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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, February 16, 1995

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 16, 1995

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

(1005)

[*English*]

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT, 1995

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-69, an act to provide for the establishment of electoral boundaries commissions and the readjustment of electoral boundaries.

He said: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I wish to inform the House that the bill just introduced is in response to the order of the House, pursuant to Standing Order 68(6), made last Tuesday.

Consequently, further proceedings will be subject to the provisions of Standing Order 68(7)(a), which includes a requirement that consideration of second reading be postponed until no earlier than the third sitting day after today.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADA HEALTH ACT

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-302, an act to amend the Canada Health Act (nutrition services).

He said: Madam Speaker, I have the honour to introduce today in this House a bill to amend the Canada Health Act with regard to nutrition services.

This bill includes the expression “nutrition services” in the definition of health services provided under the existing Canada Health Act. We all know that nutrition is an essential component of health and that Canadian dieticians are the only health professionals duly trained and authorized to evaluate a person’s nutritional status.

Furthermore, the Canadian government recognizes dieticians as key resources in developing health policies such as Canada’s Food Guide, which sets guidelines for good health. I therefore feel that it is important, as much for the general public as for the order of dieticians, that they be formally recognized and included in the Canada Health Act.

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

* * *

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-303, an act to amend the Criminal Code (dangerous intoxication).

He said: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to introduce this bill. I know other members in the House were working on similar bills. The motivation behind the bill is to remove the ability of persons to hold themselves harmless from responsibility for self-induced intoxication.

As members know, recently the Supreme Court held that persons could be held harmless from the result of their own actions because of self-induced intoxication. This goes against the grain of all thinking Canadians and common sense.

This bill, which I would ask all members in the House to support, would create a separate offence. The offence of being criminally intoxicated would ensure that Canadians are held personally responsible for the results of their actions. They cannot hide behind the charter of rights and freedoms to escape responsibility for what they have done. This would prevent violence to others who are innocent.

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

Routine Proceedings

(1010)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think you will find unanimous consent for a couple of motions. I move:

That notwithstanding any standing or special order of this House, when the House adjourns on Wednesday, February 22, 1995, it shall stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Friday February 24, 1995;

That the address of the President of the United States of America, to be delivered in the House Chamber on Thursday, February 23, 1995 before members of the Senate and members of the House of Commons, together with all introductory and related remarks, be printed as an appendix to the House of Commons *Debates* of Friday, February 24, 1995 and form part of the records of this House; and

That media recording and transmission of such address, introductory and related remarks be authorized pursuant to established guidelines for such occasions.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That two Library of Parliament research officers assigned to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development be allowed to travel to Toronto on February 19 and 20 in order to attend a conference of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it gives me pleasure to present a petition today from men and women in southern Ontario.

The petitioners would like to draw the attention of the House to the fact that public safety is the number one priority of the criminal justice system. The existing controls on law-abiding, responsible firearm owners are more than enough to ensure public safety and that the current and proposed laws criminalizing certain firearm activities when the danger to the public safety and criminal intent is either virtually non-existent or totally absent.

The target for all gun control laws in the Criminal Code of Canada must be the criminals who are either a danger to the safety of the public or those who have criminal intent, not law-abiding, responsible firearm owners. No amount of gun control has ever succeeded in preventing criminals from acquiring guns by illegal means. What our criminal justice system must ensure is that criminals who steal, import, sell and possess guns and/or use guns in the commission of a crime will be severely punished.

Therefore, the petitioners pray and request Parliament to support laws that will severely punish all violent criminals who use weapons in the commission of a crime; second, support new Criminal Code firearms control provisions which recognize and protect the right of law-abiding citizens to own and use recreational firearms, and last, support legislation which repeals and modifies existing controls—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): May I remind hon. members that it is normal to read the prayer only and not to enter into a form of debate when presenting petitions.

[Translation]

VIOLENCE

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this petition is about abuse and violence in society.

[English]

The petitioners believe that unnecessary violence and abuse in society in all of its forms, on radio and television, have become a major concern of the Canadian population.

(1015)

They want the government to ensure that the CRTC is able to regulate it and reduce it and if possible remove it, I suspect. They point out that it is not necessary to educate and it goes counter to families trying to raise their children.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Cliff Breitkreuz (Yellowhead, Ref.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present three petitions on the whole business of firearms legislation. Two petitions are from towns in Yellowhead and one is from Ontario.

Among other things the petitioners request that Parliament support laws which will severely punish all violent criminals who use weapons in the commission of a crime. I concur with that request.

Routine Proceedings

TWO DOLLAR COIN

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville, Lib.): Madam Speaker I have petition with 1,826 signatures. It is a rather interesting petition. It was the inspiration of a Mrs. Ruby Stone who lives in my riding.

She is petitioning the government as all these people are against the introduction of a \$2 coin. Some of us may not be aware that there is a study going on in this country to introduce a \$2 coin. Sometimes these things are slipped in. I know this government would not likely do that.

I think we should introduce more \$2 bills because if you use a \$5 bill you usually get four coins back. People are getting tired carrying them around. I support these petitioners.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 it is with pleasure that I rise today to present a petition containing signatures from people in Beaverton, Fenelon Falls, Woodville and Cannington in the riding of Victoria—Haliburton.

This petition calls on Parliament to oppose any amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which provide for the inclusion of the phrase sexual orientation.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of 78 of my constituents from Gold River and Campbell River, British Columbia, who call upon this Parliament to reject any further firearms control legislation, regulations or orders in council and rather focus on the misuse of firearms by violent criminals.

I support the petition.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Paul E. Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I present a petition today from some 25 lower mainlanders, some of whom are constituents of mine from New Westminster—Burnaby, British Columbia.

The petitioners fear that inclusion of sexual orientation in the Canadian Human Rights Act will infringe on the historic rights of Canadians such as the freedoms of religion, conscience, expression and association. Therefore, they call upon Parliament to oppose any amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which provide for the inclusion of the phrase sexual orientation.

Mr. Tony Ianno (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present several petitions. Several members of my constituency of Trinity—Spadina call upon the Government of Canada to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act so as to give statutory recognition of homosexual relationships and to en-

shrine their equality before the law with that of heterosexual relationships.

On behalf of my constituents, I humbly submit these petitions.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Tony Ianno (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I also rise today for members of my constituency of Trinity—Spadina who call on the government to enact legislation of a national policy on child care that is unifying and provides non-discretionary, equitable and sufficient service to all residents of Canada.

On behalf of my constituents, I humbly submit this petition.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I have four petitions to present on behalf of the constituents of Simcoe Centre today. The first group of petitioners request that the Government of Canada not amend the human rights act to include the phrase sexual orientation. The petitioners fear that such an inclusion could lead to homosexuals receiving the same benefits and societal privileges as married people.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Madam Speaker, the second petition concerns the subject of the family. The petitioners request that Parliament oppose any legislation that would directly or indirectly redefine the family, including the provision of marriage and family benefits to those who are not related by ties of blood, marriage or adoption, where marriage is defined as a legal union between a man and a woman.

EUTHANASIA

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Madam Speaker, the third petition is on the issue of euthanasia.

(1020)

The petitioners request that current laws regarding active euthanasia be enforced and that Parliament not sanction or allow the aiding or abetting of suicide or euthanasia.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Madam Speaker, the final petition today is of the subject of section 745 of the Criminal Code. The petitioners request that Parliament repeal this section so that those convicted of first degree murder will have to serve their full 25-year sentence behind bars.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. John Bryden (Hamilton—Wentworth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to present three petitions today. The first is to ensure that the present provisions of the Criminal Code prohibiting assisted suicide be enforced vigorously and that Parliament

Routine Proceedings

make no changes in the law that would sanction or allow the aiding or abetting of suicide or active or passive euthanasia.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. John Bryden (Hamilton—Wentworth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the second petition from the constituents of Hamilton—Wentworth calls upon Parliament to put an end to the discriminatory treatment of gay and lesbian citizens and their familial relationships by amending federal legislation that currently allows unequal treatment, including an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Madam Speaker, the third petition calls for Parliament to not amend the human rights code, the Canadian Human Rights Act or the charter of rights and freedoms in any way which would tend to indicate societal approval of same sex relationships or of homosexuality, including amending the human rights code to include in the prohibited grounds of discrimination the undefined phrase sexual orientation.

MINING

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of the citizens of the great communities of Logan Lake, Kamloops, Ashcroft, Cache Creek, Merritt and Savona. There are hundreds of names on this petition.

The people point out that Canada's mining industry is a mainstay of employment in over 150 communities across Canada, an important contributor to Canada's gross domestic product in total exports and a cornerstone of our economic future. They point out that the industry has proposed a 10 point plan of action which would enhance the mining industry of Canada.

They are calling upon Parliament to take any action that will increase employment in this sector, promote exploration, rebuild Canada's mineral reserves, sustain mining communities and essentially keep mining in Canada.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 46 and 128.

[Text]

Question No. 46—**Mr. Chatters:**

With respect to government funding of Indian bands, tribal councils and aboriginal/Metis organizations, (a) how many are in a deficit situation, (b) for each of them, what is the amount (i) received in the last fiscal year, (ii) of their current deficit, (iii) they will receive for the current fiscal year?

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): I am informed by the Departments of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Canadian Heritage as follows:

In so far as the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, DIAND, is concerned:

(a) For the year ended March 31, 1993, 159 Indian bands, tribal councils and aboriginal organizations are in a deficit position. 1–2

(b) With respect to the names and deficit situation of Indian bands, tribal councils and aboriginal organizations, this information is confidential third party financial information under section 20(1)(b) of the Access to Information Act and cannot be released.

1 DIAND does not fund Metis organizations. Please refer to the answer by Canadian Heritage.

2 DIAND determines a recipient's deficit position by applying an indicator of whether the recipient's cumulative deficit is greater than 8 per cent of its total revenues, one month's cashflow. Statistics are collected on this basis.

In so far as the Department of Canadian Heritage is concerned:

(a) Based on the 1992–93 audited financial statements available—48 per cent were available—27 organizations were in a deficit situation.

(b) With respect to the name and deficit situation of these organizations, this information is confidential third party financial information under section 20(1)(b) of the Access to Information Act and cannot be released.

Question No. 128—**Mr. Simmons:**

What action will be taken on the recommendation made by the Auditor General in his 1994 annual report that the "Ice Services Branch must ensure that its contingency plans can be put into effect quickly and successfully" in the event of systems malfunction or communications failure so as to avert any possible "rerouting or disruption of ship traffic in and out of Canadian ports or, at worst, loss of life and property?"

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Data collection buoys are stationed so that in the event of an emergency they can back each other up. These buoys are equipped with information transmission devices which ensure transmittal of all necessary information. The buoys and equipment have been designed and are situated so that, short of several stations failing at once, the ice services program will be maintained.

A complete failure of all the ice program systems at once is highly unlikely. In the event of a major catastrophe, we have an agreement with the U.S. National Ice Centre to provide essential ice information to our clients until our normal operations can be resumed. We can do the same for the U.S. We developed this backup plan over the past year and it will be tested shortly.

Once these tests have been completed, a comprehensive backup plan will be published in order that Canadians will know exactly how ice information is being provided.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The questions as enumerated by the parliamentary secretary have been answered.

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Shall the remaining question stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

INCOME TAX ACT

Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.) moved that a ways and means motion to amend the Income Tax Act, the Income Tax Application Rules and related acts, laid upon the table Tuesday, February 14, 1995, be concurred in.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Call in the members.

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

(Division No. 162)

YEAS

Members

Alcock
Augustine
Baker
Barnes
Bethel
Bonin
Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Bélair
Calder

Anderson
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bodnar
Boudria
Bryden
Caccia
Campbell

Catterall
Chan
Clancy
Collins
Cowling
Culbert
Dhaliwal
Discepola
Easter
English
Finestone
Flis
Fry
Galloway
Godfrey
Graham
Grose
Harb
Hickey
Ianno
Jackson
Keyes
Knutson
Lastewka
LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)
Lincoln
MacAulay
MacLaren
Malhi
Manley
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton Northwest)
McWhinney
Milliken
Murphy
O'Brien
Ouellet
Parrish
Payne
Peters
Pickard (Essex—Kent)
Reed
Richardson
Ringuette—Maltais
Rompkey
Serré
Sheridan
Skoke
Steckle
Szabo
Terrana
Torsney
Vanclief
Walker
Wells
Young

Government Orders

Chamberlain
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Cohen
Copp
Crawford
DeVillers
Dingwall
Duhamel
Eggleton
Fewchuk
Finlay
Fontana
Gagliano
Gerrard
Goodale
Gray (Windsor West)
Guarnieri
Harvard
Hubbard
Irwin
Jordan
Kirkby
Kraft Sloan
Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul)
Lee
Loney
MacDonald
MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)
Maloney
McCormick
McKinnon
McTeague
Mifflin
Mitchell
Murray
O'Reilly
Pagtakhan
Patri
Peric
Peterson
Proud
Regan
Rideout
Robichaud
Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)
Shepherd
Simmons
St. Denis
Stewart (Brant)
Telegdi
Thalheimer
Ur
Volpe
Wappel
Whelan
Zed—130

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Althouse
Bachand
Benoit
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)
Bridgman
Caron
Dalphond—Guiral
de Savoye
Duceppe
Epp
Frazer
Gauthier (Roberval)
Gouk
Guay
Hanrahan

Ablonczy
Asselin
Bellehumeur
Bergeron
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Bélisle
Cummins
de Jong
Deshaies
Duncan
Forseth
Gagnon (Québec)
Godin
Grubel
Hanger
Harper (Calgary West)

Government Orders

Harper (Simcoe Centre)	Hayes
Hill (Macleod)	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hoepfner	Jacob
Jennings	Johnston
Lalonde	Langlois
Laurin	Lebel
Leblanc (Longueuil)	Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)
Leroux (Shefford)	Marchand
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Mayfield
McClelland (Edmonton Southwest)	McLaughlin
Meredith	Mills (Red Deer)
Morrison	Nunez
Paré	Penson
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Riis
Ringma	Sauvageau
Solberg	Speaker
Stinson	Strahl
Taylor	Thompson
Tremblay (Rosemont)	Venne
White (Fraser Valley West)	Williams—74

PAIRED MEMBERS

	Members
Assadourian	Bernier (Gaspé)
Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)	Bertrand
Bouchard	Brien
Brushett	Canuel
Chrétien (Frontenac)	Crête
Gaffney	Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Hopkins	Valeri

(1105)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I declare the motion carried.

[English]

Hon. Douglas Peters (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-70, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, the Income Tax Application Rules and related acts be read the first time and printed.

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

* * *

(1110)

PICTOU LANDING INDIAN BAND AGREEMENT ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-60, an act respecting an agreement between Her Majesty in right of Canada and the Pictou Landing Indian Band, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to.)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Irwin moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Roseanne Skoke (Central Nova, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to address the House on third and final reading of Bill C-60, the Pictou Landing Indian Band Agreement Act.

As the member of Parliament for Central Nova, on behalf of the Pictou Landing Micmac First Nations people in my riding, I thank hon. members for their support of this bill at second reading and in committee. I am certain that the more than 400 Pictou Landing Micmacs appreciate your support in helping to bring much awaited certainty to their lives.

This may appear to be a minor piece of legislation but it is very important to the First Nation concerned. Therefore it deserves quick passage through Parliament.

Bill C-60 is important for three reasons. First, the bill will ensure that claims by members of the First Nations related to the effluent treatment system at Boat Harbour are to be directed to a fund established for that purpose under the agreement. As a result it will protect both the Government of Canada and the Pictou Landing Micmac from further claims.

Second, Bill C-60 will ensure that the Pictou Landing Micmac are responsible for managing the settlement money that has been and will be paid out by the federal government.

Third, Bill C-60 will confirm that the Government of Canada intends to live up to its commitment to aboriginal people, including commitments made by previous governments.

Hon. members from all sides should recognize that the settlement agreement with the Pictou Landing Micmac is already well on its way to full and complete implementation. We are not being asked today to approve new arrangements, to make new commitments, or to break new ground. We are being asked to live up to outstanding commitments that have been made by the Government of Canada to the Pictou Landing Micmac of Nova Scotia. Living up to that commitment is very important, so important is it that this government put it in writing in an agreement.

In our red book we mapped out our intention to build new partnerships with aboriginal people. Today we are being asked to live up to that pledge, not just for the Pictou Landing Micmac but for all aboriginal people. Specifically, this bill asks us to take appropriate action to protect both the Government of Canada and the First Nation from further claims related to the Boat Harbour effluent treatment system.

Madam Speaker, let me tell you a little more about Boat Harbour back when. Imagine a picture with rolling hills dipping to the ocean, sandy beaches, boats drifting by with multitudes of fish in the ocean and majestic black cormorants nesting in

Government Orders

Pictou Harbour. I hope this image will bring you and my hon. colleagues closer to Pictou Landing and closer to the understanding of the importance of this bill, because in spite of this picture just painted this is not the Boat Harbour that exists today.

(1115)

For more than two decades treated effluent from Scott Pulp and Paper Mill at Abercrombie Point has been released into Boat Harbour, less than half a kilometre from the Pictou Landing Micmac community. This has had a serious and negative impact on the environment and on the quality of life on the reserve and in the surrounding communities in Pictou County.

Now Boat Harbour is an industrial effluent treatment facility operated by the province of Nova Scotia. It serves the nearby Scott Maritimes Limited kraft paper mill. Boat Harbour is adjacent to Pictou Harbour, about 150 kilometres northeast of Halifax.

The Boat Harbour holding pond was created by blocking the entrance of a former tidal estuary to the Northumberland Strait. Boat Harbour is currently surrounded by provincial crown land and the reserve lands of the Pictou Landing Micmac.

It bears repeating the First Nation was not happy about this effluent treatment system when first approached in 1966. It agreed only after intense lobbying by Nova Scotia.

The damming of Boat Harbour permanently raised the level of the harbour and flooded approximately 12 hectares of reserve land. The harbour became devoid of oxygen almost immediately after the treatment facility commenced operation.

Over the ensuing 12 years the First Nation made a number of representations to the Government of Nova Scotia seeking compensation for damage to its land and for the flooding.

Although the province made improvements to the treatment facility, it ended negotiations with the First Nation in 1982 by refusing to recognize its claim. The Pictou Landing Micmac then entered the federal government's specific claims process. In 1986 the First Nation filed suit against the federal government alleging breach of fiduciary duty.

Boat Harbour has been lost as a source of food for the Micmac. For the past 25 years this First Nation has also had to forego hunting, wildlife harvesting and other benefits on some 12 hectares of flooded reserve land.

As a result of the federal government's fiduciary responsibility to the First Nation people the government reached an out of court settlement with the First Nation that has avoided a potentially lengthy and costly legal battle. Now it rests with this hon. House to bring this chapter in the government's relations with the Pictou Landing Micmac to a close. There should be no hesitation to do so by the hon. House.

As my hon. colleague the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development pointed out at second reading, Bill C-60 is very straightforward.

The settlement agreement ratified by community members in a 141 to 25 vote in the summer of 1993 is a \$35 million settlement which includes a \$20 million compensation package; \$8 million was earmarked to be distributed among the members of the First Nation for individual compensation. Much of this money has already been paid out; \$9.725 million was placed in a continuing compensation fund to address special claims by members of the First Nation related to the Boat Harbour environmental problem; \$2.275 million was allocated to support projects that would benefit the First Nation, including the building of a multi-purpose recreational centre and the establishment of a Pictou Landing economic development promotional package. This money is intended to compensate the members of the First Nation for general impact associated with the Boat Harbour facility.

The remaining \$15 million in the settlement has been directed into a community development trust fund that will enable members of the First Nation to relocate if necessary. This fund is being administered by the First Nation and will ensure that the First Nation and its members will be able to protect themselves from any future health effects from Boat Harbour.

This bill accomplishes two basic objectives, both of which are in the interests of the First Nation, the federal government and the Canadian taxpayer. The first objective is to ensure that the \$35 million settlement fund that has been agreed upon will be the full amount for which the Government of Canada will be liable related to the Boat Harbour effluent treatment system.

(1120)

As the House has been previously informed, about 80 per cent of the settlement funds have already been transferred to the First Nation. In turn, the First Nation has paid out most of the \$8 million earmarked for individual compensation to eligible members.

Any claims over and above this amount will be addressed through the \$9.725 million continuing compensation fund. The Pictou Landing Micmac have also been using the \$2.75 million allocated to the band compensation and development account to support projects that will benefit the entire community such as the building of a multi-purpose centre and the establishment of a Pictou Landing economic development promotional package.

These two initiatives and others pursued by the Pictou Landing Micmac will be of great benefit not only to the First Nation but to other residents of Pictou County.

Government Orders

Bill C-60 provides that any claims by the members of the First Nation that are not already settled by acceptance of the payments to individuals be directed to the continuing compensation fund. It will ensure that both the Government of Canada and the First Nation are protected from any such claims.

The second objective to be achieved by Bill C-60 is to stipulate that the moneys paid to the Pictou Landing Micmac under the final agreement will not be considered Indian moneys as defined by the Indian Act.

This benefits the federal government because it releases the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development from any responsibility for managing these moneys. In these times of fiscal restraint the department should avoid taking on administrative functions that can and should be performed by First Nations.

This provision of Bill C-60 benefits the First Nation because it will ensure that the Pictou Landing Micmac have complete control over their compensation dollars. This would not be possible if the moneys were considered Indian moneys as defined pursuant to the Indian Act.

This is one of the most important provisions of this bill. I have said this government is committed to fulfilling its obligations to aboriginal people. Beyond just fulfilling commitments, we want to build a new partnership, a partnership based on trust, mutual respect and participation in the decision making process.

This provision of Bill C-60 is a step toward making this goal a reality. Management of their own funds affords First Nations opportunities to chart their own course for economic development.

I am confident that my constituents, the Pictou Landing Micmac, like many First Nations across the country will prosper. The government recognizes that the untapped potential of aboriginal people is untapped for Canada. In a small way the development opportunities afforded by the provision of Bill C-60 open the door to potential.

The projects already borne from this settlement like the Pictou Landing economic development promotional package are just the beginning, a beginning not only for the First Nation but for other communities in Pictou County and in Nova Scotia as a whole.

Implementation of the Boat Harbour agreement has been proceeding well with no significant problems encountered by either party to the agreement. Nevertheless, the settlement agreement does require Canada to explore ways that might yield a solution to the environmental problem that now exists at Boat Harbour.

Toward this end several federal departments are facilitating and working with the Pictou Landing Micmac and other concerned parties to achieve the rehabilitation of Boat Harbour.

I want to advise hon. members in this House that the federal government is committed to ensuring that the clean-up of Boat Harbour meets Canada's high environmental standards. This proposed legislation will have no impact on this process.

As a party to the final agreement, the Pictou Landing Micmac have clearly indicated that they want and expect this legislation to be enacted.

(1125)

To ensure that Bill C-60 meets with this understanding in the settlement agreement the First Nation was consulted during the drafting of the legislation. Members of the First Nation are now awaiting Parliament's decision. In making that decision I would ask my hon. colleagues to keep the crown's honour in mind.

I would ask them to remember that this legislation is the product of a clear and genuine commitment which was made at the request of the Pictou Landing Micmac more than a year ago. I would remind them that the government's word was accepted by the First Nation in good faith despite the problems it has endured over the past 25 years.

It is time to put the unfinished business behind us so that the First Nations and the federal government's energy can be devoted to building for the future rather than rectifying past mistakes. We can and must do so by giving our unanimous support to Bill C-60.

Therefore, as the member of Parliament for Central Nova I ask on behalf of my constituents, the Micmac First Nations people, for unanimous support from this honourable House for Bill C-60.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, let me tell you right away that the Bloc Québécois will be supporting this bill. As usual, I will try and explain the Micmac reality. I think it is important to give a little background because the Micmac Nation has always been recognized as a fishing nation living for the most part by rivers, lagoons or the sea.

Many people wonder about the meaning of the word "Micmac". In fact, there are two: "a nation and its language", and "my family and friends". When I travelled just recently to the Restigouche reserve, which by the way is called Listuguj, whatever meaning you give to the word Micmac, what I saw and experienced on the reserve of which Chief Miller is the worthy representative confirms that both meanings perfectly describe the reality as I experienced it on this reserve.

I saw people bound by very strong ties of friendship. Families form a very tightly knit fabric. Micmacs are also very proud of their language. In fact, they make a point of promoting the Micmac language in schools. Micmacs have traditionally been very close to their roots and accorded great importance to their culture.

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Historically, what set Micmac villages apart from others was the fact that lodgings often housed one or more families and were located by the water. The significance of this bill's impact comes from the fact that the Pictou Landing reserve was located by the water, which is essential. Naturally, all that has happened over the course of the last three decades has had a direct impact on Micmacs' lifestyle. I felt that this needed to be pointed out.

The Micmac Nation is a nation who was much affected by the arrival of Europeans. A population decline ensued. In the early days of the colony, there were about 50,000 Micmacs, as compared to a mere 10,000 registered Micmacs today. Some kind of socio-cultural conflict arose also because, for the Micmac Nation as for other aboriginal nations, exposure to the European culture did not always prove beneficial.

Socio-cultural shocks have led this nation, and others, into dire poverty. Even during British rule, efforts were made to turn Micmacs into farmers but, given their traditional way of life, these efforts failed of course. Integration attempts continued, with Micmacs being sent out to work on the railway and in logging. Finally, you realize that these people were really sincere in the importance they accorded to their culture, a culture that has not only lived on to this day but is still highly valued, while all integration attempts have failed.

(1130)

Therefore, I felt it was important to present this short scenario, because the bill relates to a Micmac nation, the Pictou Landing community, which has always lived close to water. This bill deals with a specific body of water, the Boat Harbour.

The problem started when the Scott Maritimes Limited Pulp and Paper Mills settled at Abercrombie Point. As we know, pulp and paper companies tend to pollute the environment. As well, the protection of the environment was not seen as vital then as it is now. The priority was to create jobs in an area largely covered with forests. In fact, that is where the bulk of wood harvesting took place.

However, in 1965, the provincial government decided to build a waste treatment plant after realizing that the company was polluting the water. It was thought to be a good idea to set up a treatment plant to try to solve the problem. I say "to try to solve" because, as I will show in the next few minutes, that attempt unfortunately failed, with the result that lots of contaminants ended up in the water.

That plant, which was built to treat the water coming from the pulp and paper mill, created a body of water covering several acres, in the vicinity of the reserve, and even on reserve land. From the very beginning, there was a lack of movement on the government's part regarding the cleaning up of this environmental catastrophe. This is deplorable. For two decades, from 1965 to 1985, the Micmac tried to come to an amicable settlement

with the federal government, which is responsible for native issues, and also with the Province of Nova Scotia, which has jurisdiction over the environment.

For almost 20 years, the Micmac tried to reach some agreement. Because nothing was being done, they finally decided, in 1986, to sue the government.

In this area, the environment has reached the critical stage in terms of its deterioration. According to some information, the level of pollution is such that it has been blamed for a number of deaths on the reserve.

Through an agreement in principle, the government proposed a financial out-of-court settlement to the Pictou Landing Indian band. That agreement in principle was reached in December 1992 and ratified in July 1993. It is a compensation agreement intended to settle out of court a suit brought by the Micmac in 1986.

The bill may look like a minor piece of legislation. There are only four clauses. Consequently, one might think that it does not deal with a complex issue. However, I know from experience that the number of clauses is no indication of how complex a piece of legislation can be. That bill may have only four clauses, but the last one refers to a specific agreement which, as I will show in a minute, is flawed in many ways. Although the bill does have some merits, as the hon. member pointed out. For instance, the money to be paid will not be money as provided under the Indian Act, which means that the community will be able to spend it as it sees fit.

This is probably one of the few positive factors I found in the bill. If we refer to the agreement as such, and there is a reference to the agreement in clause 4, we realize that it does not really deal with the environmental problem. And I am not so sure that we are doing the Pictou Landing First Nation a big favour.

Clause 4 of the bill, where we find the reference to section 13 of the agreement, mentions a compensation account. In the event of legal proceedings in the days and months to come, claims may only be made against this compensation account.

(1135)

We in the Bloc Québécois considered trying to help those who did not waive their rights, because, as I will explain later on, the people who use this compensation fund waive their right to sue the federal government, and in return, the government gives them \$35 million, and I will give you a breakdown of this amount later on. In any case, at first we had some questions about section 13, because some people had not waived their rights.

What happens to those people? I will expand on this later on, but before I go any further, I would also like to thank my colleagues on the standing committee who agreed to adjourn so I

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could investigate this particular point, since we were not entirely satisfied with the response we got from the bureaucracy.

That day, after meeting with officials from the Department of Indian Affairs, we were supposed to adopt the bill clause by clause, but because of my questions and the response from the officials, we agreed, many thanks to my colleagues, to adjourn for two days and—it never rains but it pours—I was given a draft amendment a few minutes before the committee started a special sitting to hear the Bloc Québécois amendment, but unfortunately, the amendment suggested by our legal expert was not quite what we had in mind. As a result, I had to go before the committee empty-handed and apologize.

We then considered introducing an amendment at the report stage, and although I did not discuss this with my colleagues on the standing committee, in the end, we decided not to introduce an amendment, after receiving additional information from the officials and getting in touch with the community of Pictou Landing.

Initially, and I will provide some details later on, we were somewhat dubious in the case of individuals who did not waive their right, about their ability to bring legal proceedings against the company or Nova Scotia, and we could perhaps discuss this later on, but meanwhile, I would like to say a word of thanks to my colleagues, because they gave me a chance to get to the bottom of this matter and do a decent job in committee, in other words, to carefully examine each clause and then decide whether or not we wanted an amendment.

I touched on this earlier, and I would just like to say, very briefly, that this is money that will not be subject to the provisions of section 35 of the Indian Act. This means the Pictou Landing community will be able to use this money as it sees fit, without being restricted by the provisions of the Indian Act.

I would now like to comment on the agreement as such, and perhaps I should point out that only \$17 million remains to be paid to the community, so the rest of the money has already been paid, and that being said, I may have quite a few things to say later on about the logic of having a bill before the House today when the process has already started and all the money or almost all has been paid, so that the government is saying: I just want you to agree and adopt this bill.

It seems to me that certain elements with respect to the process of negotiation with the band must be taken into account, the government's fiduciary responsibility, the Bloc Québécois' responsibility as the official opposition and the responsibility of the opposition parties of the time, have been overlooked. The whole thing is now presented to us as a package. Now we are faced with an alternative, that is, do we vote in favour of the bill or not. Since 95 per cent of the people in the community voted in favour, our options are somewhat limited.

So, therefore, naturally, we will support the bill without amendment. We do, however, have a few things to say about the agreement, and I think we will use this debate to express them. I said earlier that the agreement was signed on July 20, 1993 and was ratified following a referendum. At the time, 95 per cent of the people said they were in favour of it. In a minute we will have a look at why they were in favour. I have my own personal idea on the matter. In democratic terms, however, we cannot criticize the agreement as such. Given the very high rate of participation—80 per cent—and the strong vote in favour—95 per cent—we really cannot criticize the democratic aspect of the question.

(1140)

Furthermore, according to the officials we asked, the remaining 5 per cent are people registered on the list of band members, but who do not live on the reservation. We were told they could live as far away as California. There were also a number of people with intellectual handicaps, who were unable to vote because they could not understand the scope of the agreement.

I will quickly go through the agreement, section by section, to highlight certain comments that, among other things, raise doubt about the seriousness of the government's intention to really resolve the legal action issue and also the basic environmental issue.

