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**Friday, June 2, 1995**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent**

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, June 2, 1995

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### FARM IMPROVEMENT AND MARKETING CO-OPERATIVES LOANS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-75, an act to amend the Farm Improvement and Marketing Co-Operatives Loans Act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

**Hon. Allan Rock (for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.)** moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to.)

**Mr. Rock (for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food)** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

**Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as members prepare to give Bill C-75, an act to amend the Farm Improvement and Marketing Co-Operatives Loans Act, or as we refer to it in the abbreviated form of FIMCLA, consideration for third reading, I would like to review some of the reasons we are anxious to have the bill passed into law as soon as possible.

FIMCLA is designed to increase the availability of credit on reasonable terms to farmers and farmer owned co-operatives. Farmers can borrow up to \$250,000 to invest in new technology and equipment or for a wide range of farm improvement projects. Farmer owned co-operatives can get loans up to \$3 million to invest in facilities to add value to their farm products, for example the washing or packing plants for vegetables, fruit juice plants or many other applications.

These loans to co-ops must be approved by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. This is the only national loan guarantee program that can be accessed by farmers across

Canada. Like other business sectors, the farm economy goes through cycles and changing credit conditions. Loan guarantees are an important tool that governments can use to ensure that credit is readily available to viable farm enterprises throughout the business cycle.

Bill C-75 will change only one clause in the act. That is the raising of the total amount of loans which can be guaranteed under FIMCLA over a five-year period of time from \$1.5 billion to \$3 billion. If this amendment is not passed we will soon reach the loan cap and we will have to suspend the program possibly for as long as two years. We have almost reached the point of having to suspend the program already it is so successful.

The Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food should give lenders 60 days notice if it will not be able to guarantee loans under the program. Since we expect to reach the present guarantee limit of \$1.5 billion by the end of July, it is imperative that the legislation be passed as quickly as possible. Clearly, we do not want to reach the point of having to suspend the program.

The Farm Improvement and Co-Operatives Loans Act program is very popular. It is becoming more so every year. Over the last five years the number of loans registered under the program has more than tripled, from about 4,890 loans in the year 1990-91 to over 18,000 loans in the year 1994-95. The value of those loans has climbed from just under \$82 million in the year 1990-91 to \$515 million of loans that have been guaranteed in the year 1994-95.

We expect the activity for this year to reach \$550 million. That will bring the five-year aggregate to the \$1.5 billion level. With the current level of approvals, it should stay there for the next few years. At that level, a \$3 billion cap will allow us to continue offering the program.

We attribute the increased loan activity to a number of factors: sustained lower interest rates and an improved farm debt situation, not as improved as we would like to see it but it certainly has improved from where it was in the past; greater participation by independent rural lenders; improved marketing of the program; and increased competition between lending institutions.

I would like to expand for a moment on the point about increased participation of rural lenders. In the early 1990s the

*Government Orders*

department began to encourage credit unions and caisses populaires to make the program more available to their customers. This has resulted in the addition of about 600 new designated lenders across the country. Besides adding more outlets for getting FIMCLA loans, this marketing change has also generated more competition between institutions for loans, all to the benefit of the borrowers, being the co-ops and the farmers themselves.

(1010)

I said that the program had become more popular recently. Quebec and Alberta are the sources of most of the new growth. In Quebec we can thank the caisses populaires Desjardins. That movement has become a major participant. We can credit it for the rapid growth of loans in Quebec under FIMCLA. Quebec has now the third highest number of loans.

Just ahead of Quebec is Alberta which has the second highest number of loans. In that province the government owned Alberta Treasury Branches has become a significant lender under FIMCLA Saskatchewan. However, it is still the biggest user of the program. In 1994-95 that province accounted for roughly half of all the registered loans.

FIMCLA has proven to be a very inexpensive way for the government to support the agri-food sector. Over 30 years, costs have averaged over just \$1 million a year, roughly 1 per cent of annual loans. Over the past three years the program has returned \$6.3 million to the consolidated revenue fund.

In order to reduce the program costs even further, we will be increasing the registration fee by a small amount, one quarter of 1 per cent. This will raise the average registration fee by \$67. It will now become \$202 on average. Still, we must agree it is a very reasonable cost to provide such a guarantee and program to the co-operative movement and to the primary producers, the Canadian farmers. Had this fee level been in place over the past 30 years, net costs would have averaged \$434,000 a year instead of \$1 million.

To allay the concerns that the government's 95 per cent guarantee is actually a subsidy to lenders, I should point out that the net losses under FIMCLA have historically been lower than the losses lenders have incurred on loans guaranteed outside the program. We are certainly proud in the agri-food industry that those losses are at less than 1 per cent. That is a tremendous record and one which the agri-food industry should be and is proud of.

The program and the amendments have the support of the major farm groups and the commercial lenders across Canada. I urge members on both sides of the House to support quick passage of Bill C-75 so that there is no disruption in the program for the agri-food industry in Canada.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise this morning to participate in the debate on Bill C-75 at third reading.

As we said earlier, the purpose of the only amendment to the Farm Improvement and Marketing Cooperatives Loans Act is to double the number of loans guaranteed under this act.

As the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food explained so well, this change simply increases the limit of guarantees on loans made by banking institutions. The current limit is \$1.5 billion. Bill C-75 would increase this limit to \$3 billion.

This increase is said to be in line with the increased needs of many farmers and would facilitate access to financing.

Our position on Bill C-75 has not changed. To benefit our farmers and make their lives easier, we in the Bloc Québécois will support the amendment proposed by Bill C-75. We therefore endorse raising the limit from \$1.5 billion to \$3 billion.

However, I wish to point out that, although we support Bill C-75 for our farmers' sake, this short term solution is not the one favoured by the Bloc Québécois.

(1015)

In the current federalist context, the provinces face the "mission impossible" of obtaining even a minimal degree of autonomy from the federal government, which is trying to take one power after another away from the provinces through its spending power. That is why we must support this temporary solution, to allow the government to go forward with Bill C-75 so that farmers in Canada and Quebec can have access to more funds, of course.

Although this is a fundamental aspect, I want to draw your attention to the duplication bills such as this one generate. The real question we should ask this morning is not whether the limit established by the Farm Improvement and Marketing Cooperatives Loans Act is high enough, but whether the program itself is basically sound.

According to Agriculture Canada figures, the increased demand for loan guarantees justifies the amendment proposed by Bill C-75. Farmers must, of course, have access to financing in order to improve or expand their facilities. We are not questioning this fact. The question we must ask this morning is, "What is the most efficient way to meet farmers' needs?"

In Quebec at the present time, there are three organizations that help farmers secure financing or can do so. There is the Société de financement agricole, which is under provincial jurisdiction, the Farm Credit Corporation, under federal jurisdiction, and the bill before us today, to amend the Farm Improvement and Marketing Cooperatives Loans Act, the latter also coming under federal jurisdiction.

*Government Orders*

This is a fine example of this government's and this country's mismanagement. You have two different wickets at the same level of government offering loans to the same group of people.

Let me share with you what three farm producers from the federal electoral district of Frontenac told me when I had the chance to visit them a while ago. One of them described the problems he encountered trying to get funding to expand his family farm.

I phoned him this morning and took a few notes, because I wanted to be able to quote specific figures. I asked him if he was aware of the three choices he had. And that, I must point out, contradicts what my colleague, the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, said a moment ago. He told me he was aware of only two sources of funding: the Société de financement agricole and the Farm Credit Corporation.

I said: "There is a third one, you know", and I gave him the seven or eight letter acronym. "Pardon my ignorance, he said, but I had never heard of this Farm Improvement and Marketing Cooperatives Loans Act until 8:20 this morning, when you told me about it". And this is a farm producer who had been negotiating with both the Société de financement agricole and the Farm Credit Corporation for five long months, from December to May. This is a good example of duplication.

(1020)

If this government wishes our farm producers well, why does it not have a single wicket? At present, there are three choices, three wickets, and the third one, which we are debating this morning, is all but unknown to Quebecer producers. To decide whether to borrow from the Quebec Société de financement agricole or the federal Farm Credit Corporation, in many instances, our producers must set out on long and difficult consultations with financial institutions to make sure they get the best deal possible.

I asked that farmer: in the end, did you go to the Farm Credit Corporation or the Société de financement agricole? The Liberal members opposite, who are supposed to represent farmers from the Pacific to the Atlantic, should listen carefully. That person said that the best option for him was to go to the Société de financement agricole, which is under Quebec's jurisdiction.

I was happy to hear that, and I asked him how he came to that conclusion. It is not because he is a PQ or BQ partisan. He made that decision simply because it was the best option. He told me about contacting other lending institutions, namely the Royal Bank, the National Bank and the caisses populaires, and how he managed to get for his \$750,000 loan a rate which is 0.75 per cent lower.

I am proud to say that our farmers have now become businesspeople running small businesses requiring investments which are often in excess of one million dollars. Consequently, they

have to do some calculations, to think carefully and to choose the option best suited to their needs. This morning, that farmer also told me that this 0.75 per cent lower interest rate would result in annual savings of \$6,000 to \$7,500. He added that, by using these savings to lower the borrowed capital, he will, over the next 25 years, save an enormous amount of money, which is in the six figures.

This is the story of a farmer who talked to me this morning about these three borrowing options, one of which he was not at all aware of. I fail to see why the government is so intent on duplicating existing structures, with the result that in the same city and region there are two offices to deal with the same group of farmers.

(1025)

Another friend of mine, who is involved in the dairy industry, said, in reference to the 50/50 split between industrial and fluid milk, that dairy producers were privileged in that they have two ministers of agriculture. One, whom they do not know, does not understand them and looks after two teats—that is, those which give the industrial milk—and the other one, whom they know very well, Marcel Landry, the Quebec minister of agriculture, who is a Quebecer like them, who is accessible, who can be reached any day, who understands them, and who visits them not just once a year, but whenever they want to see him.

