is the case, it is difficult to find this comment offensive to the dignity of the House and therefore a *prima facie* breach of privileges.

That is not to say that the comments, if reported accurately, do not concern me. I can fully appreciate the frustration of the House and the confusion of hon. members, let alone those who follow parliamentary affairs from outside this chamber. The scrutiny of legislation is arguably the central role of Parliament.

The decision of the House at each stage of a government bill determines whether or not the proposal can go forward. How can the decisions of the House on these bills be without practical consequence?

We appear to have come upon a paradox in Canadian practice. Bill C-31 and Bill C-32 aimed to confirm executive action, action already taken pursuant to statutes by non-legislative means, and the House of Commons has refused to give that confirmation. It leaves the government and the House in a most unfortunate conflict on the matter but, on the information I have, I cannot find that this constitutes a *prima facie* breach of the privileges of the House.

At the end of all this, it seems to me that what we have here is an unfortunate incident that has impacted upon the working relationship between the House and the government. The hon. government House leader has said that the government is reviewing its parliamentary options. The Chair would encourage the government, during the course of that review, to have further consultations with all parties in the House to clarify events and restore the central working relationship to its usual good form.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

●(1520)

*[English]***GOVERNMENT ONLINE REPORT**

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and table in the House this afternoon, in both official languages, the fourth report on Government-wide online initiative entitled "Government Online 2005, from Vision to Reality and Beyond".

* * *

INTERNAL DISCLOSURE POLICY REPORT

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, a paradox; two documents on the annual report on the internal disclosure policy which describes how the current policy on disclosures of wrongdoing is working in an increasingly effective way.

* * *

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to table, in both official languages, a number of orders in council recently made by the government.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing order 36(8), I would also like to table, in both official languages, the government's response to one petition.

* * *

*[Translation]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 30th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs on an amendment to the Standing Orders.

If the House consents, I intend to move concurrence in the report later today.

[English]

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates regarding the very limited time that was allowed for consideration of the supplementary estimates B earlier this year.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the sixth report later this day.

* * *

●(1525)

*[Translation]***EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT**

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-350, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (amounts not included in earnings).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce today three bills on the employment insurance program. I want to thank the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

These bills are the result of cross-country consultations held in 1998 on the effectiveness of the employment insurance program. Several other bills will be introduced later on this same topic.

I hope the members of this Parliament will read these bills and support them. The current EI program does not meet the needs of Canadian workers. These bills will fix the shortcomings of the program.

The first bill I am introducing on employment insurance addresses the amounts not included in earnings. Pension benefits, vacation pay and severance pay will be excluded from earnings and therefore will not reduce the benefits payable to the beneficiaries.

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

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-351, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (no interest payable by claimants on benefit repayments or penalties).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this second bill is entitled an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (no interest payable by claimants on benefit repayments or penalties). Claimants may not be charged interest or any other penalty for the late payment of benefit repayments or of penalties assessed for violations of the act.

The reason behind this bill is that in 2001 the government passed a bill that imposed interest. Now, people who are EI claimants do not have the means to pay interest as well as the penalty or fine. It seems that the debt keeps growing and people can no longer pay it. That is why this will be a good bill.

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

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-352, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (training entitlement).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill will allow employees to receive, every year, up to five weeks of training directed at the development of their careers.

Routine Proceedings

Once again, we must help people in their work. This bill will make it possible to train people so that they can keep their jobs. I believe it will be a benefit for all the working men and women of Canada.

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

* * *

[English]

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-353, an act to amend the Canada Pension Plan and the Canada Pension Plan Regulations.

He said: Mr. Speaker, as a member of Parliament, it is frustrating sometimes to have a constituent come in with a doctor's report that says the constituent is totally disabled and cannot work again, only to submit that application to Canada pension and have an official overrule the doctor who examined the patient. Often this official is not a doctor.

My bill would simply ensure that only a doctor at Canada pension can overrule another doctor's opinion.

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

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-354, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (transfer of fishing property).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill would amend the Income Tax Act involving the intergenerational transfer of fishing property. One of the great problems with the Income Tax Act as it exists regarding fishing property is the fact that people cannot pass their property and assets on to their family members, children and grandchildren.

The Income Tax Act was changed in relation to farm property in 1972 to facilitate the intergenerational transfer of farm properties within a family. This prevented the depopulation of rural Canada and allowed us to continue on with family farming businesses in this country.

This bill would do the same thing for fishing properties and prevent the depopulation of coastal Canada, and allow fishing families to keep their assets within their families and continue fishing.

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

* * *

• (1530)

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY ACT

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-355, an act to amend the Motor Vehicle Safety Act (vehicle immobilizers).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill would amend the Motor Vehicle Safety Act to include vehicle immobilizers. We just received the press release from Transport Canada and the Minister of Transport

stating that as of September 2007 this will be required as standard equipment. The problem is that it will permit the Canadian and European standards.

The European standard is an inferior standard that the Insurance Bureau of Canada is highly recommending against. When officials from Transport Canada spoke at the United Nations they also said that the European standard was inferior, which was why they were highly recommending the Canadian standard.

This bill would ensure we use the Canadian standard to protect Canadians.

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

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HEALTH

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place among all parties and I believe that you will find unanimous consent for the following: that the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Health, tabled in the House on Tuesday, March 22, be deemed to be concurred in without debate.

The Speaker: Does the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons have the unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among all parties and I believe you would find unanimous consent that the 30th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier this day be concurred in.

For the benefit of hon. members, this makes a technical adjustment to the French text of a previous report.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

MARRIAGE

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to present a petition on behalf of some of my constituents of Prince George—Peace River, specifically some of the residents in the cities of Dawson Creek, Fort St. John and the smaller rural communities of Charlie Lake, Rose Prairie, Taylor, Baldonnel and Pink Mountain.

These petitioners, like so many thousands and hundreds of thousands before them from all across the nation, wish to draw to the attention of the House that marriage is the best foundation for families and the raising of children. They note that the institution of marriage as being between a man and a woman is being challenged by the government's legislation, Bill C-38.

Therefore they call upon Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being a lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

• (1535)

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. In the first one some 1,300 constituents ask Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

The second petition with some 600-odd signatures is asking Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

SIKH COMMUNITY

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Newton—North Delta, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present several petitions signed by over 4,500 petitioners from all over Canada.

The petitioners are calling on Parliament to take every administrative and legislative measure necessary to protect and defend the freedom to wear turbans and the five Ks, the symbols of the Sikh religion.

Wearing a turban is part and parcel of the Sikh religious faith. It is contrary to the tenets of the Sikh faith to conceal or cover the turban or head with any kind of object, such as a cap, hat or helmet.

The petitioners pray that Sikh truck operators will be exempt from wearing hard hats and that Canada Labour Code, R.S.C. 1970, c. L-1 not adversely affect members of the Canadian Sikh community.

The petitioners also call upon Parliament to protect the religious practices of Sikhs in all areas of the Canada Labour Code.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present to the House today a petition circulated by Ocean Net, a marine conservation group based in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of Parliament that they are advocating for zero tolerance for marine pollution. They are also calling on the government to strongly enforce its existing environmental legislation protecting marine environments. There are over 450 signatures from across Newfoundland and Labrador.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present two petitions today.

Routine Proceedings

The first is from constituents in my riding who are concerned about the efforts of the government to overturn the centuries old definition of marriage.

There are more than 1,000 signatures of people requesting legislation that will uphold the definition of marriage as being between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

RADIO FREQUENCY INTERFERENCE

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition was brought to me by amateur radio operators in my riding who are concerned about the longstanding problems with malicious radio frequency interference. As the petitioners point out, this is not only illegal, but it interferes with public safety.

They call on Parliament to ask the industry minister to enforce the Communications Act and stop this illegal activity once and for all.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions I would like to present.

Two of the petitions have a number of names from the Edmonton area. The petitioners call upon Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

AUTISM

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition deals with autism.

The petitioners call on Parliament to amend the Canada Health Act and corresponding regulations to include therapy for children with autism as a medically necessary treatment and require that all provinces provide or fund this essential treatment for autism, and also to contribute to the creation of academic chairs to a university in each province to deal with the treatment for autism.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present three petitions all calling for the same thing. The petitioners are from the great riding of Wild Rose, from the towns of Canmore, Cochrane, Sundre, Olds, Didsbury, Carstairs and the mighty city of Airdrie. They are calling on the government to define marriage in federal law as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

I would like to add these 1,000 signatures to the thousands more already tabled.

AUTISM

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition from citizens who ask that the Government of Canada amend the Canada Health Act and regulations to include IBI and ABA therapy for children with autism as a medically necessary treatment and require that all provinces provide or fund this treatment for autism.

Routine Proceedings

Also, they ask that the government create academic chairs at universities across Canada so every Canadian with autism will be able to receive the very best treatment possible.

• (1540)

CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from the citizens of Prince Edward Island. They are calling on the government to return to its previous policy of allowing holy books to be made available to new citizens at citizenship ceremonies around this country.

Last year a citizenship judge terminated this policy alleging that the policy discriminated against non-religious immigrants. Until last year holy books were simply displayed on tables at the back of the hall, free for new citizens to take. The new citizens were not handed the books. The books were not forced on them. The judge produced no evidence to justify his inappropriate decision to ban the availability of holy books.

The petitioners ask that the Citizenship Commission return to the previous policy which served our multicultural nation so well.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House with three certified petitions from my riding of Leeds—Grenville. The first is from Kemptville Pentecostal Tabernacle. The second is from the Gananoque Calvary Pentecostal Church. The third is from Highway Pentecostal Church in Brockville. They all request that the House define marriage in federal law as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present 35 petitions with over 2,330 signatures. They are all from Langley residents. The petitioners state that traditional marriage between a man and a woman is the God ordained building block of the family and the bedrock of a civil society. Therefore, they urge that Parliament protect the traditional definition of marriage as being between one man and one woman.

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to present a petition on behalf of a significant number of Canadians, including many from my own riding of Calgary Centre on the subject of marriage.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House their prayer that Parliament define marriage in federal law as being the lifelong union between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present a number of petitions today. I will group them together in the interest of time.

They come from groups representing the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada in Prince George, the Fort George Baptist Church in Prince George, the First Baptist Church in Prince George, Joan Skuggedal of Prince George, Miss Edith Parkin of Cariboo—Prince George, Judy Black of Quesnel, and the Nechako Community Church of Vanderhoof, B.C. All of the petitioners pray that Parliament define marriage in federal law as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

I know that we are not allowed to express our personal views, but if we were, I would support these petitions.

The Deputy Speaker: I would urge all members not to express their opinions but to simply table the petitions.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions today pursuant to Standing Order 36. Both are signed by residents of Alberta.

The petitioners support the current legal definition of marriage as the voluntary union of a single male and a single female. They call upon Parliament to use all possible legislative and administrative measures, including section 33 of the charter, to preserve and protect the current definition of marriage as being between one man and one woman.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to submit many more names to the long list of thousands of names I have already submitted with regard to marriage. Most of these come from Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

The petitioners state that throughout history strong families have been the essential basic unit of all successful societies and that traditional marriage as defined as the union of a man and a woman has always been a critical institution of promoting and protecting strong families. They state that legalizing same sex marriage in Canada would undermine traditional marriage and society, and would undermine support for families as well.

The petitioners ask that Canadians concerned about our future urge the government leaders to do whatever is necessary to preserve traditional marriage in Canada.