In section 2 of the agreement, Canada agrees to pay a \$35 million settlement. This amount is intended to cover compensation and to fulfil the government's fiduciary duty. Three funds have been created: one for band compensation and development, one for community development and one for individual compensation and development. I do not wish to get into the breakdown of the \$35 million, so suffice it to say that the three funds exist. I will repeat throughout my speech that, in our opinion, this is not enough to compensate for the current environmental damage and the wrong done to these people.

As I have said, since 1965, it is clear that the environment has been seriously harmed by the construction of the effluent treatment facility. Over the past 30 years, the government has been slow to put facilities in place. It has somewhat neglected its fiduciary duty towards first nations because they continually protested the way they were being treated, and neither the federal nor the Nova Scotia government made many firm commitments or took much real action to correct the situation.

We can also say that the negative effects have taken on catastrophic proportions at present. Earlier, I mentioned 162 hectares. Responsibility for resolving the issue and for taking legal action is now in the government's lap. We think that the government is not only hesitating now and will be hesitant in the future to enter into legal proceedings, but that it will also eventually take legal proceedings in the event that Boat Harbour is further developed. Therefore, we have reason to

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doubt whether the government really has the will to really resolve the main issue.

The true problem remains the same, even with this bill, because pollution has not disappeared. All that is proposed is that some aboriginals be relocated. We might also wonder what type of land aboriginal people will be able to afford with that \$35 million. And we are told that moneys have already been earmarked for purchasing this land. But will these people be better off? Unfortunately, we do not have the answer. I see this merely as an attempt to relieve the federal government of its fiduciary duty to aboriginals and to get out of a tight spot. So we have to find out whether the move will solve the problem.

I also know that the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia are trying to assess the issue of environment versus employment. One cannot deny that Scott Paper creates a lot of jobs in Nova Scotia. We also know that this community suffers from a high rate of unemployment. So can we afford to say to this company, given the present situation, that standards will be set so high, that we will allow so many suits that, in the end, it will have to close its doors and lay off a lot of employees?

We are caught in this tension between the environment and employment. I understand that employment was easily given higher priority than the environment at the time. But, for several years now, there seems to have been increasing concern over the environment. So the debate or tension between the environment and employment remains unresolved. And for our part, we can see that the government has decided to give priority to employment over the environment.

(1145)

I would like to move on to section 5 now. In this section, one begins to see the Canadian government's position in the matter. The agreement was reached in December 1992 and ratified in July 1993. Even before the agreement was signed, each band member had received \$2,000. This, in itself, is a clear indication of the government's approach to the matter.

Even before an agreement had been reached, even before a bill had been introduced, the government had already started with its hand-outs. We have to realize also that the Micmac Indians on that reserve live in appalling conditions, as practically none of them have jobs. Their environment is heavily polluted and, after 30 years, they are sick and tired of negotiating or trying to negotiate with the government. They have to set money aside to set up a fund to pursue their case against the government. It is in such a context that they are presented with a nice cheque for \$2,000 and told: This is a first instalment, you will get more, probably as much, but first of all you must relinquish your right to sue. You sign away that right and the federal government will give you \$2,000.

We can see why these people would jump at this offer, it is a ray of hope, a chance to improve their situation. Not only were they given a cheque for \$2,000, but individuals were promised an additional amount of \$1,500 upon signing the agreement in principle. Except that the parliamentary process was conveniently forgotten. This was done without us, we were informed only when the bill was tabled and, today, we are asked to approve a bill implementing this agreement. I find this approach questionable.

This is an approach that we consider paternalistic. It is like saying: We have been negligent, but we are going to make up for it, we are going to give you some money and you forget about the whole thing. With this money you will be able to move elsewhere. We, as a government, are not going to restore the environment, but neither are we going to launch any lawsuit against you. People who sign and take the money must sign an undertaking not to sue the government of Canada or of Nova Scotia or the company. Everybody involved in that mess is getting off scotfree. They did not act responsibly and now people have to take the money because they are in dire straits.

This is a paternalistic approach. We find this kind of approach questionable, at best. In short, band members had already received money, \$2,000 in December 1991, and \$1,500 in December 1992, before the agreement was signed, and now the government confronts them with a *fait accompli*.

Before I became a parliamentarian I was, among others things, a negotiator for twenty years or so. This is a well known fact in negotiating circles: when one of the parties to the negotiations is in a very weakened position—negotiating being basically a power struggle—it is easy to promise things, give them systematically and then say to this party: Now, all you have to do is to sign this form and all your problems will be solved.

Everything was done very quickly, in a paternalistic manner, and the environmental issue has not been settled. The whole process is highly questionable.

The agreement provides for a period of prescription; that is to say that individuals have up to two years after the signing of the agreement to decide whether to give up their rights and be entitled to this famous compensation fund, or not to give them up. According to the interpretation given by officials, these individuals are going to be caught between a rock and a hard place, because it will be extremely difficult to challenge the legislation on account of section 13 which creates a further impediment, with respect to individual rights, for people wanting to appeal to the courts. As I said before, it is this particular point we find extremely questionable.

(1150)

Thus, this prescription period will come into effect in July of this year. Then, not only will the people have not taken advantage of this find it difficult to start legal proceedings but they

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will no longer have access to the compensation fund. They will be left with nothing at all.

Other sections as well are a little disturbing. The federal government is getting out from under any future fiduciary duties or obligations towards the community with regard to the risks associated with the facilities. It not only said that you are released of responsibilities, of prosecutions concerning the environment, but that, in the future, if the company decides to pollute even more, the government will assume these responsibilities and thus release individuals from them.

We see that the environment has been greatly deteriorating for almost 30 years and we recognize that this could continue in the future and that the federal government is released of all future responsibilities. I think that this is prejudicial enough to the environment to be mentioned.

Section 7 stipulates the responsibilities of the chief and his or her council with regard to the management of the money received. I agree that the \$35 million received are not native moneys but one has to realize that the band and the chief must meet certain requirements. This money is not given unconditionally, to be spent however they wish.

In section 8, the government recognizes that Canada's current position is that it is not at all sure that Boat Harbour will be brought back to its natural condition, that is, the condition it was in before 1965. The government itself admits that it is not sure this can be done. But the government of Canada is committed to exploring possible ways of dealing with the environmental problem.

We have to take a good look at the words that are used. The government will explore possible ways of dealing with the problem. There are other words to which I would like to draw your attention. The government of Canada may undertake, at its sole discretion, reasonable action that it deems necessary. As a negotiator, I could not accept that such vague words as "at its sole discretion" and "reasonable action" be included in an agreement, especially since it is the government itself which must decide what constitutes reasonable action.

There are some flaws in the agreement and we feel that it is important for us to inform you of these flaws and to tell you that, unfortunately, it is a done deal and that this agreement must now be justified. We will not keep our mouths shut. We will denounce all these flaws. I hope the government will take my comments into account so that things are done differently in the future.

Section 9 deals with the creation of a committee on environmental issues composed of three members from the Micmac community and three members appointed by the government of Canada. It says further on that the number could increase with

the agreement of both parties. What does that mean? It means that, eventually, the government of Nova Scotia could be represented on this committee and so could the main pulp and paper company, thereby diluting native participation. It is something to be cautious about. Fortunately, both parties concerned have to agree to this.

I have no advice to give. I think that people are mature enough, but personally, if I were on the aboriginal side, I would maintain my participation on the committee at 50 per cent and would not agree to the addition of other members, who would reduce my impact. Just a warning in passing, but a necessary one.

Section 12 provides that all members that have received moneys must automatically renounce completely any present or future claims. Thus, anyone accepting money, who has recourse to the compensation account, agrees not to take any action regarding past or future events. The danger is that the Scott Paper company will feel it is off the hook, that it will continue to pollute—I know that jobs are involved—but the difficulty, however, is that none of the compensation money has been set aside for the environment.

(1155)

After all, this is a company that is providing employment, even if it hardly gets full marks for its environmental performance. In my view, this company does not even get a passing mark. So, in exchange for an amount of money, the members of the community must forever agree not to take any action against the federal government, Nova Scotia, or the company.

In fact, all rights to take legal action are transferred to the federal government, in the terms I mentioned earlier, at the discretion of the government, reasonable action, as decided by the federal government. One is left to wonder if the federal government is going to take its environmental responsibilities seriously, and I must admit that I have not yet ruled out the possibility of pointing out to my colleague from Laurentides, the environment critic, that there is a major environmental issue at stake here of which she should be aware. As I was saying, if the company decides to step up production, thereby increasing pollution, it is a great pity, but there is almost no conceivable way of stopping it at the present time.

As for section 13, I probably raised the question with officials and was told that my question was perhaps not clear the first time. After reading the committee blues once again, I realize that the question was clear enough and that the official probably changed his mind in the meantime. But section 13 only refers to the compensation account. Those who relinquished their rights have already dipped into the compensation account. Those who do not give up their rights by the July 1995 deadline I mentioned earlier can access the compensation account but, according to

lawyers, the department and, after checking with the band, the Indians themselves, no one can get around this account.

Therefore, band members who have decided not to give up their rights will be forced eventually to use the compensation account, with little or no recourse against the different levels of government or the company. The purpose of the compensation account is to settle past and future bills, but it will be the only money offered by the government.

The federal government must have thought: "I will pay \$35 million to settle past and future debts, and that is how I will discharge my fiduciary responsibility toward the Pictou Landing Indians." In a nutshell, I think that is what the government attempted to do. No one, I think, could circumvent the provisions in this bill and say, "I will go further by launching a personal lawsuit for, say, \$10 million". People will always be brought back to the compensation account, which is a major obstacle to taking individual legal action. If I were in the shoes of someone who did not give up his rights, I would see if I could sue under the constitution.

I know that this would be an additional obstacle, but I think that individuals can probably still sue. However, the clause I have just read to you will certainly be used by crown attorneys to bring people back to the compensation fund.

In conclusion, there are positive elements in the agreement. This money will be exempt from the Indian Act. However, this approach is highly questionable from a regulatory and parliamentary standpoint. On one hand, the federal government and the province of Nova Scotia have let the situation deteriorate for 30 years. The federal government has neglected its fiduciary role for 30 years. It takes action only when the damage is done and almost irreversible.

(1200)

It entices the natives knowing full well that they are living in miserable conditions. It waves this \$2,000 cheque at them and promises another \$1,500 will be paid if the agreement is signed. It tells the band: "You will have a compensation account. You will have up to \$35 million to relocate and start up new projects." Given their living conditions, this offer is so tempting that I can see why they jump at it. The approach is paternalistic. Any right to sue is taken away in a context where the scope is so broad and the words used so vague that nothing stops the government from doing absolutely nothing and letting the situation deteriorate if it so pleases. Finally, the government comes up with this bill when all is settled.

When I say that all is settled, I mean that the agreement was signed and money paid. The band already committed itself. It is all done. The only thing left to do is for us to put our seal of approval on the whole thing.

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Regarding the settlement process and the parliamentary process, we express serious concerns. Sadly, we have been put in front of a fait accompli. We will go along with the referendum decision whereby a 95 per cent majority approved the agreement as is, but I would like to make a suggestion to the government. It would be interesting if any new claim settlement—and I am convinced there will be more, given the number of reserves in Canada—be subjected to a regulatory process and a slightly more democratic parliamentary process, so that we are not put in front of a fait accompli again. You just cannot come and tell us: "See, it is all settled; all you have to do is to pass the bill".

As I said, this bill looks quite innocuous with just four clauses, but it has impacts and effects on Pictou Landing. Let me wrap up. Based on the background I gave you earlier, we can assume that people who have probably lived by that this stretch of water now have to relocate on land that—I hope, with \$35 million—will allow them to maintain their traditions and culture. These people depend on fishing for their livelihood and survival.

While deploring the regulatory and parliamentary process, the Bloc Québécois will support the bill in consideration of the decision made by Pictou Landing and the aboriginal people who live there to approve the agreement as it stands.

[English]

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the member for Central Nova in whose riding is the Pictou Landing band. I also enjoyed the speech of the Bloc member for Saint-Jean. However, if it had not been for the opening and closing statements, I would not know which way he would be voting.

It is a pleasure to have an opportunity to say a few words at third reading of Bill C-60, the Pictou Landing Indian Band Agreement Act. The legislation has received due consideration at second reading and careful review in committee. I thank the departmental officials who have provided us with a cogent and detailed explanation.

While my party and I had some concerns, particularly over ratification of an agreement after payment of \$28 million of the \$35 million package has already been made, we support the intent of the legislation.

I will give a quick background. In 1966 the crown failed to provide or to obtain the band's informed consent to transfer to the province of Nova Scotia its riparian rights on the Boat Harbour tidal estuary. This transfer permitted the province to operate Boat Harbour as a facility to treat effluent from the kraft mill owned by Scott Industries Maritime Limited.

In July 1992 the government approved a mandate to negotiate an out of court settlement of the lawsuit. It was ratified by vote

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on July 5, 1993. The final agreement was signed on July 20, 1993. That was under the previous administration.

(1205)

The final agreement provides that the band gives Canada a release from responsibility and liability for past, present and future effects related to the Boat Harbour effluent treatment system in exchange for compensation to the Pictou Landing band. As I mentioned previously, the total compensation was \$35 million of which the band received \$28 million at the end of April 1994 and will receive the remainder in April 1995.

The one outstanding question in my mind is: What has taken so long to bring the bill forward? I have asked the question and I have yet to receive a satisfactory answer.

There are two critical issues addressed in the legislation. First it will ensure that all future claims by members of the First Nations in that area will be directed to an established fund that the bill provides. This means that no further claims can be made against the crown in this instance. This is critical to me and my party. We therefore are satisfied with that arrangement.

Second, Bill C-60 provides that the Pictou Landing Micmac band is responsible for managing and disseminating the settlement money provided, a total of \$35 million, \$20 million of which will go to pay out claims to the band and to individual members. The remainder, \$15 million, shall be used to pay band members to relocate should it become necessary. Once the allotment has been used, the band has no further recourse against the crown for further financial compensation.

Having addressed the two operative principles of the bill, I want to add that it is my hope the \$20 million will help deliver the band to self-sufficiency. We feel that every agreement the government signs should ultimately bring more self-sufficiency to the band.

The Reform Party supports the conclusion of outstanding claims. The Pictou claim is a consequence of the non-fulfilment by the government of an obligation arising from the improper administration of reserve lands by the department. This breach of fiduciary responsibility and duty has now been settled.

I am confident members of the Pictou band will manage this settlement responsibly and I wish them well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(1210)

FIREARMS ACT

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved that Bill C-68, an act respecting firearms and other weapons, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, may I say that I consider it a privilege to lead off debate at second reading on this important piece of legislation and to urge the House to adopt the legislation in principle before sending it to the standing committee for detailed consideration.

If I may, I would propose to begin my treatment of the legislation today by speaking about matters of principle that motivate the government in preparing and presenting this legislation: objectives, ideals and values.

The government suggests that the object of the regulation of firearms should be the preservation of the safe, civilized and peaceful nature of Canada.

While there are many reasons we respect and admire our neighbours to the south and value our unique relationship with them, there are also aspects of the American way of life that we see as very different from what we want for ourselves. Perhaps chief among them is the way in which firearms are regulated and used.

It is said that there are over 200 million firearms in private ownership in the United States of America, including tens of millions of handguns, with varying levels of regulation, but generally in a context in which the private use of firearms is acknowledged, recognized and even in some places encouraged including for self-protection.

It seems to me and to the government that we do not want that for ourselves. We do not want to live in a country in which people feel they want or need to possess a firearm for protection. That is the first principle we take as a guiding principle for the preparation of legislation in terms of the regulation of firearms.

A second principle is that if we are to retain our safe and peaceful character as a country we should signal in every possible way that we will not tolerate and we will severely punish the use of firearms in the commission of crime. Those who take up a firearm to threaten others, to rob or to assault must know that by choosing to use a firearm they are making an important decision about a large part of the rest of their lives. The punishment must be certain and must be significant.

Those who smuggle guns, those who traffic in illegal firearms, those who profit by putting guns into the hands of criminals must know that the penalties for such misconduct will be swift and will be certain. That is the second principle we take as governing or guiding the preparation of legislation as it relates to firearms.

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A third principle is that we must acknowledge and respect the legitimate uses of firearms. We should acknowledge and respect the history and tradition of hunting, not only as a favourite pastime in many parts of Canada but as a very important economic activity contributing directly to the prosperity of a number of regions throughout Canada. We must acknowledge and respect the use of firearms for ranching or hunting purposes where firearms are a tool, an implement used by the proprietor of business to get by. We must allow for that. We must not interfere with that unduly.

(1215)

May I say as well that we must acknowledge that some people enjoy collecting firearms. Some people enjoy the shooting sports. Indeed, Canada has achieved distinction internationally through the skill of those athletes who train and excel at sport shooting. We must acknowledge and respect that interest and that skill. But those legitimate interests, while they are acknowledged and respected, must be carried on in a context that is consistent with public safety.

[Translation]

Consequently, Canadians firmly intend to safeguard and to reinforce the exceptional civility which has always been theirs. The legislative and political program entitled "Safe Home Safe Street" is testimony of this government's commitment.

[English]

These are the elements of the legislation that we bring forward today as Bill C-68: First, tough measures to deal with the criminal misuse of firearms; second, specific penalties to punish those who would smuggle illegal firearms; and third, measures overall to provide a context in which the legitimate use of firearms can be carried on in a manner consistent with public safety. In all of that, the universal registration of firearms is a fundamental strategy, a fundamental support system to allow us to achieve the objectives I have described.

I know that for many members and for many Canadians the prospect of universal registration is the aspect of this legislation which is the most controversial. In the months I have spent travelling the country and speaking with those who own, use and enjoy firearms lawfully, I have been told by many that they see registration as a point on which they are going to differ with this government.

May I deal directly with the issue of registration and how it is going to enable us to achieve the objectives of a safe and peaceful society, a more effective response to the criminal misuse of firearms and enhanced public safety.

I will begin with the proposition that we live in a society in which all manner of property is licensed, registered or regulated

in some way. All manner of activities are regulated either by legislation or administrative action to achieve a level of orderliness which is desirable in a civilized society. In that context, where cars, pets, and property of all description are registered or recorded for purposes of tracing ownership or reflecting transfers, surely the prospect of registering firearms is rationally justified by a society that wants to achieve a level of order.

What is the connection between registration on the one hand and the efforts of police to fight crime on the other, or trying to achieve a safer society? From my inquiries, from everything I have read and all the discussions I have had, both with law enforcement officers and with members of the firearms community themselves, it seems to me that criminals derive their firearms from the underground market. They do not register their firearms. They do not buy them at a local dealership, fill out the forms, apply for the firearms acquisition certificate, take the courses or pay the fees. Criminals acquire their firearms in the underground market illegally.

Those who engage in street crime tap into a market that is fed from one of two sources: guns that are smuggled into Canada and therefore are here illegally, or guns that are stolen from lawful owners and then traded in the underground.

(1220)

Suppose you are inclined to use a gun in a holdup or an assault. You can go to one of Canada's major cities and, out of the trunk of a car, behind an after hours club, or on the second floor of a certain downtown hotel, or at a suburban house, if you know someone who knows someone, you can buy one of these guns illegally and put it to a criminal use.

Surely we must choke off the sources of supply for that underground market. Surely we must reduce the number of firearms smuggled into the country. Surely we must cut down on the number of firearms stolen and traded in the underground. How do we achieve that? Through registration.

The registration of all firearms will enable us to do a better job at the borders. We will never stop the smuggling of firearms entirely. There are 130 million border crossings a year. We cannot stop every vehicle and check every trunk and glove compartment. But we can do a better job than we have done in the past and registration will enable us to do it.

Last year approximately 375,000 firearms came into Canada. Almost all guns sold here are imported. We do not know where they are or how they got here. There is no control once they arrive. We know that guns leak from shipments that come in lawfully. Just last week in Toronto there was an arrest of someone who had been illegally selling guns that were legally imported.

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Registration will enable us to record what arrives and track it to the point of sale into the hands of a lawful owner. Registration will enable us to stop the kind of leakage that now occurs, to reduce the incidence of people illegally selling that which is legally imported.

Along with other measures that the government proposes in relation to border controls, including enhanced inspection and enforcement, registration will enable us to address one of the two principal sources of guns for the criminal market in the underground.

As to the second source of guns, those stolen from lawful owners, last year approximately 3,800 firearms were lost or stolen by those who lawfully own them in Canada. In the years since 1974 a cumulative total of 65,000 firearms have been stolen or lost and not recovered.

What does this have to do with registration? The police contend, and I accept it as a matter of logic, that registration which obligates each of us to record the fact of our ownership of firearms will imbue the owners with a heightened sense of responsibility to comply with laws already on the books mandating safe storage. These might involve locking the triggers, keeping the ammunition separate, or keeping the firearms themselves in a locked case.

With compliance with those safe storage requirements the incidence of firearms being stolen, of someone breaking and entering into a person's house and finding a shotgun leaning against the closet wall or a handgun in the bedside table will diminish. A second important source for criminals and guns will be addressed.

There is more. Registration will reduce crime and better equip the police to deal with crime in Canadian society by providing them with information they often need to do their job. Let me provide a practical example for my colleagues in the House.

Two weeks ago in Victoria when I met with provincial and territorial ministers of justice, we talked about a number of amendments to the Criminal Code that might make it more effective. One of them had to do with criminal harassment or so-called stalking.

It was suggested an improvement might be to add to the panoply of penalties the court can impose when convicting a person of criminal harassment, an order prohibiting them from possessing firearms because we would be dealing now with someone who had been convicted of a crime which too often leads to violence.

That suggestion was made in the context of ministers, not all of whom agreed with universal registration. But when the question was asked: Assuming that we have an order against someone made by the court forbidding them from possessing firearms because they have been convicted of criminal harassment, how will we enforce that order? How will we know that all of the person's firearms have been surrendered? How will the

police know what firearms to look for when they arrive to enforce the order?

(1225)

Mandatory registration will provide a basis upon which the police can enforce that kind of order, which is commonly made in the courts when people have been convicted of such offences.

I have said in the House in the past and rely heavily upon the fact that preponderantly the police are in favour of universal registration. We can quibble about individual officers. I know it is not unanimous. However, the chiefs have been vigorously pressing for this legislation for many years.

The Canadian Police Association, through its executive, is supportive of these measures. Police forces and boards across the country are encouraging us to proceed with this legislation. I know there are police officers who see it differently, but preponderantly the police forces are in favour of these measures.

Victims groups, including CAVEAT, urge us to have universal registration. Priscilla de Villiers, the president of CAVEAT, lost a daughter in a dreadful tragedy. She was murdered by a man in respect of whom the police had investigations concerning firearms.

In the Jonathon Yeo case there was an inquest into Nina de Villiers' death. After spending months looking at the facts of that case, the jury at that inquest recommended universal registration of all firearms. Priscilla de Villiers has spoken out strongly in favour of that measure, explaining her conviction that it will help the police to deal with crime.

The point is broader still. Registration will assist us to deal with the scourge of domestic violence. Statistics demonstrate that every six days a woman is shot to death in Canada, almost always in her home, almost always by someone she knows, almost always with a legally owned rifle or shotgun. This is not a street criminal with a smuggled handgun at the corner store. This is an acquaintance, a spouse or a friend in the home.

What does this have to do with registration? Domestic violence by its very nature is episodic and incremental. Typically, somewhere along the line the court has made an order barring the aggressor from possessing firearms. When the police try to enforce that order, just as in the case of stalking, they do not know whether they have been successful or not. They do not know what firearms are there.

When firearms are registered, if it is necessary for a person to register and show proof of registration to buy ammunition, as it will be, the police will know what firearms are there. The police will be able to enforce those orders and lives will be saved.

Suicides and accidents provide another example. Last year, of the 1,400 people who died by firearms in Canada, 1,100 were suicides. I know there are those who say that suicide by its

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nature will result in death no matter what controls are in place if the person is determined to take his or her life. No doubt that point has some force. However, too many of those suicides were by young people acting in a moment of anguish, acting impulsively because of a failed relationship, difficulty in the home, or problems at school.

If a firearm is not readily available, lives can be saved. If registration, as the police believe, will encourage owners to store firearms safely so those impulsive acts are less likely, the result may be different.

In the years since 1970, some 470 children have died in Canada as a result of accidents with firearms. If we can achieve safer storage through registration, if registration will provide us with a tool by which we can identify firearms owners, educate them about their obligations for safe storage and encourage them to comply, children's lives could be saved. Against this background what are the objections to registration? It is said that it will be unduly costly, both to the government and to the firearms' owners. Let us examine that contention, first, with respect to the government.

(1230)

We have provided our estimate of the cost of implementing universal registration over the next five years. We say that it will cost \$85 million. We have also said that we will put before the parliamentary committee, on which all parties sit, details of those calculations showing our assumptions and how we arrived at those figures. We encourage the members opposite to examine our estimates. We are confident we will demonstrate that the figures are realistic and accurate.

In so far as the cost to firearms' owners is concerned, the system of registration that we envisage if this legislation is enacted would commence next year with the registration of owners. Those who own firearms would be asked within five years to pick up a card, conveniently available in their communities, to identify themselves by name and address and to return it. They would then be sent a permit or a licence to own a firearm. In the first year of the five-year implementation period we expect that the cost to the firearms owner would be zero. If it is not zero, it would be a nominal amount in the range of \$10.

The second phase of registration, the registration of the firearms themselves, would commence two years later in January 1998. Again firearms owners would be asked to fill out a card, which they would pick up in their communities, identify their firearms by make, model and serial number, to return it and we will send them a registration certificate for their firearms. Once again, this would be phased in over five years from 1998. Once again, in the first year of implementation, the cost would be zero, or if not zero a nominal amount in the range of \$10 to register up to 10 firearms.

If we contrast the relative convenience of such a system—all we are asking of firearms owners is to fill out two cards and mail them in—with the advantages that responsible people say we will achieve through such a system, it seems that on any cost-benefit analysis registration is justified.

It is said that such a system will be complex and bureaucratic. Surely it is evident from the description which I have given that it will be just the opposite. We can take the opportunity of designing and implementing such a system in collaboration with provincial authorities, with the input of the firearms groups to eliminate irritants, to overcome paperwork burden, to simplify and streamline the system so that all of our objectives can be achieved at the same time.

It is crucially important, in my judgment, that as we debate this question of registration, in respect of which there are strongly held views on both sides, that we do so on the real facts. Let us confine ourselves to the reality of the situation. Let us not hear that the registration system will cost \$100 per firearm. Let us not hear that it is a prelude to the confiscation by the government of hunting rifles and shotguns. Let us not contend that it will cost \$1.5 billion to put in place.

That is the way to distort the discussion. That is the way to frighten people. Surely this debate must be carried out on the real facts. When the real facts are addressed it seems clear that the objectives of which I spoke at the outset can be achieved while respecting the legitimate uses of firearms. This can surely be done without imposing unduly on firearms owners through the introduction of universal registration for the reasons I have described.

So far as crime is concerned, the House will know from statements made earlier that the legislation contemplates a toughening of the penalties of the criminal misuse of firearms. It contemplates a change in the structure of the code to overcome the plea bargaining of charges relating to the use of firearms so that the penalties will be woven directly into the sections which provide for the offences themselves.

(1235)

I have discussed with my provincial and territorial counterparts their collaboration in an effort to ensure that the laws we write in the Criminal Code will be enforced as such in the courts and that the attorneys general of the provinces will instruct crown attorneys, in any case in which the facts justify them, to seek the penalties that are included in this legislation as deterrents to the criminal misuse of firearms.

In the course of the work that I did in response to the Prime Minister's request that I prepare this legislation, I met with over 150 national and regional organizations of firearms owners and users. I met with hunters, farmers, target shooters, collectors, skeet shooters and athletes who achieved distinction for Canada in the Commonwealth and Olympic Games. I met with the

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Shooting Federation of Canada. I met with all manner of local hunting and outdoors and wilderness clubs.

I want the House to know that I listened and I learned from that process. Elements of this package were changed substantially, moulded specifically, on what I heard from firearms owners.

For one thing, the House will see in Bill C-68 that we not only intend changes to the Criminal Code to toughen the sanctions but we also contemplate a separate statute called the Firearms Act to deal with the regulatory aspects in relation to firearms acquisition, use and ownership.

This is intended to meet the longstanding complaint from firearms owners that they were offended by having to consult the Criminal Code to determine the manner in which their private ownership of firearms was to be regulated.

I was asked why it was necessary to combine the regulation of private ownership of firearms with the criminal law. I responded by removing those elements from the code and embodying them in a separate statute called the Firearms Act.

There were also suggestions early on calling for the central storage of firearms or urban gun free zones. From my consultation with the firearms community I learned that such proposals were impractical and they were not pursued.

At the outset the government was urged to ban all handguns. We were told that three-quarters of Canadians, and indeed the majority of firearms owners, believed that all handguns in private ownership should be banned. We did not do that.

In the course of my meetings with the firearms groups, I was very much impressed with the ardour with which many Canadians approach the target shooting sports. They are highly skilled people, very law-abiding, conscientious in their pastimes and their hobbies. These Canadians want to continue in those sports.

Therefore this legislation acknowledges and allows those sports to continue. What we have done is remove from circulation over time, and to ban immediately after the enactment of the legislation, the importation and sale of those handguns inappropriate for target or sport shooting, the so-called Saturday night specials. These handguns are by their design and characteristics suitable for concealment, inexpensive to buy, easy to trade in the underground and not appropriate for target shooting because of their lack of accuracy.

We have also made it clear that for those who own handguns in the banned or prohibited categories, such owners will be able to use them in accordance with the requalification requirements in the statute and trade them to and from others in the same class.

Consequently complaints that we were affecting the property value of owners' investments have been addressed.

May I also emphasize that as this bill goes to committee following second reading debate, it will go with my request that the committee look at specific changes in the law. First of all, to ensure that we are accommodating all of those sporting competitions with handguns, we have already made it clear that the .22-.32 calibre Walther used by Linda Thom at the 1984 Olympics will not be covered by the ban. We want the committee to take the advice of the International Shooting Union to determine whether there are other handguns that should be exempted so that legitimate sporting activities will not be threatened.

(1240)

Second, I will ask the committee to examine the question whether there are black powder shooting events that might be affected by this legislation. It is not our intention in any way to limit historical re-enactments with the use of reproductions. We do not believe we have done that but we will ask the committee to look specifically at that question and to let us know whether additional technical amendments are required to make the meaning clear.

Third, we will ask the committee to look at the question of relics and heirlooms, recognizing that there are families and individuals who want to pass on to the next generation firearms that they have acquired and that have a specific sentimental or historical value to the family. That should be respected. We will ask the committee to fashion a way to allow it to happen consistently with the imperatives of public safety.

May I also observe that the introduction of universal registration will allow a rational way to control access to ammunition so that those who wish to buy ammunition will have to establish that they are properly registered to have and use a firearm.

Last, may I refer to the aboriginal communities who during the period of consultation were insistent that we respect, first, their treaty rights and second, their traditional and community way of life.

The firearms legislation will apply to aboriginal communities in exactly the same way as it applies to everyone else. The principles are identical. However, we have undertaken to respect treaty rights. We believe that this legislation is consistent with treaty rights because it is no more than the regulation by the federal government of hunting and other activities.

An hon. member: Two classes of Canadians.

Mr. Rock: Not two classes. Furthermore, we believe that this legislation can be implemented in a way that is sensitive to the traditional way of life of aboriginal people, that its administration can be decentralized to the community. We are committed

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to working with the aboriginal communities across Canada to ensure that happens.