Can the same be said of the federal Minister of Agriculture? Unfortunately, he never has time for people from Quebec, but he always manages to make time for western grain producers. It sounds a little like the Supreme Court, this tendency to favour to the West.

I agree that these three agencies—the Société du financement agricole, the Farm Credit Corporation and the FIMCLA we are discussing this morning in this debate on Bill C-75—offer programs that differ in a number of respects, so they do not interfere with each other. That is the impression we get initially. However, if we take a closer look, we soon realize that farm producers would be better served if all these programs could be accessed in a single location. It would be much more efficient to have programs that are complementary but with the same requirements, than to face filling out three different applications because the criteria are not the same.

If for instance the Société de financement agricole had access to the resources of the two other agencies, it could offer new programs. The SFA could become a single wicket centre. For years, the federal government has made a habit of making certain programs unnecessarily complex and in some cases almost inaccessible. A good example in Quebec is manpower training, where we are losing \$265 million because two levels of government are involved. And even worse, our people do not get full value for the money that goes into these programs. There is a lot of interfering and shoving, and the neediest members of our

*Government Orders*

society end up having to pay for this exercise in futility. Need I repeat that manpower training is a provincial matter.

In fact, a province like Quebec, may decide to set criteria that are not compatible with what the federal government has decided to do. These criteria may be better adapted to the province's needs and current situation but not fit into the federal mould.

Let us assume that in Quebec, the Société du financement agricole has standards that are stricter than those of the FIM-CLA referred to in Bill C-75. By setting up parallel programs, the federal government would undermine what the provincial government is doing, in this case the Government of Quebec, and if the province's objective is part of a strategy to develop the agricultural industry, that is just too bad.

Let us assume that the SFA wanted to do something about the alarming increase in farm debt by adopting certain criteria.

(1030)

But it would not really be free to implement its decisions, because some federal agency would come along and decide that this would conflict with its priorities. Period. Once again, the federal government, with its unlimited power to spend, has the bigger end of the stick. To hell with the deficit. In 1970, this country was almost deficitless. And now, 25 years later, it is saddled with an accumulated deficit of over \$550 billion, and need I remind you of the unpleasant fact that, during those 25 years, with the exception of the nine year Conservative reign, this country has been governed by the Liberals.

**Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Two and two make four.

**Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac):** In this case, apparently two and two makes four and a little more, it would seem. And now, I will open a chapter which will again be unpleasant for some of the hon. members opposite. The government of Quebec has decided to launch an investigation into the mismanagement of the crown corporation Hydro Québec. I must say that, when I was a teen, Hydro Québec was the pride and joy of all Quebecers.

Unfortunately, today, public satisfaction with this crown corporation of which we were so proud 20 or 25 years ago has sagged so low that obviously it has almost become a source of public shame. But, the government of Quebec was not afraid to launch an investigation. I ask my dear colleagues across the way why they refused to launch an inquiry into the attempted privatization of the Pearson Airport, from which, as everybody knows, the big wheels of Canadian finance made hundreds of millions? Why are you refusing to hold an independent investigation?

Because, my friends, the Conservative majority in the Senate overrode you on this issue. So, who will conduct the investigation now? Four Conservative and three Liberal senators. Of course, I have complete confidence in our senators. The Prime Minister just appointed Mrs. Bacon to the Senate. I have complete confidence, it goes without saying, that everything will be conducted above board and with the transparency that we should rightfully expect.

But, in Quebec, these people would not be selected to carry out such a task. Quebec will select truly independent investigators, who will probe the real wounds. If the wounds are infected, they will be lanced, and the infection will be drained off. I invite my Liberal colleagues opposite to reconsider their decision. If you are blameless, my friends, you have no reason to be afraid. Establish a royal commission of inquiry into the privatization of the Pearson airport. It would appear, however, that both parties, blue and red, are equally involved in this privatization. The numbers would appear to be the same on both sides, and, of course, they are. The situation is a bit like what happens with the leaves at this time of the year. When the wind blows, they turn over and their colour changes. When the blues are close to power, they change colour; when the reds are, they change colour too.

If the party that is currently running the country is blameless, it has nothing to fear. Let it establish a commission of inquiry, following the government of Quebec's proper lead.

(1035)

To come back to Bill C-75, the federal government's entry criteria are not always what the provinces want. Federal agencies can therefore end up competing with provincial agencies, which may have different criteria.

Here again, rather than eliminate overlap and give the provinces what is rightly theirs, the federal government is insisting on keeping everything for itself.

By keeping the overlap, the federal government reserves the opportunity to intervene in the way we manage our agricultural sector in Quebec.

It is very odd, I must point out, for the department to administer this legislation rather than the Farm Credit Corporation. Although the programs differ, the Farm Credit Corporation already guarantees loans. This, I repeat, is another striking example of administrative duplication. We are not talking any more just of duplication among different governments but duplication within in a single government.

With this duplication, the deficit continues to grow. When we reach the point of paying \$40 billion a year just to cover the interest costs of the debt, and the deficit is likely to reach \$25 or \$26 billion, we are entitled to question previous administrations.

*Government Orders*

When I was the mayor of my small community before entering federal politics the government of Quebec, which governs municipalities, forced us to balance our budget every year, and I am grateful to the government for that.

A municipality is not allowed to have a deficit, but it can have a surplus. So in the beautiful municipality of Garthby, where I was the mayor, every year we had a nice little surplus. People were happy, and told us they were proud of their town council.

My colleague of Blainville—Deux—Montagnes, behind me, was also the mayor of his municipality for a number of years. He understands very well what I am talking about.

However, if you want a surplus you must do what you have to do for it. When it was time to say no, we said no, and when it was time to increase taxes, we did so. I would never have taken a mortgage on my house to buy food for my family. No one can afford the luxury of borrowing week after week to buy food. Yet, that is what my colleagues across the way are doing. Even worst, the Trudeau government did not know how to count. Unfortunately, the Conservatives were in power for nine years. They wanted to make up for lost time, and we did not stop them.

I was saying that municipalities have an obligation to present balanced budgets. Maybe the government should also consider passing a law which would force it to table balanced budgets. Since to have enough you must have a little more, municipalities used to set property taxes a little higher than they normally would, in order to have a little 1 or 2 per cent surplus, which is quite reasonable.

(1040)

Consequently, we are not opposed to the amendments put forward in Bill C-75. However, we object strongly to maintaining overlap and duplication, whether they are in the federal government, in the federal machine, or between federal and provincial jurisdictions.

A moment ago, I spoke of the existence of two departments of agriculture for the dairy industry, one for industrial milk, and one in the government of Quebec for fluid milk. It does not make sense.

In closing, I can assure my colleague, the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, that despite all these small flaws, we will vote in favour of this bill at third reading. This will accelerate the process. Yet, we will do so without much enthusiasm, because it is not in the interests of our farmers, in the long term. In the short term, it is not that bad.

I extend an invitation to my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, to visit Quebec. His is probably not as busy as his boss, and he could come to explain this bill. For my part, I will explain it to the farmers of my riding. They do not know very much about this measure. It is incredible how often we have to explain to our constituents measures that are taken by the

federal government, but that people are totally unaware of, especially in agriculture.

I spent a week in my riding, and when I meet farmers in my capacity as agriculture critic, which I have been for seven months now, I like to ask this trivia question: "Who is the Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa?" Only rarely do I get the right answer.

**Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead):** There is none.

**Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac):** According to my colleague from Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, there is none. He is not totally wrong, because in Quebec, our Minister of Agriculture is Marcel Landry. It is Marcel Landry, and not the Minister of Agriculture whose name I will not tell, because the House of Commons Standing Orders prevent me from doing so. Therefore, I am not contributing to his promotion in Quebec.

All kidding aside, the parliamentary secretary should come to Quebec, and I would bet my bottom dollar that, out of ten farmers, not one would be able to give the name of our Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa. Quite often, those who can give it say it wrong and only give his last name.

Farmers in our province are much more attached to Quebec than to Ottawa, and I must say that I am proud of it. I am very proud of it. And the day will soon come, I think, when our farmers will understand that it would be so simple, instead of having three options for borrowing money—two of them being federal—, to at least combine them. It would be cost effective. This would be a good way to save \$25 or \$30 million without it hurting too much.

The other day, I was listening to the Minister of Finance say to his colleague, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot: "Give me some areas where I can make cuts, where I can save some money". I am giving you one, the farming industry. Combine these two possible options for borrowing money. You will save at least \$25 or \$30 million. Taxpayers would be thrilled. Also, farmers would save time and effort. Instead of having to check which one would be best, they would have to see only one. The ideal solution for our farmers would be to keep only one of the two, the Quebec one: the Société de financement agricole du Québec.

(1045)

Thank you for your attention and, in concluding, I would like to mention that we will vote for Bill C-75, because we cannot do otherwise.

*[English]*

**Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I assure the House that in Saskatchewan farmers do know the name of the agriculture minister but their faces are not glowing or smiling when they think of his name.

*Government Orders*

I rise in the House to indicate the Reform Party's support for Bill C-75. The program is being used by an increasing number of farmers. As we enter into the sunset phase of direct subsidies, it is imperative that farmers have access to proper financing. Excess cash flow that had been previously freed up from government subsidies is all but non-existent, and that is not bad. Farmers are now relying heavily on the banks and credit unions to provide them with the necessary cash flow to expand, diversify or maintain their operations.

However, as is the case with small business operators, farmers have had and continue to have a number of difficulties securing loans with financial institutions, whether for buying land or covering operational expenses.