I have quite a number of these petitions.

• (1545)

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also have petitions on another topic, euthanasia, which come mainly from the town of Langenburg in my constituency. The petitioners look to section 241 of the Criminal Code as making it against the law to counsel or aid anyone in committing suicide. They point to the Rodriguez case as finding no charter right to suicide. If section 241 were struck down or amended, such protection would no longer exist.

The petitioners petition Parliament to retain section 241 of the Criminal Code without changes in order that Parliament not sanction or allow counselling, aiding or abetting of suicide whether by personal action or the Internet.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to present petitions on behalf of constituents.

Government Orders

The petitioners state that on important fundamental social policy issues Parliament should make the decisions, not the courts. They further state that the current legal definition of marriage as the voluntary union of a single male and a single female should be left in place. They petition Parliament to use all possible legislative and administrative measures, including invoking section 33 of the charter, to preserve the current definition of marriage.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[English]

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 Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-30, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act and the Salaries Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to remind hon. members that today's debate will be governed by the provisional changes to the Standing Orders which came into effect on March 7, 2005.

[Translation]

Almost all speeches are now followed by a questions and comments period.

[English]

For today's debate at report stage of Bill C-30, all members will have a 10 minute period for debate followed by a 5 minute question and comment period.

There is one motion in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-30.

Motion No. 1 will be debated and voted upon.

[Translation]

I will now put Motion No. 1 to the House.

● (1550)

MOTION IN AMENDMENT

Hon. Joe McGuire (Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.) moved:

That Bill C-30, in Clause 6, be amended by:

(a) adding after line 27 on page 4 the following:

“(f.1) the member of the Senate occupying the position of Deputy Government Whip in the Senate, \$5,200;

(f.2) the member of the Senate occupying the position of Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate, \$3,100;

(f.3) the member of the Senate occupying the position of Chair of the Caucus of the Government in the Senate, \$6,100;

(f.4) the member of the Senate occupying the position of Chair of the Caucus of the Opposition in the Senate, \$5,200;”

(b) by adding after line 3 on page 5 the following:

“(j.1) the member occupying the position of Deputy Whip of a party that has a recognized membership of twelve or more persons in the House of Commons, \$5,200;”

(c) by replacing line 6 on page 5 with the following:

“Commons, \$35,300;

(k.1) the member occupying the position of Deputy House Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, unless the member is in receipt of a salary under the Salaries Act or section 62.2 of this Act, \$14,300;

(k.2) the member occupying the position of Deputy House Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, \$14,300;”

(d) by adding after line 10 on page 5 the following:

“(m) the member occupying the position of Deputy House Leader of a party that has a recognized membership of twelve or more persons in the House of Commons, \$5,200;

(n) each of the members occupying the positions of Chair of the Caucus of the Government and Chair of the Caucus of the Opposition in the House of Commons, \$10,100; and

(o) the member occupying the position of Chair of the Caucus of a party that has a recognized membership of twelve or more persons in the House of Commons, \$5,200.”

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise at third reading of Bill C-30 regarding the salaries of parliamentarians.

First, I want to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for closely reviewing this legislation. I am also pleased that the committee reported on this bill with the support of members—

The Deputy Speaker: The opposition House leader on a point of order.

[English]

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I apologize to my colleague for interrupting his remarks, but if I heard correctly as I was listening through the translation, it appeared as though he was speaking to third reading of Bill C-30, not to the amendment that you, Mr. Speaker, just read into the record. I wonder if he could clarify that.

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: I did not catch that one way or another. Perhaps the hon. member would clarify that. We are dealing with the amendments at this time, but obviously the parliamentary secretary can speak to the intent of the bill as well.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I thank the opposition House leader for his comments. Because I know that members are so enthusiastic to give the bill third reading and passage, perhaps I was ahead of myself. The opposition House leader is absolutely correct. We will be addressing the report stage amendments and obviously I will be talking about the very worthy merits of the legislation.

[*Translation*]

I was saying that I am also delighted the committee reported back with the support of members of the NDP and the official opposition.

All the members know that, currently, parliamentary compensation is tied to compensation for the judiciary. Last September, the government promised that the changes to parliamentary compensation would reflect the average salary increase of Canadians. Bill C-30 follows up on this commitment.

In this bill, changes to parliamentary compensation are tied to the annual average wage settlement index, published by Human Resources and Skills Development. This index tracks annual pay increases in the private sector.

In particular, the index includes over 400 collective agreements for over 800,000 employees across Canada. It is published every February documenting the wage changes of the previous calendar year.

[*English*]

This index is widely regarded as an authoritative measure. It is used by governments, private sector employers and unions, including the Canadian Auto Workers, the Teamsters and the Confédération des syndicats nationaux.

As the government House leader has said before, linking parliamentary compensation to this index is the right thing to do, for three reasons.

First, it is a fair way to ensure that parliamentarians' salaries are adjusted in line with the changes received by Canadians. The former House leader for the official opposition said during second reading debate of this bill that "the private sector wage settlement process is a very good one". He thinks "Canadians can accept that". We on this side of the House agree with those sentiments.

Second, the index is a well-known, respected and predictable measure.

Third, members of this House have recognized that we should not be linked to an index that includes the public sector, because we could be in a situation where the government is negotiating compensation levels for public sector unions or other groups or where Parliament must legislate public sector wages. If these negotiations or such legislation were to affect our own salaries, then obviously this would appear to create a conflict of interest.

Given this consideration, we are proposing an index for parliamentary consideration and parliamentary compensation that covers salary changes in the private sector alone.

After the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs reported this bill, it was brought to the government's attention that a number of parliamentary functions were in fact not covered by the Parliament of Canada Act.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

I am pleased that the official opposition and the NDP agreed that the deputy House leaders, deputy whips in the House and the Senate and the national caucus chairs receive modest compensation. These positions considerably increase parliamentary responsibilities and should therefore be compensated accordingly.

In conclusion, I want to say that, thanks to this bill, the government is keeping its commitment to delink compensation increases for parliamentarians and judges and, instead, to link them to the average pay increases of Canadians.

At the same time, I believe it is important that decisions on parliamentary compensation take into consideration the opinion of all members of this House. As a result, I am delighted that this bill has received generous support from both the government and opposition members.

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I want to commend my colleague on his remarks in connection with the report stage amendments to Bill C-30. Specifically, I want to ask the parliamentary secretary about this whole issue of linkage and then delinking.

As he correctly said, the official opposition, the Conservative Party of Canada, is supportive of this legislation and indeed supportive of the amendments. I will get to that in my remarks on report stage in a few minutes.

However, one of the things we have been concerned about all along was the linkage to the Judges Act and the fact that whatever increase the judges got would automatically be applied to members of Parliament.

We made the strong argument, and indeed, eventually the government made a similar argument, that there should not be that link or tie between an increase to the salaries of members of Parliament and an increase to judges' salaries.

It was this government that linked MPs' salaries to judges' salaries in the first place. Then the government delinked them. Now the government is going to link salaries to this index.

As I said, while we support linking to this index, we do not understand why judges should not be linked to this very same index as well. Why must they have this special commission, which indeed, if rumour is correct, is recommending an increase of somewhere around 10% or 11% to judges' salaries?

Government Orders

The government has not brought forward the legislation to deal specifically with an increase or this commission's recommendations that would deal specifically with an increase to judge's salaries. As yet, at least, we have not seen the legislation that would allow for that increase.

I wonder if my colleague would agree with me that there is no reason why judges should not be subject to this very same index. He made all the relevant points in his remarks about the validity of this index and the fact that it is fair because it is a reflection of the average wage settlements in the private sector.

I think that members of Parliament in most parties, with the exception of the Bloc Québécois, are willing to go along with that. They feel it is a fair compromise. It takes our own remuneration situation out of our hands so that we would not constantly be caught in this conflict. Why would we not apply the same logic and the same index to the judges?

• (1600)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I thank the official opposition House leader for his comments and for his very constructive support, frankly, for this legislation, Bill C-30, with respect to parliamentarians' compensation being linked to the wage settlement index I referred to earlier.

His question with respect to the potential increases for federally appointed judges is a good one. The government decided to suggest to Parliament legislation delinking us from the Judges Act increases, to some extent because the quadrennial commission established by law to look at the whole issue of judicial compensation decided, of its own motion, to change the basis upon which it evaluated the appropriate remuneration of judges.

My understanding is that previously it had been linked to a number of public sector functions. The commission chose to look at different factors and therefore came up with a suggestion for judicial remuneration which we thought may have been inappropriate in the case of parliamentarians.

I would urge the opposition House leader to wait for amendments to the Judges Act to be brought forward by the Minister of Justice to give effect to the quadrennial commission report. All of his very valid comments will be explained during that debate. I am sure he will be very comforted by the discussion around amendments that will soon be proposed to the Judges Act as a separate issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I just have a quick question for the parliamentary secretary.

I would like him to explain something to me. Twenty four months ago, he and his colleagues on the government side rose in this House to explain to everyone that it was extremely important, indeed fundamental, that parliamentary compensation be linked to judicial compensation, that this was government policy and the best approach to setting and establishing a salary for parliamentarians. Now, 24 months later, the same members rise again to explain, this time, that this is the wrong approach.

I would like to know what impact he and his government think they are having on the credibility of parliamentarians across the country by rising 24 months later to take the exact opposite stance.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to partly answer the Bloc leader's question when I answered the question of the House leader for the official opposition.

This year, when the Judicial Compensation and Benefits Commission prepared its report, which was released by the government in the fall, it decided of its own motion to change the method for calculating judicial compensation and determining whether it is appropriate.

Previously, it was linked to factors in the public service, such as senior government officials. The commission decided to look at how much lawyers were paid in major city firms to determine what would be appropriate compensation for federally appointed judges.

For this reason, and partly because the recommended parliamentary compensation appeared to be slightly higher than what Canadians make on average, we saw fit to delink our salaries from judicial compensation and link them instead to the compensation of Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and address this amendment to Bill C-30.

On January 12, 2001, a commission chaired by the Hon. Ed Lumley was appointed to study and make recommendations on compensation for members of Parliament. The Lumley commission tabled its report on May 29, 2001, and from that report came Bill C-28 which implemented the proposals in the report. In the report the commission remarked:

Parliamentarians' salaries are important, not just to the members of Parliament themselves but to all citizens; certainly, how we compensate members of Parliament can influence the ability to attract good candidates. Our democracy is based on Parliament's ability to mirror society's basic values and to respond to the needs of Canadians. In turn, Canadians ought to understand that parliamentarians need to be compensated fairly.

The commission recommended a number of changes and established stipends for members who take on certain parliamentary responsibilities, such as chairmen of committees and vice-chairs of those same standing committees. This amendment that we are discussing today reflects and is consistent with the recommendations from the Lumley commission's report.

Before adopting the recommendations from the commission's report, compensation for members who perform certain caucus roles, such as House leader, whip and leader of recognized parties, were already established. However, while there was compensation for the deputy whip of the official opposition, there was no compensation for the deputy House leader for the official opposition.

Government Orders

The reason for forgetting about the deputy House leader may be due to the fact that it is a fairly new position. Before the second world war there was no House leader, let alone a deputy House leader. At that time the Prime Minister managed the business of the House. The outbreak of the second world war caused the Prime Minister to be absent from the House, so he delegated the responsibility of managing the business of the House to one of his ministers, who did the job in addition to his other responsibilities.