From time to time issues and questions arise which permit the legislature of a country to define what kind of future it wants for the country. It seems to me that on the subject of the regulation of firearms we have just such an issue. We have an opportunity for Parliament to make a statement about the kind of Canada that we want for ourselves and for our children, about the efforts we are prepared to make to ensure the peaceful and civilized nation that we have and enjoy and to demonstrate just who is in control of firearms in Canada. Is it the gun lobby or is it the people of this country?

Much reference is made in the House on the subject of polls. It was not polls that inspired this legislation. This legislation is based on the principles and objectives that I described at the outset. However, polls are useful from time to time to remind us just where the people stand on these issues. There is no doubt that these proposals enjoy the support of the vast majority of Canadians, rural and urban, in every region of the country. They see this legislation as an opportunity for us to make exactly the kind of statement I referred to about the kind of country we want, the kind of future we want and just how firearms should be acquired and used in Canada.

I commend this legislation to the House. I invite its attention to the principles of which we speak and I ask for the support of the House for those principles.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, at last we have a bill on gun control, and we are very pleased. It was high time the Minister of Justice tabled his plan of action in the form of a bill. We are delighted to proceed with the real debate. No more delays, no more conferences and consultations. Now the debate can start on Bill C-68, which is supposed to be an innovative piece of legislation.

We in the official opposition are aware of the concerns of a public that is disturbed, and rightly so, about the proliferation of firearms and the shocking number of deaths caused by these weapons.

(1245)

We do not criticize just for the sake of criticizing, although the Minister of Justice does not seem to agree. Our criticism is constructive. Basically, we support legislation that will tighten gun control.

Right from the start, I would like to stress the attitude of the Minister of Justice during the debate on gun control. It is always a pleasure to watch a politician who sticks to his guns.

That being said, although the Minister of Justice is to be commended, Bill C-68 is not a panacea. It will not deal with all the problems out there. In fact, I am not so much worried about

what the bill contains as about what it does not contain. I will expand on this in a few minutes.

I can hardly ignore the behaviour of the minority pro-gun lobby, a minority that managed to give the impression that its extreme position is widely shared. The pro-gun lobby and their Reform Party friends have been piling on the speeches. They would have us believe that more is better. The warm welcome they gave the Minister of Justice when he visited Calgary says a lot about their allegiance and their cynical attitudes. Threats of civil disobedience, the sacrosanct right to own firearms and individual and collective rights are all part of their rallying cry.

They want the public to believe that a bill on gun control is worthy of a dictator like Stalin, Hitler or Pol Pot. I even received a communication in my office in Ottawa, with a list attached of countries where genocide had been practised and the dates on which gun control legislation had come into effect in those countries.

These fervent supporters of the right to bear arms were trying to establish a link between gun control and the genocides that have tarnished the history of mankind. This is pretty sad. I never saw such a total lack of intellectual honesty. These people should be ashamed of spreading such monstrous lies. To claim that the Armenian genocide was a direct consequence of gun control legislation that came into effect 40 years earlier is not only absurd but insane.

I agree that these individuals are not representative of the majority of those who object to all forms of gun control. Reform Party members should check their ranks and flush out the extremists. Some spring cleaning would be in order.

I come back to the bill before us today. In the fall we criticized it and, again today, we decry the minister's hesitation. Since the minister has been promising us legislation on arms control for such a long time, we were expecting something more complete, I can assure you.

The Minister of Justice wanted to win everyone over by giving something to each of them. Reformers, the gun lobby, and a number of colleagues of the Minister of Justice are delighted with the increase in the minimum sentences for crimes committed with guns and the fact that current firearms owners have almost eight years' grace to comply with the requirements of the national registration system the government is proposing today.

Let us have a closer look at who should be celebrating: the gun lobby or those in favour of stricter arms.

First, the bill proposes major changes to the Criminal Code. In terms of sentences, the bill increases from one year to four years the minimum sentence an individual must serve for committing a crime with a firearm. The present section 85 of the Criminal Code provides for a minimum sentence of one year for anyone using a firearm to commit a criminal act.

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The problem with section 85 is that only a third of the charges made under this section result in convictions. Lawyers on a case will use this section most of the time for plea bargaining. The Crown is satisfied with the few convictions, because, in return, it obtains a guilty plea for the principal offence, such as robbery or sexual assault.

(1250)

The bill does not resolve this de facto situation. Minimum sentences are increased, but there is no mechanism to force lawyers to stop bargaining for guilty pleas. In addition, judges, generally, tend to follow a principle of combining the number of years a defendant has to serve. Nothing in the bill will change this practice.

I would even bet that they will continue to do it and in this way reduce the length of the sentence for major offences. In real terms, there may be no significant increase in the actual number of years that the person will have to serve. However, if judges stop giving concurrent jail sentences, the increase in the jail population could become another problem area. I will come back to this later.

Finally, section 85 is modified by the addition of a list of 10 violent offences which will be covered by the provision. We wonder whether the government really was serious when it drew up this list. Manslaughter, an unpremeditated crime, is on the list. However, armed assault is not. Does that mean that the punishment will be the same, whether or not the victim survives the assault? Forcible confinement is not on the list, but kidnapping and hostage are.

I also really have doubts about whether the increase in the minimum sentence provided for in section 85 will be a deterrent. I would like to point out that a working paper on section 85, in particular, and on minimum sentences, in general, prepared by the department of justice concluded that for the most part, the public does not know which offences have a mandatory minimum sentence.

In addition, the same document, which the Minister of Justice should have analyzed more thoroughly, also concludes that mandatory minimum sentences are very weak deterrents and have little impact on the incidence of major crimes. Robbery is an excellent example. Even worse, apparently juries are less inclined to render a guilty verdict if they know that the accused will have to serve a mandatory sentence for the offence.

Assuming that judges will not apply the principle of adding up the total number of years for multiple offences, prison populations will increase substantially as a result. Indeed, the minimum sentence of four years would be served after any other sentence imposed by the judge.

The Minister of Justice seems to believe, naively, that detention centres could accommodate this increase in the number of

prisoners. He claims that the deterrence effect of his bill would lower the number of firearms offences. There is no way of knowing the impact of his reform bill on the number of future convictions.

We must bear in mind that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. If the minister wishes to increase minimum sentences stipulated under section 85 of the Criminal Code, he must realize that prison populations will increase thereby and that we do not have the necessary infrastructure to accommodate these new prisoners.

Let us turn our attention to the warning issued by Professor Pierre Landreville of the Université de Montréal. In an article published in *Le Devoir* of December 23, Mr. Landreville explains the danger of such legislation, and I quote: "Some 1,500 persons are convicted each year in Quebec and could possibly be given a minimum sentence of four years in addition to the sentence for the major offence. The population of Quebec penitentiaries, currently about 4,000 prisoners, would nearly double in the first four years after implementation of this measure".

If prison populations increase, so too will the related costs.

(1255)

Will the minister honestly tell taxpayers how much his reform will cost us, knowing that, just to keep a prisoner in jail, it cost on average, in 1992-93, \$56,000 in a maximum security facility and \$36,000 in a medium security one? Can the pro-gun lobby still say it is satisfied with the increase in the minimum sentence stipulated in section 85?

Moreover, for those of us in favour of gun control, can we claim this as a victory? Certainly not. The bill establishes a separate piece of legislation providing for a licensing system regarding the possession and use of firearms, and a national system for the registration of all firearms. Non-compliance with the provisions dealing with licensing and registration will be an offence under the Criminal Code. Going against the wishes of several of his Liberal colleagues, the justice minister decided to maintain sanctions in the bill.

Moreover, Bill C-68 provides for new offences and hefty penalties for the illegal importing of firearms and gun trafficking. In addition to the compulsory minimum sentence, individuals convicted of one of the ten designated violent offences will be prohibited for life from possessing a restricted or prohibited weapon. Up to now, everything is fine and these provisions are the direct result of our representations.

Also, under bill C-68, from now on, importing or selling .25 and .32 calibre handguns and handguns that have a barrel 105 mm in length or less will be prohibited. This ban affects roughly 58 per cent of all handguns in Canada.

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Concurrently with Bill C-68, the justice minister has banned several types of military and paramilitary weapons by an order in council taking effect on January 1st, 1995. A total of 21 types of military and paramilitary firearms will now be prohibited, and they include more than 200 models. However, as the Minister of Justice said, the cornerstone of his bill is the registration system, a computerized record of names and particulars of all gun owners, along with a description of all the firearms they own.

On the eve of the new budget of the Liberal government, the proposals of the Minister of Justice raise a number of questions on the cost of implementing such a system at the national level. The minister was saying, on December 6, in Alberta, that it would cost at least \$85 million to implement. He said that the cost would be spread over five years and that, afterwards, the system would generate revenues. The day before yesterday, during a press conference, he went back on his word and said that the cost would actually be spread over seven years. He demonstrated to the people that he has no idea of the possible cost of such a system and who should bear it.

Unfortunately, we can no longer rely on the minister's estimates since, in two months, he added two years to the amortization period. In a few months, will come before the Standing Committee on Justice to tell us that the costs will never be recovered?

We always asked for a self-financing system. How is the Minister of Justice going to finance his system? He said that gun owners would not have to pay a cent to get their new registration certificates. Current owners will simply have to pay renewal fees of \$60 in five years.

He also states that new certificate holders will only have to pay a small fee of around \$10. How can the minister claim that system costs will be paid off over five or seven years? Why not 10 years?

(1300)

In the meantime, he is asking the provinces to loosen their purse strings to help him pay the bill. He is asking the provinces to help him administer a system whose costs are unknown. This means that not only gun buyers and owners but all taxpayers will pay.

As I said earlier, to the costs associated with the system we must add those associated with a possible increase in prison population. The Minister of Justice can manipulate numbers as much as he likes, but the fact remains that the costs of his bill will be supported by the entire population.

Another flagrant example of the lack of rigour in calculating costs is a January 19 memorandum from the office of the justice minister stating that the government hopes but cannot confirm that current gun owners will not have to pay fees to obtain certificates of ownership.

The memorandum goes on to explain that fees will go up over time to encourage early registration and that the government is hoping that fees will not be charged during the first year.

Terms like "hoping" and "cannot confirm" suggest that the minister does not know the first thing about arithmetic. He has no idea of how much ordinary taxpayers will have to pay. He does not have any idea of the costs associated with Bill C-68 and how much gun owners will have to pay. We are basically demanding that the Minister of Justice's mathematics be clarified.

Finally, can we really talk about a victory, as suggested by the minister, when we know that all this great system will not become operational until the next century? I doubt it.

On the subject of regulations, the justice minister has missed a golden opportunity to practice what he preaches. Regulations respecting the storage, display, handling and transportation of certain firearms is a legal jumble that his department would have trouble sorting out. These regulations have been in force since January 1, 1993, but a great many people are still not aware of their existence, let alone their requirements. Even the police, who are responsible for enforcing them, says they are unfamiliar with these regulations.

When I questioned him in the House on November 15, the Minister of Justice answered, and I quote: "I well understand that the challenge we face is to make Canadians understand and comply with safe storage requirements."

I reviewed his action plan and his bill inside out, but nowhere is any revision of these regulations to be found. Yet, the Minister of Justice claims universal registration of firearms is necessary to make owners more responsible vis-à-vis storage and transportation. How can gun owners be asked to be more responsible and comply with regulations that they do not know about or do not understand?

The danger with inadequate regulations is that improperly stored firearms and ammunition are readily available to an individual who yields to a suicidal or violent impulsion. On the other hand, if firearms and ammunition are not readily available, chances are the person will calm down. Statistics on deaths caused by firearms are alarming. In 1991, suicides accounted for 77 per cent of the 1,445 deaths caused by firearms. In 1992, out of 732 registered homicides in Canada, 246, or 34 per cent, were committed with a firearm.

In the last ten years, most homicides were committed with shotguns or hunting rifles. Three times out of four, a spouse is killed by a rifle or a shotgun.

(1305)

In Quebec, from 1990 to 1992, there were 1,293 deaths caused by firearms, which represents an annual average of 425. In that same province, suicides account for three out of four deaths

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caused by firearms, for a total of about 300 suicides per year. These statistics cannot be overlooked.

The inquest conducted in Montreal, last November, by coroner Anne-Marie David shed some light on the deficiencies, and the resulting dangers, related to inadequate regulations. Coroner David's report was released on January 26.

Throughout the hearings, the most frequent criticisms were related to the inconsistency of the current regulations. Lieutenant Guy Asselin of the Quebec provincial police testified and said: "The regulations are not necessarily clear, which does not help those who have to enforce them, nor those who want to comply with them".

The spokesperson for the Quebec police and fire chiefs' association, Mr. Richard Côté, made essentially the same comment when he said: "Police officers do not know how to interpret the law. You almost have to be a legal expert". Mr. Côté added that these regulations were included in the program of only two of the nine CEGEPs offering the police technology course, and that the related training lasted only a few hours.

If police officers themselves cannot understand the regulations, how can the Minister of Justice claim that his bill will increase safety at home? Police officers are not the only ones who do not know the regulations. Those who are directly concerned, and I am referring to the owners of firearms, hardly know there is such a thing as regulations on the safe storage of firearms.

A Léger & Léger poll has confirmed these disturbing facts. The poll was conducted from September 1 to September 13, 1994, among 515 owners of firearms residing in Quebec. When asked whether they knew about these regulations, only 53 per cent of respondents thought there was a law on storage, 31.8 per cent said no and 15.1 per cent were undecided. It is clear that, in addition to a national registration system, a thorough review and targeted advertising are necessary.

The Minister of Justice forgets that sometimes simple solutions are the most effective. If the government made it compulsory for businesses to supply individual locking systems for every firearm sold in this country, the problem would be practically solved.

The minister keeps repeating that registration of owners and firearms is just like getting a driver's licence or a licence for your car. If the minister had pursued his analogy, he would have realized that cars are sold with locking systems. I may have a driver's licence, but that does not mean I can start my neighbour's car without an ignition key.

My point is that every firearm sold in this country would have a device that would make it totally harmless. The owner would

then be under the obligation to keep the firearm locked at all times, failing which he would be breaking the law. In this way, gun collectors would be able to exhibit their pieces, and in season, hunters would be able to practise their favourite sport.

I support the recommendations of coroner David, in which she urged the Minister of Justice to amend the wording of the regulations for storage, display and safe transportation of firearms, to make them more consistent and ensure they are more readily understood by the general public.

Similarly, the Minister of Justice should pay particular attention to the recommendation that the regulations be changed to oblige people selling guns to lock or disarm all weapons intended for sale and to prevent them from storing restricted firearms anywhere but in a vault and prevent the delivery to a customer of a firearm not equipped with a safety catch.

(1310)

In conclusion, I believe that setting up a national registration system is a positive step, subject to my earlier comments. I must, however, say again that I find it most regrettable that the Minister of Justice bowed to pressure from the gun lobby. By spreading owner and weapon registration over eight years, the minister is stating very clearly that he does not want the system implemented during his term of office. Furthermore, I believe the minister backed off significantly from his original plan of action by permitting the purchase and sale of handguns between owners of the same type of weapons.

Finally, it appears that the minister has not yet completed his consultations and that he is now leaving it up to the Standing Committee on Justice. He wants the committee to look at the following questions: Should we allow the owners of prohibited firearms to bequeath these weapons to their children? Are there handguns that may be used for target practice? Will the use of replicas of powder fired guns be allowed at celebrations?

The minister should have assumed the consequences of his choices himself rather than force the parliamentary committee to make some of the unpleasant decisions.

In closing, we hope the minister still has sufficient leeway to take our recommendations into consideration.

[English]

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin this debate before I get into the text of my intervention by touching on a couple of comments the justice minister made.

This is the most confusing time for the justice minister to bring new legislation on gun control into the picture. The reason is that we have court decisions, one in Alberta, clearly indicating the orders in council passed by Kim Campbell are invalid.

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Until such time as that decision is overturned, the orders in council passed by Kim Campbell and the orders in council passed by this minister, becoming effective January 1, are considered to be invalid and are not being enforced. I also understand that B.C. has taken the same position on these orders in council. A court of Queen's Bench decision renders those orders in council invalid.

We have asked the justice minister in this House if he would not consider waiting until that particular case moves through the appeal courts and a final determination is made. The justice minister has refused to accept that advice and is now heaping orders in council upon orders in council that the courts in this land are saying are invalid.

It also means that all the actions taken by the police and the court under the authority of the orders in council passed by Kim Campbell's government have been illegal. All of the seizures, confiscations and destruction of weapons without compensation are considered illegal.

Unless the judge's decision is overturned they will remain in that state. We have asked the justice minister to please wait until such time as this confusion within the courts has been cleared up. He has failed to do so.

I would like to touch on the point the justice minister raised about registration of rifles and shotguns where an individual will simply have to go to the appropriate place within his community, pick up a card and fill in the make, model and serial number.

I was talking to a firearms inspector in Alberta. I suggested this was the method that would be introduced. He said it is utter nonsense. I asked why and he said you cannot register what you do not inspect, otherwise you are going to have a system that is absolutely unreliable. I asked: "What do you mean?" He said: "Unless you inspect the identifying features on a firearm and the firearm inspector records that within the system they cannot be sure of the accuracy of that information".

(1315)

The justice minister knows as well that there are many firearms with the same serial number, the same identifying features. The suggestion by the justice minister that this is going to be easy and inexpensive is simply nonsense. It is just not accurate.

I cannot support this gun control legislation because the centrepiece of it, the registration of all rifles and shotguns, will not reduce the criminal use of firearms.

The justice minister has not told us how these measures will reduce the criminal use of rifles and shotguns. The police chiefs have not told us. The Coalition for Gun Control has not told us how the registration of rifles and shotguns will reduce their

criminal use. No one who supports the registration of rifles and shotguns has told us, told the House or told anyone how it will reduce the criminal use of these firearms. They have not because they cannot.

Handguns have been registered in the country and their use strictly controlled for 60 years. Yet we see an increase in the criminal use of handguns in Canada today. If handgun registration does not reduce the criminal use of these particular firearms, will the justice minister please tell Canadians how the registration of rifles and shotguns will have a different effect?

Death from shotgun wounds occurs in four primary areas: in criminal activity, in domestic disputes, in suicides and in accidental use of firearms. The imposition of a firearms registration system will do nothing to reduce deaths in any of these areas. The gun control bill does not address or reduce the cause of domestic disputes or suicides. Certainly registration is not the answer.

The justice minister has stated in the House, as he did today, that every six days a woman is shot to death in the country. This is a horrific statistic. Unless the causes of domestic dispute that produce these statistics are addressed nothing will change. The registration of firearms will not change this statistic and nothing within the minister's bill will address the cause of domestic disputes.

Safe storage of firearms may reduce suicides and accidental shooting. However these regulations are already in force. I have heard no one to whom I have spoken who is opposed to those regulations. They are common sense and they support them.

Over 80 per cent of the people in my riding of Crowfoot, Alberta, who responded to a survey indicated they did not believe the banning of handguns or the registration of rifles and shotguns would reduce the criminal use of firearms. The question that was asked directly was: "Do you believe that the registration of rifles and shotguns will reduce the criminal use of these firearms?" Over 80 per cent said no.

The other question was: "Do you believe an outright ban of handguns will reduce the criminal use of these firearms?" Over 80 per cent said no, but 94 per cent said that they were in favour of imposing harsher penalties upon the criminal users of firearms.

I believe during the period of review and debate on Bill C-68 as more Canadians become apprised of the details of the legislation and as people recognize the ineffectiveness of these gun controls in reducing crime and the enormous cost to the taxpayer, opposition will mount. I am reminded of the support for the Charlottetown accord when it first came out. Over 70 per cent of western Canadians were willing to support it but the more they learned about it, the more support for that accord plummeted like a stone.

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(1320)

Canadians have repeatedly urged the government to do something about crime, to strengthen the Young Offenders Act, to reform sentencing procedures and the parole system that continues the early release of violent offenders into society. These people have witnessed innocent victims being murdered, raped and viciously assaulted by offenders released into society by a system of justice that is preoccupied with the rights of the criminal, not the protection of the law-abiding citizen.

I might add that the registration of rifles and shotguns is aimed at the law-abiding citizen. I will touch upon this point later in my speech. If they should deliberately neglect to register their shotgun or firearm they are subject to 10 years in jail, which is draconian, absolutely absurd.

The sentencing provisions of the bill suggest the justice minister and the Liberal government are getting tough on crime. This is nothing more than a pretence. The bill contains provisions for a minimum of four years imprisonment for the criminal use of a firearm. However section 85 of the Criminal Code already allows for an additional sentence from one to fourteen years for the use of a firearm in the commission of a crime. This law has not been enforced rigorously at all in some areas of the country.

Crown prosecutors have used their discretion either to ignore this law or to plea bargain it away. The justice minister admitted shortly after he submitted the proposals in the legislation that his new bill would not eliminate the discretion of the prosecutors to continue to ignore or plea bargain away the new four-year minimum sentence. There is no assurance of that.

We look upon this portion of the bill as a step in the right direction. However it would not be needed if section 85 were enforced and it will be useless if the crown continues to plea bargain away the new four-year minimum sentence.

In addition to the lack of enforcement of section 85, lenient sentences and early parole are contributing to a violent society. Who is responsible for this? I ask this question of the House: Are the parliamentarians who created the laws that now spew violent offenders on to the street before they have served their full sentences not responsible for the death of the Melanie Carpenters of the country? Are those same parliamentarians not responsible for creating a situation where the rights of the criminal supersede the rights of the victim and the victim's family? Are they not responsible for the growing fear of violence experienced throughout the country?

I want the people of Canada to know that when the justice minister had the opportunity to vote for a safer society or the early release of murderers into society, he voted for the violent criminal instead of a safer society. The Minister of Justice voted against eliminating section 745 from the Criminal Code which

grants first degree murderers the right to apply for early parole. The justice minister in effect voted for the criminal and against eliminating violence and against the Melanie Carpenters of the country. So did the entire caucus, except for the Minister of Transport.

The Minister of Transport stood with 24 of his Liberal colleagues and voted with the Reform Party to eliminate section 745 which allows for the early release of convicted murderers into society. I might add that during that vote when I looked over at Bloc members I did not see one of them standing against the early release of violent criminals back into society.

If the minister is sincere about fighting crime we recommend that he do the following: increase the maximum jail terms for all violent crimes including firearms crimes, implement a zero tolerance policy for criminal offences involving firearms, ensure that charges are laid in all firearm crimes and that plea bargains are not permitted, provide judges with sentencing options including no parole for all violent crime and provide for progressively more severe penalties for repeat violent offenders and firearms offenders.

(1325)

Until the Minister of Justice implements these get tough measures he is only pretending to get tough on crime. Until the minister can demonstrate to us that the sentencing provisions of the bill will deter criminals from using a firearm during the commission of a crime we cannot support the bill because that we understand is what the bill ought to be doing. It is not going to do that.

Until the minister can assure Canadians unequivocally that the registration of rifles and shotguns and the banning of 58 per cent of the handguns currently sold in Canada will reduce the criminal use of firearms we will work to defeat this convoluted and expensive piece of legislation.

Reform members, like many Canadians, support gun control legislation based upon common sense. We fully support any and all gun regulations that will enhance public safety by reducing the criminal use of firearms. We say that present firearms legislation is adequate.

What the government ought to be doing is focusing its attention on the criminal use of firearms, giving Bill C-17 an honest chance and evaluating the impact it has upon these problems. It was recommended by the Auditor General in his 1993 report that before the government moves forward with any further gun control legislation a careful and thorough analysis of Bill C-17 and its impact upon the whole issue should be made. This we submit has not been done and it should be done.

The expensive and ineffective system of licensing and registration rifles and shotguns described within Bill C-68 simply does not make sense. It will not reduce the criminal use of these

firearms. It will not reduce domestic violence and it will not prevent suicide.

The minister has not provided us with any statistical justification for the registration of rifles and shotguns. How can Canadians, in the absence of such information, be confident that universal registration will reduce the criminal use of firearms and thereby make society safer?

The minister defends the bill by claiming that the chiefs of police support him and have requested the registration of all rifles and shotguns. We ask this question: Why does the minister not also embrace the chiefs' position on capital punishment and on the elimination of section 745 of the Criminal Code which grants murderers the opportunity for early parole?

It is clear to me that he does not really believe that when we have a law enforcement problem we go to the chiefs of police. It seems the justice minister is only going to the chiefs of police when he needs them to support a particular bill.

We cannot afford ineffective legislation particularly in the area of criminal justice. We must have sound and proven controls in place that ensure public safety.

The minister states that the cost of the legislation will be only \$85 million. However the cost of registering a single handgun is estimated today to be \$82 and over \$100 in Quebec. It is estimated that there are approximately six million rifles and shotguns to be registered in Canada.

Taking the lowest of these two fees, the cost for registration alone comes to \$492 million. If the minister is suggesting that the registration of a rifle or a shotgun will be substantially less than the present cost to register a handgun, has the government been wasting taxpayers' money on the handgun registration system? Does this imply that the registration of long guns will not be as rigorous and thorough and therefore less effective than the handgun registration system?

I might add that the Terence Wade report clearly demonstrates that the expensive handgun registration system is defective and almost useless as a crime fighting tool. This is a report that we had to wring out of the justice department.

Let us deal with the banning of handguns and the hand held crossbow.

(1330)

Where is the information and where are the statistics that the Minister of Justice used to justify such a draconian measure? That is what we ask for. Certainly anyone who responds to common sense will respond to those kinds of statistics that justify such measures. We have not seen them. We have not seen any of the statistics upon which much of this legislation is based.

The minister's original proposals banned the handguns used by our World Cup competitors. When asked in the House of

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Commons to exempt the .32 calibre handgun which is used in those competitions he said he most certainly would not. However, Bill C-68 does provide an exemption for these handguns and I compliment the minister for taking a second look at that issue.

It is clear, though, the minister's consultative process was badly flawed in spite of his presence that he was taking expert and technical advice from all interested groups. In connection with that, in the back of one of the pamphlets which was put out with the proposals, was a list of all the organizations and groups which the Minister of Justice met with on firearms. They are listed by way of province. There are eight listed for Alberta.

However, I have been advised that the Nosehills Gun Club and the Provost and District Fish and Game Association never met with the justice minister; yet that is what the document claims. Further inquiries indicated that they sent a letter to the justice minister expressing their concerns about the gun control proposals. They did it by way of someone else who was coming to Ottawa to meet with the justice minister. They had not received a reply to their letter, which was sent by courier, as of the date on which I spoke with them.

I submit that the registration of rifles and shotguns does not and will not protect Canadians. If the registration of firearms did we would have no problem with handguns and the criminal use of handguns. Every firearms control aimed at law-abiding gun owners such as the banning of handguns and the registration of firearms is an assurance to criminals that their victims and their potential victims are becoming more and more defenceless and helpless.

It has been proven by various sources that banning a product, including firearms, does not prevent criminals from getting these items from the black market. Repeatedly governments in this country have learned that prohibitive or restrictive measures lead to an underground market where people thrive on the challenge of obtaining something illegally and where ruthless entrepreneurs profit tremendously.

This bill clearly indicates that those Canadians who so adamantly oppose registration and may defy the minister and his law will not go unpunished. Under Bill C-68 these people will be subjected to a maximum ten-year penalty, a penalty which is equivalent to those imposed on some murderers in this country. What comes to mind is Mr. Lortie who went into the Quebec legislature and murdered three people and wounded 13 others. Now he is out after serving 10 years. The justice minister wishes to equate anyone who deliberately neglects to register their shotgun or rifle with that kind of prison term. That is absurd. It is wrong. It is unconscionable. It ought to be deleted from the bill before it goes any further and I would ask the minister to do that.

In addition, this bill creates one penalty for those who in ignorance of the law fail to register their firearms and another much more serious penalty for those who deliberately neglect to

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register their rifle or shotgun. The Reform Party believes that existing controls on gun ownership are more than enough and that no further controls of this type are necessary to ensure public safety. We also believe that no amount of gun control on firearm ownership can stop criminals from acquiring guns by illegal means.

(1335)

In conjunction with the regulations we recommend these following features: decriminalize minor violations respecting storage, display, handling and transportation of firearms; decriminalize those offences that are more of an administrative matter than any criminal attempt to violate a law; make all firearm regulations, including orders in council, subject to review and approval by Parliament, and let us have no more of these orders in council that are not viewed by the elected representatives of the people being passed into law; simplify the firearms acquisition certificate renewal process.

I would like to end my speech today using the words not of members on this side of the House but those of members from across the way. On November 5, 1991 the Liberal member for Kenora—Rainy River said when the House was debating Bill C-17: “What we are debating is just what it means to the law-abiding citizen, the individual who feels that this piece of legislation does absolutely nothing to the criminal element that we as members of Parliament are supposed to be dealing with. We are not supposed to be restricting severely law-abiding citizens who are not the problem at all. We have suggested to law-abiding citizens of this country that we cannot trust them to do the right thing”.

On the same date the Liberal member for Willowdale said: “There has been almost no suggestion and certainly no evidence that it is legitimate gun owners and members of gun clubs who have created the problem of gun related deaths in Canada. It seems to me that this bill as it now reads is dealing not with the fundamental issue of controlling the criminal use of guns, it is penalizing people who have proven in the past that they are part of the solution and not part of the problem of gun related deaths in Canada. This bill is very deficient in that it is not fair. People have over the years acquired a number of guns. Many of these guns are going to be taken away from them by this bill without compensation”. It certainly applies to this bill.

The member further stated: “It is expropriation without compensation. You cannot do that in terms of people’s homes and cars. Surely this is not fair. Let us not pretend that we are dealing with the root cause of gun related deaths in Canada and the harm that guns can cause Canadians. It does not address the real problems so that we as a Parliament will have to come back to deal with those issues not too many years from now”.

I have news for the member for Willowdale. You are back, your party is back and, like the previous government, is still not dealing with the problem, certainly not the cause of the problem.

Finally, we have the words of the member for Haldimand—Norfolk: “I believe this is nothing but a bill to hoodwink the Canadian people into believing that the government is concerned about trying to do something about gun control when it clearly does not. This bill addresses none of these uses of a firearm except by placing more stringent conditions on the acquisition of an FAC. It fails to address the real problems in society. It gives Canadians a false sense of security that the government is actually doing something to stop crimes when it is not. This bill seems designed to disarm, overregulate and financially devastate the honest Canadian citizen. It will redefine Canadians as criminals and punish them severely for things like paperwork. I suggest that in this bill the government is encouraging an underground network of illegal guns”.

These members were all speaking against Kim Campbell’s Bill C-17 which did not restrict and confiscate law-abiding citizens’ guns to the same extent as the current bill before us will or threatens to.

I am glad that so many members on the other side of the House share the same common sense opinions expressed on this side. I sincerely hope that these members continue to express these views despite the pressure from within their caucus to do otherwise.

I would like to tell this House and make a commitment to all Canadians that a Reform government will repeal any ineffective, costly legislation such as Bill C-68.

(1340)

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Madam Speaker, regarding the last comment by my Reform colleague, I can understand why the Reform Party will never form the government. It would be going against the wishes of 95 per cent of Canadians.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

An hon. member: Which survey?

Mr. Lincoln: At the last biennial—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Order. The hon. member.

Mr. Lincoln: At least they should show courtesy. If they do not agree, they should show courtesy. We listen to them. We do not agree with them, but we listen.

At the last biennial convention of the Liberal Party in May 1994 the women’s commission of the Liberal Party presented a resolution asking for tighter gun control laws in Canada. I felt very privileged to be asked to second that motion which was adopted by unanimous vote of our party then. That same day the

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Prime Minister in his address at the end of the convention made a very strong commitment to gun control legislation.