Reformers believe farmers and farm marketing co-operatives have access to financial assistance not through government administered programs like the Farm Credit Corporation and its provincial counterparts but through chartered banks and credit unions.

The intent of the Farm Improvement and Marketing Co-operative Loans Act is: "to increase the availability of credit to farming operations and farmer owned marketing co-operatives to improve farm assets and strengthen production and financial stability". We are talking for the most part about farm improvement loans when we talk about FIMCLA.

Increasing the aggregate amount available to farmers and farmer owned co-operatives from \$1.5 billion to \$3 billion will continue to fulfil the objectives set out by the Farm Improvement and Marketing Co-operative Loans Act. Farmers have utilized this program from across Canada. The program has been extremely popular, with the number of loans issued in the past five years increasing by over 1,000 per cent. Increasing the levels of moneys available under the program to \$3 billion will enable a greater number of farmers to secure loans.

There is some concern, however, with the reluctance of financial institutions to provide loans to farmers without some sort of guarantee from the government. This is not to say these financial institutions will not provide loans to farmers; they will, but with an arm's length of preconditions and unfavourable interest rates.

Why are the banks so reluctant to provide loans to farmers and farmer owned marketing co-operatives? Possibly it is because governments are so willing to get involved in financial guarantees, from megaprojects right down to small business entrepreneurs.

The program over the years has had a default rate of only 1 per cent. A 1 per cent default rate is quite impressive when we compare it with other sectors of the economy. That speaks very well of our farming community and tells us about the quality of the people involved in the agricultural industry.

The banks over the past couple of years have lost incredible amounts of money in defaulted loans to the likes of the Trizec Corporation and the Reichmanns. However, with individuals like the Reichmanns the banks are willing to bend over backward to provide financing for their risky ventures. The chartered banks appear to be prejudiced toward small business and farms or else do not care so much about the smaller accounts even though they likely compose the most reliable sector of bank customers. Farming can be risky as well, but looking at past performances farmers have been a very credible risk.

Farmers see this bill as the lesser of two evils. Ideally we would like to see the government get out of the business of guaranteeing loans to farmers and to farmer owned marketing co-operatives. We do, however, see it as an important step in the transition from a subsidy based industry to an entity able to compete on its own feet.

We have stated in the House a number of times that farmers can compete globally. This can be accomplished with government's getting out of the business of telling farmers or related industries how they should run their businesses.

Unfortunately Liberals have a long history of interfering in places they do not belong. All I have to do is say three letters and members will recognize them immediately, NEP. The blood begins to boil in my fellow Reformers and Canadians right across the country, particularly in the energy producing areas, when they think of the national energy plan. That is an instance where government got involved in business. It should not have done so. It got involved in industry when it should not have done so and messed it up. It is very important the government not get involved directly in business but that its members be the legislators who allow businesses to carry on in a fair and equitable environment.

(1050)

It is sad to say the government continues to perpetuate the myth that it knows what is best for business. For the remainder of my speech I will address some of the areas the government must remove itself from. One is the lending business.

The Farm Credit Corporation, the FCC, seems to have outlived its usefulness in its present form, a dinosaur that should be put out of its misery. The FCC provides services duplicate to those services already provided by banks and credit unions. As pointed out by the member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre, there are private lenders willing to do the job and they see FCC as a publicly financed competitor where borrowing money to lend money is not right.

It is ludicrous that a government in debt as much as this government is guaranteeing loans to farmers. The FCC is also in the business of loaning money to farm related industry. How many ways do we approach this? Certainly we are putting

ourselves as government in a compromised position when we are the legislators of the lending industry. We are guaranteeing loans and we are also providing loans. The waters are indeed muddy.

What is next for the Farm Credit Corporation? About the only thing the FCC does not do is provide long term loans at reasonably fixed rates. That was the original concept under which the FCC was created.

If this is not possible, why do we keep the FCC around? A related issue to the FCC fiasco is the amount of money being given to the western economic diversification program and the prairie farm rehabilitation administration, the PFRA, with regard to the farm machinery industry in Saskatchewan.

As a Saskatchewanian I see the importance of a home grown agricultural manufacturing business. I am in favour of creating new agriculture technology in responding to the desire for increased efficiency and diversification and creating jobs in a stable economy. If the government is involved in financing these ventures, it is of concern to us and taxpayers alike; often we are the same people.

There is no reason the farm machinery industry should be propped up either in the short term or the long term. Many of the Liberal hair brained short term financing schemes have turned into long term drains on the public purse.

In the past eight years over \$34 million has been approved for loans or grants to Saskatchewan farm industry manufacturers. The agreements are a combination of grants and interest free, non-repayable and conditional loans. Although the \$34 million is a combination of federal and provincial governments, the federal government through western economic diversification and the PFRA have provided a substantial amount.

It appalls me when the president of the largest agricultural machinery manufacturer in Saskatchewan makes the following statement: "A company has no choice but to look at what is there and to take what is offered if you are to remain competitive". This is from the *Western Producer* on June 1, 1995.

Flexi-Coil has received over \$19 million in closing grants from the federal and provincial governments since 1987. Dale Botting, executive director of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, commenting on the grants and loans given out states that the days of government giving money to a chosen few has to stop.

A recent survey conducted by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business members shows that most are opposed to business subsidies. Members who have received grant money in the past would have proceeded with their expansion without the grant by a margin of three to one.

### *Government Orders*

Another farm machinery manufacturer, Bourgault Industries, is competing head to head with Flexi-Coil. Bourgault Industries has not received a single government dollar yet it has become a successful business, with sales of over \$50 million each year.

In an article in the *Western Producer* Gerry Bourgault, president of the company, stated: "Refusing government loans and grants shows up in a healthy bottom line. When sales are down the company is forced to reassess its equipment and make changes that farmers want. Government money clouds the financial picture. If you do not run your business properly, government grants are not going to make up for that. Governments should not be in the business of giving money away to businesses. In most cases it is just squandered".

The Liberal government should be in consultation with the likes of Gerry Bourgault. There is no doubt the Liberals have been and continue to consult the wrong individuals. The Liberals must stop interfering in agriculture and business. As stated by Mr. Bourgault, refusing government loans and grants shows up in a healthy bottom line. Propping up business with loans and grants does nothing more than create a greater dependency on government. Reformers believe the economy should be market driven and not skewed by government interference and intervention.

(1055)

The small business loans program should probably be merged with the farm improvement loan program. They are both attempting to do the same thing. They are both supposed to be financially sound and we as members of Parliament must insist both programs be actuarially sound and that all costs with respect to the program should not come out of the taxpayers' pockets but should be paid for by the users of the loan guarantee program.

I understand the farm improvement loans are not subsidized by the taxpayers. We as legislators must insist on proper accounting and it be maintained. The administrative costs must be covered by the users and the default rate must not become so high that the moneys are taken out taxpayers' pockets to subsidize any industry, whether it be my industry, farming, or any other small business or megaproject. We all have to operate by the same rules.

The Reform Party sees Bill C-75 as a small step in the right direction with respect to private sector lending institutions making capital available to viable farm operations. The government still has a long way to go in removing itself from the grants and loans to all areas of the economy.

FIMCLA must be made self-sustaining. It must not be a burden on the taxpayers and governments. Governments must get out of the business of being in business and they must provide fairness and equity to the business sector.



*S. O. 31*

The government must set some priorities. I cannot enunciate this strongly enough. The first priority is to get out of the grants business 100 per cent; no more grants, period. Second, there should be no public financial lending institutions. They provide a conflict for the government with the private sector. Governments should be in the business of making sure business operates fairly and is honest. It should not be in the business.

Third, there should be no loan guarantees to megaprojects and there should be no political patronage. Fourth, there should be no guarantees to small business and there should be no loan guarantees to farms, and we should not treat them differently.

To reverse the order—

**The Speaker:** My colleague will have the floor when debate continues after question period.

It being 11 a.m., the House will hear Statements by Members.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### AIDS

**Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, by the turn of the century the World Health Organization estimates that as many as 30 million people may be exposed to the virus which causes AIDS. It is therefore critical for Canada to create partnerships with other governments in an effort to combat the spread of this deadly disease. For example, the Canada-Ukraine partners program is proving it is possible to contain HIV infection and prevent the devastation of AIDS.

Yesterday by hosting the president of the Ukraine's national HIV-AIDS committee, I had the opportunity to learn about community health education programs which will have a direct impact on both of our countries.

We must continue to support these efforts which serve as model examples of international co-operation.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### RECOGNITION OF SAME SEX SPOUSES

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the content of the speeches made last night in this House on the recognition of same sex spouses shows that this country still has a long way to go as far as respect for differences is concerned.

The Liberal member for Central Nova, who made hateful and disparaging remarks on the gay community last winter, expressed her contempt again last night when she said, and I quote: "Canadians do not have to accept homosexuality as being natural and moral. Homosexuality is not natural, it is immoral".

The comments made by the Reform member for Calgary Northeast also reflect a narrow mindset.

The members of the Bloc Québécois strongly denounce the contemptuous attitude of some Liberal and Reform members toward the gay community. We will never accept the attacks made against this community by small minded politicians, when all homosexuals want is the same rights as those enjoyed by other citizens.

\* \* \*

[English]

### NATIONAL AWARENESS WEEK

**Mrs. Sharon Hayes (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, today wraps up national awareness week. This week was a time for Canadians to have a special opportunity to focus on promoting and creating barrier free learning for people with disabilities. It was a time to recognize the thousands of volunteers and the partnership of organizations and governments that adds strength to the message of access. One aspect of the program is the face to face program that matches employers with those with disabilities.