As government became more complex, the job of government House leader likewise became more involved. That is why today we have a full time minister responsible for managing the affairs of the House, and that is why he has a deputy House leader and a parliamentary secretary to ably assist him. He is shadowed by me, the official opposition House leader, and I too am assisted by a deputy, currently the member for Calgary Southeast.

The senior House leader positions on the opposition benches evolved with compensation, but the deputy positions did not. Unlike the opposition whip and his deputy, which are positions that go back to the early days of the parliamentary system, the deputy House leader is a relatively new caucus officer. This amendment that we are debating today proposes to correct that omission, and to recognize the position and the hard work of the deputy House leader.

This amendment also recognizes the reality of the multiparty system that we have today in this chamber. We have the Bloc Québécois with 54 members and the New Democratic Party with 19. As much as some of us would like them to go away, they have not. Maybe some day, but until then they also have whips and House leaders, and their deputies should be recognized as well. However, if the Bloc Québécois is insistent and in fact opposed to this amendment that we are discussing today, then I feel that it would naturally follow that its deputy House leader, deputy whip and caucus chairperson will obviously refuse this extra stipend that was revealed in the amendment that is under debate. I would assume that since they are voting against it.

We also have a situation where chairmen of standing committees now receive compensation, but the caucus chairmen do not receive any extra compensation and we should be consistent. To be consistent, this amendment applies the salaries of existing positions to the ones covered by the amendment.

● (1605)

For example, the deputy opposition House leader would get the same compensation as a parliamentary secretary under this amendment. Deputies for the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party would receive the same compensation as vice-chairs of the standing committees. Caucus chairs for the government and the official opposition would receive the same as the chairs of standing committees of the House, and caucus chairmen of the other two parties would receive the same as vice-chairs of the standing committees. This is a straightforward and a defensible proposal.

My party will be supporting this amendment and the bill. Why will be supporting this legislation? Throughout my 12 years in the House of Commons, I have always maintained that members of Parliament should not be placed in the natural conflict of interest that arises when we have to debate and vote on our own personal remuneration. I am not aware of anywhere else where this happens. I

have had many jobs in the private sector and in none of those jobs did I have the advantage of setting my own remuneration or my own perks such as my pension benefits. There is no defensible reason why we would have that here in the House of Commons.

That is why I support the government's initiative to tie any future increases in our salary to a cost of living index that would reflect the average increase received in the private sector, in the real world outside of the chamber. That is a commendable goal of the legislation.

As I said before, the Bloc Québécois does have a valid point. There is more than a touch of irony here. This same government made some very impassioned arguments a couple of years ago about why we needed to link our salary increases to something so that we did not have to set them. We were in agreement with that. The government chose to link them to increases given to judges. As the deputy leader and the House leader for the Bloc Québécois have already stated, there is more than a touch of irony here in the fact that the government did this a couple of years ago and is now arguing against it.

While I support the bill and the amendment, as I said in my question to the parliamentary secretary, I have always maintained that it is incumbent upon the government to defend why two years ago it felt our salary had to be linked to judges and now is being linked to this index in Bill C-30, which is a fairer system and much more defensible.

By extension, I believe that we should watch very carefully when the government brings forward legislation to enact an increase for judges. If an increase of say 1%, to reflect the cost of living index and the average increase that is reflected in the private sector, is good enough for members of Parliament then it should be good enough for judges. We will be watching that very closely.

I take the parliamentary secretary at his word that the government will bring this legislation forward. My predecessor and I have been calling upon the government to do this. We hoped it would bring Bill C-30 and the amendments to the Judges Act forward at the same time so that we could have seen both and seen that they were compatible.

That has not happened. The government has not seen fit to bring that forward at this time. I am looking forward to that when the time comes. I am also looking forward to the debate that will take place hopefully soon on third reading of Bill C-30 when I can once again express the official opposition's support for this legislation.

● (1610)

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague with great interest. I too greatly support the linking of our salaries to this private sector index. I congratulate the government on it because it removes the conflict of interest. Virtually everything we do, it seems to me, affects the economy of Canada and so indirectly, almost everything we do influences this index that we are linking our salaries to.

Government Orders

I could tell from my colleague's remarks that a good deal of this appears to me, as I was not involved in the discussions, to have come from the official opposition. I know we are dealing with legislation that affects all parties. It affects the remuneration of the Conservatives, the Bloc and the NDP, so it is not simply for government members.

My colleague and I have been here for exactly the same time and I remind him that I actually once voted against a secret ballot for the chairs of standing committees. I did that not because I was opposed to the secret ballot but because I felt the ballot did not protect the official opposition enough or the official opposition vice-chairs of the standing committees. He will remember that. We must protect the official opposition.

Does he think that this legislation protects the official opposition in situations where, as has occurred in Canada, it is reduced, for example, to one or two members faced with a huge government majority? Do the provisions here deal with that situation and, with due respect to the other parties, protect the official opposition which is so important to the functioning of the House of Commons?

• (1615)

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, if I were a cynic, I would have to say that my hon. colleague is interested in protecting the official opposition because he soon plans to be a member of the official opposition when the Conservatives become the government in the next election. I am left assuming that is why he is so concerned about the status of the official opposition. It is hard for me to follow his rationale

I am assuming it is a serious question in relation to the fact that it states that the extra stipends will be awarded to positions of recognized parties. Recognized parties in the chamber, as we all know, are those that elect 12 or more members of Parliament. He brings up a valid point of what happens and did happen of course following the 1993 election. At that time there were five, not four parties, and two of them were not recognized officially because they elected less than the requisite 12 members.

I am comfortable with the way this legislation deals with that issue. It would continue to acknowledge that a recognized party in Parliament is 12 members or more. I have not heard arguments why we should change that to a lower number, although as my hon. colleague states, the reality is that there have been many instances not only in this chamber but in provincial legislatures where even the official opposition, for example, in my home province of British Columbia, only has two elected members. It does create problems if that indeed happens.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this will also be a relatively short question.

The hon. parliamentary leader of the Conservative Party made a suggestion to us earlier that the Bloc Québécois members opposed to a salary raise should refuse it and let the other parties take theirs. According to him, the Bloc members ought to manage on less.

Frankly, I would ask the leader of the opposition if he is serious in his proposal. In the case of any institution, be it a school, a hospital or a parliament, workers could choose their salaries. The nurses

could decide to work for full salary, half salary, with a premium, without one. This makes no sense.

No system in the world could operate that way. This would open the door to the worst kind of demagoguery. Someone sufficiently well off could announce that he would work in Parliament for free, and everyone would find that ever so nice. We would return to the days when representing one's fellow citizens was a privilege of the wealthy. That makes no sense.

I would ask the hon. leader of the opposition if what he is proposing to the Bloc members, that is to not take advantage of the proposed pay raise, is not something like the strategy used by the Canadian Alliance. At the time, all its members announced that they would not take advantage of the pension system and yet now they all do. Not one of them is not in the pension plan, but they let everyone think that it made no sense to take part in it. I would like to know if that is what he is proposing to us because, if he is, we are not interested.

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, specifically on the last point by my hon. colleague on the pension plan for members of Parliament, I do not have enough time to get into an elaborate speech on what has transpired over the 12 years I have been here. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, since you were the House leader and I was the whip at the time the bill came forward, we were involved in a lot of negotiations behind the scenes. On the passage of that legislation, all members of Parliament were forced back into the pension plan. The only choice that was left to us was whether to buy our back service. The reality is everybody is now in the same pension plan. That is my answer to question.

As to whether I was serious or not that the members of the Bloc Québécois should consider, since they appear to be opposed to this amendment, willingly giving up the extra stipend for their deputy House leader, deputy whip and caucus, I will leave that for them to decide.

I am expressing my disappointment that they would not be in agreement that those positions, whether it is in their party, our party or any of the four parties in the chamber, are deserving of that extra stipend just as the other positions are, as I laid out in my remarks. I am disappointed that they are not supporting this amendment even though I know they are opposed to the bill itself.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present the position of our political party.

I want to say from the outset that the reason our opinion differs from that of the other political parties is that we refuse to engage in any form of hypocrisy regarding the salaries and allowances of members of the House of Commons.

Indeed, two years ago, members of the House unanimously decided to link the salaries of parliamentarians with those of justices of the Supreme Court and other courts in Canada.

Government Orders

For the benefit of the citizens paying these salaries and watching us, the basic principle was that the Prime Minister's salary should be equivalent to that of the chief justice of the Supreme Court. I realize that the Prime Minister is not performing very well and that, perhaps, he does not deserve to hold this position, but as long as he is the Prime Minister, as far as we are concerned, he deserves the salary of the position. In our opinion, the Prime Minister should earn at least the same salary as the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada.

These two salaries are paid by taxpayers. Let us stop being hypocritical and admit that from these same taxes the public is paying us. A comparable scale enables the public to evaluate the importance of the work we do. I think everyone agrees that the job of Prime Minister of Canada is equal to if not greater in importance than that of chief justice of the Supreme Court. Moreover, the latter does not have to get elected and he does not have to justify his decisions. He is appointed for life and he must work in a much more protected environment than the Prime Minister, the ministers or any parliamentarian in this Parliament. This is our first point.

How is it that, today, we find ourselves holding a debate that has already taken place? We are once again talking about the salaries of parliamentarians and an amendment is proposed to allow holders of certain positions to enjoy additional monetary benefits.

My comments and my refusal to support the amendment have nothing to do with the value of the work done by these people. Absolutely not. My comments and our position have to do with the whole bill and the process whereby we are once again talking about the salaries of elected members, because of the Prime Minister's lack of courage. That is the reality.

When the Prime Minister realized that the committee recommendation on judges salaries granted an 11% salary increase, there was an outcry across Canada. The Prime Minister addressed this matter quickly. We would have expected a statesman to say that 11% is high for a salary increase and that the salary determination process for judges and members of Parliament would be reviewed. He should have said that in today's economy, it made no sense to give an 11% salary increase to all these people, because it is the public who pays. That is what we would have expected a statesman to say.

However, totally grandstanding, the Prime Minister grabbed the first microphone he could to say that MPs would not be getting an 11% salary increase and that their pay would be delinked from judges' salaries. He acted as though Canadians felt that an 11% increase was too high for MPs, but not for judges. Let us not be hypocrites. For Canadians, an 11% salary increase was too high for judges and for MPs.

An examination of the mechanism is called for, not hypocritical behaviour and image polishing. The Liberals wanted to have everyone believe that they were being generous and that they did not want an 11% increase, but would grant it to the judges.

The public will start trusting politicians when politicians start having principles. To have principles is to be able to carry an argument through to its conclusion.

• (1625)

If the outcome of that argument is that the result is out of proportion, the entire process must be reviewed and not just one part

or a little bit that serves our purposes and makes us look good. We must look at the entire process.

We cannot support the amendment and we cannot support the bill. We are busily undoing what this government had us doing 24 months ago. It is absolutely, incredibly, ridiculous. There is a limit to what the people can accept. The same members of Parliament rose in this House to tell us they had found the way to finally solve the problem of parliamentary salaries. Today, these same members are rising to tell us the opposite. I have never seen anything like it.

How can the people have confidence in this Liberal government? It is obvious that a Liberal government says whatever will give it an advantage at the time it is speaking. That is not discourse based on principles; that is discourse based on partisan political interests. That is what we face on the other side. That is why we refuse to act in the miserable film they are proposing. It is not right.