I would like to quote his words: "I would like to thank the women's commission in particular for having tabled an excellent resolution and strengthening firearms legislation. I believe that there is no place for firearms on our streets or playgrounds and I believe that the time has come to put even stricter measures in place to achieve this goal. I will be asking my Minister of Justice to examine your resolution very closely and to draft tough gun control legislation. I hope we have the support of all parties for this tough gun control. I know the Bloc Québécois supports gun control and Preston Manning and the Reform Party are certainly talking a lot about crimes. I hope they will support these restrictions because tough talk is easy. What Canadians want and what we must provide is tough action".

At this point I would like to pay special tribute to the Minister of Justice. He has been patient in an exemplary fashion. He has heard. He has listened. He has crossed Canada to hear groups that were for gun control legislation and those violently opposed to gun control legislation.

He has heard not only from police chiefs but from community groups, from sports and gun clubs and any number of citizens of Canada who felt one way or another about this legislation. Eventually the time comes when decisions have to be made.

I thank him for his courage, his tenacity, his perseverance in bringing forward Bill C-68. What is more important is that he has told us time and time again that this is only part of a much broader picture, that crime prevention is not ensured by gun control legislation alone, that several measures must be taken together so that there is a reversal of attitudes in our society so that crime does not continue to be the menace it is today in our streets, in our villages and in our towns.

The whole crime prevention package is far broader than gun control legislation. It includes sentencing reform. It includes corrections and parole reform. It includes, as we have done, amendments to the Young Offenders Act. It included a Canadian crime prevention council which was launched last year.

More important, it includes broad social reform. In our red book we have tried to portray a holistic approach to society, to social reform, because unless we prevent the social causes that are the very root of crime in our society we will never eradicate crime no matter what legislation we put forward, no matter how tough the legislation, no matter how tough the jail sentences.

We have to reverse attitudes, create a new type of society in which we eradicate the root causes of crime: poverty, lack of education, lack of opportunity. This is what we are doing to approach social questions in a holistic fashion so that there is not only the tough legislation on gun control and crime but also the addressing of the root causes that lead to crime.

(1345)

The intention of Bill C-68 is not to penalize or hinder legitimate gun owners. Not at all. In fact it recognizes the legitimate right of gun owners to use them for sport or for their livelihood. It recognizes the treaty rights for aboriginal people in Canada. At the same time it does recognize a profound reality. That reality is very simple. Guns are lethal weapons and they kill.

In fact, some of the opponents of gun control have tried to portray this as an urban versus rural debate. I suggest it is not. In fact, statistics accumulated for the period between 1980 and 1989 showed that in those 10 years there were 63 per cent more deaths by guns in towns with a population of under 5,000 than in towns with a population of over 500,000. Therefore it is not a big city versus small city problem. It is a problem of the safe handling of guns.

Guns impact especially on the lives of women. In the case of violence against women 42 per cent of all acts of murder committed on women have been done with guns. Of those guns 80 per cent of them are rifles used by their owners to batter and murder their wives.

We have to do something about this. We have to attack the problem, certainly the long term problem, by looking at the root causes of the social evils of society. At the same time we have to take short term measures to ensure that crime does not pay and that guns will not kill.

[*Translation*]

I would like now to pay a special tribute to two young women I know well—especially one of them—, Heidi Rathjen and Wendy Cukier, two young women who quit lucrative jobs. Heidi Rathjen is an engineer. She is now working almost on a volunteer basis to achieve stronger legislation on gun control. Heidi Rathjen said recently in an interview: Had we had stricter legislation, Marc Lépine and Valery Fabrikant might not have been able to do what they did. Were there even a slight chance that stronger legislation would have prevented Marc Lépine and Valery Fabrikant and all the others who committed senseless, horrible crimes from doing so, then that legislation would have been worthwhile, a thousand, a hundred thousand times over.

Michael Hogben was one of the four individuals killed by Valery Fabrikant. Michael was one of my friends. I worked very closely with him at Concordia University. We worked together on the Esther Goldenberg lectures, and it was on the eve of these lectures, which Michael was to organize, as he always had in the past, that he was killed. I remember being at the Hogben apartment with Esther Goldenberg after his funeral. I remember seeing Mrs. Hobgen there, whom I had not met before, and the two young Hobgen girls, and thinking that a scholarly person, a person with so much to give to society, not only erudite but a person of character, exceptionally high-minded, well-liked by everyone, his students and colleagues, was killed in the prime of

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his life, senselessly, by someone who had managed, under existing legislation, to obtain not one but two firearms.

We must recognize that the legitimate use of firearms is acceptable, but when used maliciously, firearms can cause irreparable, irreversible damage.

(1350)

How can one measure the damage of a ruined life, the nightmare experienced by the surviving family, who relive the event every day and every night, because they can never forget? This is not death due to illness, it is violent death brought about by the use of a firearm. And that is a price no society can afford.

I know the debate on firearms is heated. I know the whole question of registration is especially controversial.

[*English*]

Yesterday in question period and again today our friends from Reform were questioning the cost of \$85 million. They saw that as being too much. One Reform member said yesterday that we should send that money to cancer research or not spend it.

I wonder if the Reform members have calculated the cost to society of a simple trial, of putting people in jail, of police control for people who have used guns. The cost is far greater not only in terms of money, but certainly in terms of life lost.

What is the value of a life? Is it \$1 million, \$2 million, \$80 million, \$85 million? I wonder how much the lives of the 14 young women killed at the polytechnique were worth. I wonder how much Michael Hogben's life was worth. They are not statistics. We do not measure their lives, their souls, their beings in monetary terms.

It seems to me that society has not only the right but a duty to make sure we take every possible step we can as legislators to try to eradicate the ills caused by guns. If registration helps, even if it is not watertight, even if there are loopholes and even if we cannot prove statistically that it will work 100 per cent of the time, if it makes committing crime more difficult, then it would be worth it and would be money spent well.

Registration will certainly improve the control of the flow of firearms across borders. It will help the police trace firearms used in crime. Moreover, it will place the responsibility on the individual himself or herself. When someone has to go through a registration process, be it for a car, a boat, or any possession, it ties a special responsibility to that person to care for that possession.

Registration will be an immense deterrent. In fact, it is no accident that a great number of community organizations, police organizations and all anti-crime community organizations and institutions are heavily in favour of registration. That includes the great majority of people in the province of Alberta where

most Reform members are from. British Columbians should be proud because it is the case in B.C. as well.

If registration and gun control legislation were only to save one life, I suggest it is worth it. I know the Bloc members share our view on this and I thank them for it. On this side we hope, and are convinced, that if it saves many lives, then Bill C-68 will be a major piece of legislation. Not only will it be because it is Liberal legislation, the work of this government and this Minister of Justice, but because it is a piece of legislation that society at large needs and wants.

Today we are in the process of getting it. Once again, I pay tribute to, thank and am very grateful to the Minister of Justice for having brought this bill forward.

(1355)

I hope the great majority of us here will reflect the majority view of Canadians at large, and 95 per cent of those in Quebec, who believe that gun control legislation is not only needed but it was needed yesterday. It is a great piece of legislation. It is a forward piece of legislation and I will support it with great conviction.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I get the impression from the rhetoric over there, the violence of it and the great emotion I heard that this is exactly the type of approach to gun control that makes people in this country frightened. The reasoned arguments which were expressed by the justice minister, although I emphatically disagree with them, do not carry the same connotations as what came across the aisle from the hon. member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis.

If one is to take seriously what he was saying, I am quite convinced that this is the type of thinking, this rabble rousing, this fanning the emotions of people which will ultimately lead to the confiscation of private arms in this country. That is why people are so concerned.

The hon. member refuses to deal with real numbers. He says that he thinks registration will be a deterrent. Those were his words. We do not pass legislation of this magnitude simply because we think something.

He quoted the chiefs of police, as did the Minister of Justice. I would remind both members that when gun control was being discussed in this House in 1976, the police chiefs presented a brief to the Standing Committee on Justice. In that brief they emphatically stated that registration would serve no useful purpose in the control of crime. Whether the organization had—

The Speaker: My colleagues, we will have seven or eight minutes remaining after question period and the hon. secretary of state will have the chance to speak at that time.

S. O. 31

[Translation]

It being 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 30(5), the House will now proceed to Statements by Members pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Anna Terrana (Vancouver East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the budget is quickly approaching. Canadians are not prepared to pay more taxes. They are in fact letting all of us in government know that they are prepared to react very negatively should taxes be increased.

However, Canadians are prepared to do with less services. They are asking us to cut services and programs and to ensure a fair taxation system so the middle class does not bear an undue burden of taxes.

Being a Liberal is not easy in these times. While we know we must bring down the deficit, we also know that our party has shown compassion over the years and has taken care of individuals in need.

We must and will continue to ensure that we are able to care for all Canadians, both now and in the future. I am committed to working toward these fundamental values. We recognize that difficult choices must be made if we are to ensure Canada's well-being and prosperity.

We are listening to Canadians. We hear that a fair taxation system should be introduced, cuts to services should be implemented, that duplication should be avoided and most important, that those in need should not suffer through this exercise but rather be strengthened by it.

* * *

[Translation]

DEFICIT REDUCTION

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even though the reason interest rates have gone up is that the Minister of Finance has not taken any deficit-fighting action for a year now, he is bragging that he will be able to reach the gigantic deficit goal of \$39.7 billion.

The minister's strategy is extremely obvious. To reach the enormous deficit goal of \$39.7 billion, he plays with numbers at the expense of the unemployed. In fact, he is using the surplus in the unemployment insurance fund to reduce the government's deficit.

The Minister of Finance not only is using this surplus to reduce this year's deficit, but now that 11 months have passed by, we can see that he also overestimated the 1993-94 deficit by

close to \$4 billion in his last budget. All that to make people believe that the situation is improving. In reality, the minister is playing all kinds of games to mask his lack of action in the fight against the deficit.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL LITERACY ACTION DAY

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as one who left school too early and returned to get my grade 12 at the age of 28, I wish to mention a new study.

We have heard that 30 per cent of Canadian youth leave school. However a school leavers survey from September 1993 shows this has improved 18 per cent of 20-year old Canadians not completing high school.

Employment is related to school leaving, with employment in excess of 20 hours per week a big factor. Despite long hours in blue collar and service jobs, hundreds in my riding of Okanagan—Shuswap are attending an alternate education program called "The Open Door", open until 9.30 p.m. weekdays. Since it started three years ago school leavers have completed 338 courses.

Last week I had the pleasure of speaking there. Today on National Literacy Action Day I applaud "The Open Door" and the hard working people walking through it to a better future.

* * *

AIRPORTS

Mr. Glen McKinnon (Brandon—Souris, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the House is aware that the Ministry of Transport has introduced new long term regulations and guidelines for local regional airports.

To increase understanding I was active in facilitating an airports conference in Brandon, Manitoba on February 7 and 8, 1995. The main conference objective was to bring together stakeholders from central Canada to discuss the challenges of assuming ownership and operation of community airports.

I can confidently say the majority of 91 participants left the Brandon Airports Conference respecting the minister's efforts of establishing a more affordable, integrated, efficient and competitive transportation system that still remains safe, secure and accessible.

My thanks to the inspired participants, informed speakers and my staff for making the conference such a great success.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were shocked yesterday when they learned that almost all Reform Party MPs did not make time to attend solemn

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observance of the 30th anniversary of Canada's flag. In fact I saw only one Reformer there.

Perhaps it is because they wanted to stay in their offices preparing to sing our national anthem on the floor of the House of Commons. Perhaps they were just too busy getting ready for another event which took place last evening.

I was one of many members who accepted an invitation to attend a reception by the Canadian Restaurant Association, a wonderful event where guests are served tasty delights from every Canadian province.

Included in the crowd were many Reform Party MPs who appeared to be having the time of their lives. Their usual sanctimony was gone. There was no evidence of the parsimonious, frugal, grassroots politicians. They came to eat, drink and be happy. On that, I think everybody can agree.

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CANADIAN FLAG

Mr. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was the 30th anniversary of our maple leaf flag.

Our flag is a proud and distinct international symbol. It is recognized and greeted with warmth all over the world. Canadians can be seen wearing the maple leaf on their backpacks while travelling abroad. Even some Americans have been known to wear our flag while travelling.

The maple leaf flag unites us from coast to coast. The flag is one of the things that encompasses all Canadians despite our varied regional characteristics.

Yesterday in communities all across Canada there were flag raising ceremonies, speeches and school assemblies. Canadians from all races and religions celebrate the flag together.

I congratulate and welcome the three new members elected to represent their constituencies and our flag. Today I ask all my colleagues to reflect on the significance of our maple leaf flag and its meaning to all Canadians.

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[Translation]

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF CANADIAN FLAG

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister of heritage made a very clumsy attempt at camouflaging the federal government's prereferendum propaganda by literally plastering Quebec with posters on the 30th anniversary of the Canadian flag, at a cost of over \$1 million.

(1405)

Today's *Toronto Star* confirms that more than half of these propaganda posters are for Quebec, despite the minister's statement that only 30 per cent of them would be put up in that province.

Why will the minister not simply admit what the federal government's goal is in lavishly celebrating this anniversary, in using all available means to try to influence Quebecers on the eve of the referendum and in trying to artificially instill in them a fleeting feeling of Canadian identity?

* * *

[English]

BILL C-263

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the constituents of Okanagan—Simikameen—Merritt to remind my colleagues that Bill C-263, which I introduced in the House, will be debated today.

Bill C-263 is an act to amend the Financial Administration Act and will bring five crown corporations under part X of the act. The five corporations are the Canada Council, the Canadian Film Development Corporation, the Canadian Wheat Board, the International Development Research Centre and the National Arts Centre Corporation.

The bill intends to bring accountability to these five corporations through allowing the Auditor General to conduct special examinations, a value for money audit every five years, as the Auditor General's office does regularly with other departments in the public service.

This matter concerns accountability. It works toward reducing waste, improving requirements for planning, improving strategy and cost systems. In short, the bill will ensure that five crown corporations are following good management practices.

I encourage all members to support Bill C-263.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a proposal for the Minister of Transport who says he wants to rid himself of the financial obligations for the Crow benefit. He also says he wants to get rid of the Canadian National Railway.

Since the present value of the Crow benefit obligation is somewhere between \$7 billion and \$9 billion, sums which the government is hard pressed to find, why does the minister not offer prairie farmers the CNR (North American) as at least a partial payment of the Crow obligation?

While CN's net worth is considerably short of the Crow obligation, it could be a start toward providing a means of connecting farm fields with sea ports in a way that satisfies both Canadian needs and international obligations under the GATT.

Such a proposal leaves farm people with some control over export costs since it allows them real choices in striking a balance between viable railways and viable farms, something the minister has not considered so far.

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[Translation]

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF CANADIAN FLAG

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my great honour to speak on behalf of my fellow Quebecers on this occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Canadian flag. Internationally, the Maple Leaf is a symbol of generosity, democracy and freedom. At home, it symbolizes strength, unity and pride.

The past thirty years have seen profound changes in Canada. Rather than passively submit to these changes, our country has shaped and adapted them to the principles and values of tolerance, justice and fairness that we hold dear.

Canadians from coast to coast proudly display our majestic red and white flag. Businesses spend thousands of dollars to develop a trademark, but Canada has the finest trademark in the world, the Maple Leaf.

Long may it fly! Long live Canada!

* * *

[English]

LITERACY ACTION DAY

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is Literacy Action Day. Since 1990, the Year of International Literacy, government, business, labour and voluntary sectors have been working together to find ways to solve this problem.

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO's International Literacy Year's objective is to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2000.

Despite ongoing struggles as many as 963 million people, 26.9 per cent of the world's people, remain illiterate. Thirty-eight per cent of Canadian adults have some difficulty dealing with the reading requirements of everyday life.

[Translation]

I would like to pay tribute to three organizations in my riding who are fighting relentlessly against illiteracy. They are the Haitian community action and social affairs centre, the Villeray literacy centre known as La Jarnigoine, and the new immigrants' centre known as Le Centre N-A Rivé.

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Education is the key to freedom. Let us continue to work together to eliminate illiteracy.

* * *

(1410)

[English]

GUN CONTROL

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 4 the *Ottawa Citizen* reported that some hunters savagely killed their hunting dogs by slashing their throats or shooting them at point blank range because the dogs were no longer useful at the end of the hunting season.

Recently the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters responded to this article saying that the federation has advocated mandatory identification of hunting dogs for many years. The federation takes this position so that hunters would be discouraged from abandoning their responsibilities as dog owners and to ensure that lost dogs are returned to the owners.

As we begin the debate on gun control in the House of Commons, I call on the hunters who oppose any firearm registration to help us create a safer Canada and not only support registration of dogs but the registration of guns because, like dog owners, gun owners sometimes abandon their responsibilities, resulting in the loss of life. It is our responsibility as lawmakers to discourage this.

* * *

[Translation]

JOB CREATION

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on February 6, the Minister of Finance boasted that more than 438,000 jobs had been created in Canada and that this was the best performance in a decade. Unfortunately for Canadians and Quebecers, Statistics Canada's annual figures are nowhere near this level. In fact, 261,000 jobs were created in 1994.

If we compare these figures with those recorded at the end of the early 1980s recession, last year's 261,000 jobs should be compared with an average of 347,000 jobs created annually between 1985 and 1988. The minister has nothing to brag about.

Especially since, with the increase in population, 825,000 jobs would have to be created to return to prerecession employment levels.

* * *

[English]

AIRBORNE REGIMENT

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, most Canadians' sense of fair play was offended when the airborne regiment was ordered disbanded. They saw this action,

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rather than being based on factual evidence, as an emotional overreaction to amateur videos.

A whole regiment laid low for the misbehaviour of a few. Humiliation for the several hundred remaining members of the airborne as well as every serving or retired member who ever saw duty with the regiment.

Families: wives, daughters, sons, who proudly associated themselves with the regiment now feel tarnished by this ignominious end to their unit. A professional, highly trained and motivated force which should be remembered for claiming the dominion of our north; for the deep respect earned while on duty in Europe and in the Middle East; and for the humanitarian relief provided across many continents. Government, attempting to appear decisive, has made an inappropriate decision.

A proud and capable regiment has been lost from the order of battle and the Canadian taxpayer burdened with a large and unnecessary expense.

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DECADE OF LITERACY

Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this decade of the 20th century has been declared by the United Nations as the Decade of Literacy. This is a time to raise our awareness of those Canadians who can neither read nor write.

It is a disturbing fact that nearly three million Canadians are unable to function with basic literary skills. We are now halfway through the Decade of Literacy and inroads are being made by groups like the Movement for Canadian Literacy and ABC Canada.

Learning to read is a golden key which unlocks the door to creativity and independence. One of the greatest satisfactions of my entire life was teaching an adult male to read. He trusted me enough to share his dark secret that he had been faking it. Privately we persisted and a few months later he was on his own, actually reading the daily newspaper. The joy was like the miracle of restoring sight to the blind.

I encourage anyone hearing my voice today who cannot read to take action to seek the help in learning the greatest joy in life, the joy of reading.

* * *

[Translation]

FRANCOPHONES OUTSIDE QUEBEC

Mr. Raymond Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on January 19, the PQ government decided to close Quebec's office in Edmonton, thus forcing francophones in the three Prairie Provinces and the Northwest Territories to turn to the Vancouver and Toronto offices for assistance.

(1415)

On May 27, 1994, the leader of the Bloc Québécois unveiled a policy on francophone and Acadian communities, claiming that after achieving sovereignty, Quebec would strengthen the role of its offices across Canada in promoting Quebec's co-operation programs.

Who is right? The leader of the Bloc Québécois who wants to make more assistance available or the separatist PQ government which closes offices and cuts services to francophones outside Quebec?

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

FEDERALISM

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. In a prerferendum speech to the Metropolitan Quebec Chamber of Commerce, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said, and I quote: “—no one in Canada is going to discuss the status quo. There will be no more status quo. There will be major changes—”.

Does this statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs mean that the Prime Minister has changed his mind and that his government will now support major changes in the way federalism operates, this after doggedly defending the status quo?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development is introducing major changes in the way unemployment insurance and social programs operate. Who is opposed to these changes? Who wants to keep the status quo?

An hon. member: The Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): The Bloc Québécois, exactly.

When the Minister of Finance suggests ways to improve our society, who wants to keep the status quo? Always the Bloc Québécois.

Our federalism is flexible. We will make some adjustments, but we do not have to change the constitution to make those adjustments. We must be practical and tackle one problem at a time, in the best interests of all Canadians.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, seriously. The Prime Minister should take this seriously.

If it is so easy to transform Canada by signing administrative agreements and if the Prime Minister is sincere about this, could he explain why, fifteen months after his party came to power, he has yet to recognize the unanimous demands for full jurisdiction

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over manpower training from all stakeholders in Quebec? All stakeholders in Quebec are asking him to withdraw from this area of jurisdiction. If it is so easy and if he is so serious about it, why has nothing been done? Why?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have made several offers to the Government of Quebec. We have offered to simplify the system, as the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said. We could not offer everything they wanted, but we offered half a loaf.

Since these people want to maintain the status quo, they will not consider accepting anything else. Right now we are signing harmonization agreements with Canada's nine other provinces, except the Government of Quebec that wants to keep the status quo. We are not maintaining the status quo. They are.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, may I remind the Prime Minister that the Quebec Premier who turned down the agreement with the Liberal government was the former Liberal Premier of Quebec, the Prime Minister's partner on the no committee for the Quebec referendum?

Will the Prime Minister admit that this manoeuvring by his Minister of Foreign Affairs was an attempted rerun of the referendum speech by Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1980?

(1420)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers must have liked Mr. Trudeau's speech, because they voted 60 per cent in favour of staying in Canada, and this year, Quebecers will again listen to the people in Quebec who want to stay in Canada. Apparently, on the evening news tonight, we will be told that it is even better than last time. Two or three months away from the referendum, they are at least 15 points behind where they were in February 1980.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what has stuck in the mind of Quebecers about Pierre Elliot Trudeau's 1980 speech is that promises were not kept.

An hon. member: And unilateral patriation.

Mr. Duceppe: In his speech, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that, from now on, the federal government would concentrate on areas of federal jurisdiction, recognizing implicitly that duplication and overlap had become common practice in Ottawa, when he said: "We will review this matter and focus on areas of federal jurisdiction."

My question is for the Prime Minister. Now that his Minister of Foreign Affairs has announced that the federal government will no longer encroach on areas of provincial responsibility, will the Prime Minister indicate from which areas Ottawa plans to withdraw?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have offered on several occasions to withdraw from forestry agreements for example, but Bloc members would rise in this House and ask that we go on providing funds for Quebec forests. Questions were put to us on this subject.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): It is always the same thing. They want us to withdraw, but at the same time they want us to continue paying. If we withdraw, we withdraw. The problem is they want to have their cake and eat it too. They want us to collect taxes for Quebec to spend as it pleases. Well, from now on, we will spend our own money and they can spend theirs.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister wants his remarks to be taken seriously, could he clearly identify the areas from which he intends to withdraw, as well as the federal departments and agencies that will be abolished to eliminate the costly duplication referred to by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is incidentally the minister responsible for Quebec?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working day in and day out with the other provinces to try and eliminate duplication. In many areas, there is no duplication. Take income tax for example. In every other province, there is only one level of government collecting.

Duplication comes from Quebec deciding to have its own ministry of revenue collect personal income tax, unlike the other provinces. You know, it does not cost Ontario anything to collect its provincial income tax, because a line was added to our tax form for that purpose, while in Quebec a separate report has to be filed. Hundreds of millions are spent unnecessarily because of this. Duplication often comes from the other side.

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[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, just a few hours ago Moody's bond rating service announced it will review Canada's foreign debt rating and also Canada's AAA domestic rating. Moody's is not only sending the government a wake-up call, it is ringing the alarm bell.

Will the Minister of Finance finally acknowledge that the markets are rejecting his deficit reduction targets as inadequate and that Canada's debt and deficit situation is much more serious than he or the Prime Minister has led us to believe?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Moody's certainly could have waited until the government brought down its budget.

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When the government brings down that budget the financial markets will see very clearly this government has kept faith with what it said in its pre-election campaign and in the last budget.

We have repeatedly said that we will fulfil our obligations, we will live up to our commitments, we will hit our targets. In terms of this year's deficit, I am here to tell you we have done a hell of a lot better.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister and the members opposite just do not get it. When one of the world's largest bond rating agencies will not wait two weeks to get the minister's budget, it is telling him that his targets are not only unbelievable, they are unacceptable to the money markets. That is the message they are trying to send to the minister.

(1425)

Will the minister simply accept the fact that his deficit reduction targets are inadequate and commit to eliminating the deficit within the life of this Parliament, which is what the money markets are asking?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year in the months that followed the budget the leader of the third party kept standing up and saying that we would never hit our targets, that they were too tough, that we would never get there, that the sky was about to fall, that Chicken Little had a lot of trouble.

Why at least does the leader of the Reform Party not have the decency to stand up today and congratulate the government for having done what he said we never could do?

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, to congratulate the minister on hitting that target would be like congratulating a high jumper for getting over the bar when it is at three feet.

We are wondering whether the minister and the government ever learn anything from the experiences of others. The government and this minister are going down exactly the same fiscal path as the NDP Government of Ontario. First it denies the situation is serious, then a half-hearted attempt at tax increases to deal with it, then in the final analysis come to cut spending after it is too late.

Is it really the minister's ambition to become known as the Bob Rae of federal politics?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last October the government provided a very accurate analysis of this country's financial situation. It was an analysis praised by the financial markets. It was an analysis praised by the great majority of economists. It was an analysis praised by those of the Reform

Party who understand economics, who basically said it was an accurate analysis. Is he about to now deny that which his colleagues said?

Let me tell the House something. I know it is hard for this member to accept some good news. This country is leading the G-7 in growth, leading the G-7 in employment, leading the G-7 in controlling inflation.

For the love of heaven let me say today, manufacturing shipments in this country were up 1.6 per cent in December and 12—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

[Translation]

FEDERALISM

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The government's pre-budget public relations exercise, including the speech made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, is an attempt to convince Quebecers that the government is about to decentralize the federal regime.

Does the Prime Minister agree that true decentralization requires a transfer of tax resources, including tax points, so that the provinces can take over from the federal government?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to be in a position where someone else would collect taxes on my behalf, so that I would not have to do it myself. Tax collection is a part of political responsibility. If they want us to decentralize, fine. However, they were happy to let us collect taxes, and take the blame for it, and then get the money from us. In the context of responsible government, it would be better if everyone collected his own taxes. The situation would be clearer for everyone.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what we are asking, namely that the federal government withdraw from these tax fields. We will do the job ourselves.

Does the Prime Minister agree that this renewed Canada, which he is predicting, is nothing more than an attempt to hide the fact that the federal government continues to dump the costs of social programs on the provinces?

(1430)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can see that the Bloc members are in disarray because they realize that our flexible federalism approach is working very well. If they knew a bit about history, they would know that, a few years ago, the federal government collected over 60 per cent of the taxes in this country, while incurring close to 60 per cent of the expenditures.

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Now, the figures are reversed. Indeed, the provinces, which used to collect 40 per cent of all taxes, now spend and collect 60 per cent of the money. The federal government is currently collecting 40 per cent, a proportion which is diminishing. Thus, the situation changed considerably over the last ten years, even without any constitutional amendment.

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[*English*]

CANADA PORTS CORPORATION

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the age old problem of patronage under the former Tory government is well known. Now it is coming back to haunt the new masters of patronage, the Liberal government.

Most recently Canada Ports Corporation chairman Arnold Masters has reportedly abused his expense account, billed an unreasonable amount of work and doctored the minutes of the corporation's board of directors.

Now it has been revealed that nearly 50 top executives of shipping companies from Vancouver to Halifax have written to the Minister of Transport calling for Masters' immediate resignation.

When will the Minister of Transport take action on these abuses, take the advice of the Canadian shipping industry and demand the resignation of Arnold Masters?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that this is a serious matter.

Because we try to pay attention to the advice that is given by members of the third party in the House, in situations such as this one where serious allegations have been made and there is a call for drastic action we want to take some time to make sure we do the right thing.

The hon. member would know, as many of his colleagues have said on another matter that has been the subject of a great deal of discussion in the House, a person does not want to act rashly in these matters.

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister has already claimed to be waiting on a report from the transport committee's study of marine policy before he takes any action.

The purpose of that study is to consult with users to determine how they want their port system changed to make it more viable. Those users have spoken and they have spoken loudly against Arnold Masters.

With this kind of unified opposition, when is the Minister of Transport going to act?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member indicated, the appointment of the gentleman in question was made by the previous government.

He has been in office for several years and had acted as a director prior to that. We understand the importance of making sure that the operations of Canada Ports are done efficiently.

There have been questions raised by the hon. member and others at hearings of the Standing Committee on Transport. We are going to review the matter very seriously, but I want to emphasize that the Standing Committee on Transport, mandated by the House to look into the whole area of the operation of Canada Ports, is meeting across the country right now and will have an opportunity to hear from these people who signed their names to a letter. They can make their allegations directly before the committee.

Perhaps, if the hon. member has any other information that he wishes to make known to the Canadian public, he might want to step outside and make whatever allegations he wishes to make.

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[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Pointing to the massiveness of the system, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that Ottawa would work to eliminate overlap and duplication. It would therefore be devoting its efforts to areas under its jurisdiction. Under the constitution, health is a provincial matter.

To demonstrate his good faith, does the Prime Minister intend, as logic would dictate, to abolish the national forum on health that he chairs?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, health is a complex issue, and we have a responsibility in this area. We set up a national health service in Canada, which all Canadians and a large majority of Quebecers continue to support. It guarantees free health services to all Canadians and ensures that there will not be two categories of hospitals in Canada and Quebec—one for the rich, and one for the poor.

We wanted to ensure dignity, in Canada, for all who are sick. This is why the federal government stepped in. Canada's health system has set an example for the world, and the Americans would like to have it right now.

(1435)

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, are we to understand from the Prime Minister that his "new" Canada in health matters simply means that Ottawa will force the provinces to meet ever more stringent national standards while cutting transfer payments to them and leaving them with the financial burden?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we decided to try to improve the systems. As I was saying earlier, we have succeeded in signing agreements with all

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the provinces to eliminate duplication. The only government that does not want to sign an agreement with us in an attempt to identify areas of duplication which could be eliminated is the government of Quebec, because it wants to use the status quo for its purposes. I just hope they will hold a referendum soon, ask an honest question, so that the blackmail business will be over with.

[English]

CANADA COMMUNICATION GROUP

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Communication Group has been recommended for privatization, yet unbelievably the President of the Treasury Board has extended the workforce adjustment directive giving the employees of CCG guaranteed job protection. This is the very same workforce adjustment directive the minister is attempting to eliminate from other federal employees.

Why would the minister extend a policy that guarantees these federal employees job protection when the recommendation is to get rid of the agency?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have said before in the House that we are going through a downsizing. Part of that downsizing will require that different programs and services are curtailed or completely removed from what we provide to Canadians. That is part of getting our deficit reduction targets met.

In the course of doing that it will be necessary to downsize the public service, but we will be treating our employees in a fair and equitable fashion in doing that, whether they are part of that agency or any other part of the government.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question was: Why give them the protection of the workforce adjustment agreement when we are trying to downsize the government?

Will the President of the Treasury Board assure the House that he will rescind the most recent extension of the workforce adjustment agreement and that there will be no further extensions of the policy, as he admits, while we are downsizing the government?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as it applies to the particular agency the hon. member is mentioning, I would have to repeat what I am saying in terms of the public service overall.