I am pleased to thank many of my colleagues, as many members from the House, including Reformers, are participating again this year.

As part of awareness week the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons had the opportunity to present the Centennial Flame award. As a member of that committee, I congratulate this year's winner, Miss Laurie Bellefontaine.

Opportunity is not created by quotas and coercion. Opportunity becomes real through community based initiatives such as this that promote understanding of the abilities and strengths of the disabled in the workplace.

I salute all who participate in this worthy program.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### CHILD SUPPORT

**Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, 62 per cent of single parent families led by women live in poverty. Two weeks ago, the courts ruled against Suzanne Thibaudeau, who had challenged the law requiring custodial parents to pay taxes on child support payments. The law is unfair and simply impoverishes women even more. We have waited long enough.

[English]

Parliament has already debated this issue in the form of a private member's motion. There has been a task force on child support payments. The minister has had ample time and opportunity to act.

S. O. 31

The minister has stalled on this issue for too long. It was this government that appealed the Thibaudeau case last year, causing another year's delay. I urge the minister to act immediately to change this unfair law.

\* \* \*

#### ENVIRONMENT

**Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, recently the United States Senate passed legislation allowing oil and gas development on the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd in the Alaskan wildlife refuge. This action contravenes a 1987 agreement recognizing Canadian and American joint responsibility to protect the habitat of the Porcupine caribou herd and the Gwich'in people who depend on it.

I urge the government to ensure both the continuation of the U.S. government's commitment and the right of the Gwich'in people to their traditional food source and longstanding way of life. We owe this action to our aboriginal people.

\* \* \*

#### ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

**Mr. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to inform the House that the appeal challenging the wearing of turbans by Sikh RCMP officers has been summarily dismissed in the unanimous decision made by the Federal Court of Appeal in Calgary.

The measure of a strong and just society is its ability to weave our differences into the fabric of our national identity. The dismissal of this challenge has once again proven that Canada is a strong and just society.

These decisions reaffirm that the wearing of articles of faith by a Sikh police officer in no way impedes their ability to perform their duties with impartiality and fairness.

Let this decision be a wake up call for the Reform Party. Its opposition to Sikhs in the RCMP is out of line with the Canadian legal tradition and demonstrates an intolerance to cultural diversity. When will the Reform Party realize the 1930s are over? It is 1995 and the time has come for it to support the religious freedom of all Canadians.

\* \* \*

#### VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, each year over 225,000 Canadian children are abused. According to the committee on sexual offences against children and youth, 53 per cent of females and 31 per cent of males have been victims of one or more unwanted sexual acts.

Approximately four in five of those incidents happened to victims when they were children or youths, and one-third of all

assaults against children occurred within the family. In addition, at least one million children in Canada have witnessed violence by their fathers against their mothers.

(1105)

Children who witness violence by one parent against another are often considered children at risk by child welfare authorities because of the lasting emotional and psychological consequences for the child. In many cases the children grow up to be abusive themselves, thus perpetuating the cycle of violence.

I appeal to all levels of government and to all Canadians and organizations that we must do a better job related to violence against children.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### SHARING OF FEDERAL DEBT

**Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the sovereignists have always maintained that a sovereign Quebec will negotiate sharing the federal debt with the Government of Canada on an equitable basis. A study conducted by the Institut national de la recherche scientifique and released yesterday shows that a sovereign Quebec's share of the federal debt would have to be reduced by \$24 billion on account of the fact that, over the years, Quebec has paid more than it has received from the federal government. The INRS study concludes that a sovereign Quebec should therefore be responsible for 17.4 per cent of the federal debt.

It is important to note that in the present federal system, Quebecers currently assume 23 per cent of the federal debt with the \$30 billion in taxes that they pay each year to the federal government. Hence the INRS conclusion that the total debt burden of a sovereign Quebec would amount to 103 per cent of GDP, as compared to 108 per cent for Canada at the present time.

According to the INRS study, a sovereign Quebec would therefore have a lower debt level than Canada now has.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### HEALTH

**Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the time has come to give Canadians freedom of choice in health care.

Every year Canadian taxpayers put tens of billions of dollars into health care premiums to pay for our medicare. Yet many of these same Canadians make the conscious decision to drop out of the conventional health care system, choosing alternate forms of health care.

*S. O. 31*

One of my constituents, Mrs. Margaret Wiens, recently wrote to me: "A change in the way we deliver health care is long overdue. It is discriminatory to only cover and recognize conventional drugs. I and hundreds of thousands of others in Canada faithfully pay our medical premiums, and therefore we should have freedom to choose our preferred type of treatment".

I am confident that Canadians are capable of making intelligent decisions on how they will care for their bodies. It is time for the government to share this confidence. The Canada Health Act must be changed to return to Canadians the freedom of medical choice they are calling for.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HEALTH CARE REFORM**

**Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the PQ government refused to support an opposition motion on health care reform. It read as follows: "That this Assembly support the proposal by the Leader of the Bloc Québécois, Lucien Bouchard, to broaden the scope of the ongoing consultations on health care reform in Quebec".

This failure of the PQ government to accede to this legitimate request by their separatist friend and partner clearly shows that the coalition in Quebec City has two faces. They are partners for promoting sovereignty but when it comes to health, they are on opposite sides of the issue.

Does this contemptuous rejection of their Bloc friend's proposal a sign that, this time, the PQ will not let him dictate a new "virage" or change in direction?

\* \* \*

[English]

**ONTARIO ELECTION**

**Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, ten good reasons to vote Liberal in Ontario:

- (1) With the Liberals you know you are always safe.
- (2) Bob Rae and the NDP have done enough damage.
- (3) The Liberals always care.
- (4) Mike Harris is harmful to your health with his foolish tax proposals.
- (5) In one way or another, if you are a single mom, youth, middle class, senior, or own a small business, you can be certain that Harris is after your pocketbook.
- (6) You could not sleep at night knowing that there are Tories in Ontario.

(7) If you are injured, disabled, sick, or looking for your annual check up, Harris will be waiting for you to add salt to your wounds and do more damage to you.

(8) You have fooled with the Tories federally and with the jacuzzi socialists provincially and you were badly wounded.

(9) In the blink of an eye, Tories will suck the blood and money out of the most vulnerable in Ontario.

(10) With the Liberals, you will not take a chance. Your satisfaction will be guaranteed.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SHARING OF FEDERAL DEBT**

**Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Quebec minister responsible for restructuring released the findings of another study. According to the minister, the results of that study, which focused on the proportion of the national debt that would have to be assumed by an independent Quebec, are very positive.

(1110)

Of course these results are positive. Do you think for a moment that the Quebec minister "responsible for propaganda" would have agreed to release a study which would not serve the separatist cause of the PQ government?

Rather than continuing to spend Quebec taxpayers' money with impunity, in an attempt to give some credibility to a project which does not have any, the PQ government should concentrate its efforts on job creation and economic recovery.

Otherwise, at the rate it is spending public money, there will soon be nothing left but the debt to share in the PQ and BQ kingdom.

\* \* \*

**ABORIGINAL NATIONS**

**Mr. André Caron (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we were very disappointed by the editorial of free lance writer Gilbert Oskaboos in *The First Perspective* magazine.

His disparaging remarks on Quebecers and sovereignist leaders do not in any way reflect the feelings expressed by the First Nations chiefs and members with whom we meet as part of our work. Our differences of opinions usually do not keep us from having civilized discussions. Unfortunately, the tone used by the editorialist does not reflect the respectful attitude which we are used to in our contacts with members of the First Nations.

Quebecers, including a sovereignist government which was the first one in Canada to recognize the existence of aboriginal nations, have, for a long time, been more open minded toward these people than Canadians have in general.

The Bloc Québécois hopes that aboriginal leaders will denounce the comments made by Mr. Oskaboose, so as to promote, on both sides, the open-mindedness which will lead to agreements such as the ones which were recently signed by Quebec and the Crees and which will foster peace and co-operation between our peoples.

\* \* \*

[English]

### INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been down this road before: Liberal, Tory, same old story.

If the minister of public works is not too busy pork barrelling or designing a statue of himself for his memorial parkway he might want to take a Sunday drive down the scenic 104 highway, where he will find a message on a billboard unveiled today by the Reform Party and concerned citizens of Wentworth Valley.

Up until this point the minister has refused to listen to the people. Maybe this message will get through to him. Diversion of \$26 million so that the minister can buy votes in his riding is simply unacceptable behaviour, and taxpayers are not going to take it any more. Nova Scotians and all Canadians are sick and tired of the despicable political practices of the Conservatives and now the Liberals, especially of the minister from Cape Breton.

What does the sign say to the minister? It says “\$26 million is highway robbery. Give it back to highway 104”.

\* \* \*

### TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today is national transportation day and next week is national transportation week in Canada.

Organizations have scheduled a variety of transportation related activities and seminars in major cities around the country, including Hamilton, Ontario, where the ninth annual international Great Lakes–St. Lawrence mayors conference will discuss, among other matters, transportation issues.

The theme of national transportation week is “Careers in Transportation: Opportunities, Training, Skills”. As the Minister of Transport has said, the coming century will bring new pressure to increase Canada’s productivity. This pressure will have an enormous impact on the skilled professionals who design, build, operate, and maintain our transportation system.

Today’s dedicated transportation workers are expected to be skilled in technology, management, administration, and public relations. As we pay tribute to the skilled and dedicated people who keep our transportation system running, we must also ensure that those who succeed them have new skills needed for the 21st century.

### Oral Questions

I also want to congratulate Mr. Geoffrey Elliot, the national transportation person of the year. Without his timeless efforts Canadians would not have the many benefits resulting from the recent open skies agreement with the United States.