And as for the Conservative Party, to listen to them, it is time to start playing with salaries. We take the salary. We take it not. "I think I do not deserve it, so I will not take my allowance." "I deserve half my salary, so I will take half." What kind of society would we have if everyone applied the Conservatives' principles?

In schools, young teachers could say as they were hired, "I come from a well-off family; I will take half the salary to do the job". Another might say, "I think I am very good; I will take the full salary", or "I am going to do a good job, but I think being a teacher is not very tiring, so I will take three-quarters of the salary". This is all nonsense.

This does not seem like a parliament but rather like a day care. Everyone is bringing their own idea and their own opinion to the table, and the impression is that this is how society is built. We have to build our society on principles. We had established principles for determining parliamentary compensation. These principles have been set aside. The Bloc Québécois said that, since the compensation system was being set aside, parliamentarians would not get an increase. Since this is the case and we want to people to be happy, let us ask the public what it thinks. No increase for any parliamentarian: this is the position of the Bloc Québécois.

When the members of this House are responsible enough to properly discuss this issue is when we can talk about linking parliamentary compensation to compensation for senior public servants, the judiciary and whomever else we decide to link our compensation to.

I do not believe there would be a conflict of interest if we were to tie parliamentary compensation to that of public servants. Would we vote for huge salaries for 300,000 public servants so we could give ourselves a \$500 raise? That does not hold water. It is not fair, and the way the government is proceeding is not right.

Government Orders

There is one way of doing things for the judiciary, another for parliamentarians, which means much lower increases, yet another for senior officials, who get bigger raises than junior public servants, who in turn get a bigger increase than MPs. It is a total mess. Everything is on a case-by-case basis. Everything depends on partisan interests instead of on principles.

MPs, senior public servants, junior public servants, the judiciary and everyone, big or small, should get the same increase. The same principle should apply to everyone. In my mind, this would be the most logical solution and more acceptable to the public.

• (1630)

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I want to put some context into the debate on Bill C-30 and the compensation for members of Parliament.

As I recall, during the debate a couple of years ago, when the government was intent upon linking the salaries of members of Parliament to judges, I was opposed to that. I felt that what a judge did, in or out of a courtroom, had absolutely nothing to do with the job of a member of Parliament. In fact, there is arguably nothing similar about the two jobs.

Therefore at that time I felt there was no defensible argument for linking the salaries of members of Parliament to the salaries of judges. However I did believe that any linkage at all that removed from the House of Commons the ability to set its own remuneration was a step in the right direction. In other words, it was better than the status quo.

I believe that Bill C-30 is a step in the right direction. Now we can argue all along that the government should have brought this forward a couple of years ago. It should have done it then to link the members of Parliament to the similar average wage increase index that affects people out in the real world, in the private sector, and the increase in salary that they have to face.

This issue came to a head last spring when it leaked out that the commission, which sets the increase for the judges, appeared to be on the verge of setting a 10% or 11% increase in one year for judges and that same increase would have applied to members of Parliament. It is not defensible for us to go back to our ridings and say that we deserve a 10% or 11% increase in our salary when our constituents are getting maybe 1% at best.

I give that framework as a bit of background. I wonder why it is, never mind that the government made the mistake of linking it to judges to begin with, that we would not all be supportive of linking it to the same salary increase that the real world faces every day.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, today I really do not agree with the government, but I agree even less with the opposition.

We have just been told that the work done by an MP has nothing to do with that done by a judge. An MP makes laws and a judge interprets them. These areas are very closely related. I will admit that a judge cannot be compared to an MP in that an MP has to be elected. He has to fight every day and he has to constantly be reviewing his positions in order to please his fellow citizens. He is in

the hot seat at all times to keep his job, and he must rethink what he is doing every day. That is not the case for a judge. Once appointed, he sits and he brings down the decisions he wants. Unless he is really outrageous, he will stay there, never bothered by anyone. Let it be understood, I have the greatest respect for judges, but once they get in there, there is not much job insecurity.

That said, perhaps the work done by MPs is not like that done by judges. But now they are trying to tell me that it is more similar to what is done by some guy in a plant. I have a great deal of respect for people who work in companies with 500 employees, who work for Alcan, for instance, but I have the impression that my work is a bit more similar to that of a judge, who interprets the law, since I make laws, than to the work done by a man who does welding on some big machine or is an electrician in a plant.

The Conservative Party is telling us that we must separate ourselves from the judges, because our work has no connection to what they do. We should instead link it with what is done in the private sector in Canada. I have a great deal of respect for the work done in factories, but it does not strike me as bearing any resemblance to what we do in Parliament. Under that line of thinking then, the best link found so far is with the judges. Anyone finding a better one must tell us what it is, for time is of the essence. For the moment, I think that it was the best way to go, and still is.

• (1635)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. 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 Selkirk—Interlake, Freedom of Religion; the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain, Agriculture.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to rise in the House.

The New Democratic Party does support Bill C-30. We want to be on the record that we believe that this is a good motion that has been brought forward. We support the work that has gone on between the parties. The report stage amendment was based on all party discussions and we feel it provides fair remuneration for the caucus, the chairs, the deputy House leaders and the deputy whips.

As a side issue, unfortunately there is nothing for deputy hecklers, but hopefully will bring that in at a later date. That is a joke, for the record.

We support the amendment because we in our party believe that our caucus, chair, deputy House leader and deputy whip perform some very important functions in terms of our parliamentary duties in bringing forward the kind of legislation and issues that need to be addressed in this House. We also recognize the work that the representatives of all parties do in this regard.

Government Orders

We believe this deals with the MP issue of compensation. We supported it at second reading and in committee. We believe that pegging it to the industrial wage index is fair and we support that.

Once again, we are always concerned whenever wage increases or anything to do with remuneration is debated in the House as it tends to be a political football, but at this point it is time that we moved forward. It is fair and we support it.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: The vote stands deferred until 5:29 this evening.

* * *

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT ACT**

Hon. Ralph Goodale (for the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development) moved that Bill C-23, an act to establish the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development and to amend and repeal certain related acts, be read the third time and passed.

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development.

I am very honoured because this department is at the centre of issues about which I feel passionately. It is also at the centre of challenges that our country must meet if we want to continue paving the way to success in this 21st century.

As hon. members are aware, the Prime Minister announced the creation of the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development in December 2003 to better position the government, to strengthen Canada's social foundations and to build a true 21st century economy.

I am proud to be the parliamentary secretary of a department whose vision touches on the well-being and fulfilment of every single Canadian. That vision is a country where individuals have the opportunity to learn and to contribute to Canada's success by participating fully in an open and efficient labour market.

The department's mission is to improve the standard of living and quality of life of all Canadians by promoting a highly skilled and mobile labour force, and an efficient and inclusive labour market.

The bill that the House is considering today would give Human Resources and Skills Development Canada the legislative foundation we need to realize this comprehensive vision and mission.

Bill C-23 sets out:

The powers, duties and functions of the Minister extend to and include all matters relating to human resources and skills development in Canada over which Parliament has jurisdiction....

We will continue to work in partnership with the provinces and territories, employers and employees, and other key stakeholders.

The passing of this legislation will give the minister and the department and the Minister of Labour and Housing the authorities required to effectively fulfil this mandate.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

Bear in mind that this legislation does not create any new programs or services. It only reflects changes to the machinery of the government announced by the Prime Minister in December. The bill also lays the foundations for a new harmonized code governing the disclosure of personal information. This code will be more efficient and more transparent and will reflect our commitment to ensure continued protection of personal information.

[*English*]

It would also enable us to strike a fair balance between the need to protect Canadians' privacy and the use of such information for the effective administration of programs and services.

The Privacy Commissioner has expressed her solid support for the privacy code in this legislation. She said, "We think this is a very positive measure. We urge you to adopt it".

I would like to take the time to remind the House of the importance and breadth of the mandate of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. There are many reasons why the average Canadian is more likely to be in contact with the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development than most other federal departments and those reasons relate to the diverse programs that we offer.

The department is responsible for \$20 billion in benefits for Canadians. By providing employment insurance benefits, for example, the department assists Canadians during times of transition, such as job loss or sickness. EI benefits also enable parents to be at home with a newborn or a newly adopted child or to care for a gravely ill family member.

Government Orders

Our employment programs, which include employment insurance active measures and the youth employment strategy, help thousands of unemployed Canadians each year to develop skills and find good sustainable jobs.

Our workplace skills strategy assists employers across the country through initiatives like the sector councils and labour market information.

The department's learning programs, including the Canada student loans program and the Canada education saving grants program, help make post-secondary education more accessible to millions of Canadians.

I also want to mention particularly the National Literacy Secretariat which funds projects to support literacy across the country, in every community that is represented here, including my own.

• (1645)

[Translation]

Under its labour program, the department provides mediation and conciliation services to resolve labour disputes affecting the federal government.

Our programs for the homeless include many initiatives to help communities across the country address problems with housing and homelessness. The Regional Homelessness Fund and the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative represent two of these initiatives.

[English]

As I am sure the House will agree, all these programs have a very direct and positive impact on the lives of Canadians.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight how the department will be focusing its efforts in the future.

Given the demographic trends, the rate of growth of our labour force is slowing. Although this phenomenon is not unique to Canada, we lag behind a number of our international competitors in terms of positioning ourselves to enhance productivity. We can no longer rely on the quantity of our labour force to support economic growth. We, like many other industrial economies, must rely more and more on the quality of our labour force to remain competitive and to spur economic growth.

Therefore, Human Resources and Skills Development's priority will be the development of Canada's human capital. By human capital, I mean the sum total of all our citizens' skills. Canada's success as a nation and the well-being of us all increasingly depend on how we develop this human capital.

This will be the department's contribution to the government's broad objective of sustaining and enhancing a productive and innovative economy, a vibrant and healthy society, and an efficient and inclusive labour market. We want to see a nation where all our citizens can readily acquire the skills and knowledge they need to succeed and where everyone adopts and values a culture of lifelong learning.

For individual Canadians, our focus on human capital will mean increased earnings, sustained employment and enhanced health and

social well-being. For employers, human capital will mean a skilled, mobile labour force and increased investment in training and innovative workplaces.

We will build a human capital strategy on three pillars. The first is lifelong learning, which I have mentioned. The second is modernizing our employment programming. The third is a national workplace skills strategy.

[Translation]

Developing a culture of continuous learning is a prerequisite to ensuring the quality labour force the new economy calls for. At a very early age, Canadians have to have access to skills development opportunities. Moreover, they will have to develop and practice their skills throughout their working lives.

[English]

To support lifelong learning, Human Resources and Skills Development will continue to improve the Canada student loans program as well as enhance the Canada education savings grant to encourage low income and medium income families to start investing for their children's long term education. We will also be reviewing student debt measures and support for part time students.

We know we face some major challenges in our learning goals for Canadians. Eight million working age Canadians lack the literacy skills needed to meet the demands of the knowledge based economy. Raising literacy and essential skill levels will be critical to improving the quality of our workforce and contributing to Canada's social prosperity.

The second pillar of our human capital strategy will see the renewal of the department's employment programs to foster a productive, adaptable and resilient labour force.

We will develop an integrated labour market strategy to respond to emerging labour market trends and work with the provinces to update labour market programming to better reflect the realities of work in the 21st century. Part of this involves strengthening employment insurance and making it more responsive to the current labour market realities.