[Translation]

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in his speech to the Chambre of Commerce of Metropolitan Quebec, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and minister responsible for Quebec stated that the government must concentrate less on regional development and focus instead on helping small business.

Can the Minister of Finance, minister responsible for regional development in Quebec, confirm his government's intention to withdraw from regional development and focus exclusively on helping small business?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite obvious that the best way to go about regional development is to help small business. That is truly where most new jobs are created. I am not the only one to say so, so do local authorities in Quebec, as well as the provincial government, the parent company.

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. If it is clear, given that Quebec has adopted a general strategy for regional development, including assistance to businesses, would the minister not agree that, in the interest of avoiding all duplication and overlap, as the Prime Minister has said, he must recognize Quebec as the sole authority in terms of regional development, including assistance to businesses?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only do I disagree with the hon. member's hypothesis, but I say that, having discussed the matter with the current Government of Quebec, the current government does not agree with the hon. member's hypothesis.

* * *

(1440)

RAILWAY SAFETY

Mrs. Georgette Sheridan (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

Yesterday, he tabled a report entitled "On Track" from the committee reviewing the Railway Safety Act. Can the minister tell us when he will be in a position to respond to the report's recommendations?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has mentioned a very major report

that is quite long. First off, I would like to thank those who wrote it. The government is currently preparing its response to the many recommendations, a good number of which are very broad in scope, and we should be able to publish that response within 90 days.

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[English]

IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on September 24 of last year in my constituency, Catherine Evenson, a beautiful young lady who was confined to a wheelchair, was raped in her home. The man facing rape charges is a refugee and is now trying to cement his stay in Canada by applying for permanent resident status.

Will the minister of immigration intervene in this case and ensure that no permanent status in Canada is considered until the case is heard and the verdict is handed down?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have no specific details of the case. I appreciate the hon. member raising it. I will give her my word that certainly I will have officials look into the case.

It is also a good reason, rather than simply dealing with individual cases, to have had Bill C-44 approved at third reading. It attempts to make the system better so that we minimize any such horrible cases we hear about.

I was somewhat distraught that the Reform Party, which relishes bringing case after case to the floor of the House of Commons, did not see fit to support Bill C-44.

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I assure the minister that I have been in constant contact with his office on the matter as well as with the Solicitor General's office. I also stress that I am assured Bill C-44 will do nothing to help this case at all.

I thank the minister for his response. I assure him that today this young woman and her family are listening to and watching these proceedings. Would the minister please notify me as soon as a decision is made?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said in my first answer, I would be happy to look into the file. I can appreciate that the hon. member has been in touch with officials of my department, but as any member can appreciate no minister can be on top of the thousands of cases across the country.

The hon. member, with all due respect, is absolutely wrong if she and her colleagues believe that Bill C-44 will not improve the system's capacity to keep those individuals from getting protection and allowing those legitimate cases to be accepted in our system. I ask her and her colleagues to change their minds

Oral Questions

about Bill C-44 because it would help Canadians and the system.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. The Official Languages Commissioner published a study this morning on services in the minority official language offered to the public in designated federal offices. Among other things, the study found that in Quebec, service in English is available 98.8 per cent of the time, while in the rest of Canada, 28 per cent of all designated offices still do not provide service in French.

How can the President of the Treasury Board justify that, more than two years after a regulation was passed on the issue, over one in four francophones outside of Quebec are unable to obtain federal services in their language?

[English]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even while the official languages commissioner was undertaking his survey the Treasury Board was consulting with managers in offices across the country to help ensure that they were carrying out their obligations under the Official Languages Act.

Furthermore, we have assembled information that we have provided to Canadians through minority language newspapers across the country so that they know where to find the offices and who to contact to be able to get services in the language of their choice.

(1445)

Finally, let me say that this government is solidly committed to quality services in the official language of choice by Canadians and in meeting its obligations under the Official Languages Act.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, given the alarming increase in the assimilation rate of francophone and Acadian communities in Canada, how can the minister justify the slow pace with which the government has made its services available to francophones in the language of their choice? Is bilingualism a sham?

[English]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the official languages commissioner said that in 79 per cent of cases across the country the service was available and that 92 per cent of the time it was good quality service that was being provided.

Oral Questions

We are not satisfied with those numbers. We are not satisfied with anything short of 100 per cent in meeting our targets under the Official Languages Act.

* * *

GUN CONTROL

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Justice could not or would not answer how a national gun registry program would reduce crime. If the minister could show this evidence to support registration, most Canadians would probably support it.

Will the minister provide this House with evidence that shows how a national gun registry will save lives and reduce the criminal use of firearms in our communities?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if anyone has questions to answer about their position on gun registration surely it is the Reform Party of Canada. The very party that styles itself as the party of law and order opposes a measure that the police want in this country. The very party that styles itself as the party of the people is against a measure that poll after poll shows is supported by the vast majority of Canadians.

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, for Canadians who are concerned about the cost of firearms registration and for Canadians who are concerned about crime on the streets using firearms, would the minister give them the statistics that confirm a national firearms registration program will save lives and will reduce the criminal use of firearms?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, time and again the police chiefs of this country tell us that a registry system will help us stop the traffic in illegal arms at the border. It will help us ensure that the number of firearms lost and stolen every year and end up in the hands of criminals is reduced. Time and again they tell us they need registration to enforce court orders that prohibit people convicted of crimes of violence from possessing firearms. I will take the word of the chiefs of police on that question.

* * *

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Ian Murray (Lanark—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal.

The minister announced today that hundreds of governor in council and ministerial appointments will be eliminated as a result of the agency review. I agree that this overhaul of boards and commissions is long overdue, but is it all just window

decorating or will this initiative bring real savings for Canadian taxpayers and help put an end to political patronage?

Mr. John English (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must thank the hon. member for his question. It allows me to comment on the agency review report which was released today. The report looked at 400 commissions, boards and agencies and 120 were affected, 73 were wound up, 47 were restructured and no less than 665 governor in council positions were abolished.

To give members an idea of the scope of this review, since this government was elected, it has appointed approximately 700 persons to governor in council positions, 100 of which were reappointments. In short, the government has abolished more governor in council positions than it has appointed new persons to such positions.

We are bringing efficiency and fairness to government.

* * *

(1450)

[Translation]

NATIONAL PORTS

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. Forty maritime organizations and businesses have asked the Minister of Transport to dismiss the chairman of Ports Canada's board of directors, Arnold Masters, from his duties. Just a few minutes ago, the minister said that he had to wait for a report from the transport committee before he could take action.

How can the minister wait for the report from the transport committee before taking action in this matter, since the committee has no mandate to review Mr. Masters' case?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a revelation: the hon. member will now wait for a mandate before raising such issues. When I appeared before the transport committee, the hon. member, instead of dealing with the problems affecting the transportation system across the country and proposing solutions, went on and on about Mr. Masters. With or without a mandate, the hon. member always knows where to dig.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since Mr. Masters is completely discredited in the eyes of the Canadian maritime industry, why does the minister not suspend him immediately now that the allegations are out in the open?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I indeed received a letter signed by several stakeholders in the industry asking me to replace the gentleman in question. However, as far as I know, the allegations are based on

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comments which so far are not supported by any evidence of criminal or fraudulent activities.

I wish to emphasize that we are, of course, reviewing the situation because it is important. Unless the hon. member has specific evidence to submit to us which would point to unacceptable behaviour on the part of Mr. Masters involving criminal or fraudulent activities, I would appreciate it if the hon. member exercised his right to make these accusations outside this Chamber instead of staying here where he is protected.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

The minister is well aware that virtually all of the OECD countries now have an inheritance tax for people who inherit, say, sums of money over \$1 million. This would generate hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue at a time when revenue is much in need.

Can the minister tell us, is there some reason Canada does not have an inheritance tax like virtually every other OECD country?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will answer the question as asked concerning the reasons for not having one. I interpret this question to be not related to the budget, but simply seeking information.

The reason is that we in Canada, unlike other countries, have deemed capital gains disposition on death, which roughly equates to an inheritance tax. Another reason is that we have much higher property taxes than do many other countries. It is felt that does the case. Also, the principal interest most Canadians have is their main residence, which as the hon. member knows, is not subject to capital gains tax and would not be subject to any kind of a wealth tax.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is why I suggested a ceiling of \$1 million would be a useful guideline. It would get around the matter of one's principal residence.

The minister has said that not many poor people use tax loopholes. I suggest that not many poor families use family trusts. Can the minister explain to the House of Commons and the people of Canada why a country like Canada would continue to have in its tax system a provision that caters virtually exclusively to the wealthiest families in Canada?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, family trusts are also used by many small businesses in order to make sure the business can pass from one generation to the other. Where objections have been raised to family trusts is where it really does entail undue tax advantage for those who are using it. This was a position that many on this side of the House took when in opposition and it is a position that is certainly supportable in debate.

* * *

(1455)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Many Indian people in my riding are expressing deep concern that the federal government is about to sign a self-government agreement with Gitksan Indian leaders. Their concerns relate mostly to the fact that elected band councils will disappear and will be replaced by an unelected and unaccountable hereditary chief system.

Can the minister confirm that the federal government will not now or in the future allow such a system of government to gain power in Canada?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no, I cannot.

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, if the minister cannot answer my question perhaps the Prime Minister can.

Will the Prime Minister of Canada as the leader of the government guarantee that his government will never sanction undemocratic Indian governments of any kind in Canada?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that the Government of Canada will never sanction undemocratic governments of any nature.

* * *

ATLANTIC GROUND FISH STRATEGY

Hon. Roger Simmons (Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

The good news is that 27,000 Newfoundlanders are benefiting from the TAGS program. The bad news is that many hundreds of fishermen and plant workers, all of whom have had a long work attachment to the fishery, are being deprived of benefits. I say to the minister that the culprit is the appeal process. There are rumours, for example, that more than 95 per cent of second level appeals are being rejected by HRD officials.

Business of the House

What is the minister doing to ensure that the appeal process is fair?

(1500)

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to express my appreciation to the hon. member and other members of the Atlantic provinces and Quebec who have been working very closely with us to ensure that those who are eligible will be able to receive their benefits under the TAGS program.

We understand there are some difficulties being faced by the appeal process. The latest records are that about 75 per cent of the appeals are being recommended, but there are some difficulties which the hon. member and others have brought to my attention.

I have been working closely with the minister of fisheries. I can make a commitment to the hon. member that we will have a correction of the appeal process within the next two weeks.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Since 1986, Portuguese nationals need visas to visit Canada. Portugal is the only EEC country to which such a restriction applies.

Does the minister, who stated in 1986 that, by imposing visa restrictions on Portuguese citizens, we were doing a disservice to a European country and an ally, agree that this is a discriminatory and unjustifiable measure which must be lifted as soon as possible?

[English]

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for raising a question on an important policy issue. Members should be very well aware that the federal government has already seen fit to lift visas in a number of countries throughout the world.

Some months back we lifted the visa restriction on Hungary. During his trip to South America the Prime Minister made an announcement that no longer will Chile, a country the member knows well, have a visa restriction.

We are making progressive moves but it is a two way street. When we lift visa restrictions we also want to make sure that our system is protected with respect to documentation as well as visits from individuals from that part of the world. Where they meet our conditions we can make such moves, as we have in the past.

JUSTICE

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. This morning I had the pleasure of introducing a private member's bill to the House which would have the effect of amending the Criminal Code to make dangerous intoxication a criminal offence. This would prevent people from hiding behind the charter of rights and freedoms to get away from their own responsibility for offences committed while drunk.

Will the minister take this bill, make it a government bill and try to get all-party support for this very important consideration that all Canadians hold together? Most people in Canada cannot understand why this loophole exists.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge the hon. member's initiative and I share his objective. I too have been at work on this very subject.

The Department of Justice has its own approach to this very problem. I expect before too many days are out to be introducing government legislation to achieve the same objective.

The Speaker: We will have the usual question on the Business of the House. Then I will hear a question of privilege, a point of order and then I want to give a ruling a little later on another question of privilege.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as customary, I would like to ask the Secretary of State for Parliamentary Affairs to let us know what the legislative menu for the coming week will be.

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue with the consideration of Bill C-68 on firearms. Tomorrow, we will start the debate in third reading on Bill C-59 to amend the Income Tax Act.

[English]

On Monday we will debate third reading of Bill C-37, the young offenders legislation, and if there is any time left when this is finished we will resume consideration of report stage of Bill C-52.

Tuesday will be an allotted day. On Wednesday we will deal with second reading of the electoral boundaries readjustment bill and we will then resume consideration of Bill C-68.

There will be no ordinary sitting on Thursday but at three o'clock p.m. on that day there will be a joint meeting of both Houses in this Chamber to hear an address by the President of the United States.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

BILL C-68

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege and I appreciate the opportunity to be recognized today.

I take the point of privilege very seriously. After six years and some months in this Chamber I have never risen on a point of privilege, recognizing that to do so would mean that my rights as a member of Parliament were abused or the ability to do my job was somehow impeded by rules of this House or by actions that may have taken place elsewhere.

I rise today on a point of privilege to express my concern that my ability to do my job as a member of Parliament has been impeded by rules and regulations that exist in this place.

A bill before the House at the present time, Bill C-68, the firearms legislation, is a bill that in my constituency and elsewhere across Canada is of great interest. The bill has elicited a tremendous amount of letters and telephone calls over the last few months. The proposals that were brought forward by the government have been out in front of Canadians for several months.

As a result of those proposals being put forward to Canadians I have had a great many telephone calls and letters from my constituents asking to be kept informed of the progress of this bill and when the bill was printed and available in the House to supply those constituents with copies of that bill.

I have compiled a list of names in my constituency and tried to assess the number of letters that I received with regard to this bill.

(1505)

I have calculated that maybe 200 or 300 copies of the bill would be required for me to distribute to the people who have expressed an interest in responding to this issue in front of all of us to provide me with their comments and backgrounds so that I can properly represent them and to communicate an intelligent review of the bill to the minister and the government.

On doing so I have contacted the Department of Justice for extra copies of the bill to provide to my constituents. I am told

Privilege

by the Department of Justice that I am limited to a handful of copies of the bill.

I contacted distribution of the House of Commons and I am told that there is a limited supply of the bill, that very few can be available to me. Only after all members are done getting their limited supply will I be able to have access to the few copies that would be left over.

Finally I took the bill along with a letter and some newspaper clippings to printing this morning to ask if it could produce some copies so that I could keep my constituents informed as they requested about the contents of this important bill.

I am told by printing that it cannot do it because the rules of the House of Commons specify that if the bill is available elsewhere, it cannot print it.

We have exhausted all the possibilities of the bill being available elsewhere. I do not want to be embarrassed in front of my constituents by being unable to provide them with copies of bills that I am debating in this Chamber.

I ask that my question of privilege be examined by the House and at the very least that I and members of Parliament who require copies of this bill to keep our constituents informed be allowed to have printed enough copies to satisfy our demands.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although I doubt that this is a question of privilege the issue brought to the attention of the House by the member is an important one.

A number of my own colleagues have approached me in my position as whip on the same issue. Perhaps more appropriately it would be a matter for the Board of Internal Economy to consider. If either that member or another member can make a formal request that we do that you, Mr. Speaker, and I and others who sit on that board could look at this issue and how to accommodate it.

For this to be a question of privilege, I suppose a member would have to be denied access to the information which of course he is not. There is a fee, quite a hefty one, for obtaining copies of the bill. I am informed that it is in the area of \$10 a copy.

It is more appropriately a matter to be discussed by our board as an expenditure of the House. Perhaps in so doing we could see what we could do to accommodate at least some of the members or accommodate all members with a quantity of some sort to satisfy the demand that is expressed by this member and others who have brought it to my attention as well.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the words of my hon. friend but recognizing that, it might be some time before the Board of Internal Economy would have an opportunity to address this. The matter is rather urgent. The legislation is before the House now.

Speaker's Ruling

Our constituents want to find out immediately what this bill involves. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, you can assure members that this is not some item that might be put off indefinitely or for a few days even.

The Speaker: To the extent that I can give that assurance to all hon. members, I will surely give it. This would be a point that would be put on the agenda. I do not know whether I can talk to the Board of Internal Economy. I will defer to that and go back to the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for an answer to that question.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I guess I am really responding as the spokesperson for the Board of Internal Economy. I can assure my hon. colleague that he has my undertaking to bring it to the attention of the board as early as the meeting on Tuesday.

The Speaker: With agreement from hon. members we will proceed this way. If there is not agreement at the end of it all I will take this up again and I will get back to the House.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

PROPS IN THE CHAMBER

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during question period the hon. member for Kootenay West—Revelstoke rose and put a question.

(1510)

I am informed, although I did not see it as I could not see it from my seat, that on the television cameras it was quite obvious that he was holding a prop. The prop was in the nature of a sign posted on the back of the document or portfolio that he was holding. The document was clearly visible on television and contained a slogan that related to recent meetings on taxes in Canada.

The person who told me this saw it on television in the lobby. I was not in the lobby, I was in the House and could not see it from where I was sitting.

I refer to Beauchesne's sixth edition, citation 501:

Speakers have consistently ruled that it is improper to produce exhibits of any sort in the Chamber. Thus during the flag debate of 1964, the display of competing designs was prohibited. At other times boxes of cereal, detergent and milk powder have been ruled out of order.

Citation 502 states:

When a member produced samples of grain in the House, the Speaker deprecated the practice, saying, 'If we allowed hon. members to produce such exhibits, we would get ourselves involved in a position where perhaps all too often hon. members would want to table dead fish, herrings, or red herrings, damp grain or wild oats'.

This quotation from previous Speakers indicates the grave nature of this offence against the rules of the House and I ask the Chair to apply the proper discipline to the hon. member for Kootenay West—Revelstoke.

The Speaker: Perhaps there is a simple explanation. The hon. member is here now and perhaps he can explain it in a few words.

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that a prop is something that relates to the subject at hand. I held up my speech and I used a piece of stiff cardboard in order to keep the pages from falling over, as they will.

I will not display it now and further incur the wrath of the hon. member, but as it happens there was a label on the back, which we have on briefcases and everything else, which said "No more taxes. No more debt".

I can understand the hon. member's sensitivity to that. It was not my intention—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I am glad we do not have the lash in our arsenal.

I would encourage all hon. members not to use props. The hon. member has explained that it was done inadvertently. I accept the hon. member's word.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

COMMENTS IN QUESTION PERIOD—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now ready to rule on a question of privilege by the hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, which he raised first on November 2, 1994 and then again on February 8, 1995.

On November 2 the member rose to complain that during question period the previous day the Deputy Prime Minister had breached confidentiality by quoting from a letter which the member had written on behalf of a constituent to the Minister of Canadian Heritage. He contended that by revealing the contents of this letter without his permission the Deputy Prime Minister had interfered with his ability to carry out his duties. He argued that his constituents would now wonder whether or not matters on which they sought his assistance could be kept confidential.

The Deputy Prime Minister responded that the letter was part of the public record of the Canadian Radio—Television and Telecommunications Commission.

On February 8, 1995 the hon. member again rose on a question of privilege to state that new information had come to light on the same matter. He explained that the constituent on whose behalf he had written had received a letter from the manager of correspondence and complaints at the CRTC. In that letter the

constituent was advised that under the terms of the Privacy Act, unless she requested otherwise, the hon. member's letter, sent on her behalf, and any other correspondence related to her complaint would become part of the licensee's publicly accessible file in early January.

The hon. member now argues that contrary to the statement of the Deputy Prime Minister his letter was not in fact a public document when the Deputy Prime Minister quoted from it last November and again requested that I review the matter.

(1515)

[Translation]

The chief government whip then intervened and argued that what was at issue was a question of law and that the Speaker does not rule on such matters. He also added that if the hon. Member had a complaint with the CRTC, there were other avenues by which he could pursue it.

Let me first address the matter of whether or not the member's letter to the Minister of Canadian Heritage was a public document and therefore able to be quoted from in debate. Beauchesne's Sixth Edition, page 151, citation 495(7) states:

When a letter, even though it may have been written originally as a private letter, becomes part of a record of a department, it becomes a public document, and if quoted by a Minister in debate, must be tabled on request.

[English]

From this, I must conclude that the letter from the hon. member to the minister was in fact a public document and therefore could be quoted from in the House.

It is not for me to decide whether or not, as the Deputy Prime Minister stated, the letter was part of the public record of the CRTC. The application of the Privacy Act and the laws and policies governing CRTC dossiers are beyond my purview. As my predecessors have repeatedly ruled, it is not now, nor has it ever been, the role of the Speaker to rule on questions of law. This has been a longstanding practice and I draw members' attention to Bourinot's *Parliamentary Procedure and Practice in the Dominion of Canada*, Fourth Edition, 1916 at page 180 which reads that the Speaker:

—will not give a decision upon a constitutional question nor decide a question of law, though the same be raised on a point of order or privilege.

This is also repeated in citation 168(5) of Beauchesne's sixth edition, 1989.

On matters of privilege, it is up to the House to decide whether or not a member's privileges have been breached. The Speaker must be persuaded that there is some evidence that a member has been hindered in the performance of his or her parliamentary duties, before putting the question to the whole House for determination.

Government Orders

Having carefully reviewed the procedural authorities and the interventions of hon. members, I must conclude that in the case before us there is no prima facie question of privilege.

I thank all hon. members for their contribution to this decision.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FIREARMS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-68, an act respecting firearms and other weapons, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I understand there was some time left in the question and comment period for the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment. I believe the member for Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia had the floor.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I had digressed to the question of the political flip-flop of the Association of Police Chiefs on the question of the registration of guns. However, I would like to pursue my original debate with the hon. member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis.

He has at rather great length discussed the causes of domestic violence and suicide in the home as it relates to the registration of firearms. I fail to see, and I have tried very hard to understand, how a registered gun is any less lethal than an unregistered gun. If we want to solve the problem of domestic violence leading to death or of suicide with firearms, there is only one way it can be done. That is by totally disarming the civilian population.

(1520)

I would ask the hon. member if that is his vision of Canada.

Mr. Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, I was really interested in hearing the hon. member before question period when he contrasted the styles of the Minister of Justice who spoke in calm tones and mine with very passionate, emotional tones.

In this party we are individuals. We have different styles, different ways of expressing ourselves, different points of view sometimes. That is what makes a democratic party. I do not see why we should not speak with passion. I feel very passionately about this issue. I feel passionately about it because guns kill. They cause death and injury. We should do whatever we can to be on the side of caution. That is what Bill C-68 is all about.

Government Orders

I would remind the hon. member that there are an estimated five million rifles and shotguns in Canada. Nobody knows who owns them. Over the past 20 years 62,000 guns have been stolen and not recovered. Over 3,000 a year are lost and nobody knows where they are.

A registration system makes it easier for police control, for people in charge of legal control to trace possessions. This is why we register cars and boats. When they get stolen or burglarized people can trace them.

Today the Reform Party is challenging us to prove without any fear of contradiction, with 100 per cent certainty, that registration will be watertight or statistically proven. We have suggested that there is a whole body of opinion relating to crime. The police chiefs association, the Canadian Association of Police, the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Crime Association all tell us that registration will have an impact on at least controlling the guns that flow across the borders unregistered, unknown.

Surely it is worse, the precautionary principle. Where is common sense? Where is the fact that we should use caution when it comes to lives? The onus should be on us to show we have taken every possible action to ensure life is protected.

If registration would save one life—according to all the experts it will save many lives—then of course registration is possible. We have a duty as a government to do it. Bill C-68 is awaited by a great majority of Canadians. Eighty-eight per cent of Canadians in the Angus Reid poll say they are for registration, including a majority all across Canada. In some provinces it is up to 95 per cent, in another, 69 per cent. Every western province is for it.

Therefore, Bill C-68 is a big step forward. It is a reflection of what the majority of Canadians want. I am very pleased it is here. I will support it with great conviction.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to listen to the rhetoric flow, having it interfaced with an appeal to common sense. That is what we ask for, to see some common sense in the gun legislation in this country. The hon. member mentioned there are estimates which range from five million to as high as 12 million firearms and long guns unregistered in the country.

(1525)

The registration of handguns has been in effect since 1934. We have had 60 years of registration and it has done nothing to prevent criminals from acquiring and using handguns for criminal purposes.

I ask the hon. member for a succinct answer, if possible, because I know his time is up. How will registration of long guns be more successful than the registration of handguns has been?

He also mentioned experts who say that registration will work and that “it will save countless numbers of lives” I believe was the term. Name the experts. We would love to know who the experts are who claim that registration will save lives.

Mr. Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, I said it would save lives. If it saves just one life it would be worth it. They never talk about life over there. They talk about guns. They do not talk about human life. That is really what this bill is about.

The member makes the point that the registration of handguns has been in place since 1934 and it still permits criminals to use handguns. What would happen if there was no registration of handguns? Would there not be more crime?

If the registration system needs improving, then let us improve it. Today we have computers, all kinds of technical means to ensure that a registration system is far better than the one that was set up many years ago. This is the opportunity to do it. We have the technological means to set up a proper registration system. It will take time but the minister has allowed for that in the bill. Once it is set up it will be a modern, up to date registration system which may filter into the communities and which hopefully will involve the community at large, the grassroots. It will be far better than the system we now have, which is no system.

If the handgun registration system is not perfect, then let us perfect it. But at least it is a step toward caution, toward saving lives.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate at second reading of Bill C-68, An Act respecting firearms and other weapons, which was tabled on February 14, 1995, by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

That legislation, which was promised a long time ago by the Liberal government, and the tabling of which was postponed on several occasions, amends the Criminal Code and includes a new Firearms Act. It provides harsh sanctions for crimes committed with a firearm, as well as a system of registration certificates and a national firearms registration system.

This dense, complex and technical piece of legislation of 132 pages, with no explanatory notes, will give effect to the measures announced on November 30 by the minister. The delay in the tabling of that bill can only be explained by the considerable opposition it has stirred in the ranks of the Liberal Party. Over 30 Liberal members will vote against that bill, including the member for Timiskaming—French River, the member for Kenora—Rainy River. Some ministers are also said to have strong reservations about the new legislation.

I hope that these dissenting members will have an opportunity to express their views in this House, so that we get an idea of just how divided the Liberals are on this issue. The hon. member for

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Lachine—Lac—Saint—Louis, who just made a good speech, should use his persuasiveness to convince his colleagues to support this legislation.

(1530)

Bill C-68 proposes several measures, including: the establishment of a national firearms registration system; a minimum jail sentence of four years for violent crimes committed with a firearm, as well as a prohibition to ever own a restricted or prohibited weapon; the inclusion of new Criminal Code offences with harsh penalties for the illegal importation and traffic of firearms; measures to tighten controls at the Canadian border—this morning, the minister mentioned that a very large number of firearms are imported into Canada each year—, and a prohibition to import and sell .25 and .32 calibre handguns, as well as handguns equipped with a barrel of 105mm or less.

Individuals who do not acquire a licence or a certificate within the time prescribed could be sentenced, under the Criminal Code, to a maximum of six months in jail, or to a fine of up to \$2,000. The weapons license is renewable every five years at a cost of \$60. The registration certificate will be valid for life, unless the weapon is sold or transferred. Once the system is in place, the license will be mandatory for the purchase of ammunition.

Control of firearms has caused and continues to cause heated debate. Those in favour of control are demanding, among other things, more stringent regulation, that all weapons be registered, and that certain types of firearms be prohibited.

On the other hand, the weapons industry is angry at having to submit to new restrictions. It will therefore intensify its pressure in strongly opposing this bill. We of the Bloc Québécois have always held that there must be legislation in this area in order to better control firearms.

In my opinion, it will also help resolve the crime problem. I also realize that more restrictive gun control alone cannot resolve the crime problem. We must reconcile the right of individuals to protect themselves against violence with the legitimate interests of weapons' owners, including hunters.

It must be pointed out that the minister resisted the pressure of the powerful gun lobby. Universal registration of firearms is a positive measure. It will encourage owners to find ways to store them safely.

Reactions to the bill in Canada and in Quebec are divided. However, I think most of the country, including the people in my riding of Bourassa, in Montreal North, support the broad lines of the bill. Therefore, I believe this bill, despite many gaps and shortcomings, is a step in the right direction.

(1535)

Among the measures contained in this bill, the registration of all firearms is the most seriously disputed. Under the administrative control of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, this measure should be implemented in conjunction with the provinces and territories. We will keep an eye on co-operation between the RCMP and the Government of Quebec. In Quebec, where at least one firearm offence is committed daily, the police must use stronger measures to effectively counter the criminal use of firearms.

In my province, 400 to 450 deaths are caused by firearms every year, about 300 of which are suicides. This is why the health care community, in particular, has been calling for registration of all firearms for a long time. We must remember that in Quebec firearms have been registered since 1972, but the registration system must be improved.

I have serious reservations about several measures in the bill, especially in regard to registration procedures and costs. The national registration system is not self-financed, something which the Bloc Québécois has been demanding for a long time. The justice minister has merely mentioned that implementing this system will cost \$85 million over seven years. But he has not said where he got these figures, how he arrived at this amount. In addition, I believe the cost will be much higher than what the minister has calculated.

Moreover, we believe the minister and his government have given in to the powerful progun lobby by allowing a period of eight years for the registration of gun owners and their weapons.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, I am Chilean by birth. I came here following the military coup in 1973. Chile was a peaceful country; Pinochet's dictatorship brought total insecurity. When my wife, my children and I came to Montreal in 1974, we most cherished the safety of this country's cities and streets.

However, I was shaken by the tragedy of December 6, 1989, when 14 young women lost their lives at l'École polytechnique de Montréal, at the hand of a misogynist murderer. Marc Lépine used a Luger rifle. The incident spurred a major movement in Quebec and Canada in favour of increasing firearm controls and it heightened awareness of the daily violence that women are subjected to in our society.

I was personally affected by the tragic incident five years ago because one of my goddaughters was studying at l'École polytechnique during the incident but, fortunately, did not get shot.

The bill outlaws the sale of all weapons like the one used by Marc Lépine. At the time, close to three out of four Canadians felt that the massacre of the 14 students at l'École polytechnique demonstrated the need for tighter gun controls.

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(1540)

Women, seniors and Quebecers in general were and are the three groups most in favour of legislative action to restrict the sale of weapons. According to figures from Statistics Canada, between 1978 and 1982, 37 per cent of all murders were committed with firearms. Of the 6,465 crimes committed between 1978 and 1987, 33 per cent were committed using a firearm.

The minister said that on the average, every six days a woman dies from a gunshot wound in Canada. The situation is therefore very serious. However, in my opinion, the minister is afraid to really get to the heart of it. He should have tabled a tougher bill. He extends until the 21st century the time limit for those who currently own firearms to get a certificate in compliance with the minister's action plan.

He has committed the sin of omission on many points in his bill. The Minister of Justice did not pay enough attention to coroner Anne-Marie David's inquest, held in Montreal in the latter part of 1994. Twenty or so witnesses representing various organizations testified about how inconsistent and unclear the regulations were and how the minister's new proposals did not address the problem as a whole.

Government must protect citizens against any fraudulent and dangerous use of firearms. Public safety must be improved by limiting the use of firearms for criminal purposes. I think that all immigrants in Quebec and Canada wish to live in a safe and law-abiding society. I also think that the people do not want Quebec and Canada to become like the United States as far as firearms are concerned.

But at the same time, I would like to see this bill take into consideration the legitimate interests of hunters and farmers. Hunting is a long-standing traditional activity. It is a major leisure and economic activity for many Quebecers and Canadians. Sports shooters have gained international recognition. Many aboriginal people hunt to feed their families. I have nothing against people using weapons for good reasons.