\* \* \*

### ATLANTIC FISHERY

**Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the snow crab fishery in the Gulf of St. Lawrence has emerged as one of the real success stories in the Atlantic fishery.

This year it will generate more than \$275 million in economic benefits in a few short weeks. Success presents a tough policy challenge for the minister of fisheries, who has to set the rules for managing this resource. He must ensure that (a) the snow crab stock is not overfished; (b) the number allowed to fish this resource can make a reasonable return; and (c) the economic benefits from this common property resource are shared equitably.

Determining how many fishermen can participate in the snow crab fishery and what the size of their individual quotas should be has proven to be among the thorniest aspects of reconciling these policy objectives. This year the minister has adopted a novel and ingenious approach for dealing with this difficult problem. He has allocated a portion of the total allowable catch of snow crab to a number of fishermen’s associations and has challenged them to find a way to fish their allocation safely and responsibly and to share the benefits fairly among those who do not have regular snow crab licences.

(1115)

The fishermen are rising to the challenge. They have formed companies and worked out harvesting and processing strategies to share the benefits of this temporary allocation.

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## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

### BOSNIA

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, B.Q.):** Mr. Speaker, a week after the latest escalation in the conflict in Bosnia, when 370 peacekeepers, including 55 Canadians, were taken hostage by Serbian forces, there has been a flurry of statements and meetings which failed to produce any concrete results leading to the release of the hostages. This morning, the International Red Cross said that the Bosnian Serbs told them they would release the hostages unconditionally, either today or tomorrow.

*Oral Questions*

Could the Deputy Prime Minister confirm the statement by the Red Cross that the Bosnian Serbs will release the 370 peacekeepers who are being kept hostage sometime during the next few hours, although Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic said yesterday that no hostages could be released without guarantees that all air strikes would be suspended?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we received communications mentioning that a few hostages might be released today, but at 11.13 a.m., we were unable to confirm whether that was the case.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, B.Q.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence confirmed yesterday that Canada was negotiating with the Bosnian Serbs to allow a rotation of the 45 Canadian peacekeepers being held hostage at their observation post. Meanwhile, in Europe the Minister of Foreign Affairs was saying, with Canada's allies, that there would be no negotiations with the Serbs regarding the hostages.

That being said, who speaks for the Canadian government? Is it the Minister of Foreign Affairs or is it the Minister of National Defence, who said that conducting negotiations would be tantamount to saying the Bosnian Serbs have the right to take hostages? Who is telling the truth?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada does not negotiate with the Bosnian Serb government.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, B.Q.):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Deputy Prime Minister should say so to the Minister of National Defence who said yesterday in the House, as did the Prime Minister—just read *Hansard*—that negotiations were being conducted locally to obtain the release of hostages.

In any case, the Prime Minister was delighted with the position taken by the UN Secretary General on redefining the mandate of the peacekeepers in Bosnia, and he went on to say that this had been Canada's position since last Sunday. However, need I remind members that although it has been questioned about this all week, the government has steadfastly refused to announce its intentions?

Since tomorrow there will be a meeting of NATO defence ministers in Paris, mainly to discuss the French plan, and since a NATO plane was shot down this morning, while flying over Bosnia, could the government tell Canadians now, before tomorrow's meeting, what Canada's position will be on the French proposals?

[English]

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to underscore that the claim made by the hon. member is simply

not true. In comments made to date we have stated quite clearly that we are not negotiating with the Bosnian Serbs.

If the hon. member's question is reviewed, he speaks about the issue of rotation. In the normal activities of the team on the ground there is a rotation of troops. That rotation is being discussed on an ongoing and soldier to soldier basis in Visoko. That is certainly consistent with the position we have taken as a government.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**AGUSTA**

**Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Defence and Industry officials confirmed yesterday that the government is preparing to spend \$2.6 billion on the purchase of 47 new helicopters. The main supplier of this equipment vying for the contract is no other than Agusta, the very company facing accusations of bribery in Europe.

(1120)

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister, who is responsible for enforcing the government's code of ethics in this House. Will the government commit to excluding Agusta from all new contracts until we get to the bottom of the circumstances surrounding the EH-101 contract, as demanded by her colleague, the Minister of Human Resources Development, in 1993?

[English]

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no contract has been authorized by the government.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is again for the Deputy Prime Minister, who is responsible, as I said earlier, for enforcing the government's code of ethics in this House when the Prime Minister is away.

Given that Agusta just hired the Liberal Party of Canada's former communications director, Daniel Despina, to lobby for the sale of new helicopters to the Canadian government, and given that all cabinet members know him well, how can the Deputy Prime Minister not commit to launching an investigation into the awarding of the EH-101 contract to Agusta before the government does any more business with the company, which is, as I already said, currently facing corruption charges in Europe?

[English]

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thought I made it quite clear to the member. No contract has been approved either by the Minister of National Defence or by the government.

*Oral Questions*

The member quotes unnamed sources within the bureaucracy. It is not the bureaucracy that will make this decision and no decision has been made about any contract by any member of cabinet.

\* \* \*

**BOSNIA**

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the defence minister said he was looking forward to finding out how the U.S. forces would be deployed in Bosnia. Today the world got a clear indication of where the U.S. is headed when one of its F-16 fighter planes was shot down over Bosnia earlier this morning. Everyone knows this act could escalate the conflict even further.

For the second day in a row, my question is this. Will the government assure the House that it will not let our troops get dragged into a war for which they are neither equipped nor mandated?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have confirmed that an American plane was shot down. Obviously the situation is very volatile.

A number of Canadian hostages are being held in various parts of the territory in question. The prudent thing for the Government of Canada to do to protect the safety of the hostages is to go to the meeting in Paris tomorrow with a clear mandate. Our number one priority will be to protect those Canadian soldiers and to ensure that any action taken in a collective way will ensure the safety of the hostages and the soldiers who are on the ground right now.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, civil wars are very messy and they get even worse when other countries join in the fighting, and the situation is escalating in Bosnia.

Given that our troops are not equipped for a high intensity conflict, what is the exact position the Canadian government will take tomorrow in Paris? Will it be the position of the foreign affairs minister or the defence minister, because a definite question has to be asked?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not quite clear as to the options the hon. member is offering. I have underlined how concerned we are about the more than 50 Canadians either being detained or being held hostage.

At this point our main concern when we go to Paris tomorrow is to ensure that any collective action decided on by all of the participating parties will first and foremost ensure the safety of those soldiers who are on the ground.

I am sure all Canadians want the Government of Canada to ensure the safety of those troops who are currently being held hostage and others who are on the ground.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, we are all concerned about the hostages. We want them released. We want all Canadians withdrawn, including the hostages.

(1125 )

We welcome the news that Bosnian Serbs will be releasing the hostages tomorrow without condition. The Reform Party hopes that will happen. There would not have been hostages if we had acted on this much sooner.

Given the escalation of the situation in Bosnia and the potential for further hostage taking, will the government make a commitment to withdraw our troops once the hostages are released?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I did say that at about 11.13 a.m. we had the opportunity to check the status. At the moment we have no confirmation of the release of hostages. We hope that news is forthcoming.

Our first responsibility should not be to outline our negotiating stance for political gain. Rather it should be to ensure that when we go to Paris, all the parties that have troops on the ground have a chance to make a full exploration of all of the possibilities on the table.

That is certainly what the Minister of National Defence will be doing in Paris tomorrow.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

In its decision last Friday in the case of *Egan v. Canada*, the Supreme Court of Canada found that sexual orientation is a profoundly personal characteristic, which is either immutable or alterable only at unacceptable personal cost and which, therefore, comes under the protection of section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Since the Supreme Court of Canada considers discrimination based on sexual orientation unconstitutional, will the minister not acknowledge that he has a duty to table his bill to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act by the end of the present session and thus make all discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation illegal? A little courage, Mr. Speaker.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has referred to the recent judgment of the Supreme Court of Canada in which the court considered the equality provisions in section 15 of the charter as they relate to sexual orientation.

For the first time the court pointed out that sexual orientation is an analogous ground under the charter for the purposes of that section. We are considering the judgment. More than one judgment was issued by the court in its analysis and the judges expressed a variety of views.

Quite apart from the judgment, the government has long recognized the importance of amending the human rights act to provide that sexual orientation cannot be a basis on which discrimination occurs. We have long since made the commitment to do just that.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Minister of Justice that the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms has prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation since 1978 and that he should use it as an example.

Are we to understand that, despite the very clear decision by the Supreme Court, the government will not change its policy with respect to homosexuals, lesbians and same sex spouses, a policy which, by the fact of doing nothing, denies the rights accorded by the country's justice system to all these Canadians?

*[English]*

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in fairness the member will know that the judgment of the court was released a week ago yesterday. As I mentioned, there are judgments both ways expressing a variety of views with respect to these matters and what flows from them.

The government should do what it is doing. It has reaffirmed its commitment to amend the human rights act. It is also going to look at the implications of the judgment. It is going to consult with caucus and determine the position that we will take on the wide variety of issues that arise on the subject of sexual orientation.

\* \* \*

**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, in dealing with the administration of the justice ministry, the

minister insisted yesterday that "when the government goes to the legal profession to hire agents to help us with legal cases, the fundamental criteria is competence and merit".

That being the case, can the justice minister explain to Canadians the appointments recently made in the revenue minister's riding in Victoria. How does the appointment of three firms with little or no experience in drug prosecution and the termination of a firm with 20-years' experience fit his stated criteria of competence and merit?

(1130)

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in British Columbia, as in the case of all other provinces where legal agents were appointed, suggested names for appointment were sent to the regional offices of the Department of Justice where they were vetted. We asked the regional justice offices whether they were satisfied the persons under consideration were competent for the work that was intended.