• (1650)

[Translation]

This is why the budget included a number of measures to this end, such as a new premium rate setting mechanism to increase transparency and accountability and to provide increased rate stability by setting a ceiling on employment insurance premium rates. This mechanism will ensure that the rates paid by workers will not exceed the current rates over the next two years.

In addition, unemployed Canadians will receive more support through three new pilot projects launched in high unemployment regions.

*Government Orders**[English]*

This is to allow clients new to the labour market, or returning after an extended absence from it, to access EI benefits after 840 hours of work rather than 910 hours, when linked with EI employment programs, and to calculate EI benefits based on the “best 14 weeks” of earnings over the 52 weeks preceding a claim of benefits. This will mean that for individuals with sporadic work patterns, EI benefit levels do a better job of reflecting their full time work patterns. Last, it will increase the “working while on claim” threshold to allow individuals to earn the greater of \$75 or 40% of benefits so that they can continue to work without reduction in their benefits.

Continuation of the pilot project that provides workers in high unemployment regions with five additional weeks of regular benefits is another improvement.

There is the extension of the EI so-called transitional boundaries in the economic regions of Madawaska-Charlotte, New Brunswick, and the lower St. Lawrence North Shore of Quebec for another year.

Of course, EI is only part of the answer since we also need to address the growth of self-employment and the requirements for continuous skills upgrading. As we need to enhance our employment programs in support of labour market participation, this means we will renew our efforts to bring in those at the margins of the labour force, like aboriginal Canadians, new Canadians and older workers. We want all Canadians to be able to develop and use their full skills and talents.

The third pillar for developing our human capital is our workplace skills strategy. We are focusing on the workplace because it is ideal setting for Canadians to gain skills, to re-skill and to up-skill for the new economy. The workplace skills strategy will encourage skills development and use through collaborative partnerships with business, unions, learning and training institutions, and sector councils.

Recognizing the important role workplace learning can have in improving labour market productivity and the quality of Canada's workforce, the recent budget announced significant new investments of \$125 million over three years.

First, it will strengthen apprenticeship systems in Canada. The government will continue working with the provinces and territories and other partners to enhance interprovincial mobility in the skilled trades and support high quality apprenticeships for all Canadians

Second, it will also support the testing of new skills initiatives that are demand driven and targeted to employed people. A new workplace skills innovation initiative will encourage employers to invest in the skills development of their employees and inform them of government labour market policy and programming.

Third, we will also foster dialogue on workplace skills issues through the workplace partners panel, comprised of business, labour and training leaders. The new panel will be a forum for sharing best practices and innovations and increasing industry leadership and commitment in the area of skills development.

The strategy will also support workplace innovation through demonstration projects and enhance and refine existing tools to support skills development in the workplace.

The department also will continue to advance the government's foreign credential recognition program. Between 2011 and 2015, we expect that virtually all of Canada's net labour growth will come from immigration.

We must find new and better ways of attracting skilled immigrants and helping newcomers integrate into our labour markets so that they can apply the skills and work experience they bring with them. This is why we are investing \$68 million over six years to help find better ways to assess and recognize professional credentials and work experience earned outside of Canada. Through the efforts of a broad range of partners we will develop foreign credential recognition processes that are fair, accessible, transparent and consistent all across the country.

• (1655)

These processes will also be rigorous in order to protect the health and safety of Canadians. For example, we have reached an agreement with the provinces and territories and key medical stakeholders on improved procedures for licensing foreign trained doctors. A similar initiative is underway for foreign trained nurses and consultations will soon begin with other health professions.

We are also supporting the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers on an action plan to integrate international engineering graduates more quickly and efficiently into the Canadian labour market. In addition, we will be working with employers and sector councils to find ways to recognize the skills and prior experience of immigrants seeking work in non-regulated occupations, which make up 85% of the Canadian labour market.

Our goals for human capital development will only be achieved by working closely with our partners, including the provincial and territorial governments, businesses, unions, sector councils, education and training institutions, community organizations and municipalities. We will continue to respect provincial jurisdiction while recognizing that the federal government has an important role to play.

The legislation under consideration today also will enable the department to continue its work on other priority issues that matter intensely to Canadians. A key priority issue is the renewal of the aboriginal human resources development strategy and work with communities through the urban aboriginal strategy to find solutions to the issues that aboriginal people face in our cities.

Government Orders

The department will also work to ensure that official language minority communities have the tools their members need to participate in and contribute fully to Canadian society.

I would like to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons With Disabilities for their work on the bill.

I believe I have demonstrated that the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development has a major role to play in helping Canada to address the challenges of the knowledge-based economy and provide an even better future for every person, community and business in the country.

With the mandate, authority and necessary tools this legislation provides, the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development will be able to assist individual Canadians to learn and continually develop their skills. This crucial investment will, in turn, enable our citizens to contribute to Canada's economic success and to their own well-being and sense of fulfilment.

The passing of the legislation will, therefore, help ensure that Canada continues to be internationally recognized for the quality of life we offer to our citizens and for its vital and innovative economies.

For these reasons and for the fact that a standing committee of the House and the House endorsed the division of the former HRDC department, I strongly support the legislation.

• (1700)

Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I sit with the member for Peterborough on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons With Disabilities.

My question has to do with ministerial accountability. This is an issue I have raised before. As we all know, before HRDC was split into two ministries, there was a significant scandal in that ministry regarding the minister's inability to keep track of what was going on. The defence at that time was that the ministry was simply too large and it was impossible for one person to know everything that was happening there.

Since the ministry has been split, we have two separate ministries that are linked in many ways. They are not separate but connected in some ways. It raises an issue of ministerial accountability. Our system is based on the principle of ministerial accountability. Everything that happens in government, a minister is responsible for that.

I would like to hear comments from the parliamentary secretary. Would he agree that when we have programs under one minister but services being delivered by staff from another ministry, as will be the case between social development and human resources skills development, there may be gaps in the principal ministerial accountability?

Hon. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member and his colleagues for their work on the committee.

I know this is a very serious question because ministerial responsibility is something on which our system depends. In this case I would beg to differ. I supported the division of the former

department, not simply because it was too large but because it was too diverse and there were too many cultures in it. That in itself created complexities and problems.

It is a bit like dividing Siamese twins, not that I have done it. It is a very intricate process to take two departments which have been linked for generations and then divide them. As my colleague put it, how does one maintain this ministerial responsibility?

I suggest a number of things to him. I think the division is appropriate and I suspect he does too. It is the right thing to do. There are formal overlaps in this legislation between the two departments, but they are not unique.

To give an example, in my speech I mentioned aboriginal affairs and education, and we have a Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. In a very real sense, our aboriginal division, although it is responsible to the minister of HRSD, is in fact delivering programs which are sort of developed in conjunction with another department.

As I see it, there are two formal overlaps at the moment. Call centres will be responsible for the new Department of Social Development and delivery on the ground is the responsibility of HRSD. I think decisions of ministerial responsibility will be made on the grounds of the programs which are being delivered, not in immediate response to them.

I hope that is a useful response.

Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the address by my colleague, the hon. member for Peterborough. He listed an enormous number of things that the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development of Canada presumably will be able to undertake, if this legislation is passed. That is what we kept hearing. I guess, if that is true, it speaks to how many wonderful things the department has not been doing so far. I say that somewhat tongue in cheek because the department has been doing most of those things thus far.

We have already seen the division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade under Bill C-31 and Bill C-32, similar to what we have with the legislation in front of us, which the government undertook a year and a half ago, and it was of absolutely no consequence whatsoever with the government. When it was finally implemented by the counterpart legislation for foreign affairs, it was defeated, yet the government forged ahead with the division in any event. It did not make any difference.

Are we not wasting our time today debating this, since it seems to have little consequence to what the government actually does?

• (1705)

Hon. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I am faced with very well-informed people today because they are members of the committee. I thank my colleague for his work on it.

I will say first off that a big difference between the two legislations, and I know less naturally about the other legislation, is that this legislation has its roots in a unanimous report of a standing committee fully supported in the House of Commons. There was an inquiry into the previous department, as was mentioned by my predecessor.

Government Orders

We are looking at something which the House can be proud of because the House of Commons said that one of the recommendations of the committee report, which was accepted by the House, was that the old department should be divided. This is a serious matter from that point of view.

From the point of view of public policy, which goes back to the previous question, it is almost inevitable in our society that government departments operate on a silo basis. They work within themselves and have a mandate. One of the difficulties is reaching out between them. In this case, we have two more effective silos, but we also have useful links between them which help us with the problems which silos create.

It is a product of the House of Commons, not a government initiative. It has been carried out in an effective way. For this one department, it is my great hope, if one reads the mission statement of HRSD, that this will department become not the delivery mechanism but the point of contact for everything to do with lifelong learning in the federal system. That alone is something needed in Ottawa.

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one question I wanted to ask was touched on briefly by the parliamentary secretary in answer to another question about why we were doing this and why it was because these good things were not being done in the past.

The parliamentary secretary very astutely pointed out that the government was listening quite attentively and implementing a unanimous recommendation made by a committee of the House of Commons, albeit in a previous Parliament.

Is this not an example of how well our Prime Minister has listened to the advice given by a committee of the House of Commons? It appears to me, very objectively, to be precisely the case.

Hon. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I tried to make that point. As it happened, I was chair of the standing committee concerned and was very involved with it. Although this is a minority Parliament we are used to consultation and discussion to a certain point, in those days that was not common. There was a great deal of consultation in committee and it was agreed that a revision of some sort was one of the solutions to the problems at which the committee was looking. The House of Commons agreed to it.

I would agree that this was a large example of individual members of the House of Commons having an influence all the way through to massive changes in a structure which involved \$60 billion in the previous department.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague from Peterborough to make the following correction. The work of the Standing Committee—

• (1710)

The Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the question and comment period has expired. Resuming debate. The hon. member for Chambly—Borduas.

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Speaker, this is even better since I can make the correction myself. I think that my hon. colleague is seriously mistaken when he says that the other opposition parties also agree to divide the department into two.

I want to remind my colleague that the work done previously was conducted within a framework totally different from the one to which this bill refers. The bill makes reference to concepts with which the Bloc Québécois completely disagrees, in particular the Employment Insurance Commission and infringements in areas of jurisdiction relating to on-the-job training and so forth. I have already talked about this, as has my colleague for Québec.

Contrary to what the member opposite said, we disagree for very specific reasons. This bill ignores the consensus reached during the previous session of Parliament.

The Bloc Québécois will vote against the bill for many reasons. The first of which, as I mentioned, is that it infringes in areas under provincial jurisdiction. For Quebec, this is serious, particularly with regard to labour management.

And there is the EI fund also. The Prime Minister used the proposed division of the former Department of Human Resources Development into two departments to establish the Department of Social Development and maintain the EI fund in its present form, in spite of the opposition from all stakeholders in the Canadian society, and the Quebec society in particular. I will come back to that. This does not reflect the consensus at all. In this regard, the Prime Minister is on the wrong track, as I will show.

The Prime Minister split the department the very day he was sworn in. He did so in a hurry, because of the recent election. It was obvious that the matter had been thought over for quite some time. I will come back later to the intention behind this decision, because it is clearly different from the one set out by our distinguished colleague from Peterborough.

This bill adds to existing bureaucracy. It does not introduce anything new or additional in terms of the services to be delivered through this Department of Human Resources and Skills Development, which will be duplicated, naturally, with the Department of Social Development.