I do not think that in Canada, unlike other countries, we need to be armed to protect ourselves. At least, this is not the kind of society I would like to live in.

[English]

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Bourassa mentioned that about 30 members on the government side will be voting against the bill. I would suggest that he redo his research because many of the concerns that our members had have been addressed in the latest changes to this bill.

I was pleased to hear from him that he personally will be supporting this bill because, as he said, it was a long time

coming. He did comment, though, that the bill did not go quite far enough.

(1545)

The minister of the environment and wildlife for Quebec stressed that the bill goes too far. I am wondering if he can give us some clarification if this is the same split within his party. He makes a very strong statement that the bill does not go far enough and yet we are hearing another message from that province that the bill has gone too far.

[Translation]

Mr. Nunez: I hope that the dissent within the Liberal caucus with respect to Bill C-68 is not deep-seated. I accept your explanations, but I still think there are some serious problems about this bill within your caucus.

As I said before, we agree with the general principles of the bill. We are in favour of tighter gun controls, especially in Quebec, where we had the tragic killings at l'École polytechnique in Montreal and where other occurrences have made us very much aware of the problem.

I hope that during consideration of the bill in the Justice Committee, we will be able to take a closer look at this legislation and propose amendments that will make it more effective and give it more teeth, and that will also ensure it will come into force as soon as possible. As the hon. member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis said earlier with such passionate conviction, I think society in Canada and Quebec absolutely needs this legislation.

[English]

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for Bourassa two questions.

The hon. member indicated that he supported the idea of prohibiting the Mini Ruger which was used in the polytechnique massacre. I can support that and understand that assault weapons are off the list. My constituents support that as well. However, someone who is deranged will find a weapon in some way, whether it is registered or not under this current program. He could have used a sawed off shotgun, for example.

The first question is how would registration have stopped that circumstance from actually happening?

The second question is with regard to a remark the hon. member made concerning universal registration. He said it is a good idea because it will encourage owners to store their guns and ammunition safely. The last House of Commons passed Bill C-17 and put into place legislation that required all people in Canada to store their guns and ammunition safely. It has not lowered the crime rate or the illegal use or misuse of firearms in crimes in any way. How can the hon. member say that universal registration is going to make a difference with regard to this?

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[Translation]

Mr. Nunez: Mr. Speaker, of course there are limits to what we can do. There are mentally disturbed individuals in every society. However, I believe that our goal and the public's goal is to minimize the risk of crimes being committed with firearms.

I do not know whether the weapon used by Marc Lépine was registered, but I think firearms registration will be helpful because we will know who the owner is. In the case of people who are mentally disturbed, I trust they will be denied the right to have a firearms licence.

I think registration is essential to gun control. Of course, if we have a national registration system, we can also ensure safer storage of these firearms. I hope that this bill will help us achieve some of these goals, despite, I repeat, some considerable deficiencies in Bill C-68.

(1550)

[English]

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I remember one time being stopped by a policeman for a routine check in my car and in the back seat was a baseball bat. He asked why I had a baseball bat in my car. I said that along with the ball and the glove on the floor of the car, I used it to play with my children. This was a few years ago. He said that was fine, but that if I were carrying it to use as protection or to use against someone it would be a crime to have it in the car.

It seems to me that the intention of the use of a firearm or a hatpin or a hammer or a kitchen knife or a pair of fists is the thrust of what we should be talking about. It is the intention of a person to harm, the deformed will of a person that we should be addressing ourselves to. We cannot stop every threat. When we are told that if we can save even one life, if it were true I would accept that.

If we are so concerned about saving lives, why is the government and why are the people of Canada not more concerned about the technical standards of appliances, of automobiles, of so many of the things we use? Why do we allow smoking? Why are the restrictions on drunken driving not more stringent? This is a red herring.

How will the registration of guns, how will further restrictions on guns and how will this bill on gun control affect the misuse of guns by someone who is determined to cause someone else harm?

[Translation]

Mr. Nunez: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I believe the national firearms registration system will provide tighter controls over who owns these firearms and where they are stored. I am not alone in this respect.

In my own riding of Bourassa, in Montreal North, 15 per cent of my constituents are senior citizens. I discussed this with them. We had a number of meetings, and I asked them: What do you think about gun control and the bill announced by the Minister of Justice? All senior citizens are in favour of tighter controls because they want to be able to go out, and walk in the park, without fear of being attacked by some crazy person with a gun. And many people would agree.

I spoke to the labour movement, the Canadian Labour Congress, which represents more than two million members in this country, and especially in Quebec, they agree with the broad principles of this bill. I spoke to physicians and health care workers. They also want tighter gun controls in Canada. I think the majority of the people in Canada and Quebec, and in my riding, support the broad principles of this bill.

[English]

Mr. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I feel that it is a great opportunity for me to speak on the topic of gun control. I hope to talk about some of the concerns expressed by the Reform Party and go through a whole series of situations in terms of support, some of the statistics that support strong gun control.

(1555)

Let me start with a basic premise on why gun control is good for Canada. Gun control is not simply about controlling guns. It is about public safety. It is about crime prevention.

Do members think—I have asked this question to people often—if we have more guns on the street we will have more crime? Consistently the answer is yes, the more guns we have on the street, the more crime we will have. If you can go out and buy a gun in a local store, do you think we will have more crime? The answer consistently is yes.

Is that not logical? If there are fewer guns on the street and if the government makes it more difficult for people to get more guns, will we not have less crime? My basic premise is if we have fewer guns on the street and those that are there are restricted and managed, we will have a safer society and safer communities.

The other part of it is just the psychological effect, the fact that we know as a society we do not tolerate people having guns, and the fact people know it is illegal to have guns on the street and that we do have restrictions. That will also help in determining that psychologically there is less fear in our society. That is very important as well.

Let me look at the support that this bill has right across this country, whether it be in Alberta, British Columbia or anywhere else. There is tremendous support for this bill. For example, from October 5 to October 25, 1994 Environics Research Group Limited conducted a national survey of Canadian public attitude

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toward various gun control measures. The survey reported that 90 per cent supported a law requiring all firearms to be registered.

In British Columbia 88 per cent of the people support strong gun control. In Alberta 83 per cent of the people support gun control. Virtually all Canadians, 96 per cent, support increased penalties for the use of a firearm during the commission of a crime. Part of that bill also increases the crime whenever a firearm is used in the commission of a crime.

Seventy-five per cent wanted restricted access to ammunition. Sixty-seven per cent supported a law preventing civilians from owning handguns.

There is a whole list of the polls done. It goes on and on. I could probably go on. There was a survey done in Alberta recently which said that 64 per cent of Albertans support a national firearms registry.

This was a poll done by Alberta's minister of justice, Mr. Evans, who said that he was surprised by the results of this poll. An Angus Reid poll was done in the fall of 1994 in which 70 per cent of Canadians favoured tougher gun controls.

I can go on and on and cite more polls but it is pretty evident that Canadians support strong gun control. If one looks at the groups that are supporting gun control, there are incredible groups that are saying they want gun control.

For example, on August 25, 1994 at its 89th annual conference the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police passed six resolutions that support strengthened firearms control measures. Mayors of B.C., mayors of some of the people in the Reform Party, said they want stricter gun control. Eighteen mayors throughout British Columbia representing 1.7 million people said they want stronger gun control. This is coming from the mayors of municipalities.

It is quite evident that groups right across Canada, whether it is the mayors, the Canadian police chiefs or other groups including community groups, have said they want stricter gun control. As the Reform Party always says, we are listening to those Canadians. We are listening and we are responding. We believe we need to listen. The difficulty for Reform Party members is that if they do not support this bill, they will be against the majority in their own ridings that wants stricter gun controls.

(1600)

I know we have to be careful in using statistics because they can be used in misleading ways. I want to share some statistics with the Canadian public. A recent survey showed that guns were used in 42 per cent of murders of women by their spouses.

One woman in Canada is killed with a gun every six days. Most often she is killed in her own home and almost always she is killed by someone she knows. That is quite a revealing statistic.

There is another statistic that we should look at closely. Over 80 per cent of the rifles and shotguns were legally owned at the time of the shooting. Is that not an incredible statistic? The members of the third party say: "It is the criminals that are committing the crimes". It shows that over 80 per cent of the rifles and shotguns were legally owned by those people at the time of the shooting. What does that tell us? It sends a very strong message when 80 per cent of the rifles and shotguns were legally owned at the time of the shooting. We have to take action.

In 1991 there were a total of 1,445 deaths involving firearms. Of those, 19 per cent were homicides, 4 per cent were accidental deaths and 77 per cent were suicides. In 1992, 26 per cent of all robberies involved firearms. This represents a gradual decline since 1977 when it was 39 per cent, the year before stricter gun control measures were passed by Parliament.

As the result of stricter gun controls we have cut robberies down from 39 per cent to 26 per cent. We heard the same arguments in 1977 when the Liberal government, proposed by Minister Ron Basford, passed legislation on stricter gun control. The same arguments are coming out. In looking back the statistics show we did the right thing. In 15 or 20 years we will look back and say we did the right thing now as well.

In 1992 there were 732 homicides. Of those 732, 34 per cent were committed with firearms. That is a serious problem.

We can compare our gun laws with those in other countries. Unfortunately we do not have a comprehensive study that compares countries that have stricter gun controls and those that have less restrictions.

We do have one very comprehensive study that took the example of two cities which were within a 100 to 150 mile radius. The study looked at what happens in crime in those two cities. The two cities were Seattle and Vancouver, the city which I am from and represent, Vancouver South. It looked at these two cities because there were a lot of similarities in geography, climate, make-up and population. It was a study done between 1980 through 1986 in order to investigate the associations among handgun regulations, assaults and other crimes, as well as homicides.

The two cities are similar in many ways. They share common geography, as I said, climate history and both cities have a comparable level of schooling and have almost identical rates of unemployment and ethnic diversity.

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(1605)

Although similar to Seattle in many ways, Vancouver has adopted a much more restrictive approach to the regulation of handguns. During the study period, it is quite relevant that both cities had similar rates of burglary and robbery.

In Seattle, the annual rate of assault was modestly higher than that in Vancouver. However, the rate of assaults involving firearms was seven times higher in Seattle than in Vancouver. That sends a very good message. Despite similar overall rates of assault the relative risk of death from homicide was significantly higher in Seattle than in Vancouver. Virtually all of this excess risk was explained by a 4.8 fold higher risk of being murdered with a gun in Seattle as compared with Vancouver. That is very revealing.

The conclusion of this study was that restricting access to handguns will reduce the rate of homicide in a community. That is the basic premise I started from. It is logical that if we have more guns on the street, we will have more crime. If we have fewer guns on the street, it is logical that we will have less crime.

That is a very simple way to look at it. Unfortunately the members of the Reform Party still do not see that. It is very simple. The average person should understand that. If we let people buy a gun whenever they want with no restrictions or rules, we will have higher crime. If we restrict firearms, we will reduce the crime.

Another example is Indianapolis. Its police wanted to stop vehicles to have a real, active approach on gun control, like our drinking program. They said they would stop cars in a certain area where they had problems; they would search cars, looking for guns. They set up a proactive approach to this.

The police actively sought out and confiscated illegal firearms in high crime neighbourhoods. The result was that gun related crimes were reduced by almost 50 per cent in the relevant areas. Homicides and drive-by shootings also went down significantly. This is a very good message.

Even with this information, the Americans have been unable to put forward stricter gun controls because of the national riflemen's lobby association. Strangely enough, we hear members of the Reform Party talking about lobby groups. They say their favourite subject is lobby groups and how they are against lobbyists and lobby groups. However, when the lobby groups support their position, they are holding hands. They do not mind going to bed with the lobby groups that support their position, as they have done with the gun lobby group.

We always get the argument that we should punish those people who cause the crime. Here is another statistic that will interest people. Eighty per cent of all homicides in Canada occur between people who know each other. Most homicides occur as a result of assaults during arguments or altercations. A small

minority occur during the commission of a robbery or other felony.

If there are more guns in the homes, there will be more homicides. If there are fewer guns in the home, there will be fewer homicides. It is very simple.

(1610)

What is the cost of this program? Prove that it will reduce crime. If everything we did to prevent crime had to be proven first, we would not have very many crime prevention programs.

We have heard from major groups that have said that this bill will reduce crime. Common sense tells us that it will reduce crime. However, members of the Reform Party want evidence, proof now, on crime prevention programs. The proof is already there if we look at past legislation and at the gun control bill of 1977. It shows that stricter gun control reduces crime. We do not need any more proof. The government will take action whenever a crime prevention program shows it reduces crime and helps public safety.

Once a crime is committed there are incredible costs. I know members of the Reform Party have mentioned costs. But what does it cost once a crime is committed? What is the cost to a family? What is the cost to society? What is the cost of losing a family member? There are huge financial costs, for the courts, for the legal system, for the pleas. To keep someone in jail costs \$60,000 a year.

Yes, the program will cost something. The registry system will cost approximately \$85 million. But it is not a cost, it is an investment because it is going to reduce crime. It is an investment because it will ensure there are fewer tragedies, whether it be a suicide or a murder. Hopefully as parliamentarians we can attempt to reduce those kinds tragedies. That is why I am supporting this bill.

The Reform Party strongly opposes any preventive gun control measures. Its arguments are primarily based on defending the interests of gun owners, not in public safety. Reformers ignore the facts about the use of firearms in domestic violence, suicides and accidental deaths. Although Reform claims to put a high priority on crime prevention, the only action it advocates is to deal with criminals after lives have been lost. We want to prevent the loss of lives. That is our goal.

The costs of registration have been exaggerated by the Reform Party with allegations that the registration system will cost hundreds of millions of dollars. Concerns about the design and the cost of the system are being dealt with by taking time to develop it carefully.

I have to congratulate the Minister of Justice who had the courage to tackle this issue and to make sure that it is done right. Too often politicians do not want to tackle tough issues. They do not want to tackle issues where there is some resistance. The

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minister saw resistance to gun control. It took a lot of courage for him to bring in this legislation.

With today's technology it will also be cheaper than it would have been 15 or 20 years ago. We think those figures are correct.

I know that I am running out of time. My colleague from Edmonton Southwest said his survey showed that 69 per cent of the people in his riding support stricter gun control. In a lot of ways Canadians are ahead of politicians on this one. However, as a government we recognize that we must do this. The Canadian public wants us to do it. The police forces want us to do it. Let us do it for our children. Let us do it for the youth so they will face less crime.

(1615)

I have three children and I want them to live in a safe society, where they do not feel threatened by someone having a gun. I want them to build a stronger society. We do not want to be Americanized as do some Reform Party members. We want to have a safe country. We do not need guns.

If there is any message I can send today it is that everyone, including the Reform members, should support this bill and give support to the minister. If anything, it should be a tougher bill than what it is now. I hope in the future we can make it more tough because the fewer guns out there, the less crime. It is only logical.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member a couple of questions.

I too have spent the last seven or eight weeks touring the country far and wide talking to people at many public meetings. I have also received polls. I received one yesterday regarding registration from the constituents of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, which had 2,807 respondents. Of those respondents, 111 said yes and 2,696 said no.

That is what came from that riding. The member of Parliament has received that poll from those constituents. Is that member of Parliament going to be allowed to represent his people? After all, the polls he is getting certainly do not indicate what the minister and other members are claiming.

Are we aware that the Prime Minister received 200 resolutions from municipalities in the province of Manitoba opposing the minister's gun law? We have not heard anything about that, but I know they were delivered to the Prime Minister of Canada from the province of Manitoba.

Tons and tons of petitions are being tabled. I have managed to put in over several thousand names from all over the country because some members evidently do not want to table these petitions. They have come from all parts of the country. The

latest one was from Manitoba and was signed by somewhere in the neighbourhood of 1,400 individuals, including 400 or 500 women who signed it on special pink paper so it would be recognized. They are opposing this bill.

The hon. member for Burlington was with me at a meeting in Kamloops. The place was packed full. There might have been 300 or 350 people there. They asked that member to send a message to the minister. They called for a vote and they all stood opposing the gun proposals.

For heaven's sake, when you see these kinds of things—and everywhere I go I see them—and you get them from your own members' ridings, where it says that 96 per cent oppose gun registration, where in the world are you dreaming up these figures that you keep talking about?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order. The Chair recognizes that this is very controversial and that there are very strongly held views on both sides of the debate. However I would remind members on both sides of the House to always direct their interventions through the Chair, through the Speaker, and avoid referring directly to one another as "you".

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for that. I forgot for a moment that you were there. I will not do that again. But as you say, it is very easy to get worked up.

I have attended over 19 public meetings. I have personally interviewed thousands of people and I have listened to them. I did not encourage them in any way, fashion or form. I asked: Are you familiar with the proposals? They said yes. I asked: Are you in favour? There was an overwhelming no. This is mostly grassroots. I do not have time for a lot of the elite, as do some of the ministers. I am talking to grassroots individuals throughout the country. They do not want it. It is loud and clear from every indication.

Check the petitions that are tabled and tell me how many petitions are in favour of this and how many are against. Mr. Speaker, you will be pleasantly surprised.

Mr. Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, on any given day on any issue I could probably get 1,000 people out in my riding. If a Reformer comes to speak in my riding, I can get 1,000 people to protest against them because of their stance. It is not hard to get 300 people up against it.

(1620)

However, that is not the issue here. The issue is that overall, the polls coming in show again and again that the majority of Canadians are supporting this. There are going to be some people who oppose it because it will be in their interests to do so. These are the hunters and the people who sell guns. It is in their interests to oppose this.

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Some of them have legitimate reasons. I give the minister credit because he has met with people right across the country from coast to coast to talk to them about their legitimate concerns. Some of them are hunters up in the north whose livelihoods depend on guns.

When the polls show that 15 per cent of the people are against this bill, they are going to sign petitions, but 85 per cent of the people want gun control. It is an overwhelming fact that people want gun control.

The Reform Party will pay a very high price for not listening to the Canadian public in the next election. A recent poll has shown how marginalized it is and it will be more marginalized after the next election. It will have less than the two seats the Conservatives got.

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have heard the hon. member from the other side state many facts and figures.

It has been mandatory to register handguns since 1934. I would like to know how much and how far crime has depleted with the use of handguns. I also heard the member mention crime control at border crossings. I would like the hon. member just to remember that this is the same government that could not stop the smuggling of cigarettes.

Mr. Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, this government has done a very good job in stopping the smuggling of cigarettes. All one has to do is look at the facts.

The hon. member was not listening when I gave an example. I said that in 1977, 39 per cent of the people were using a firearm in robberies. Now it is only 26 per cent. The evidence is there and it is overwhelming. If some people want to ignore the evidence, so be it. Some people do not want the truth and choose to ignore the evidence, as some of the Reform members have done.

However, we are not going to ignore the truth or the facts. We are going to look at this in 20 years and know that we did the right thing in this Parliament. We will have passed strong gun control legislation which I think should be even stronger than it is now. Canadians across this country have shown support for us. In the recent byelections it was three seats out of three for the Liberals. Why? It is because we are doing the right thing, we are listening to Canadians.

It is surprising that whenever we have done consultations the Reform Party has called them a sham. It is not interested in consultation and it is the party that wants consultation.

There are some legitimate concerns out there on gun control and the minister has dealt with those concerns. This is an excellent piece of legislation. I hope the members will strongly

endorse and support it because when they look back at it 20 years from now, they will know they did the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Before resuming debate, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Kamloops—Taxation.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead has given me written notice that he will be unable to be present to move his motion under Private Members' Business on Friday, February 17, 1995.

[*English*]

It has not been possible to arrange an exchange of positions in the order of precedence pursuant to Standing Order 94(2)(a). Accordingly, I am directing the table officers to drop that item of business to the bottom of the order of precedence.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 94(2)(b), private members' hour will be deferred and the House will continue with the business then before it.

(1625)

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I wish I could stand today to say it is a pleasure for me to speak on Bill C-68 but I am afraid I cannot. I had hoped that the hon. minister would have listened to the concerns of literally hundreds of thousands, millions of Canadians across the country who have deep concerns about gun registration. Obviously he has not and has chosen to forge ahead.

I personally have received thousands of letters from people who are concerned that the Minister of Justice has confused gun control with crime control. I am sure that every other member of Parliament in the House has as well.

There is a growing perception that our justice system is not working. The justice minister and the anti-gun lobby are trying to convince everyone that if we just make it tougher to own and use a gun legally, somehow it will be harder for criminals to use them illegally. Somehow I have my doubts about that.

Our justice system was built on the principle that one is innocent until proven guilty. We must work hard to maintain the integrity of that system to ensure that innocent people are not deprived of their rights for the wrong reasons.

When any program is put into place, it should be clear what the objectives are. There should be a means of evaluating its effectiveness. In this case, I feel the government has clearly failed.

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What does imposing more restrictions on law-abiding citizens have to do with crime control? To use the minister's own words, how does registration make Canada a safer, more civilized place to live? In 1993 the Auditor General said that we do not have statistics indicating whether previous gun control legislation has had any effect on the misuse of firearms.

The results of just one short term evaluation done in 1983 were used as a basis for the even stricter gun control legislation introduced by Kim Campbell, Bill C-17 in 1991. When Bill C-17 was passed, there was no real proof that the new laws or regulations would meet the government's crime control objectives.

This justice minister has introduced legislation with some very clear crime control measures, such as stiffer penalties for using a gun in the commission of a crime or for weapons trafficking. However, in the same bill he has included restrictions on honest citizens who he cannot demonstrate have anything to do with the problem.

I object to the minister lumping measures against criminals in with measures against law-abiding citizens. I object to the implication that responsible gun owners are somehow guilty of a moral deficiency or harbouring criminal intentions simply because they own a gun. I am referring to such measures as mandatory registration and powers of search and seizure without a warrant.

In parts of my riding, every household has at least one gun. The police have been handed the power to search businesses and premises other than dwellings, without a warrant. The minister has created a new category of criminals in this country.

Where I grew up in northern B.C., someone is a criminal if they do something illegal, if they actively go out and break the law. This bill makes honest Canadian citizens criminals subject to a 10 year prison term if they do not do something. If they fail to register their .22 they can be thrown in prison for up to 10 years.

Ten years was the penalty Denis Lortie got for murdering three people and wounding 13 others in the Quebec National Assembly. Ten years is the maximum penalty this minister is seeking for a young offender who commits premeditated first degree murder. Is this minister saying that because someone fails to register their gun they must be going to commit murder or rob a bank?

This legislation is a slap in the face to every law-abiding gun owner in Canada. This government tells us that we need tougher gun laws against legal gun owners because stolen guns are used by criminals. Where is the proof that registration will prevent even one death? The government does not have any.

If crime prevention is not the objective of registration, then what is? Murder rates in Canada have remained relatively stable

over the last 15 years. Yet in April, the justice minister reacted to two high profile murders in Ottawa and Toronto by floating a proposal for a total ban on guns within city limits. Who did he think would be affected by such a ban, the criminals?

(1630)

Tougher gun control legislation in many states has had no discernible impact on gun violence. In the United States 93 percent of the guns used in homicides were apparently acquired illegally. New Zealand and Australia found registration did not help the police. It did not seem to have any tangible aim and did not help at the scene of a crime when the offender stole, borrowed or found a firearm.

What about in Canada? Here the government does not keep statistics on the use of illegally versus legally owned guns in the commission of crimes. Why not? Would they not support the government's position?

Last June I asked the Minister of Justice to prove to law-abiding gun owners that they are part of the crime problem before he enacts even tougher laws. We want proof that tighter restrictions for people who respect the law will prevent the criminals who do not respect the law from getting their hands on guns. Eight months later we are still waiting for an answer.

Restricted and prohibited firearms are already registered. What has their registration done to prevent crime? In most cases where restricted and presumably registered guns are used in crimes the government does not even know if the criminal bought the firearm legally. It does not keep records. There are already 1.2 million registered firearms in the country and this government does not have a clue how many of them were used in crimes because it does not ask. It knows guns used in crime were smuggled into the country and I fully support tougher measures against gun smuggling.

Why is the minister taking rights away from people who are not criminals? The hypocrisy of selling universal registration as crime control is readily apparent to everyone.

We know that thousands of guns are smuggled into the country all the time. What is the point of borders and laws if we cannot or will not enforce them? If we cannot close our borders to cigarette smuggling how much more difficult is it going to be when the government finally gets serious about gun smuggling? When will the government take a stand and give the police or the army the mandate to stop international trade in arms?

I visited with police in the Cornwall area. The minister and other members opposite like to talk about how they have the support of the police forces. Everyone knows gun smuggling is going on down there but they have not been able to stop it. When I questioned the police as to why they have not been able to stop the smuggling they said to me: "Why should we risk ourselves with a small revolver against automatic weapons? When we

apprehend these people, we make an arrest, we get them into court and they get off with a slap on the wrist”.

Their message to me was to get tough with the people who are misusing and abusing firearms rather than legislate a useless registration system.

I hope this government’s anti-smuggling legislation works better than its anti-cigarette campaign. I understand cigarette use has increased dramatically since this government lowered the taxes a year ago. I hope the plan is not to lower the taxes on guns to combat smuggling.

Bill C-68 has some tough laws on trafficking. Under sections 99 and 100 of part III of the Criminal Code a weapons trafficker will get up to 10 years. I also notice that tucked away in section 110(v) of the Firearms Act the governor in council can pass regulations “respecting the manner in which any provision of this act or the regulation applies to any of the aboriginal peoples of Canada and adapting any such provision for the purposes of that application”.

The question has been asked and will repeatedly be asked whether this legislation will apply equally to all Canadians. The minister’s reply throws more confusion when he says yes, but with flexibility toward the aboriginal people. What does this mean? Canadians need to know.

The justice minister maintains that the government is not effectively destroying the value of the prohibited handguns because Bill C-68 creates a class of gun owners they can trade with. This class is defined as any current gun owner who legally owned one of the newly prohibited guns on or before Tuesday, February 14. Considering that date I wonder if Bill C-68 is not just a Valentine’s present by the minister to Wendy Cukler of the Coalition for Gun Control.

(1635)

Does that really protect their investment in these guns? Over time the class of owners will dwindle through attrition. Fewer and fewer people will be allowed to buy these guns and eventually there would be only one avid collector in possession of half a million guns. When he or she dies all those guns will be confiscated by the crown. Will they get fair compensation for those firearms if he or she tries to sell them before they die? There will only be a few collectors allowed to buy them. Do not tell me that fair compensation will be offered. Do not tell me or the country that their market will be stable.

Last year a young Edmonton mother, Barb Danelesko, was savagely murdered in a home invasion. Do you think she could have convinced a firearms officer that she needed to protect herself or her children? Recently one young offender found guilty for that crime was handed a three-year sentence.

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Under Bill C-68, if Mrs. Danelesko had had an unregistered firearm at her disposal for her defence and had survived, she would have had to face up to 10 years for non-compliance. Where is the balance? Where is the justice?

Proven criminals receive fewer years than this minister wants to give responsible hunters who have done nothing wrong but failed to register their shotgun.

Many people, especially those living in cities, do not believe the ability to protect your home and family is a legitimate reason to own a gun. The justice minister certainly does not believe it.

Less than a year ago he said he came to Ottawa with the firm belief that the only people in this country who should have guns are police officers and soldiers. This is a sobering thought for millions of responsible gun owners in Canada. With the introduction of Bill C-68 he is one step closer to fulfilling his goal.

He also said he did not want Canadians to think they needed to protect themselves. I have news for him. With our overburdened police forces and court system, most Canadians already know they need to protect themselves.

Guns are a necessary part of life for many people in northern B.C. Farmers need them for predator control. Trappers and guides use them every day in their work. Hunters use them to help stock their freezers. Many of us also believe that we should be able to use guns for personal protection, to defend our homes, our families and our property.

The criminals laugh while the rest of us become their victims and have our civil liberties taken away. This is how the Liberal government deals with gun related violence. People need to be able to defend themselves in situations in which the police, as much as they would like to, cannot.

In Edmonton a man shot at intruders in his yard and he is the one facing charges. The papers called the thwarted robber the victim. If we are to have true justice the rights of the innocent defending their homes must supersede the rights of the guilty who are trying to rob them.

Today the criminals are called the victims and society apologizes for their behaviour. Meanwhile responsible citizens have more of their rights infringed upon because the police and the courts cannot keep up.

This government is trying to convince Canadians that gun control is the same thing as crime control. Maybe it is easier to go after law-abiding gun owners than after hardened criminals. I do not believe it is going to solve the crime problem and I do not think most Canadians do either.

I do recognize, however, that there are positive aspects to this legislation. If the hon. members opposite would listen, I will list the positive aspects.

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For example, I applaud the changes to section 85 for the use of a gun in the commission of a crime. It has been beefed up to include imitation firearms and use during flight or the attempted commission of a crime. Although the first offence only gets 1 to 14 years, subsequent offences will net a criminal 3 to 14 to be served consecutively to any other sentence related to the same event.

However, these changes are meaningless if the charge is plea bargained away in our overcrowded courts. On the first offence a criminal would also be prohibited from owning a gun for 10 years. If he or she violates this prohibition order, they are subject to a maximum 10-year sentence. It does not say if it is consecutive.

(1640)

I have some questions about whether the 10-year maximum for violation of the prohibition could ever get tacked on to a maximum 14-year sentence for using a gun in another crime. I think a potential 24-year sentence for using a firearm again would certainly make some criminals think twice before acquiring yet another gun for illegal purposes.

Making sentences tougher on the books will not mean anything to criminals if our judges will not impose sentences consistently or if gun charges are plea bargained away. Imposing a mandatory minimum sentence for armed crimes has no deterrent effect if criminals do not get a consistent message.

The minister has given law enforcement officers greater powers under this bill for search and seizure. The police need to be able to go into a domestic violence situation with the ability to remove firearms while the situation is still out of control.

However, this minister has given police far greater powers. Under section 117.02 police officers can enter any premises, except dwellings, without a warrant if they suspect someone has not registered their shotgun. Why does this justice minister believe people sign away their rights to privacy simply because they choose to own a gun?

I would like to draw the attention of the House to section 112 which says many regulations made by the governor in council do not have to be laid before the House. I find it very disturbing that further regulations can be made with respect to the Firearms Act or part III of the Criminal Code without coming before Parliament.

A small handful of people can make regulations affecting millions of gun owners and there is no public accountability or scrutiny before going into effect. I do not believe it is right that a handful of bureaucrats should be able to make regulations that can land Canadian citizens in prison.

The Minister of Justice believes Canadians widely support all of his gun control initiatives as we have heard countless times in the past and again today. Why does he not have the courage to place all orders in council related to his Firearms Act before the House? Why does Bill C-68 make it so explicit that regulations can be passed without parliamentary approval?

More important, why does he not separate his new Firearms Act pertaining to legal gun owners from his amendments to part III of the Criminal Code dealing with criminals? He has said in the House today that the reason he has drafted the Firearms Act is to address the concerns expressed by legitimate firearms owners, that they feel certain violations pertaining to them should not fall under the Criminal Code.

If he is convinced this has widespread support, he should have the courage to separate these two issues and defend each on its own merits.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am frankly sick of listening to the flagrant misrepresentations the hon. member is indulging in with his efforts to mislead the Canadian public as to what is going on in this bill. He knows perfectly well he is doing it and he should be ashamed of himself.

I refer him for the purpose of clearing up the error—perhaps he will admit his deliberate error—to section 92(1) of the proposed new bill currently before the House. Page 68:

Subject to subsection (4) and section 98, every person commits an offence who possesses a firearm knowing that the person is not the holder of

- (a) a licence under which the person may possess it; and
- (b) a registration certificate for the firearm.