In the case of the agents under discussion, as in the case of all others who were appointed, the regional offices expressed their view that the individuals were competent for the work that was intended to be given to those lawyers.

If the hon. member will look at the record of agents appointed across the country he will find that in many cases agents appointed during the last regime are still doing work. Their appointments have been continued by the government because we thought they were appropriate to carry on the work in those cases.

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, in news reports from Victoria an experienced undercover officer commenting on the justice department's termination of a firm with 20 years of drug prosecution experience has said:

It is a complete and utter farce. We are losing very experienced and very knowledgeable prosecutors who are used to dealing at all levels of drug enforcement. This is a definite blow to drug enforcement.

Public safety should never be compromised by political patronage. It begs the question: was the justice minister made aware of the very close connections between the revenue minister's political interests and the appointed firms?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that public safety should not be compromised on any basis. I insist that in this case it was not.

The agents who were appointed are competent for the task for which they have been retained. As to the comments of the police officers, I know only what I have read in the press and what has been quoted by the hon. member.

*Oral Questions*

I can say that any concerns anyone in the administration of justice system has about the quality of any of our agents can be communicated to the regional office and their comments will be considered; but we are satisfied that the agents we have in place are competent to carry out work on behalf of the people of Canada.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

**Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, three times this year the Minister of Justice was unable to explain why individuals and businesses in Quebec receive only 5 per cent of the value of professional and special services contracts awarded by his department and has even expressed some doubt about this percentage. However, his own officials confirm our allegations.

After studying this matter for three months, can the Minister of Justice explain to us why his department awards 15 times more contracts to residents of his province, Ontario, than it does to residents of Quebec?

[English]

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a subject that two of his colleagues raised on earlier occasions.

I have a draft response on my desk to which I should have got this week but did not. I will see the written response is in the hands of the hon. members who asked the questions next week. It will furnish a detailed response to the questions that have been raised on this subject.

[Translation]

**Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the minister has been studying this matter for three months but has yet to give us an answer. The Minister of Justice has also said in this House that he did not believe that 98 per cent of professional and special services contracts are drafted in English. But, once again, his officials say the opposite.

Is the Minister of Justice still of the opinion that the fact that research contracts awarded by his department are drafted in English only accurately reflects the reality of bilingualism within his department?

[English]

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has the right to expect a detailed and factual response to these questions. Both the hon. member and his colleagues have asked specific questions about the number and percentage of contracts that have been awarded and the use of language in specific work done for the department.

My officials have prepared a response which I have in draft form on my desk. I shall get that response on these points to the hon. member and his colleagues within the week.

\* \* \*

(1135)

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, every Canadian knows full well the story of 15-year old Tara Manning from Quebec and how she was sexually assaulted and stabbed 47 times.

Every Canadian's heart goes out to her family and is outraged that a killer may go free if a court upholds the claim that the killer's rights were infringed by a judge granting a warrant for a DNA search.

Since the minister knows full well that in order for the perpetrator of the crime to be held accountable legislation must clear the House before the summer break allowing a judge to grant a DNA search, will the minister immediately bring the legislation before the House?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very aware of the case. I met with Mr. Manning, the father of the victim, and with his parents. I was very much affected by the sadness of the tragedy, particularly for the family.

I am not going to discuss the Manning case because it is pending in the courts. However I will respond on the subject of DNA testing and I will say that the government has said it would introduce changes to the Criminal Code to provide a further basis upon which authorities could take samples for DNA testing for prosecution purposes.

I should point out to the hon. member that there are provisions in the code at present which are being used for that purpose. Nothing I say is intended to suggest that those are insufficient for that purpose at this time.

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians continually hear the government and the minister state that they will change legislation to enhance public safety. It has been 19 months and I have not seen it yet.

Canadians should have confidence in the justice system. We are waiting for the drunkenness defence bill. Now we are waiting and waiting for this legislation, which will definitely serve a purpose in the country and solve the problems.

How could the minister dare speak of justice when he completely abandoned the most basic concept of humanity, that when a person is murdered society must punish the murderer?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member



*Oral Questions*

to be fair to the facts. Bill C-72 with respect to the drunkenness defence is before the House. Indeed it is at committee.

The hon. member took a very active role in the consideration of Bill C-37, which was improved because of his work on committee dealing with amendments to the Young Offenders Act. That bill is now in the Senate. The hon. member participated in committee work with respect to Bill C-41, which is intended to strengthen the sentencing provisions of the Criminal Code.

However, on the point the hon. member raises, I can tell the hon. member as I have in the past that we will introduce legislation to amend the Criminal Code to broaden the basis upon which DNA samples can be obtained.

I emphasize to the hon. member that there are provisions—

**Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River):** When?

**Mr. Rock:** I cannot say exactly when, but I can say we will do it.

I want the hon. member to be aware there are provisions in the code already that can be used for that purpose and have been used for that purpose. I do not suggest for a moment that they are insufficient for that purpose.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs says that the scandal involving Canadian diplomats who trade their airplane tickets for money is a thing of the past. The President of the Treasury Board claims that the phenomenon is limited to diplomats assigned to dangerous and difficult cities. However, for a diplomat posted in Tokyo with his family, it can amount to 40 per cent of his salary, tax free.

How can the President of the Treasury Board justify that such financial benefits, which were granted in 1993, are still available to Canadian diplomats, when other civil servants have had their salaries frozen since 1991?

[English]

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to look further into the particulars the hon. member has raised.

I can say, as I have said before, that in terms of foreign service directives there has been a tightening up of those procedures and that previous difficulties that arose have been corrected.

(1140)

I could also point out that there is a three-year review which is being conducted this year with respect to foreign service directives. The matter is fully under review.

[Translation]

**Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, moreover, the majority of diplomats who trade their airplane tickets for money to pay for their holidays do not go to Canada and are not even obliged to submit their receipts. They pocket the money, tax free.

Will the President of the Treasury Board undertake to review these benefits, granted in 1993, before laying off more civil servants, who cannot take advantage of the lax approach of Treasury Board?

[English]

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, surely the hon. member understands that when people receive foreign postings they and their families should have an opportunity to be able to come home from time to time. There are, particularly in the case of what are called hardship posts, increased opportunities to do that.

Some very strict rules have been put into place. Lately we have been experimenting with a pilot system whereby we have actually lowered the amount of money that we will provide to 80 per cent from 90 per cent of the economy fare for a return trip, in that way further controlling the costs and recognizing the need of the government to cut government spending.

We will be evaluating that in the framework of the three-year review which is due this fall. We will be looking at further measures to ensure that the taxpayers' money is well protected and well spent in this regard.

\* \* \*

**YOUTH SERVICES CANADA**

**Mr. John Finlay (Oxford, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I understand there was news this morning concerning Youth Services Canada. Since this is the time of year when many students are seeking employment, could the Secretary of State for Training and Youth provide the House with some of the details of the important announcement?

**Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (Secretary of State (Training and Youth), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to respond to my colleague from Oxford.

We have the start up of 63 new projects under Youth Services Canada. These projects will allow over 850 young Canadians across the country to gain valuable skills while helping out in

their communities. Whether it is opening up a second hand store for the needy in Montreal, setting up crime awareness programs in Winnipeg or preserving native culture in Yukon, projects are geared to help both the kids and their communities.

Unemployed youth who participate in Youth Services Canada are breaking the cycle of dependency and learning good, solid job skills.

The announcement underlies once again the government's commitment to the youth of the country and its determination to take action on it.

\* \* \*

#### CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

**Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House the Solicitor General confirmed for the record that the commissioner of the RCMP advised that the commercial crime section of the RCMP in Winnipeg had reviewed allegations made by the member for Lisgar—Marquette and found no evidence to support an investigation.

The crime section of the Winnipeg RCMP has no record of a request from the commissioner of the RCMP on the matter.

My question is for the solicitor general. The commercial crime division in Winnipeg says once thing; the solicitor general says another thing. Who are we to believe?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have conveyed to the House, and earlier to the hon. member's colleague, information provided to me by the commissioner of the RCMP.

The deputy commissioner for operations of the RCMP today sent a letter to the hon. member's colleague setting out the position of the RCMP on the matter. If the hon. member's colleague will agree, I would be delighted to ensure that the letter is released to the public. I think it should clear the air and help the hon. member to get on to something more constructive.

**Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I hope we are making progress here. We are not asking the solicitor general to launch an investigation or become involved in the day to day operations of the RCMP. However, we are very concerned that we find out exactly where the file went. There is supposed to be a file.

Could the solicitor general advise the House where the file went? If it did not go to Winnipeg, as they say it did not, then where did the file go?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would have hoped the hon. member would have

#### Oral Questions

confirmed, on behalf of his colleague, that the letter the deputy commissioner of the RCMP sent to him explaining the involvement of the RCMP in the matter be made public. I think that would be a better way to clear the air than to keep asking this kind of question.

(1145)

There must be some other matters the hon. member could deal with rather than attempting to create wrong impressions which should be the subject of an apology.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

In her recent answer to a question on the health hazards from 24 highly contaminated sites, the Minister of the Environment has reaffirmed the polluter pays principle and confirmed that Environment Canada denies any responsibility concerning so-called orphan sites.

Could the minister tell the House when the inventory of contaminated orphan sites will be completed by her department, and when she expects to be in a position to lay charges against owners who refuse to clean up their sites?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that question could have been addressed to my Quebec counterpart. The hon. member is aware that the federal government signed an agreement with Quebec a few years ago whereby we financed, in partnership with the province, provincially identified orphan sites. Federal funds have been paid to the provinces, and they made the decisions on the use of those funds for clean-up operations.

When all environment ministers agreed two years ago that we should stop paying for orphan sites, we did so at the request of the provinces, who have the instruments to initiate prosecutions in the private sector, more particularly in Quebec.