One objective pursued by the government with this Department of Human Resources and Skills Development is to mobilize the private sector, non-governmental organizations and communities on community development, the social economy and social development. There are also plans for an adequate income security system for seniors, persons with disabilities, families and children and for integrated policy development and program delivery.

This adds nothing to the services currently provided. It only adds a second head, grafted on to the existing body, namely the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development, and chops off arms. Nothing is added to the existing structure, but the unstated purpose is the one in the latest budget.

Government Orders

● (1715)

I remind the House that because this is about splitting a department in two, we cannot limit our discussion to Bill C-23, which concerns the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development. We must also, logically, discuss Bill C-22, which proposes the creation of the Department of Social Development.

I remind the House that there are currently 14,000 public servants in this department, which has a budget of \$20 billion. The Department of Social Development will absorb 12,000 of these public servants, and have a budget of \$53 billion. Up to that point, all is well. The same employees will be assigned to the same places, but spread out in service points across the country. These service points will include management of 105 employment insurance processing centres and 11 income security programs processing centres .

It is said that the Department of Social Development will use exactly the same channels to provide exactly the same services as before. What has changed, then? A minister has been added to a institution providing services under the social safety net, namely employment insurance, income security for the aged, job-related training, for a category of sectors, and more than I can mention.

Let us move on and look closer at what they want to do with that. The answer is found in the budget.

All stakeholders in our society are crying out for the creation of an independent employment insurance fund, with improvements. That fund would be managed by the two groups that contribute to it, namely employees and employers. We want contributions to cover employment insurance program requirement, on the order of \$12 billion to \$15 billion annually.

The surpluses accumulated in the employment insurance fund over the past eight years total close to \$47 billion. What happened to these surpluses? They were used for other purposes. How were they generated? They were generated with the employment insurance benefits that were not paid to individuals who were entitled to these benefits and who had paid for them.

A claim is being made in this regard. I will get back to it later on, in the context of the bill and the standing committee.

My distinguished colleague often makes reference to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. On February 15, the committee tabled in this House a unanimous report recommending the establishment of an employment insurance fund administered by those who contribute to it, namely employers and employees. This committee, to which my distinguished colleague is referring, unanimously asked the government to put back in the employment insurance fund the \$46 billion or \$47 billion that have been diverted over the past several years.

Not only is this measure not provided in the budget or in this bill, the contrary that is confirmed. This bill provides for an employment insurance commission consisting of four commissioners. Just think: there will be one representative for employers, one for the some 18 or 19 million workers across the country who contribute to

employment insurance, and two government representatives. This does not change anything in the current situation.

Needless to say the government will continue to divert the funds intended for employment insurance.

● (1720)

There are two stances. First we are told in this House that the issue of EI is a priority and the government will take care of it. Timid measures were presented suggesting that the best was yet to come. Nothing specific happens. When we look at the bill before us we realize they want to keep something that is unacceptable.

Let us move along. I come now to the budget. That is why I say we need to know exactly what this government is trying to achieve. Not only does it not want to put back into the EI fund what it took out, and not only does it not want to improve EI benefits, even though it has the means to do so, but it is giving the expenditure review committee the mandate to use various cuts to save \$2 billion or \$3 billion in the EI program. Where will this money be taken? It will be taken from the EI contributions.

In other words, the government is doing indirectly what the House will not allow it to do directly. Before the holidays, this House voted on a resolution as follows:

From now on, the employment insurance fund is to be used only for employment insurance purposes and the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, is given the mandate to recommend to the House the measures to take to ensure that this fund is indeed used only for employment insurance.

Instead of complying with the wishes of the House, the government is in the process of doing indirectly what the House told it not to do directly. This is totally unacceptable.

Where will this money be taken from? They say it will come from programs or structures. They say contributions might be reduced. Yet, that is not what those who are contributing to EI are saying. Maintain the contributions at the current rate and improve the program. What is happening now is totally unacceptable.

When we look at the unstated intention of this bill, to truly understand its meaning, we have to look at other documents. I have here a highly important document in which most of the recommendations were made unanimously. It is quite recent and concerns current factual data bases, not different data from the last Parliament. It is the report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

The first eight recommendations are unanimous. They recommend an independent fund so the government will no longer be able to dip into it for other purposes. It will be administered by the contributors and used to improve the benefits of those who pay into it. This has to mean something more solid than what the parliamentary secretary, the hon. member for Peterborough, is referring to.

Government Orders

In recent weeks in this House, we have also heard the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development delighting in the measures she had presented here relating to Employment Insurance. The Quebec lieutenant, the transport minister, added that any reasonable unemployed person would find the budget and the government's position excellent. They were about the only two to say so.

In connection with this, the minister referred to a New Brunswick worker who claimed to be delighted with it. If anyone wants to consult them, I have some letters here that are addressed to the minister.

● (1725)

They come from the Canadian Labour Congress. The president sent me a copy, along with a letter. The CLC represents 3 million workers. The Quebec component alone represents over 1 million. Many are going short everywhere in the country, in Quebec in particular: the jobless, youth centres, women's shelters, municipalities. Just about every group of society is represented among those millions of workers and people working with those who are suffering because of the government's inadequate, restrictive and inhumane measures.

It is unacceptable, and at the same time ironic. It is a clear illustration of what goes on in this place and the mess things are in. As we have seen, while the government has the ability to make people poor, it is, in a muddled sort of manner, proposing measures to the members of this House that will make them rich.

Hon. Don Boudria: Our benefits have been reduced.

Mr. Yves Lessard: Yes, benefits can be reduced. As for the hon. member's benefits, perhaps he should explain that to the unemployed. His colleagues are not even able to meet the unemployed. Their Quebec lieutenant is incapable of meeting with the unemployed; he refuses to meet with them. Here, they say that the unemployed are happy. If they were happy, they would go to talk with them.

The people of Acadie—Bathurst, in the editorial in *L'Acadie nouvelle*, are giving the minister a rough ride over her position. In almost all municipalities where there are seasonal workers, editorials are saying that it is unacceptable and lacking in common sense. One journalist even suggested that we find a way to spend half an hour with the minister to try to get her to listen to reason. That is what is in the newspapers. The minister has not talked about that. She has said that everyone was happy with it. The Minister of Transport, the Quebec lieutenant, and the minister are not representative of what people are going through in rural ridings, especially with respect to seasonal employment in businesses, whether it is textiles, shoes, softwood lumber and our forest workers, seniors or the POWA. Recommendation 13 in the committee report, which I have here, was passed unanimously. There is nothing here, except insensitivity to these situations. It is inconceivable.

They could say there is no money. That is not true. Not only is there money, but that money belongs to the contributors. As a result, people are in need. Families have been impoverished this way, and here the government struts about, concerned about our salary increase and so on, when there are people in need who have paid their contributions. Really!

I would be embarrassed. I think they lack courage. Here, all is well. Passing measures like this that impoverish people, and then refusing—

* * *

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-30, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 23, 2004, as reported (with amendment) from the committee and of Motion No. 1.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but it being 5:29 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred division on Motion No. 1 at the report stage of Bill C-30.

Call in the members.

● (1805)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 49)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Adams	Alcock
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Angus	Bagnell
Bains	Bakopanos
Barnes	Beaumier
Bélangier	Bennett
Benoit	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blaikie
Blondin-Andrew	Boivin
Boshcoff	Boudria
Bradshaw	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Broadbent
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Bulte
Cannis	Carr
Carrie	Carroll
Casey	Casson
Catterall	Chamberlain
Chan	Chong
Christopherson	Coderre
Comartin	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies	Day
DeVillers	Devolin
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Drouin
Dryden	Duncan
Easter	Efford
Epp	Eyking
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Folco	Fontana
Forseth	Frulla
Fry	Gallant
Godbout	Godfrey
Godin	Goldring
Goodale	Graham
Grewal (Newton—North Delta)	Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
Guarnieri	Guergis
Hanger	Harris
Harrison	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Holland	Ianno
Jaffer	Jean
Jennings	Julian
Kadis	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karetak-Lindell	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kilgour

Government Orders

Komarnicki
Lapierre (Outremont)
Lauzon
LeBlanc
Longfield
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Malhi
Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
McCallum
McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Menzies
Miller
Minna
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Myers
Nicholson
Obhrai
Owen
Paradis
Penson
Phinney
Powers
Preston
Rajotte
Redman
Reid
Robillard
Rota
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Sgro
Silva
Simms
Smith (Pontiac)
Solberg
St. Amand
Stoffer
Szabo
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Toews
Torsney
Ur
Valley
Vellacott
Wappel
Wasylycia-Leis
Wilfert
Yelich — 203

Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lastewka
Layton
Lee
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Macklin
Maloney
Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
McDonough
McGuire
McTeague
Merrifield
Mills
Mitchell
Murphy
Neville
O'Connor
Oda
Pacetti
Patry
Peterson
Poilievre
Prentice
Proulx
Ratansi
Regan
Richardson
Rodriguez
Saada
Savoy
Schellenberger
Scott
Siksay
Simard (Saint Boniface)
Skelton
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Sorenson
St. Denis
Stronach
Temelkovski
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tonks
Trost
Valeri
Van Loan
Volpe
Warawa
Watson
Williams

NAYS

Members

André
Bachand
Bergeron
Blais
Bonin
Bourgeois
Brunelle
Clavet
Crête
Deschamps
Duceppe
Gagnon (Québec)
Gauthier
Guimond
Kotto
Lavallée
Lessard
Marceau
O'Brien
Perron
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Poirier-Rivard
Sauvageau
Steckle
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Vincent — 50

Asselin
Bellavance
Bigras
Boire
Bouchard
Brown (Oakville)
Cardin
Côté
Demers
Desrochers
Faille
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Guay
Hubbard
Laframboise
Lemay
Lévesque
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Paquette
Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon
Roy
St-Hilaire
Telegdi

PAIRED

Members

Bonsant	Boulianne
Carrier	Comuzzi
Emerson	Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Galloway	Gaudet
Khan	Lalonde
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)	Loubier
McLellan	Pettigrew
Simard (Beauport—Limoulu)	Thibault (West Nova)
Wrzesnewskyj	Zed — 18

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): I declare Motion No. 1 carried.

[*English*]

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in.

Hon. Karen Redman: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to apply the votes with Liberal members voting in favour of the motion before us, except for those who wish to be recorded against.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, members of the Conservative Party will be voting in favour of the motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Madam Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois are opposed to this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Madam Speaker, members of the NDP will be voting in favour of this motion. Also, I would like to add the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley to the list.

[*English*]

Mr. Tom Wappel: Madam Speaker, I wish to be recorded as voting against the motion.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: Madam Speaker, I wish to be recorded as voting no to the motion.

Mr. Raymond Bonin: Madam Speaker, I wish to be recorded as voting no to the motion.

Mr. Charles Hubbard: Madam Speaker, I wish to be recorded as voting no to the motion.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: Madam Speaker, I wish to be recorded as voting no to the motion.

Mr. Paul Steckle: Madam Speaker, I wish to be recorded as being in opposition to the motion.

Hon. Jerry Pickard: Madam Speaker, I wish to be recorded as a no vote.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Madam Speaker, I wish to be recorded as voting against the motion.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Madam Speaker, I wish to be recorded as being against the motion.

Ms. Bonnie Brown: Madam Speaker, I wish to be recorded as voting no to the motion.

Government Orders

Mr. John Cannis: Madam Speaker, I wish to be recorded as voting against the motion.