Subsection 3 says:

Every person who commits an offence under subsection (1) or (2) is guilty of an indictable offence and liable—

—to the 10 year imprisonment to which he referred. This is a person who committed an offence possessing a firearm knowing the person was not the holder of a licence and that the gun was unregistered. In other words, it is the criminal misuse of firearms.

Let us go back to section 91(1) of the bill:

Subject to subsection (4) and section 98, every person commits an offence who possesses a firearm, unless the person is the holder of

- (a) a licence under which the person may possess it; and
- (b) a registration certificate for the firearm.

Then it says in subsection (3):

Every person who commits an offence under subsection (1) or (2)

- (a) is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years; or
- (b) is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.

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He knows that an offence punishable on summary conviction carries a maximum sentence of six months or a \$2,000 fine. It also carries the possibility of an absolute or conditional discharge. He knows that the innocent gun owner who fails to register will be charged under that section, not someone who is committing an offence which is the section he is referring to when he talks about 10 years. He is misleading the Canadian public. He should apologize for his deceit.

(1645)

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that we are able to excite the opposition across the way.

What I was referring to—and I stand by my earlier statements—is that there are two classes of people when it comes to registering firearms. There are those who will be covered by section 91 who will for some reason not hear about it. I cannot imagine who they will be because everyone, before we get done, is going to know about this. I do not think the government can keep it a secret much longer. The word is getting out.

For those who inadvertently do not register their firearms, the hon. member is quite correct, under section 91 they will either be facing a jail term of up to five years or an offence punishable by summary conviction which could be as little as a fine.

However, section 92 pertains to people who willingly disobey and do not register their firearms. For this crime, the government has decided that 10 years imprisonment is a justifiable sentence. I have talked to hundreds and hundreds of gun owners throughout my riding.

In January I took a tour throughout my riding which covers the whole northeastern corner of British Columbia. I tried to talk to as many people as possible. We held meetings on this. As one of my hon. colleagues said, I did not try to drum up the anti-gun control sentiment. I merely went to these meetings and asked the individuals how they felt about it. I did not have to ask very loudly because they were very forthcoming with their sentiments about more gun control and certainly about registration, not only on restricted firearms but on long guns as well.

I asked them in confidence, without revealing names, how many of them were going to be registering their firearms. I did not find one individual in my travels who said he or she would willingly and voluntarily register his or her firearms.

Under section 92 those individuals, if they have willingly not registered their firearms, will be subject to 10 years of imprisonment. That is how I read this, but I admit that I am not a lawyer, and thank goodness I am not a lawyer.

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague give his speech and I have a couple of questions I would like to ask him.

Regarding the numbers and stats, how far did you go in trying to find this information? Were you able to get this information from the Minister of Justice or his department? Also, with you living in a rural area how long would it take for the police to respond?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): We use the word “you” so often that somehow there is sort of a dialogue going on between the two of you while the rest of us are attentively waiting to get involved. I certainly do not want to be forgotten or left out. Please, through the Speaker.

Mr. Stinson: Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not want to forget about you either.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member how long it would take the police force to respond to his home in case of an emergency if he was to dial 911 like we normally can in most cities?

(1650)

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his questions.

As I indicated in my speech, it is simply not possible for our police to get there on time. If we talk to the policemen one on one they readily admit this.

Statistics clearly indicate, unfortunately, that the vast majority of times when police are responding to a crime, by the time they get there the crime has already taken place. Their job is to try to investigate and hopefully apprehend the criminal. That is the job and the duty of the police in most cases. On rare occasions they can intervene in time to save someone from assault, rape or murder, but it does not happen very often.

In my case, because I live outside of town, I suggest it would probably take in the neighbourhood of half an hour for the police to get there if someone was breaking into my home. We see increasing evidence across the country that citizens are concerned. There is increasing evidence of home invasions, where young hoodlums break into homes, often targeting the elderly. They break into these homes for no apparent reason. Many times the people are at home and they have no means to defend themselves.

I guess the answer to my hon. friend's question is that it would probably take about half an hour before the police could respond to a break-in in my home.

As to how much effort I have made to try to get statistics from the government, I referred in my speech to the fact that last June I asked a question during question period of the minister requesting the statistical evidence to prove how even the existing gun controls under Bill C-17, without registration, were working to prevent crime, to bring down the levels of violent crime and the criminal misuse of firearms. Nothing was forthcoming.

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On October 28, 1994 I placed a question on the Order Paper. I could read it but it is quite lengthy. It consists of seven specific questions that ask the government to provide proof to us, and to the Canadian people, how legal firearms pertain to crime in the country.

I will refer to one of the questions, which is part (c) of Question No. 96. In that question I was referring to section 85 of the Criminal Code, which is already in force. The question is as follows: "How many of those charged with this offence were the legally registered owner of the firearm used in the commission or attempted commission of the crime?" It is a very simple, straightforward question asking for statistical evidence.

What was provided after three months, not 45 days, was the following answer:

The Uniform Crime Reporting Survey—

which comes from StatsCan:

—does not collect information which can distinguish the number of criminal offences which have been committed with the use of legal firearms. Prior to 1992 the Homicide Survey collected data on registered and non-registered firearms, but because this information was grossly under-reported (90 per cent unknown) the data are no longer collected.

That is the best the government could provide to me in the way of statistics to show that legally owned firearms have anything to do with curbing crime.

Mr. Raymond Bonin (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the people of northern Ontario have a culture that is unique, and part of our culture is hunting and fishing. My riding of Nickel Belt is a rural riding. I probably have more hunters and fisherpersons than most of the Reform members.

I support this legislation and I have supported registration since we began to speak about it. As a matter of fact, during the campaign we had 12 debates and I made it very clear that our policy was to fight crime. We have presented legislation which will fight crime.

Part of this bill deals with the smuggling, the importing, of arms. It is a very important part of this legislation.

(1655)

The next package that will be coming is sentencing. The Reform Party would like to throw everybody in jail and throw away the key. That is not the way we want to run the country. Probation is a very important issue for the government. The Young Offenders Act is very important as is the gun bill or the gun and rifle registration.

How can a government that is serious about fighting crime, a government that is responding to requests from Canadians from all over to combat crime, a government that wants credibility say: "We will look at importation and smuggling. We will look at sentencing. We will look at probation. We will look at family

violence. We will look at the Young Offenders Act but we will not talk about guns or rifles. We will not talk about this".

How can any politician have credibility and say, we will fight crime but we will not talk about the weapons that kill people?

I intentionally prepared this speech not wanting to use statistics. The reason I am not using statistics is that I do not have to stand in the House to convince my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois. Very seldom can I stand and say that I agree with what they are doing. They agree with this bill.

Even though its members want to leave our country—they will not leave—they have the good sense, they have the wisdom and they care enough to want to leave behind a country that is safe, a country that continues to be the envy of the world. In the end that is why they will not leave. They will stay with us and feel good about having supported this legislation.

I will not spend too much time referring to the Reform Party because it is very clear that its view of Canada and my view of Canada differs immensely. I would not spend valuable time in the House trying to compare the views of these individuals who do not care who has guns, who do not care how many guns there are, who do not care what kind of guns they are, who want to throw everybody in jail, who say: "Hang them. Bring back capital punishment if you want to eliminate crime".

An hon. member: Good idea.

Mr. Bonin: "Good idea", he says. Do all these things. One thing we never hear is "do it with compassion". Talk about the individuals. Talk about the families of criminals, because they are victims also. If we do not deal with people everything is so simple.

When I have a discussion with a group it really scares me when one individual in the group has all the answers, when one individual for any problem that one can present has a solution. It is usually a very simplistic solution. I get my share of hearing simplistic solutions when I listen to the Reform Party address the House.

The people representing Canadians on all sides of the House have worked for years to make Canada a safe country, a safe society, a place where people want to emigrate to and contribute to and create wealth.

My two sons are married and I am very proud of that. They married last summer. The next step will be grandchildren. I look forward to it. I spoke so proudly a few minutes ago about northern Ontario and Nickel Belt but there are things that I am concerned about for my grandchildren.

I have brought a newspaper article. I have them by the dozen in my riding. "Former boyfriend shoots single mom then commits suicide in apartment". That was in my riding and there are a number of them.

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(1700)

Mr. Grubel: It was a handgun.

Mr. Bonin: I hear remarks. This does not affect individuals who care not about people but it affects me that this young woman was shot and killed. It affects me that every six days it happens in Canada. When we say it, we hear silly remarks from individuals who do not care about people. They ask whether the gun was registered. If it was registered, would it make it okay? No, that is not the issue.

Mr. Morrison: That is the question.

Mr. Bonin: That is not the issue. The issue is that for a number of years in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada you could buy guns if you owned an FAC. If you did not own an FAC you could not buy guns. That is fine.

What has been happening is that people are starting to think differently about guns. I come from a culture where there was a gun on the wall. It came from dad, a beautiful short .22, a masterpiece. We all wanted to inherit it.

The issue is that people are tired of guns. People who do not use them say that it is too cumbersome and too much trouble to own rifles. They want to get rid of them, have them taken off their hands. Someone with an FAC could take it off the owner's hands for 20 bucks. The person with the FAC bought it, legitimately and legally. The result of that is there are people in my riding who own 250 and 300 rifles legitimately and they are not registered.

Mr. Morrison: So what?

Mr. Bonin: The so what is that come June, junior boy or girl graduates from high school and throws a party. There are 300 people in that house and a fight breaks loose. Members are laughing. We are talking about possible victims and they are laughing. When the fight breaks out and the police are called they say: "Give us a break. Give us a chance. Before we knock on that door we want to know if there are 300 guns downstairs". And these members laugh.

This legislation is just a small piece of a large puzzle. All members of Parliament take their jobs seriously, even my colleagues from the Reform Party. I know they take their jobs seriously. I do not think their motives are correct, but I think they believe in them so they are doing the best they can.

I take this very seriously. Gun control is very serious. Guns are serious. However it is not the most pressing problem in my life. I want to deal with this, I want to pass it and I want to get it done.

Then I want to move on to senior citizens who are losing their ability to support themselves, some of whom are lonely and addicts dying alone. I want to deal with people who cannot find jobs. I want to deal with children who go to school in the morning with cramps in their bellies because they do not have

food. I want to move on. When we deal with these issues I hope my colleagues will have the same vigour they have when they take so much pleasure in talking about guns. What a fun thing to talk about.

I want to deal with family violence. I want to deal with the deficit. I want to deal with the debt. For Canadians to be part of a democracy, if the price they have to pay is to register their guns and their long arms then I am prepared to do it. I will be the first to line up to register mine.

Reform members say that registration will not eliminate all serious crimes so we should not do anything about it. They do not worry about how many guns people have. They do not worry about the kinds.

(1705)

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police say that we need gun registration. The police association says: "We support registration. Help us do our job". The Reform Party says: "They do not know what they are talking about". The police officers want it. Their associations do too.

The Reform Party spoke of motions that were presented by towns and municipalities. The FCM represents all municipalities in this country and it supports this. But the Reform Party says: "They do not know what the heck they are talking about". The list goes on. I will not name them all because it will take up my 20 minutes.

Nobody knows anything about anything, only the few members of Parliament here on the Reform side who do not even agree with the majority of people in their own ridings.

Mr. Morrison: What about the 12,000 people who marched on Ottawa?

Mr. Bonin: Last summer was when the debate first started and I remember full well. It has been a good debate. We have served our constituents well. We have met with them. Many times my constituents were misinformed and they disagreed with me. I met with them anyway and I took my bumps.

Last summer when we met for the first rally, here is what was distributed. It is very interesting that many of the lines that are used in the presentations by the Reform members are lines that are used in the documents of propaganda. It may be a coincidence.

This is how the debate started: "To all firearms owners, the federal Minister of Justice wants to ban all firearms in Canada. Contact your member of Parliament immediately and tell him or her the following: This is unacceptable. Firearm owners are tired of being punished for the acts of criminals. Members of Parliament who advocate gun control or the banning of firearms and ammunition banning are attempting to deceive Canadians into thinking that gun control will prevent or reduce crime. Banning of firearms and gun control will not prevent or reduce

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crime. Criminals do not obey laws”, and it goes on to talk about polls. When I heard these things at the beginning I said no.

The media called me and asked whether I supported the banning of all guns, arms and long rifles. I said that I did not support that as it is part of our culture. I still have guns. Every year my brothers phone me and ask: “Are you coming hunting with us this year? You have not been hunting with us for a number of years. You are so involved with your politics you never have time to come hunting”. But I will go back. Someday I will retire and I will go hunting. I am a legitimate gun owner and I will be the first one lined up to register my guns.

But then there was a debate. People call it a rally. There we were, as we usually say, two against a thousand. But it was two against about 250. It was amazing. The information that came out of that room was scary. When it was over I moved through the hall talking to individuals. I asked one individual: “What is the problem for you?” The answer was: “It is going to cost a lot and it is not going to work”. I asked: “If it does not cost a lot and it is an efficient and effective system, can you live with that?” The answer was yes.

Do you know what? One of the organizers stepped in and said: “Do not say that. That is what Hitler did. He registered all guns and then he confiscated them all”. That is the fear that was put into them. Some of these people were senior citizens. The reason they were concerned about the cost is because it is difficult for them to make ends meet. These organizers put that fear into their minds. They said: “That is what Hitler did”. I heard Hitler’s name so many times it was scary.

My answer to them is that in Canada we have more boy scouts and girl guides than we have soldiers, so we cannot go in and confiscate all those guns. We have no intention of doing it and we do not have the capacity to do it.

(1710)

We kept getting the calls. Getting the calls is very difficult because everyone agrees that we work long hours and it takes time. However, that is the best way to deal with the issue. I would rather get 100 phone calls than meet 100 people in one hall because I know I can give the correct information and mail out documents.

Canadians are reasonable when we pull the individuals away from the people who try to influence their way of thinking. They understand common sense. They tell me that if it is cheap and reasonable, there is no problem and they will register them. That is what is happening and it will be cheap.

We continued the debate and the fear mongering kept happening. Now we are here with a document. We had a document before Christmas which I mailed out to many people. Some people will never agree with anything that is said. Maybe they were former Reform Party candidates, I do not know, but they

will never agree. It is impossible to discuss common sense with them. Now we have a document so I am calling them.

If I have a few minutes I call them and say for example: “You are a target shooter and you are the first group I went to see. I went to see you at the range on a Sunday morning”. Like the minister, I was impressed at the seriousness of these people and how they are careful to check their members. I remember being asked for a letter of reference for a person who wanted to become a member. They go through the whole thing. It impressed me. That was at the time when it was being said that we would confiscate all these things. The media was saying it and the Reform Party was saying it.

I said to them then: “No. The Liberal Party does not do it to the people; we do it for the people. We are being asked to do it and we will do it for Canadians”. Now I call them and I say: “Tell me what the problem is with the bill in the way we have presented it. Does it prevent you from practising your sport?” One of them said: “Well, the .32”. I said to him: “No, in the legislation you will find that all guns and rifles that are used in legitimate competitions will be permitted”. They had no problem with that.

Some will have a problem. When I go back they will have heard this and they will say: “Ray, you said I would have no problem and I have a problem”. I agree that some people will have problems.

Before talking about the collectors, just before I left home I saw a sad thing on TV. I cannot even begin to tell you how many rifles, guns, grenades, rounds of ammunition, launchers and machine guns that someone turned over. The discussion was bringing people out of the woodwork. This was in a private home. It scared the heck out of me. We do not know who the individual is. For all I know, it could be my neighbour. I do not think so but it is somebody’s neighbour.

I called the legitimate collectors and asked them if they had a problem. They do not have a problem any more. They have intelligently and reasonably brought their comments to the Minister of Justice either directly or through us and their concerns have been addressed. Their investment can now be sold to other collectors of the same nature and the estate can sell them. Brokers eventually will sell them outside the country, the illegal ones. Eventually they will be gone and I will be glad when they are.

Some people said: “Well this gun came from my great-grandfather”. When they told me that I brought it to the attention of the Minister of Justice because I had to agree with them. It is not a gun that will be used even for target shooting. It is just great-grandpa’s gun or rifle. It is something that you do not sell, there is no value in that. Now we are going to find a way for people to pass them on.

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(1715)

We are left with registration, the only other problem we can have now. The minister has repeatedly told us today that it will be cheap. It may be free. I am talking about registration. It may be free and will be very reasonable. I am talking about people. I am talking about the gun owners.

It is difficult for the Reform Party to relate that I am talking about individuals. It is talking about the 85 million, because it does not know how to associate an issue with individuals. That is what we are talking about here today. The cost will be very reasonable. It will be efficient.

After we had our discussions, our rallies, the pro-gun groups were still not satisfied. I understand it was because there was so much wrong information going around. On their behalf I asked the justice minister to come to our region to talk to the people who are against him.

As backbenchers they say we do not count in this House and cannot do a thing. We, the backbenchers, were able to ask our Minister of Justice to come to our communities to talk to the people who are working against him. Tell me another country where that happens. That does not even happen in the United States, a democracy. However, in Canada it does because we have a Minister of Justice who cares about people, individuals. He covered six ridings.

It was suggested that we invite four individuals in each riding. I invited the president of the local gun club. I did not try to dodge the issue, did I? I invited the president of the local gun club who was against the legislation and probably still is. I will have to phone him when I get back home.

I invited the president of the fish and game association, who is adamantly against it. He bought a membership in my riding and he was going to the annual meeting in Toronto, and we did not try to stop him or railroad the meeting. We welcomed him. To balance the load, I invited the crown attorney because they meet the victims.

My fourth candidate was Dr. Bota who works in emergency at Sudbury General Hospital. This is the individual who meets the victims, sometimes teenagers who try to commit suicide with these long rifles lying around uncontrolled in their homes. They blow off half their face. He works on them for hours and hours. He saves them and tries to rebuild their features. These young people are still alive. They are discouraged individuals. If we can save one of them, it is worth it. One in a hundred years is worth it.

Let one go. It is just an individual. That is what I am hearing—embarrassing. The hard core individuals said the figures were all wrong in Dr. Bota's study, who had just marked real cases, a real scientific poll.

Canadians have asked us to do something for them. They have asked us to make Canada safe. The women of Sudbury who are walking one night a year to take back the streets that are too dangerous are saying do it.

I say to the minister let us do it fast, in spite of the members from the Reform, because we know the people they represent want us to do it too.

(1720)

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I really do not know what to say about this. Most of what I heard was absolute nonsense.

Not all of what he said was nonsense. He talked about saving one life. An individual told me of this actual account where an elderly couple was driving through the United States. Somehow they got off the turnpike and down two or three miles on to a narrow road. When they ran out of gas, he took a container and tried to get back to the highway. He got lost in the woods and they never saw him again but his wife had some supplies in the motorhome and she was able to live for two weeks. She was saved by a hunter who found her. He saved one life. I agree with my hon. colleague.

There are both sides to this argument and we should recognize both sides. He has certainly taken a shot at the Reformers but he should take a look and save some of his energy in terms of discussing what we stand for and why we are against this bill. He should talk to his own backbench. He should perhaps clean up his own House if he thinks that this bill is absolutely waterproof and bulletproof. Start there.

He told the story about selling his guns to a person who had a FAC. He has over 200 guns. He told about a party and problems arising and the police being called in. It sounded to me as if everyone was going to run for a rifle.

I spent 14 years as a peace officer and I have never heard such nonsense in all my life. Even if that did happen, what difference would it make to the police or anyone else if those firearms were registered? What difference would it make? This is the essential question that we ask.

For those who commit suicide, what difference does it make if the weapons are registered? For women who are shot every six days in this country, what difference does it make? This bill does not attack the cause, domestic disputes. It does not attack the cause of suicides. That is what we are saying ought to be done.

Certainly if registration is going to reduce that, please tell us how because we do not know how. We have as much concern about these matters as anyone in the House. We have sons and daughters, brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles. They are not immune to these social problems. We have as much concern about that as anyone across the way.

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We ask very simply how will the registration of these 200 firearms have any impact at all? Reduce the suicides. Reduce the domestic occurrences. How will it do that? I did not hear a thing. I never heard a thing that the hon. member said that went anywhere near answering that question.

That is what the common sense people are asking for. I have told the people all across the country where I have met with them that I would be willing to give up my right to own the old weapon that I have locked away if it would reduce the criminal use of firearms.

It is not going to reduce the criminal use of firearms. It is simply not because we know where they are getting them from. He has given evidence of that. The haul that the police made in Vancouver on all of these weapons being smuggled in is evidence.

As a peace officer I know we get about 10 per cent of the infractions that occur. One can multiply that haul by about 90 per cent for the day. We have some understanding of the number of firearms being smuggled into our country.

If statistics and evidence can be submitted to suggest that this will save lives, we have not seen it yet and that is what we are asking for.

(1725)

Before the hon. member comments on what I have had to say, I would like to point out one glaring error in the statistics which have been given to the House in this debate. In 1977 the Auditor General's report indicated clearly that the reduction in violent crime through the use of firearms was beginning before the legislation came in. The Auditor General said that it was wrong to assume that the total responsibility for the dip which had been reported in the House after the 1977 legislation was brought in was the only cause for the decline because there were causative factors which came to bear prior to that.

I leave that information for the hon. member. I have been in northern Ontario, by invitation, and I welcome him on the campaign trail during the next election if he continues his stand on this issue.

Mr. Bonin: Mr. Speaker, the challenge is accepted. I will be running in the next election and I will support this bill.

I am here to do a job. I am here to do what is good for Canadians. Unlike my colleagues on the other side, everything that I do in politics is not measured by the number of votes that I will be getting. I am here to do an honest job. I swore an oath. I told people about the way that I do my politics and my politics are done for the good of the people I represent, not to be re-elected.

It is fascinating that people who question every simple statistic presented by reputable companies, who have disputed every poll done by credible, reputable companies are saying show them statistics. We know already they will say they are all wrong, only their statistics apply.

My hon. colleague who asked the question said that he was a police officer and that he had never heard of such hogwash. When I said there were 250 to 300 rifles in some of my constituents' basements, it is because a crime was committed in one of those homes, the wife was killed and suicide occurred. I do not make up these stories. They break us up when we think about them, when we think of their children and their neighbours. It is not hogwash. If that is the type of police officers in his community, I am very pleased he was not a police officer in northern Ontario. I will leave it at that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): We have very little time before we move to the next order of business at 5:30. I will take a question from the hon. member for Red Deer, but wanting to give an equal amount of time to the hon. member for Nickel Belt to respond, I hope that the intervention will be brief in order that he may give a brief response.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I will make my question very brief. I will not try to answer or discuss any of the claims which have been made. However, what I would like to do—and you know the facility that I am talking about in central Alberta, between Edmonton and Calgary—is challenge the minister to stand in front of the thousands of people who would come out to hear the facts about this whole gun control legislation and tell them why they should vote for it. That is an open challenge to the minister to come to tell the people the facts. There will be thousands.

I just brought down a petition which had 5,000 signatures. That gives us an idea of the interest which exists. These people want to hear answers, they want the truth and they want the facts.

I challenge the minister to take me up on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bonin: Mr. Speaker, the justice minister travelled to Alberta on at least five occasions. Possibly the hon. member opposite was misled when I said that, as a back-bencher, I had asked the minister to come and visit my riding. I think he heard somehow that I was the Minister of Justice. He heard wrong. Mr. Rock is the Minister of Justice and I am the back-bencher.

I would like to address the first question, as I am told it was not answered. How will registration help reduce crime? Already, I have widows phoning me to say: "I have rifles here and I do not know what to do. Can you help?" Already, people in my riding are starting to say: "We have rifles at home and we want to get rid of them."

People who own between 200 and 300 rifles will take them out, women will make sure that men get rid of rifles, and vice versa, and the problem will be solved.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.) moved that Bill C-263, an act to amend the Financial Administration Act and other acts in consequence thereof (exempted crown corporations), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the message was loud and clear to every member of Parliament during the last election. Our constituents demanded accountability.

All members of the House were asked by their constituents to come to Ottawa to work toward solutions to the debt problem facing our nation. I am sure all hon. members would agree that as elected representatives of the people we ought to work toward ensuring accountability in every activity of the federal government.

The Canadian people want us to provide the means by which we can all come to trust the government. When it concerns government programs my constituents, and I am sure many MPs feel the same way, are very inquisitive. They are like investigative reporters. They use the five ws: who, what, when, where, why and all the time when it comes to government programs they ask how much it is going to cost. The people of Canada want to know. They want to be proud of the activities and the performance of the federal government.

Bill C-263 provides all members of the House with an opportunity to say to their constituents that at least in some small way we have come together to work toward ensuring that the federal government is accountable to the Canadian taxpayer.

I feel strongly that members from all sides of the House should rally in support of Bill C-263 so that we can honestly say we have tried to respond to the wishes of the people who sent us here.

Bill C-263 is not all encompassing, dictatorial, unable to change or restrictive. Bill C-263 is flexible. I have tried to provide an occasion for all corners of the House to work together and at the end of the day five crown corporations will be more

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accountable. We will all feel as though we have done a good day's work and proudly report to our constituents what we have done. Our constituents in turn will take note of our work and they will feel we are serious about doing positive and constructive work.

As members know, in the 1993-94 fiscal year crown corporations incurred losses of \$57.2 million. Their net borrowing from the Government of Canada amounted to \$14.2 billion and they received \$4.6 billion from the government through budgetary appropriations.

We say \$1 billion so often it just floats by. How much is \$1 billion? It is such a massive amount. If you earned \$1 per second you would be a millionaire in 11 days; but it would take you 33 years to become a billionaire.

When we are talking of billions of dollars it is very important that we do not just flash by it very quickly and not understand how large a sum of money it is. Our task is to ensure for our constituents that every government department and agency be accountable for every tax dollar spent. I dare say that everyone in the House wants to be able to say to the people at home that we are responsible to the people who ultimately pay the bills, the Canadian taxpayer.

(1735)

On those occasions when constituents ask us why it is that certain public corporations do not report their financial status, members have no satisfactory response. The average Canadian wants to know about all federal agencies and departments.

When constituents hear about an activity financed by the government and they are not allowed to know about the finances associated with that activity, they become quite interested. They are concerned that maybe there is something to hide.

The Auditor General has a key role to play in this regard. In many cases, which I will refer to in a moment, the Auditor General has not only made available publicly the exact facts and figures concerning the activities and performance of the federal government, but the Auditor General has been able to improve such activities and performance levels by dissecting and evaluating agencies and departments.

There is no shame involved in the work performed by the Auditor General. The auditor's detection of poor performance and recommendations is seen by Canadians as routine and expected. Canadian firms, large and small, perform audits on their own activities and performance. Often the audits show that they are right on track with their objectives. And sometimes they must swallow tough medicine to cure ailments detected in their business audits. This is a fact of life. Canadians expect their government to follow good business practices as well.

No one can deny the performance of the Auditor General in recent history. Progress has been made. The Auditor General has

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the power to follow up on recommendations. The result has been that in many cases Canadians are realizing better value for their tax dollars because of the efforts of the Office of the Auditor General.

In May 1994 the members of this place took a step closer to greater accountability by freeing the Office of the Auditor General to report on matters which the auditor deems pressing. Members of the House have already moved in the direction of Bill C-263, by endowing the Auditor General with a measure of discretion. In fact, there was a great deal of agreement on all sides of the House. We saw this as a good thing, a chance that would enhance the Auditor General's ability to do the job expected of the office.

Canadians want their watchdog to have a long enough leash. We all wanted to further empower the watchdog last spring, and I am sure I speak for all of us when I say we were proud to do so.

With reforms instituted in 1984, most crown corporations have operated within the accountability framework established under part X of the Financial Administration Act. Part X of the act requires each crown corporation to do three things:

There must be an annual report. The annual report in addition to its financial statements in the auditor's report also presents information on how well the objectives of corporations were achieved during the reporting period. Crown corporations must submit a corporate plan. They must submit budget summaries for tabling in Parliament.

In my view, these requirements are basic and simple. They are not unreasonable. Yet we have a system where all crown corporations are not required to do these basics.

Canadians expect that their tax dollars are spent within this framework of accountability. Again, when Canadians hear of moneys being spent by the government without the above criteria, they become suspicious. There is good reason for Canadians to feel this way. The Financial Administration Act could be easily made applicable to the crown corporations listed in Bill C-263.

There are 49 crown corporations, seven of which are exempted from the Financial Administration Act. They are the Bank of Canada, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Canada Council, the Canadian Film Development Corporation, also known as Telefilm Canada, the Canadian Wheat Board, the International Development Research Centre and the National Arts Centre. Bill C-263 would move these crown corporations under the supervision of the Auditor General with the exception of the Bank of Canada and the CBC.

With respect to the Bank of Canada, central banking independence is critical for the proper conduct of monetary policy. Monetary policy is ultimately the responsibility of the federal government, specifically the Minister of Finance and the executive of the Bank of Canada. There are informal avenues of accountability to which the governor of the Bank of Canada is subject.

(1740)

With respect to the CBC, provisions of the Financial Administration Act were incorporated into the Broadcasting Act in 1991. In short, the CBC is already subject to the accountability requirements of Bill C-263 and the Financial Administration Act.

This latter point is important for all members to note. The CBC is the recipient of about 70 per cent of government funding provided to exempt crown corporations. This means that Bill C-263 is finishing the job already accomplished by Parliament. Since 1991, the CBC has adjusted to the accountability requirements of part X of the Financial Administration Act.

Hon. members may agree with my observation that the CBC, more than any other exempt crown corporation in Bill C-263, was most insistent about the idea of the critical importance of an arm's length relationship to government. Yet the CBC has not had any of the difficulties that it anticipated in adapting to these accountability requirements. The CBC has been operating within this framework for the past four years.

I can remind my colleagues that the Auditor General already performs financial audits on the five crown corporations in this bill. These audits do not permit the Auditor General to comment on the appropriateness of the activities of the five nor is the auditor able to comment on the extent to which each fulfils its mandate. As it stands now these are not value for money audits.

Value for money audits are done every five years. They are different from the annual audits in that they comment on corporate management, goals and objectives. I think it is fair to say that the boards of the exempt corporations should welcome the value for money audits. It is not unthinkable that the board members would look on the audits as helpful to their work as well as a positive accountability measure.

In the course of my work and research concerning this bill, I have stumbled across some very interesting things. For example, I have a letter from Tommy Banks, a member of the Canada Council audit and evaluation committee which he wrote to me shortly after I began working on my bill.

In his letter, Mr. Banks heralds the benefits of special examinations which the Auditor General has been invited to do for the Canada Council every five years since 1986. Mr. Banks

states that “the glaring scrutiny by the Auditor General—is contemplated as an ongoing process”. Yet there is no formalization of this process. The problem now is that there is no assurance that these value for money audits will be done in a set time frame with the resulting benefits of regular periodic audits. Clearly a legislated requirement is needed.

It has been 10 years since the accountability framework for crown corporations was established. Exempt corporations have had a decade to review and analyse the effects of the Financial Administration Act on the independence of non-exempt crown corporations. By now it is highly likely that crown corporations exempted from the act would conclude that the Financial Administration Act poses no real threat to them. The CBC is an illustration of this. Provisions of the Financial Administration Act were incorporated into the amended Broadcasting Act of 1991.

The exemption of the seven crown corporations means that they have not been subject to certain provisions that support good management and accountability. As such, their exemption is hard to justify in these times of fiscal restraint. These exempt crown corporations are more than two times more dependent on budgetary appropriations from government as a percentage of total assets than non-exempt corporations and more than four times more dependent on a per employee basis.