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, how can the Minister of the Environment expect us to take seriously her commitment to the polluter pays principle, when, in 1994, the Canadian government initiated just 13 prosecutions under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which is 30 per cent less than in 1991, and 40 per cent less than in 1992. And that does not include contaminated sites in the Arctic which are not under the direct responsibility of the provinces. How can the minister explain such a drastic drop in the number of prosecutions, if not by a total lack of commitment to a stringent enforcement of the act?

## Oral Questions

[English]

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a result of my intention to increase the number of enforcements at the federal level there were 13 charges laid in the metropolitan Toronto area last week alone as a result of the activities relating to the export of illegal hazardous material.

I have issued a new directive in my department. We are moving away from the issuance of letters of warning. It will be one strike and you are out. I intend to pursue aggressively those polluters who would despoil our environment simply to make a buck.

\* \* \*

## UPPER NICOLA BAND

**Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, B.C. tribal chiefs are sending a warning shot across the bow of the B.C. treaty process by saying there could be more barricades this summer. They are reacting to the province of B.C. attempts to reduce unfulfillable native expectations. Yesterday provincial minister John Cashore called on the federal minister to help resolve the dispute at Douglas Lake Ranch.

Will the minister do more than facilitate negotiations as he has already agreed to do and cut off funding to the Upper Nicola Band until this illegal blockade is removed?

**Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):**

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.]

[English]

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that a mediator was appointed by the province yesterday and he is in the process of mediating. All the parties to the dispute have publicly called for a peaceful resolution to this situation. I think the hon. member should be aware of that.

**Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, these standoffs often go on for an extended period of time.

The federal minister has said that this is not his territory because it is off reserve and the band is not part of the B.C. treaty process. This is irrelevant. The barricades and this whole process are expensive to the taxpayer and to local residents.

Will the minister assist in efforts to achieve a voluntary removal of the blockades by insisting on removal of the funding to the band in order to ensure compliance?

(1150)

**Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):**

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.]

[English]

The hon. member should be aware that a peaceful resolution to this is being sought by all parties. The minister has also made it quite clear that he is prepared to assist if asked by the province, by the First Nations or by any other group involved but to date we have not been asked.

\* \* \*

## FOREST FIRES

**Mr. Ron Fewchuk (Selkirk—Red River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister.

The people of Canada would like to know the federal government's involvement in dealing with the forest fires raging in Canada and most distressingly in western Canada.

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. member's question, a very serious situation is emerging with a number of forest fires that are burning, in some cases out of control, in western Canada.

Emergency Preparedness Canada has been contacted by the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta. We have offered our full support. Emergency Preparedness Canada under the auspices of the Department of National Defence has already provided a number of possible airlifts and is ready and willing to provide more.

We are also working to mobilize the Department of Transport where necessary. Certainly we are hoping that over the weekend things will stabilize. We are concerned and we are offering whatever help we can to both the provinces involved.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## IRVING WHALE

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

On Tuesday, an Environment Canada spokesperson suggested that the *Irving Whale* would only be raised high enough to slide a submersible underneath. Yet, the solution outlined in the government's call for tenders is to lift the barge more than 70 metres with steel cables before using a submersible.

How can the minister let a spokesperson from her office give the press information that is contrary to that contained in the initial bidding documents?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in this matter, which has already been dragging for some 20 years, I am following the advice given by my hon. colleague, the hon. member for Frontenac, on March 18, 1994—15 months ago—when he asked us to act as soon as possible, and I quote: “—as an ecologist and a recognized environment specialist—this is Jean-Guy Chrétien talking—I can only welcome this announcement. As a matter of fact, I took an interest in the *Irving Whale*, a potential ecological time-bomb, as soon as I became the opposition’s environment critic”.

Instead of complying with the hon. member’s request to further delay lifting this barge, we will go ahead. The call for tenders has been issued, and the *Irving Whale* will be raised as soon as possible.

**The Speaker:** My dear colleagues, I would ask you to please refer to other members by their ridings and not by their names.

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we are not asking the minister to let this matter drag on for years. What we are asking her is to raise the *Irving Whale* as safely as possible, even if it is more costly.

A spokesperson from her office indicated that two businesses had submitted bids to refloat the *Irving Whale*. Since her department has known about the bids since May 11, can the minister tell us the prices quoted in these bids and release immediately all bidding documents?

[English]

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the House of Commons last year I gave every single document relating to the lifting of the *Irving Whale*. I also said at that time that the proposal being pushed by the hon. member is based on a recommendation that was done by the company that is interested in doing the work.

We called for an independent assessment. If the member wants, I will refer her to an opinion of Murray Fenton & Associates Ltd., Southwark Bridge Road, London, England. That firm has no association with the Government of Canada and says that the option we have chosen is the best scientific option.

(1155)

I would be very happy to table the letter so we could put the issue to bed and get the *Irving Whale* out of the situation it is in, which puts the fishermen of the Magdalen Islands at risk. I think the hon. member and her eight colleagues on the Magdalen Islands should stop playing politics and start doing something to get this thing up.

### Oral Questions

#### IMMIGRATION

**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, MPs’ offices are constantly flooded with complaints from law-abiding Canadians whose relatives cannot get visitor visas to Canada. Why? Because the minister’s failure to enforce immigration law creates so much abuse that the only way to stop it is by denying visas to decent law-abiding visitors.

Why is the minister limiting his promise of compassion to queue jumpers and foreign criminals and not extending that compassion to those who really suffer under Canada’s immigration laws: law-abiding Canadians, overseas refugees and people who want to visit Canada?

**Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):**

[Editor’s Note: Member spoke in Italian.]

[English]

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member told me that he knew a few words of Italian, so in the spirit of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, I thought I would try it out.

In response to the hon. member, the reality in fact is the opposite. The member should be somewhat respectful of the fact that 85 per cent of all visitor visa applications, and there are some one million around the world, are accepted by Canada. There is a 15 per cent refusal rate. Eighty-five per cent out of 100 is not bad.

In the case where those refusals perhaps legitimately should have been accepted, there is a procedure in place for those individuals to make new applications. From time to time there are also interventions. I caution however that a minister should not intervene on a visitor visa program simply because of the numbers involved and simply because the fact is it works quite well.

**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, whether the minister speaks Italian or English, I still do not understand the point.

The minister talks a good game. Just yesterday he bragged about how well the New Delhi immigration office was working. Tell that to Victor Sumbly, a well respected businessman whose sister and nephew could not get visitor visas from Delhi. They were told there was so much abuse that officials could not risk giving visas to a mother and child, even though Victor offered to post a \$50,000 bond.

Would the minister be willing to meet with Mr. Sumbly and tell him face to face that the immigration system is working just fine?

**Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am equally confused by the member’s approach today. Usually he gets up in the House and asks the government to keep people out, to slam the door shut, to keep people from coming in. Today he decides to do some constituency work after all because there have been a lot of

*Point of Order*

complaints from Canadians in Calgary, Alberta who cannot get the time of day on immigration matters from members of Parliament. It pleases me, finally, to see the member of Parliament stand up for his constituents.

\* \* \*

**ALZHEIMER'S REGISTRY**

**Mrs. Jane Stewart (Brant, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the solicitor general and the Minister of Health have recently announced the creation of a national registry for Canadians with Alzheimer's. I would ask the solicitor general to explain to the House the intention of the registry. Could he tell us who is going to manage the system and explain the government's expectations as to the impact the registry will have on Canadians with Alzheimer's and members of their families?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the registry is intended to help locate and identify missing individuals with Alzheimer's or related conditions. It will help to ensure that the risk to them because of their condition is mitigated and limited. It will also reassure their families and caregivers.

I am very pleased that we could work on this project together with the Alzheimer's Society of Canada and the department of health. The program will be managed by the Alzheimer's Society of Canada and its branches across the country. It will use the RCMP's Canadian police information computer system.

I think this is a wonderful example of police-community co-operation. I am very glad that the federal government has been able to facilitate the project.

(1200)

**The Speaker:** Colleagues, this would bring to a conclusion the question period. I have notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**POINT OF ORDER**

COMMENTS BY MEMBER FOR CALGARY NORTHEAST

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will let you be the judge and decide whether this is a question of privilege or a point of order, but as you know, the matter I wish to raise is connected to the fact that yesterday, we had the second hour of debate on a motion I presented earlier in April in which I urged the government to recognize same sex spouses.

I must say that yesterday, for the first time since I became a member of Parliament, I was not very proud to be a parliamentarian. I was not very proud because, as we know, a few days ago the Supreme Court asked us to discuss one of the most important issues for the future of our society, and I am referring to equal treatment of same sex spouses.

I feel I must draw your attention to the fact that yesterday evening, some very discriminatory, hateful and offensive statements were made concerning the homosexual community, and we can hardly say the homosexual community benefited from the kind of debate we had yesterday.

My main point is, and I will give a very specific example, that I always saw the role of the Chair as allowing a maximum of freedom of expression, and I must say that you and your team have always scrupulously abided by this principle. However, I feel I must draw your attention to the fact that in the course of the debate yesterday evening, the hon. member for Calgary Northeast made some comparisons that were extremely dangerous and very difficult to accept for parliamentarians, and I think that if we do not put a stop to this and if we do not call to order members who take the liberty of making comparisons which I find deeply offensive between the homosexual community and certain rights to which I am committed on their behalf, the reputation of this institution will be tarnished.

In concluding, I simply want to bring to your attention a comment that will give some indication of the very distressing tenor of yesterday's debate, at least in the case of the hon. member for Calgary Northeast. Very briefly: "Homosexuality, to anyone who has not been brainwashed by the last decade of effective propagandizing by the gay lobby, is unnatural".