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 50*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Adams	Alcock
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Angus	Bagnell
Bains	Bakopanos
Barnes	Bélanger
Bennett	Benoit
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blaikie	Blondin-Andrew
Boivin	Boshcoff
Boudria	Bradshaw
Breitkreuz	Brison
Broadbent	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bulte	Carr
Carrie	Carroll
Casey	Casson
Catterall	Chamberlain
Chan	Chong
Christopherson	Coderre
Comartin	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies
Day	DeVillers
Devolin	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Drouin	Dryden
Duncan	Easter
Efford	Epp
Eyking	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Folco
Fontana	Forseth
Frulla	Fry
Gallant	Godbout
Godfrey	Godin
Goldring	Goodale
Graham	Grewal (Newton—North Delta)
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)	Guarnieri
Guergis	Hanger
Harris	Harrison
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Holland
Ianno	Jaffier
Jean	Julian
Kadis	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karetak-Lindell	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kilgour
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lapierre (Outremont)	Lastewka
Lauzon	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Longfield	Lukiwski
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Macklin
Malhi	Maloney
Mark	Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
McCallum	McDonough
McGuinty	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McTeague
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Minna	Mitchell
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy
Myers	Neville

Nicholson	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Owen	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Penson	Peterson
Phinney	Poilievre
Powers	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Rajotte	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Reid	Richardson
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rota	Saada
Savage	Savoy
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Scott
Sgro	Siksay
Silva	Simard (Saint Boniface)
Simms	Skelton
Smith (Pontiac)	Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Solberg	Sorenson
St. Amand	St. Denis
Stoffer	Stronach
Szabo	Temelkovski
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews	Tonks
Torsney	Trost
Ur	Valeri
Valley	Van Loan
Vellacott	Volpe
Warawa	Wasylcia-Leis
Watson	Wilfert
Williams	Yelich— 200

NAYS

Members

André	Asselin
Bachand	Beaumier
Bellavance	Bergeron
Bigras	Blais
Boire	Bonin
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brown (Oakville)	Brunelle
Cannis	Cardin
Clavet	Côté
Crête	Demers
Deschamps	Desrochers
Duceppe	Faillie
Gagnon (Québec)	Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gauthier	Guay
Guimond	Hubbard
Jennings	Kotto
Laframboise	Lavallée
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Marceau
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	O'Brien
Paquette	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Plamondon	Poirier-Rivard
Roy	Sauvageau
St-Hilaire	Steckle
Telegdi	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Vincent	Wappel— 54

PAIRED

Members

Bonsant	Boulianne
Carrier	Comuzzi
Emerson	Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Galloway	Gaudet
Khan	Lalonde
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)	Loubier
McLellan	Pettigrew
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)	Thibault (West Nova)
Wrzesnewskyj	Zed— 18

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): I declare the motion carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1815)

[English]

FOREIGN CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION PROGRAM

The House resumed from March 10 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion.

The question is on the amendment.

•(1825)

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

(Division No. 51)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alecock
Bagnell	Bains
Bakopanos	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bennett	Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew	Boivin
Bonin	Boshcoff
Boudria	Bradshaw
Brison	Brown (Oakville)
Bulte	Cannis
Carr	Carroll
Catterall	Chamberlain
Chan	Cotler
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Drouin	Dryden
Easter	Efford
Eyking	Folco
Frulla	Fry
Godbout	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Guarnieri	Holland
Hubbard	Ianno
Jennings	Kadis
Karetak-Lindell	Kilgour
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lapierre (Outremont)
Lastewka	LeBlanc
Lee	Longfield
Macklin	Malhi
Maloney	Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	McCallum
McGuinty	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Minna
Mitchell	Murphy
Myers	Neville
O'Brien	Owen
Pacetti	Paradis
Patry	Peterson
Phinney	Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Powers	Proulx
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rota
Saada	Savage
Savoy	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sgro
Silva	Simard (Saint Boniface)
Simms	Smith (Pontiac)

St. Amand
Steckle
Telegdi
Tonks
Ur
Valley
Wappel

St. Denis
Szabo
Temelkovski
Torsney
Valeri
Volpe
Wilfert— 112

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
André	Angus
Asselin	Bachand
Bellavance	Benoit
Bergeron	Bezan
Bigras	Blaikie
Blais	Boire
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Breitkreuz	Broadbent
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brunelle
Cardin	Carrie
Casey	Casson
Chong	Christopherson
Clavet	Comartin
Côté	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Davies	Day
Demers	Deschamps
Desrochers	Devolin
Duceppe	Duncan
Epp	Faille
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Forseth	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)	Gallant
Gauthier	Godin
Goldring	Grewal (Newton—North Delta)
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)	Guay
Guergis	Guimond
Hanger	Harper
Harris	Harrison
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Jaffer
Jean	Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Komaricki
Kotto	Laframboise
Lauzon	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Lukiwski	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Marceau
Mark	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
McDonough	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Paquette
Penson	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Poilievre	Poirier-Rivard
Prentice	Preston
Rajotte	Reid
Richardson	Roy
Sauvageau	Schellenberger
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Siksay
Skelton	Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Solberg	Sorenson
St-Hilaire	Stoffer
Stronach	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Trost
Toews	Vellacott
Van Loan	Warawa
Vincent	Watson
Wasylycia-Leis	Yelich— 138
Williams	

Private Members' Business

PAIRED

Members

Bonsant	Boulianne
Carrier	Comuzzi
Emerson	Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Galloway	Gaudet
Khan	Lalonde
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)	Loubier
McLellan	Pettigrew
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)	Thibault (West Nova)
Wrzesnewskyj	Zed— 18

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): I declare the amendment lost.

Ms. Libby Davies: Madam Speaker, given that the amendment has just been defeated, I would seek unanimous consent of the House that we now go to a vote on the main motion.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): There is no unanimous consent. Accordingly the motion is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

* * *

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

The House resumed from March 22 consideration of the motion that Bill C-272, an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (sponsorship of relative), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion for second reading stage of Bill C-272 under private members' business.

● (1840)

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

(Division No. 52)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	André
Angus	Asselin
Bachand	Bellavance
Bergeron	Bigras
Blaikie	Blais
Boire	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Broadbent
Brunelle	Cardin
Christopherson	Clavet
Comartin	Côté
Crête	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Davies
Demers	Deschamps
Desrochers	Devolin
Duceppe	Faille
Gagnon (Québec)	Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gauthier	Godin
Goldring	Grewal (Newton—North Delta)
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)	Guay

Guimond	Harris
Jaffer	Julian
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kilgour
Kotto	Laframboise
Lavallée	Layton
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Marceau
Mark	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
McDonough	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Obhrai	Oda
Paquette	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Poirier-Rivard	Reid
Roy	Sauvageau
Siksay	St-Hilaire
Stoffer	Telegdi
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Vincent	Wasylycia-Leis— 76

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Alcock	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Bagnell
Bains	Bakopanos
Barnes	Beaumier
Bélangier	Bennett
Benoit	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blondin-Andrew
Boivin	Bonin
Boshcoff	Boudria
Bradshaw	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bulte	Cannis
Carr	Carrie
Carroll	Casey
Casson	Catterall
Chamberlain	Chan
Chong	Colter
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Day
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Drouin
Dryden	Duncan
Easter	Efford
Epp	Eyking
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Folco	Frulla
Fry	Gallant
Godbout	Godfrey
Goodale	Guarnieri
Guergis	Hanger
Harper	Harrison
Hearn	Hill
Holland	Hubbard
Ianno	Jean
Jennings	Kadis
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karetak-Lindell
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lapierre (Outremont)
Lastewka	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lee
Longfield	Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Macklin	Maloney
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McCallum	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague	Menzies
Merrifield	Mills
Mitchell	Moore (Fundy Royal)
Murphy	Myers
Neville	Nicholson
O'Brien	O'Connor
Owen	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Penson	Peterson
Phinney	Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Poilievre	Powers

Prentice
 Proulx
 Ratansi
 Regan
 Robillard
 Rota
 Savage
 Scarpaleggia
 Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Sgro
 Simard (Saint Boniface)
 Skelton
 Solberg
 St. Amand
 Steckle
 Szabo
 Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
 Tonks
 Trost
 Valeri
 Van Loan
 Volpe
 Warawa
 Wilfert
 Yelich— 167

Preston
 Rajotte
 Redman
 Richardson
 Rodrigue
 Saada
 Savoy
 Schellenberger
 Scott
 Silva
 Simms
 Smith (Pontiac)
 Sorenson
 St. Denis
 Stronach
 Temelkovski
 Toews
 Torsney
 Ur
 Valley
 Vellacott
 Wappel
 Watson
 Williams

PAIRED

Members

Bonsant
 Carrier
 Emerson
 Gallaway
 Khan
 Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
 McLellan
 Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)
 Wrzesnewskyj

Boulianne
 Comuzzi
 Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
 Gaudet
 Lalonde
 Loubier
 Pettigrew
 Thibault (West Nova)
 Zed— 18

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): I declare the motion lost.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed certain bills, to which the concurrence of this House is desired.

THE ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall
 Ottawa

March 23, 2005

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 23rd day of March, 2005, at 4:56 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Curtis Barlow
 Deputy Secretary
 Policy, Program and Protocol

The schedule indicates that royal assent was given to Bill S-17, an act to implement an agreement, conventions and protocols concluded

Adjournment Proceedings

between Canada and Gabon, Ireland, Armenia, Oman and Azerbaijan for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion—Chapter No. 8; Bill C-20, an act to provide for real property taxation powers of first nations, to create a First Nations Tax Commission, First Nations Financial Management Board, First Nations Finance Authority and First Nations Statistical Institute and to make consequential amendments to other acts—Chapter No. 9; Bill C-6, an act to establish the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and to amend or repeal certain acts—Chapter No. 10; Bill C-39, an act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act and to enact an act respecting the provision of funding for diagnostic and medical equipment—Chapter No. 11; Bill C-41, an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service of Canada for the financial year ending March 31, 2005—Chapter No. 12; Bill C-42, an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service of Canada for the financial year ending March 31, 2006—Chapter No. 13; and Bill C-18, an act to amend the Telefilm Canada Act and another act—Chapter No. 14.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

● (1845)

[English]

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Madam Speaker, on December 3 I raised a question on an issue that has arisen in Manitoba. It has also happened in Saskatchewan and British Columbia.

The province of Manitoba informed all marriage commissioners that they had to perform same sex marriages and that if they refused, they would have their licences revoked. Right off the bat, 11 marriage commissioners resigned. Two more refused to quit and have taken this matter before the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

My question is quite simple. We have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Canada, yet the government has not stood up for these individuals' rights. The freedom of religion and the freedom of conscience of these individuals are being trampled upon by the Government of Manitoba and also by the Government of Saskatchewan and the Government of British Columbia.

I want to make sure that the federal government will stand up for the rights of individuals. We cherish our charter in this country. We believe strongly in the freedoms that we enjoy as individuals. Yet the federal government has not come to the aid of those individuals. It should be standing side by side with them, defending their rights to freedom of religion, freedom of expression and freedom of conscience and making sure that their voices are heard by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission. The government should tell the province of Manitoba and the other provinces that are doing this to take a solid step back and allow individual freedoms to reign.