I feel it is reasonable to require the five crown corporations to prepare a business plan so that annual reports can allow Canadians to monitor and gauge the performance of the five. There have been some cases where a crown corporation’s annual report objectives differ from its business plan objectives.

(1745)

An example of that is in 1991–92, Telefilm Canada spent 90 per cent of its film funds on projects from Toronto and Montreal. One film of the 24 supported by Telefilm came from western Canada. Moreover, Telefilm spent 41 per cent of its budget that year on French language film and only 2 per cent on the English language film from the west. We know Telefilm has stringent linguistic targets. Having said that, I think hon. members would agree that the objectives of Telefilm were not fulfilled in the business it conducted in 1991–92.

Even though there are provisions for exempt crown corporations to invite the Auditor General to conduct a special examination, the audit itself is only released to their board of directors, not to this place. The problem with making administrative as opposed to legislative arrangements for voluntary audits is that with a change in administration or administrative policy, these agreements may fall apart. Providing the corporations with an option of inviting the Auditor General in to do an audit is just not good enough.

For example, because the National Arts Centre remains one of Canada’s most secretive crown corporations, in 1990 the House of Commons communications and culture committee recom-

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mended that the Auditor General perform a special examination of the centre. The board’s directors jumped at the chance. Yet the process was fudged. The board had problems releasing the report, even though it initially promised to publish the report.

Some 300 days after receiving the report, which the board originally denied receiving, it finally responded. The *Ottawa Citizen* called the response hilarious. The Auditor General had portrayed the arts centre as an institution that fails to properly define its objectives, plot its future, monitor its expenses and communicate with its board.

In this regard, we can clearly see that inviting the Auditor General to do a special examination or a value for money audit is insufficient. If the Auditor General’s office was involved with the corporation on a regular basis, business plan objectives would not deviate from objectives stated in the annual reports.

The benefits are worth the cost of the Auditor General’s audit. Reporting is not onerous. It is good management. Value for money audits pay their way.

Another example: In 1992 the Auditor General reported that tax arrangements for foreign affiliates were costing Canadians hundreds of millions of dollars in lost revenue. Following the report, amendments were made to the rules relating to how foreign affiliates were taxed. This ensured that foreign affiliates paid their fair share.

In 1993 another special examination identified overpayments to CPP and old age security, which were between \$120 million and \$220 million per year. Following the report, an action plan was tabled with the public accounts committee to stop the problem. The government was able to act and produce an action plan.

You may be wondering if the other 42 non-exempt crown corporations included in the Financial Administration Act have increased their accountability since the introduction in 1984 of the act. In 1993 the Auditor General reported that management of crown corporations has improved because of the requirements for planning, strategy, and cost systems, in short, good management practices.

I think we can all agree that in times of restraint those who spend taxpayers’ dollars must be more than ever aware that they are answerable for how they spend those dollars. Since part X of the Financial Administration Act has been so effective for other crown corporations, it seems reasonable that the crown corporations outlined in Bill C–263 are in line as well.

In closing, I would like to quote a statement from the director of the National Arts Centre Corporation board, who is recognizing that improvements were needed in the corporation’s financial management. The director said: “Given the limited resources which management has at its disposal, tackling the institutional mentality rooted in two decades of lack of accountability has been a monumental task”.

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I urge all members of the House to support Bill C-263.

(1750)

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak today to the bill presented by the hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt.

The bill has as its basic purpose the removal of exemption from application of divisions I to IV of part X of the Financial Administration Act for five crown corporations. These are the Canada Council, the Canadian Film Development Corporation, the Canadian Wheat Board, the International Development Research Centre, and the National Arts Centre Corporation.

[Translation]

These corporations, together with the Bank of Canada and the CBC, are exempt under section 85 of the Financial Administration Act. All other crown corporations, which number about 41, are subject to part X of the FAA.

If we study part X, we see that the goal was to provide a more or less standard accountability and control system for all our crown corporations.

The role of Parliament was to hold the government and the crown corporation accountable through the appropriate minister for the public funds allocated to the corporation.

[English]

The government's role was seen to be to provide co-ordination, direction, as necessary, and control with the objective of protecting the public's investment and ensuring that public policy objectives are met.

Part X of the Financial Administration Act represents a comprehensive accountability system allowing crown corporations to adopt private sector management systems and practices, while ensuring that government and Parliament exercise certain key approvals.

For example, corporate plans of crown corporations subject to part X require approval annually by the governor in council. As well, the corporation's annual report must be tabled in Parliament. Part X requires that it contain information on how well the corporation has met its objectives.

[Translation]

At the end of each calendar year, the President of the Treasury Board must submit to Parliament his annual report on crown corporations and other corporate interests of Canada. This report contains a section which is audited by the Auditor General and which shows to what extent activity summaries and annual reports are submitted in accordance with established criteria for every minister responsible.

[English]

It can be seen from this one example how part X is designed to ensure that not only government but Parliament as well is viewed as integral to a sound accountability and control system for crown corporations.

As previously indicated, certain crown corporations are exempt from this part X system. The grounds for exemption, while not found in any written or formal criteria or regulation, reflect some of the special sensitivities in the relationship between the government and these particular corporations.

For example, the perception of arm's length freedom from government direction and decision which involve awarding grants to juried recipients is viewed as fundamental for the Canada Council. The government should not be seen to be dictating artistic merit as a matter of the politics of the day. Similarly, the mandated freedom for the CBC in areas of programming and journalistic independence led to the provision that this corporation also be exempted from part X.

The remaining exempts, five of which are named in the bill before us today, are subject to the elements of accountability found in their own enabling legislation. For example, all are required to provide annual reports for tabling and for those which are dependent upon government subsidization, they are subject to the annual process and procedures of parliamentary supply.

Bill C-263 contains two additional elements of some concern to me.

The first of these is the provision that employees of the National Arts Centre, the Canada Council and the International Development Research Centre become members of the public service. This is moving in the wrong direction.

Crown corporation employees are, for the most part, not public servants. In fact, the legislation creating the four museums crown corporations specifically states that museum employees are not public servants. We do not want to increase the size of the public service for no good reason.

(1755)

The second element deals with the concept of agent of the crown status being introduced for these three corporations by the bill. This is a complex legally challenging subject that requires some thought.

I believe the International Development Research Centre was specifically made a non-agent for compelling reasons relating to its mandate and the freedom to choose fields of research of international significance. Agencies should not be arbitrarily invoked under the assumption that it removes autonomy.

Clearly, the experience we have had over the last 10 years indicates that generally there may be merit in bringing other exempts under a modified form of accountability framework

similar to the regime that is now in place for the CBC which is different from some of the others. I can and do support that general principle.

Bill C-263 however, while moving these corporations in the right direction, contains certain fatal flaws which I suggest would preclude my support for it today. I urge hon. members not to support it.

[Translation]

The most serious flaw is that the bill does not recognize the need for a thorough review of the mandates given to these corporations in order to develop an appropriate accountability framework, without the appearance of unjustified political meddling in sectors where a certain level of independence from the government is in the public interest.

[English]

For example, part X contains sections which provide for a directive power for government to override decisions taken by crown corporation boards of directors. This could be construed as a fundamental change in the traditional approach of successive governments allowing cultural crown corporations the freedom to engage in decision making affecting artistic merit or research matters. This issue was thoroughly reviewed in the debates and committee hearings on Bill C-24 back in May and June of 1984.

Looking forward, I see merit in exploring better ways to ensure accountability for the crown corporations named in this bill. Subject areas such as auditing, corporate governance, financial management and control, corporate planning, reporting to Parliament and borrowing plans have been very thoroughly addressed in part X of the Financial Administration Act and have resulted in a system which the Auditor General noted is working well. The hon. member acknowledged that in his speech.

This system can probably be further modified to meet the special circumstances of the majority of exempt crown corporations. Whether this is best achieved through a series of initiatives amending existing enabling statutes for each of the named corporations in question requires further study.

I am informed that discussions have already occurred with some of these corporations as to the best way of achieving this.

[Translation]

I have no doubt that additional efforts will be invested to improve the accountability system while giving exempt crown corporations the appropriate level of freedom that Canadians will continue to perceive as being in the public interest.

[English]

As this bill stands I cannot support it and do not recommend it to the House.

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[Translation]

Mr. Richard Bélisle (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of Bill C-263 is to amend the Financial Administration Act and other acts in consequence thereof.

As you know, these five crown corporations are now exempted from this act. The Financial Administration Act is a very broad law which deals among other things with the running of Treasury Board, public funds, public spending and the public debt.

This act was amended 58 times between 1985 and 1994, an average of once every two months. I will not go as far as saying that there has been a lack of consistency in the Financial Administration Act in the last decade, but the least that can be said is that a flood of legislative amendments were adopted to adjust to a so-called changing environment.

There are currently almost 50 crown corporations in Canada. The overall budget of these corporations is close to \$5 billion and together they employ 115,000 people. Their economic impact is therefore considerable.

(1800)

Although relatively autonomous with regard to their management, these crown corporations are ultimately accountable to Parliament through the minister responsible. These crown corporations' management framework, established in 1984, comes under Part X of the Financial Administration Act.

These crown corporations are accountable; they must submit an annual corporate plan to the minister responsible. They must also submit an operating budget approved by Treasury Board. They must prepare an annual report, that is, the required financial statements and statistical data showing to what extent their goals have been achieved.

Finally, each corporation must conduct internal audits. The corporation's auditor also carries out a special, more comprehensive audit every five years. However, seven corporations are exempted from these legal requirements.

Bill C-263 maintains the exemption granted to the Bank of Canada, which keeps its independence at the management level and may, for example, pursue its monetary policy whatever the government in power.

Bill C-263 also maintains the exemption already enjoyed by the CBC. In any case, the corporation is already subject to the accountability principle—internal and special audits, annual report and corporate plan—through the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Act which reflects the provisions of Part X of the Financial Administration Act.

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The ultimate purpose of Bill C-263 is to remove the exemption from accountability for the following five corporations: the International Development Research Centre, the Canadian Wheat Board and three other corporations involved in the arts: the Canada Council, the National Arts Centre Corporation and the Canadian Film Development Corporation.

If this bill were adopted by the House, all five corporations would be subject to the provisions of the act. They are exempted mainly because of the specific nature of their relationship with the government. Parliament has, until now, preferred to maintain the arm's length relationship of these corporations.

In 1991, the auditor general commented that many exempt corporations had voluntarily conformed with the provisions of the act. Half of the exempt corporations had asked for a value for money audit. Many exempt corporations had also established internal audit functions and audit committees within their organizations.

These corporations can be allowed greater flexibility in terms of management control. Extending certain provisions of Part X of the Financial Administration Act to the five corporations mentioned in the bill would not necessarily mean eliminating arm's length position in terms of administrative control.

According to the auditor general, there are a number of ways in which the rules can be standardized to make exempt corporations more accountable. One way would be to incorporate the provisions of Part X of the act in the enabling legislation for each exempted corporation, as in the case of the CBC, which remains accountable to Parliament but maintains a large measure of management autonomy, which means it is not subject to management audits by the government.

One could also add these corporations to the schedule to the Financial Administration Act while exempting them from certain provisions of the act. Many exempt corporations already conform voluntarily to many of the provisions in the act, so that any concerns that overly vigorous management audits would be detrimental to the mandate of these five corporations would seem to be exaggerated.

In any case, we will vote against Bill C-263 because it goes too far in terms of controlling the administration of these corporations. It would subject the five crown corporations identified to close supervision involving both their accountability and their control over their management.

We would prefer a more flexible approach, such as the one advocated by the auditor general, who proposes incorporating the requirements selected by the legislator in the enabling act of each of the five exempted corporations, as is already the case for the CBC, as we have mentioned.

Each corporation will have to be looked at individually, after analysis, to discover the best way to make it accountable and establish a level of control in keeping with its particular goals and mission. We will therefore vote against this bill, because it gives the same status to all government corporations, except the CBC and the Bank of Canada.

(1805)

We favour ensuring accountability by making these corporations responsible for their operations rather than by controlling them, as Bill C-263 would have it. We want to increase their accountability, make them accountable to Parliament and thus permit a better assessment of their performance. We are opposed to unbounded control over the management of these corporations. Three of them contribute to the development of the arts, the fourth, as we said earlier, contributes to agricultural development, and the fifth contributes to international development.

We can provide a proper framework for their operations and, at the same time, show some flexibility in monitoring their management practices; this can also enhance the performance of these corporations and their efficiency.

We are also opposed to the bill as presented because it gives the minister responsible the right to interfere in the mandate of cultural agencies. Such agencies must be accorded greater flexibility in their activities.

Bill C-263 does not resolve the issue of the accountability of crown corporations since, as the auditor general himself has said, several non-exempt corporations do not comply with this principle of accountability, even if they are subject to it. They do not respect all of the accountability requirements prescribed by law.

This bill increases only slightly the accountability required of crown corporations. It seems to us that other means could be used to hold these crown corporations accountable for their results to a greater extent. This does not mean passing legislation. The auditor general's input can be extremely helpful in evaluating their results. Likewise, the fact senior executives of such corporations must appear before standing House committees, such as the public accounts committee, to account for their management, serves as a powerful incentive to produce the required reports and present documents of higher quality.

We favour this type of approach since it seems more effective to us than new legislation.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Before the member proceeds with his intervention, on the basis that the mover of the motion spoke to his motion and the next two interventions were

Private Members' Business

against the motion, I am going to look to the same party as the mover and possibly he will speak to the motion.

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with some interest to the member opposite representing the government and the member representing the Bloc who just finished speaking to the bill.

The intent of the private member's bill is to bring more financial accountability to crown corporations. These are not public corporations; they are crown corporations. It is kind of a hybrid. It is not as though they are using their own money; they are using our money.

How is it that a member of Parliament representing the people of the country, especially the member for Kingston and the Islands, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, could possibly say that he cannot support the bill as it is written? What would it take for the government to support the bill?

Perhaps the answer is not to support the bill. Perhaps it would be to privatize it. Mr. Speaker, if this were your money or my money, or the money involved was not public money but personal money out of the pockets of Mr. and Mrs. Taxpayer, would we be looking at our responsibilities as members of Parliament a bit differently?

A crown corporation has the benefit of being supported by public funds. Yet it does not have the downside of having to worry about whether it is going to get funds to manage its daily affairs from the product of its work. When things go wrong in these crown corporations, when they are not efficiently managed, when they do not have a business plan, do they go to their shareholders who are individuals that put up the money? No. They come running to the Government of Canada with their hands out and say: "Top it up".

The problem is that our country is going into the hole at the rate of \$110 million a day. What do we have to do to get it to sink into the heads of members opposite that they should start by doing the little things right and eventually, if they do enough of the little things right, the big things will turn out right? A little thing is to support the bill which calls for more accountability in a mere five crown corporations.

(1810)

In order to get some unanimity in the House, the mover of the bill deliberately left out some of the more contentious crown corporations such as the CBC. If we in the House were to reduce the budget of the CBC by about 50 per cent tomorrow, which would mean that we could spend lots of money on cancer research, lots of money on AIDS research or not borrow money to put more of our children to work, I guarantee it would focus

the attention of the CBC on what it really should be doing, what we can afford and what we cannot afford. However the mover of the motion did not include that because it is a very contentious issue.

What do we have here? We have the Canada Council, the Canadian Film Development Corporation, the International Development Research Centre, the Canadian Wheat Board and the National Arts Centre.

What, the National Arts Centre? How did the National Arts Centre creep into this? How on earth did that become a crown corporation? Could it be that it is located in Ottawa and it is one more thing for the people of Canada to subsidize?

It would be an interesting exercise to go to the rest of the arts centres in the country to find out whether they are crown corporations and whether they have their arms in the pockets of Canadians from coast to coast. Somehow I doubt it.

What is it about being in Ottawa that gives people the thought that money is something that sort of grows on trees or that if it is public money it is not accountable for?

Anybody who has been in business knows that the discipline of an audit is not a negative thing or a bad thing. The discipline of an audit will make any company work better. That is why these crown corporations should be saying: "Wait a minute. We want to be overseen. We recognize the fact that we are dealing with public money".

Why should they not want to be involved? Is it because they are not efficient? Is it because they can run like little fiefdoms and do whatever they want any way they want to? Is it because the Canadian Wheat Board is not perhaps so much a wheat board but a co-op? Is it because the Canada Council is a collection of people who are self-interested, get public money and dole public money out to whoever they think should have it?

I am not suggesting for a moment that the Canada Council and the people involved in the Canada Council are doing so somehow maliciously. I am sure they are doing everything that they are doing with their hearts in the right place. However it is not their money; it is our money. Why should we not oversee every nickel they spend?

The Canadian Film Development Corporation has been the subject of some debate in the House in past months. There are people who think it is doing a good job and there are people who think it is not doing such a good job. There are people who say we have to support it because it is Canadian culture. I think most of us like to go to a movie every once in a while to see a movie that speaks about us, to see something familiar. There might be some granting to the Canadian Film Corporation that pays off; it might even make some money from time to time.

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(1815)

It would be interesting if they used their own money and had to compete in a world market on the quality of their product and rather than saying that we have this domestic market which has the tariff wall surrounding it, we are going to make movies that everybody in the world is going to clamour to see because of the quality of the story, the quality of the acting, the quality of the distribution?

That is what we should be looking for in our Canada. We can compete with the best in the world in anything, in business, in arts, in film development. If we are going to have crown corporations that have the purview of doling out public money for private purposes, certainly to oversee over these crown corporations is common sense.

I would like to conclude my few moments of discussing this bill, because it is a votable bill, by once again appealing to my hon. colleagues to reconsider the initial response not to support this bill.

The hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt brought this bill to the House with the express intent of ensuring that it was innocuous enough that it could find support on the Liberal benches and with the Bloc as well as a testimony to the fact that on some things, albeit a minor start, the members of Parliament in this House assembled can come together for the right reasons and do the right thing.

It is a tragedy that every time a member gets up to speak, to move a motion or to do something in this House, it is always done on an adversarial position. It need not be that way. Common sense is common sense, whether it originates on the Liberal benches, on the Bloc benches or on the Reform benches.

When we have an opportunity in this House to come together in unity to do the right thing for the right reasons which could have the effect of using taxpayers' money more efficiently, we should seize the opportunity, seize the moment and do the right thing for the right reasons.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak for a few minutes on this bill that is before the House, Bill C-263.

I want to assure the member who just concluded his remarks that my remarks are not made in an adversarial way but just to simply point out how this bill would address the Canadian Wheat Board. I know it is a crown corporation that is of some interest to the Reform Party and it is of some interest to all of us in this House, particularly those who are involved in the agri-food industry.

I want to point out in the next few minutes why this bill is absolutely unnecessary and actually would be doing much of what the Reform Party has faulted governments in Canada for in the past, repeating something that is already done and doing things twice and spending money that is not necessarily spent.

The Canadian Wheat Board was established in 1935 as a marketing agency for western grain farmers. At the time farmers in western Canada wanted a system that would control price fluctuations, distribute delivery opportunity equitably and move the largest volumes of grain at the best possible prices.

That mandate is still the same. The Canadian Wheat Board remains the same now as it was years ago in the mandate that it has, to earn farmers the best possible returns for their wheat and barley. That is exactly what the board has been doing for that 60 years. It has done an excellent job of selling Canadian grain at the best possible prices and then returning as much money as possible to the users of that board, those users being western Canadian farmers.

Although the Canadian board is a crown corporation, its operations are financed by 130,000 grain farmers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the grain growing areas of British Columbia.

(1820)

This in itself makes this crown corporation unlike many of the others. Some crown corporations including the Canadian Wheat Board are exempt from the application of the Financial Administration Act. It is one of the member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt listed this afternoon as being exempt.

With this bill this exemption would be removed and the crown corporations affected by the bill would become subject to a different reporting system with different requirements.

For example, under this bill the Canadian Wheat Board would be required to submit a corporate plan to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food for approval by the governor in council. The board would also have to submit an operating and capital budget annually for approval by Treasury Board. This report would then be included in a review by the parliamentary committee.

Finally, the wheat board would be subject to an audit by an outside auditor and possibly the Auditor General of Canada.

There is no doubt in my mind that the objectives of the bill are well intended. I can assure everyone that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the government are in favour of ensuring that the accountability is there. That accountability at the present time is to farmers, the government and to taxpayers.

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It is essential to remember that the board's operations are funded by farmers, not by government. Nor does the board operate with a capital base funded by the government. Although some accountability to the government is appropriate the board's first responsibility is to western Canadian wheat and barley producers.

I should also emphasize that the board is already accountable to the government through a variety of provisions in the Canadian Wheat Board Act, a separate act. The safeguards established under that act are virtually the same as those under the Financial Administration Act. Again, why repeat it?

Even though they are there they are slightly modified to take into account the unique nature of the wheat board's business. For example, the board is required to file an annual report with the minister by March 31. This annual report is tabled in Parliament.

The wheat board act requires the board to have an external auditing firm conduct an audit each year and to keep proper books. The Canadian Wheat Board Act also grants borrowing powers subject to the approval of the Minister of Finance. In all of these examples the provisions of the Financial Administration Act are virtually identical.

I could go on but the point is Bill C-263 which has been put before us today is not the way to enhance the accountability of the Canadian Wheat Board. The government's main concern for accountability and the reporting process that ensures it should stem from a need to be aware of possible government expenditures.

There will only be government expenditures if there is a deficit in the pool accounts. A deficit in the pool accounts will only occur if the Canadian Wheat Board's initial payments to farmers are set at or raised to levels that exceed the ultimate levels from the sales of wheat and barley. Since the government must approve the level of the initial payments it already has an effective method of accountability in this area as well.

Another serious concern with the bill is that the nature of the marketing activities of the Canadian Wheat Board requires extreme confidentiality. The reporting relationship between the Canadian Wheat Board and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is created under the Canadian Wheat Board Act and it is appropriate, given the need to ensure that confidentiality.

We are also concerned about timing. The minister has already announced his intention to begin a process that will rigorously examine all of the facts and issues relating to western grain marketing and the Canadian Wheat Board. It is no secret that opinions on this and these issues are sharply divided on the subjects. There have been meetings, rallies and demonstrations on both sides of these issues.

Before the government makes any decision on the future of the board, farmers have a right to carefully consider the situation and together they must decide what represents the best balanced solution for their industry. Bill C-263 represents a very important decision. Its impacts on the Canadian Wheat Board and on western grain growers are potentially far reaching.

(1825)

It is our duty to act fairly through a transparent forum and to consult farmers before we make any major decision on the future of the Canadian Wheat Board.

We know what the majority of farmers want. When we are convinced that the procedure to get their views has been fair, impartial and equitable and does represent what the majority wants, then and only then will this government be ready to approve changes to existing legislation.

Until then I urge members of this House to respond to Bill C-263 with a clear and strong message that we are not yet ready to make major changes without understanding the consequences and most important without consulting with its users, the prairie farmers.

There is still a lot of work to be done and there is still much consultation to go through before we can come to a definitive decision on the future of the wheat board.

In conclusion, I would ask the members of this House not to support Bill C-263 as it relates to the Canadian Wheat Board.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, basically what I want to talk about in Bill C-263 is the openness, accountability and transparency that I think these agencies should have. I want to talk specifically about IDRC. That organization is often confused with CIDA. It is wrong that this should happen.

Throughout many of the discussions I have been involved in we have heard what the people of Canada are saying about CIDA. They are saying that there is inefficiency, that they want accountability there. However, they quite often mix IDRC into that same ball of wax. I think that is rather unfair.

This bill asks for accountability. I think that will do nothing but benefit that organization because the Canadian public wants to know it is getting good value for its dollar.

Under the current system IDRC is not getting audited the same way as other government institutions. It does not follow all of the provisions of the Financial Administration Act. Therefore, Canadians have a hard time really knowing whether they are getting value for money.

In a time of serious spending cuts and serious budgetary constraints, we can make an awfully good case for getting some kind of regular, accountable audit procedure. In terms of this, I know this year IDRC has done a budget. I have certainly talked

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to the organization. I would say it is a very well run organization. I know a member across who would agree with me on that.

If there were support for this bill we would have to separate IDRC from CIDA. Going through most of my notes, in many cases the people in IDRC I have talked to would totally agree with this. In private conversation they would say that. We have an agency, a crown corporation, that may or may not do an audit. Only because of good management would it do an audit, becoming accountable.

We also have the public saying this agency is the same, it gives out aid or it is something involved with aid, and what are we going to do about that, maybe we should subject it to the same treatment that we subject an organization like CIDA to.

As I pointed out, that is totally wrong. For that reason I would strongly advise members to read the member's bill, to take a look at what it is trying to accomplish and the fact that it is allowing this organization to get its dollars and cents out on the table and to make them open to the public, thus achieving the accountability and transparency that I believe people are demanding.

(1830)

Obviously I had a lot of other areas I would have liked to have covered, but for the sake of time I will stop at this point. I ask members to reconsider their support of Bill C-263. When it comes to an area like the IDRC they would welcome that as much as any of us would in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

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

TAXATION

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious to anyone who is watching the various news programs today, or who has any sort of sensitivity to what is going on in the country, that there is the equivalent of a tax revolt well under way.

People have literally been driven to the wall when it comes to the existing tax system which, to give it undue consideration, would be to call it unfair, unjust, unbalanced and discriminatory.

It discriminates against the small business sector relative to the corporate sector. It is biased against the average working person, as opposed to people in the upper income or the very wealthy tax brackets.

This tax revolt has occurred by the economy moving underground. There probably is not a Canadian citizen who is not participating in some way in the underground economy, with the exception of yourself, Mr. Speaker, and some of my colleagues who are presently in the House.

Who does not participate with cash transactions or in a barter system? It is increasing. It is estimated that somewhere between \$40 billion and \$120 billion of business transactions each year take place in the underground economy. This makes it almost impossible to pay down the debt of the country until we get some confidence back in the system.

Why is that? First of all, if we add up all of the tax exemptions, they come to about \$36 billion a year. That was in the press yesterday. Thirty-six billion dollars a year is lost to the treasury because of tax exemptions. Many of these exemptions are legitimate but many must be classed as tax loopholes. I give my friend, the Minister of Finance, full credit for going public in the last few days and saying that the system is filled with tax loopholes that have to be closed. He also said that the poor do not use tax loopholes. It is clear what he means. The rich use tax loopholes.

When we go down to the harbours in some of the port cities of Canada and see the huge yachts, they are by and large tax deductions. I personally know a number of people with boats who write off half of the cost of the boat and call it a business tax deduction for entertainment purposes. The boxes in the big sports stadiums are tax write-offs. We found out from the news today that even escort services can be a tax write-off if the name is changed to a tour guide or a bodyguard.

I suspect a lot of submissions will be made by individuals who are entertaining their clients. A lot of touring will also be going on, or perhaps a lot of bodyguards will be put into place. That will be a legitimate tax write-off.

The reports say that Revenue Canada will soon send out a circular clarifying this issue. As long as the escort service is also a tour guide or a bodyguard, it will qualify for a legitimate tax write-off. I could go on, but I suspect that we are all familiar with the various forms of tax write-offs.

I would like to ask a couple of serious questions. Canada is one of the very few OECD countries that does not have an inheritance tax. Across the way, when my hon. friend inherits \$2 million or \$3 million, it is not taxed. We are virtually the only country in the western world where an inheritance is not taxed.

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(1835)

Even the United States has an inheritance tax. The United States also considers capital gains to be like any other income. In other words \$1 of capital gains is taxed like \$1 of regular income. But not in Canada. That \$1 of capital gains is only considered to be worth 75 cents for taxation purposes.

Once again we are one of the very few OECD countries that says to people: If your income is from capital gains we are automatically going to give you a 25 per cent tax break before we even start considering it.

Again I have to ask, why the tax break for those who earn their income from capital gains as opposed to someone working in a radio station, a factory or a plant? Why do we distinguish between those two kinds of incomes? Why do we let those people who inherit vast amounts of money off, not to pay any income tax at all on it? Again, we are one of the very few countries in the world that does that.

I could also ask about the family trust provision. Here is the mother of all loopholes. I believe there is now universal agreement that if there is a tax provision that has to go in this budget, it has to be this family trust business. The tax experts told us this provision was brought in to protect only the very wealthiest families of Canada. Must we have a special tax provision that costs us many hundreds of millions of dollars to make life easier for the very wealthy in Canada? I think the reaction to that is no.

We will be watching very closely to see what the Minister of Finance does when he brings in his budget in a few days and whether or not he says: "We are going to take this loophole of loopholes, the mother or father of all loopholes out of the system". If he does that, then I think we can legitimately say that yes, there is some balance to the budget.

For example, he should tax the inheritances people receive, let us say, over \$1 million or \$2 million. I am not talking about people who inherit the family farm or the person who inherits a small business or the family home or whatever. I am talking about people who inherit \$2 million, \$3 million, \$5 million or \$10 million. Why should they not pay tax on that? They would if they were in virtually every other western industrialized nation, but not in Canada.

A whole set of questions must be asked about the loopholes in the system. I am very happy to see that the Minister of Finance has now acknowledged this. We will be watching carefully as he attempts to close off some of these loopholes in an effort to make the tax system a bit fairer.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to try to respond to the very windy comments of the hon. member for Kamloops. With his typical hyperbole he

went on to grossly exaggerate the deficiencies of the Canadian tax system, I am sure for the benefit of his viewers in Kamloops.

He sounded a little like the premier of Ontario did when he was in opposition, and we have all noticed how he has changed his tune since he came into government. Of course he has made the worst mess we have ever seen of any government in any province. I suspect the hon. member for Kamloops would agree with me if he lived in Ontario. He does not, so he has missed out on some of the worst aspects of NDP rule in our province.

The NDP is involved in the tax system in Ontario and the Ontario taxpayers are complaining about high taxes. What they have not fully realized in every case is how many of those taxes are charged by their provincial government. It has really slapped it to Ontarians in a big, big way, in spite of having a massive deficit and total incompetence in its government and running the economy of that province.

I agree with him that the fundamental basis of a sound tax system is that everyone pays his or her share. When a minority of taxpayers are able to avoid paying their fair share, the legitimacy of the whole system suffers.

Like the hon. member for Kamloops, the Minister of Finance and indeed every member of this caucus is committed to trying to restore an element of fairness to our tax system. But the government in fact has already taken steps to do that. It did it in the last budget.

I did not see the hon. member for Kamloops applauding the minister on budget day last year. I am sorry he did not, but I can safely tell you, Mr. Speaker, and I know you will agree, that none of us have ever seen the hon. member for Kamloops applaud a budget in this House.

There is a good reason for that. None of them has been an NDP budget. If there had been one, no doubt he would applaud it. But as long as the budget is presented by any other party, no matter how fair it is, he will say it is not fair enough for him. He does not talk about Bob Rae's budgets. If he did, I think he would be complaining about the lack of fairness. I am sorry we are not able to hear his thoughts on that tonight.

I want to point out examples of some of the things the Minister of Finance did last year in his budget.

He eliminated the \$100,000 lifetime capital gains exemption that had been put in by the previous government that benefited high income individuals almost exclusively. The deduction for business meals and entertainment expenses was reduced from 80 per cent to 50 per cent, another item that benefited substantial taxpayers. Large Canadian controlled private corporations are no longer eligible for the small business deductions which benefit small business and which the hon. member for Kamloops ignored in his remarks. I think that is important.

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The need for increased equity and simplicity in the tax system is recognized. The finance minister has made it clear on a number of occasions that his budget will be fair and will try to reduce inequities in our tax system.

I am sure the member for Kamloops will applaud the minister on budget day and thank him for the great service he is doing for Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Pursuant to Standing Order 38, 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 6.40 p.m.)

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