Adjournment Proceedings

Of the two people who are fighting this in Manitoba, one is a constituent of mine, Kevin Kisilowsky. He got his marriage commissioner licence from the province of Manitoba because he wished to sanction marriages outside of a church. He is a Christian who has an outreach ministry for outlaw biker gangs and a youth ministry. He is trying to reach out. These people do not belong to a church. He is not affiliated with any particular religious organization. In order to legally marry people who decide to become Christians through his ministry he needs to have a licence.

He already informed the Government of Manitoba when he applied for his licence that he only wished to marry Christian couples through his outreach ministry. He was told to go ahead with his application and that he would be put on a private list. Unfortunately, Kevin is now in a situation where he refuses to perform same sex marriages so his entire licence is being revoked.

Essentially I want the government to explain why it has not supported Kevin and all the other commissioners in Manitoba. I want the government to make sure that they can still perform traditional marriages. This does not prevent the province of Manitoba from hiring other marriage commissioners to perform same sex marriages.

Let us defend the rights of individuals who were born and raised in Canada and also those individuals who came to Canada because we have such a great charter. Let us not trample on those rights. I want the government to explain why it has not supported the individuals' rights and freedoms of religion and conscience.

• (1850)

Hon. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member first asked this question on December 3 last year, just as the government was anticipating the release of the decision from the Supreme Court of Canada on the marriage reference.

I would like to remind the House that the government takes the issue of religious freedom very seriously. Indeed, as the House will recall, the Government of Canada was very concerned that the granting of equality to same sex couples should not come at the expense of other charter protected guaranteed rights and freedoms, such as the freedom of religion. It was for that reason that the government chose to refer its proposed legislation to the Supreme Court of Canada before tabling it in Parliament, so that our opinion that the bill would not affect religious freedom could be confirmed by the highest court in the land.

The Supreme Court released its decision on December 9 of last year and confirmed that the charter already protects the religious freedom of all Canadians. In its ruling, the Supreme Court made some of the strongest statements ever on the nature and importance of religious freedom in Canada. Specifically, the court clearly ruled that: religious officials are protected by the charter from being compelled to perform any religious or civil marriage that would be contrary to their religious beliefs; and religious institutions are protected from being forced to provide their sacred spaces.

The Supreme Court was categorical: the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms already protects the freedom of religion. The

charter protects churches and synagogues, mosques and temples from being obliged to perform marriages contrary to their beliefs.

This protection is clearly echoed in the draft bill to extend civil marriage to same sex couples. Indeed, the crystal clear assurances of religious freedom are one of the major reasons that I personally support Bill C-38.

At the same time, I am concerned that some may be seeking to unduly alarm Canadians by confusing the question of civil commissioners with that of religious officials performing marriages. The two issues are qualitatively different. Religious officials are protected by the charter from doing anything that would be against their religious beliefs. Civil marriage officials are provincial or territorial employees or appointees hired to perform a service that the provinces and territories are required under the law to provide to all without discrimination.

As provincial employees, civil marriage officials are not within federal jurisdiction but would fall within provincial or territorial jurisdiction. As I understand that there is currently a case on this issue before the provincial human rights body, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on that specific situation in Manitoba.

In general terms, however, if any additional specific protections for religious freedom are desired in the terms of civic marriage officials, commercial provision of services, hall rentals, et cetera, they must be made by the provinces and territories.

Even here, at a recent FPT meeting, the attorneys general of two of the most populous provinces, Ontario and Quebec, both said that they had experienced no problems with religious freedom despite thousands of same sex marriage ceremonies.

Many provinces and territories already have amended their laws to add specific protections for religious freedom. In a recent FPT meeting, the Minister of Justice encouraged the provinces and territories to ensure, as the federal government is doing, religious freedom is protected in all their laws.

• (1855)

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I find the parliamentary secretary's comments quite amazing. First, he makes a statement that religious freedoms are very important to Canada and yet refuses to engage in a situation that we have happening in the provinces. Yes, these are provincial civil matters but these are people who have their rights guaranteed to them under the charter, which is a federal responsibility.

It is up to the federal government to stand up for these people and to ensure they have the opportunity to express their freedom of religion or freedom of conscience. Not everyone has a particular religion but they do have strong personal beliefs and do not agree with the approach being taken by the government.

Therefore I ask the government one more time to actually take a stand and stand up for individual rights and freedoms. It has the responsibility to oversee what the provinces are doing and to ensure they are enforcing what we have as a charter.

Ajournment Proceedings

Hon. Paul Harold Macklin: Madam Speaker, it is quite clear that different provinces and territories are entitled to and will take different positions on this issue, as they do with many others.

The bottom line is that the government has no intention of intruding into matters of provincial jurisdiction. Frankly, I am quite shocked to hear the member opposite suggest that we should be forcing a sister government to do anything that is within its exclusive power to decide for itself even where we may respectfully disagree with its approach.

As I mentioned, I am concerned that the specific cases, such as civil marriage officials, are being taken out of context and used to alarm religious groups into believing that Bill C-38 should not proceed because the government cannot assure religious freedom. That is simply not the case.

The Supreme Court has clearly supported the position of the government that the charter continues to protect freedom of religious officials and groups who oppose same sex marriage.

Civil marriage officials already have the potential for conflicts with their religious beliefs. For example, in situations where the marriage involves a divorced person, first cousins or interfaith couples, each of which is forbidden by some religious beliefs, in these situations a solution has been found before. I am confident that our provincial and territorial colleagues will find one now.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following public bill to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-14, an act to protect heritage lighthouses.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

● (1900)

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a question that I posed on December 3, 2004. My question was to the Prime Minister and had specifically to do with the opening of the American border to Canadian and particularly Saskatchewan beef. I asked him what he had to say to all of the farmers and ranchers across Canada who are facing another winter of despair about what was going to happen.

The answer was that at the USDA, the United States Department of Agriculture, and in the White House steps were being taken to have the border open on March 7. In fact, in a news release our agriculture minister announced that Canada received a commitment from the United States to open the border and resume trade of Canadian live cattle under 30 months on March 7, 2005.

There is no question that the process involved was an administrative one by the United States Department of Agriculture. They had hearings and so on and came to the conclusion that in their

opinion, administratively, and according to their legislation, the border ought to be open to Canadian cattle.

The fact of the matter was that during these hearings, Canada had an opportunity to make representations. I have heard the members opposite indicate that based on science, based on facts, based on data, there was no question that the transfer of Canadian cattle through the American border was safe, that our food chain was safe, that our inspection agencies were properly codified, and that they were using the proper protocol and there was nothing to be concerned about.

When R-CALF made an application for an injunction to the Montana court, the court in that particular case held that the injunction would issue. One of the reasons it held that the injunction should issue was that it said the USDA “failed to provide the specific basis for the conclusion that its actions carried an acceptable risk to public health and failed to provide the data on which each of the agency's critical assumptions were based”.

What that judge was saying was that the USDA did not provide the basis and data for its decision. My question is, where were the Canadian government and its people in ensuring that the USDA had all of the facts and all the basis to show that the sound science was there for the border to open. Why was that material not there?

Second, when the matter was before the Montana judge, our government should have had lawyers present at that court case arguing Canada's position. They applied late, I understand, trying to file a brief, and perhaps they filed a brief, but they were not there to advance the case. Consequently Canada was not represented at a very critical time when we had millions of dollars in trade being affected. Canada was using the political angle when it should have been using legal process and material.

Now that the courts have become involved, they are still playing politics. Our Prime Minister is in the United States today talking to the President, but we have no basis upon which to speed up the process. We have a Montana court decision that has been appealed. We have some indication that it will take until July 7 for a decision to be made. There is a trial and the process is taking months.

Where is the government? Is it taking the steps to ensure that this process is expedited? It is not a political matter now. It is a court matter. But political pressure can be applied to ensure that the process happens in weeks, not months and years. We see that happen in American politics. Let us look at the recent case relating to Terri Schiavo in which two courts, three judges of one panel and 12 judges of another panel, heard a case in the same day. If there were the political will it could be done, but Canada has wasted a lot of its political capital.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food (Rural Development), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Souris—Moose Mountain for his question because I know that he is deeply concerned about this issue as we are. Certainly, all of us in the House were disappointed on the decision that was made relative to the March 7 border opening because based on science that border should have been opened.

Ajournment Proceedings

However, I want to put the issue into perspective. First, the hon. member said that the USDA failed to provide the specific basis and why Canada was not there. The fact of the matter is that the Canadian government did ask to present an amicus brief which would have outlined the scientific details of what we are doing relative to BSE in this country. If the judge would have heard that, then he could have made a decision on the facts, but the judge refused to allow Canada to present that amicus brief.

I think it is important that I outline a few other specific points. First, the Government of Canada's approach has achieved some very considerable results, but not all that we wanted. We would have preferred the border to be opened totally on March 7.

The fact of the matter is that the interventions with President Bush and other American officials made by the Prime Minister, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and others have resulted in the border being reopened for boneless beef from animals under 30 months of age in August 2003.

That is the first time that ever happened to a country that had BSE. In fact, our exports of beef products, not cattle, to the United States are over 300,000 tonnes and that is at levels above in terms of the beef side prior to the BSE issue.

President Bush, as the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has said in the House a number of times, and Secretary Johanns have repeatedly expressed their commitment to further opening the border as soon as possible based on science. It is disappointing that a U.S. district court judge in Montana has managed to keep the border closed by taking the presentation made by R-CALF and preventing us from getting products in based on science.

We believe there were compelling reasons for the court to allow us to participate in an amicus brief in order to shed light on a number of factual issues raised in the litigation, but we were refused from doing so. However, we are pleased to note that the USDA is now appealing the March 2 preliminary injunction.

The Government of Canada intends to seek permission to file an amicus brief with the appellate court that would allow us to set out the facts about Canada's system for protecting human and animal health and food safety. We believe, if given that opportunity to raise the facts with the court, that the judge, if he is fair at all in terms of addressing the issue, would in fact allow the U.S. law to proceed. This would allow Canadian beef under 30 months into the United States and we would work on the other issues following that date.

• (1905)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Madam Speaker, I note that the United States appeal court said that the judge set July as the hearing date. We are now in March. That is a long period of time.

The Prime Minister today stated:

We look forward to the day in the future when, notwithstanding all of the lobbying, all of the legal challenges, all of North America is open to our safe and high-quality beef

He must do more than hope. Given the fact that the government was not on its toes and not making the representations it should of made, I think there is some obligation on the government now because of its lack of due diligence to put some money on the table for the BSE farmers who are suffering.

I think the parliamentary secretary, who knows agriculture quite well, also knows that the problem is deeper than that. Saskatchewan farmers and Canadian farmers need some financial assistance. They need it now before spring seeding.

Will the parliamentary secretary commit the government and tell us what the government's actions are with respect to those two things: funding for the BSE cattle producers who are dealing with that issue and the ordinary grain farmers who are waiting for some answers from the government?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, I think the member knows that both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food were in western Canada last week and talking to producers about the very concerns that the member has raised. The Prime Minister has made it clear as well as the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food that we will stand with producers in their time of need. Those issues have certainly been looked at.

However, let us look at a couple of facts specifically on BSE. There has been a BSE repositioning in the livestock industry in September 2004 in the amount of \$488 million from the federal government; \$995 million in March 2004 for the transitional industry support program; and in June 2003, there was \$475 million for the cull animal program. Two weeks ago on March 10 the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food announced an additional \$50 million to help aggressively market beef products around the world.

Therefore, we are standing with the producers and we will continue to do so to support them in their time of need.

• (1910)

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:10 p.m.)

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