I finally want to say that I am not acting on behalf of any lobby whatsoever. In presenting a motion I felt was important, I was acting as a parliamentarian in order to raise one of those issues which, as you know, requires more than one debate.

In concluding, I want to say that I do not believe that in this Parliament or anywhere else, those who are involved in promoting gay rights have been brainwashed.

**The Speaker:** Dear colleagues, I do not believe that this is a matter of privilege. I would ask all of you, regardless of the topic being debated, to always make judicious word choices because sometimes we are confronted with ideas that are not always acceptable to all individuals.

As you know, in this House, we use strong words and express strong opinions, and sometimes, we use unusually strong words. But, in this instance, I have not read the record of the debate. I will read those statements in context and will watch the video to find out more. If necessary, I will report back to the House with my decision on the matter.

*Routine Proceedings*

(1205)

*[English]*

I will look into this particular matter. To the hon. member for Calgary Northeast, I do not want to get into a debate. We had a debate on this yesterday.

At least at this point, it does not seem to be a question of privilege. If the hon. member for Calgary Northeast wishes to put something on the record very briefly I invite him to do so. I do not want to have this escalate into a debate.

**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I stand by the words I issued in my statement. I did not mention any particular person by name. That is all I will state in the matter.

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for his intervention.

*[Translation]*

It is not a matter of privilege, but I give the floor to the whip of the Bloc Quebecois.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I trust you unconditionally to review this issue and to listen to what was said.

To better understand the issue and put the debate in context, I suggest that we—us parliamentarians and you the Speaker—should consider that when we say that a community is immoral, for example homosexuals, we are going after each and every individual. If we were to do the same for francophones, Jews or women in general, it would not be tolerated.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**The Speaker:** I would like to end this discussion here. As I said, my dear colleagues, I do not want members to get into a debate on the matter. I will take care of it, I will look into it, and will report to the House, if necessary.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

*[English]*

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table in both official languages the government's response to 20 petitions.

\* \* \*

### ENVIRONMENT

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think it is certainly a

relevant day, given the question that was asked by the member from the Bloc Quebecois in the House on what we do to deal with contaminated sites.

Today I wish to advise Parliament that as a government we are introducing a new federal toxic substances management policy. What we would like to do is begin with pollution prevention to avoid the kinds of messes we saw with things like PCBs in the past.

We do not often get up in the House to discuss complex scientific issues involving complicated chemical compounds. However, we also do not often discuss the need to stop poisoning ourselves, our children, our environment, our reproductive systems, our food chain, and our genetic make-up. We do not often discuss how chemicals can affect the health Canadians and the health of our environment.

Toxic substances in the air, water, soil and sediment upset the balance of nature and jeopardize the interdependent existence of all living things on earth.

*[Translation]*

The new toxics policy I am announcing today will apply across the scope of federal activity—not just the Department of the Environment. The policy calls for virtual elimination from the environment of substances that result from human activity, that take a long time to break down, that build up in living organisms and that are toxic.

For other substances that threaten the health of our environment, we will implement full life cycle management—from cradle to grave.

*[English]*

It is cradle to grave management for those substances.

If we cannot find the means to keep certain natural substances from being released into the environment, we need to take measures to prevent generation and their use by humans. Federal laws, regulations, policies and programs will be used to turn off the tap of release into the environment of bio-accumulative and persistent toxic substances produced by Canadians.

(1210)

What does that mean? It means saying no to toxins that work their way into the food chain. It means saying no to toxins that take too much time to break down once they are released.

*[Translation]*

All other substances of concern under federal jurisdiction will face the world's strictest controls.

The new policy is based on the most advanced scientific methods and concepts, and expert analysis, including computer modelling and internationally accepted criteria.

*Routine Proceedings*

In making today's announcement, the government is making public complete details of the policy and a document describing the scientific basis and the technical criteria of the policy.

[*English*]

In making today's announcement, the government is making public complete details of the policy and the document describing the scientific basis and technical criteria of the policy. The government is also publishing a third document summarizing the main issues identified in eight months of public consultations and our response to those issues.

The policy covers the complete range of toxic substances that are used or released into the environment as a result of our modern lifestyle. PCBs, dioxins, furans would not have been accepted had we known their effect on human health and on the food chain. This policy will mean that new industrial chemicals, new pesticides, new compounds produced by biotechnology, and new chemicals that mimic human hormones will be banned unless they can satisfy rigorous scientific criteria. The onus will not be on Canadians to prove that these products pose a danger. The onus will be on the manufacturer to show that they are safe and can be properly managed.

The bottom line is that a decision to ban new chemicals and new products will be made on science. For existing toxic substances that continue to pose a risk the decision to eliminate the products from the environment will also be based on science. We will establish targets and schedules that will take into account social, economic, and technical considerations.

During public consultations some have made the point that they should have the opportunity to produce additional scientific evidence once a preliminary decision to virtually eliminate or to stop the production of a product is made. The government will provide that opportunity, but we will provide the same opportunity to scientific experts, to other governments, and to the public. For human made toxic substances that are not persistent and do not bioaccumulate, do not stay in the environment for a long time, actions to control them will take into account risk management and legal, economic, and sociological factors.

[*Translation*]

In simplest terms, the worst offending toxics will be gone, all other toxics will be managed throughout their entire life-cycle.

[*English*]

In English we say cradle to grave management.

[*Translation*]

There are those who may complain that this is too tough a policy. Tell that to people who live along dead lakes and rivers, with deformed fish and birds. Tell that to Canadians who breathe our country's air, till our country's soil and swim in our country's waters.

[*English*]

I want to be clear that these actions apply to areas under federal control. Many toxic substance problems in Canada fall under the jurisdiction of the provinces and the territories; hence my response earlier in question period on the issue of contaminated sites. It is the federal government's intention to use the policy we are announcing today in order to pursue a national strategy for managing toxic substances through discussions with the provinces and the territories.

I think here is one example where a PCB in Quebec, a PCB in Ontario, and a PCB in British Columbia pose the same problem for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

I do not approach this matter with a "holier than thou" attitude.

(1215)

The federal government's hands have not always been clean in the past nor has the federal government made a determined effort to be a world leader in controlling toxic substances.

My belief is, however, that it is in the absolute interest of Canadians to work together to eliminate and control toxics, and, more importantly, because this is what Canadians want.

[*English*]

We need a united Canadian strategy for dealing with the world community. The free flow of air and water means that dangerous substances released in one community can end up poisoning the environment of another community a thousand kilometres away. That is why it is important to have a Canadian policy but it also means toxic substances produced in other countries end up poisoning Canadians. Toxic substances in eastern Europe are currently poisoning breast milk of mothers living in the Canadian Arctic.

Lake Superior is probably the most virgin of the Great Lakes. If we took all the toxins of local creation out of Lake Superior at the moment that lake would be 20 per cent damaged as a result of toxins that come from places that have never even heard of Canada, places very far away where the toxins come out of the smokestacks, get into the atmosphere, travel to the Arctic shield and diffuse over Canada.

That is why we need not only a national strategy but an international strategy for birds flying over our Pacific coast, fish swimming in our Atlantic waters and people living along the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes.

The federal government will use the strategy and the policy announced today as a basis for negotiations with the world community. Next week Canada will host in Vancouver a meeting of the world's leading experts on persistent organic pollutants. We will co-chair the meeting with the Philippines so that we can have the right marriage of countries of the industrialized world as well as countries en voie de développement. International

*Routine Proceedings*

co-operation is certainly needed in areas from capacity building to technology transfer, to the use of alternative substances.

The Government of Canada is announcing this policy for Canadians because it is the right thing to do. In doing so I know we are following a course directly contrary to the course currently being advocated by members of the Congress of the United States. Certain American Congress people are calling for fewer controls over toxic substances. They want to release more toxins into the St. Lawrence, into the Great Lakes, into our oceans and other bodies of water and air we share. With the greatest respect, that downgrading attitude by some members of the United States Congress is dead wrong.

By this policy today Canada is sending a message to the world and in particular to our American partners that we will do our part to deal with toxic substances and we expect them to do theirs.

[*Translation*]

When you look at the people living along Lake Champlain, who are currently facing an ecological disaster partly because of construction operations by the Americans, it is obvious that the environment knows no boundaries.

By moving Canada to the forefront in managing toxics, we can move Canada to the forefront of new businesses, new green technologies and new green jobs. I am confident that the new policy will serve the long term health of our economy and I know that it will serve the health of our environment and the health of Canadians.

[*English*]

On Monday I will be in Montreal opening the Biosphere which is another tribute to the possibility for Canada to begin to return to a country where environmental technology is not imported but exported.

[*Translation*]

At the Biosphere, on Monday, you will see that with the Biodome, the Biosphere, the environmental centre—the public really supports this endeavour—and modern technology, Canadian technology, we are indeed able to go ahead and eliminate these toxic substance. But to succeed, policy and legislation are required to speed up the process of protecting the environment.

(1220)

[*English*]

We do not want to go down the road of the Americans who are now saying this to 50 million people who drank water from the Great Lakes. This summer we are getting into a period of

potential smog. I am sorry to say that in the United States the current acceptable levels of smog are about 40 per cent higher than in Canada. Who breathes that?

The Detroit–Windsor corridor sends all the stuff over to the Canadian side and we end up losing work days because of pollution problems caused by persistent toxins that come over from the United States.

We want to make sure with this policy that we have our own house in order to ensure that when we go to Vancouver next week and when we go to the international community and in particular when we go to our American neighbour, we will not allow the U.S. Congress to lose the gains we have made. The action we are taking today is a further commitment to the strategy of pollution prevention which says we should not only focus on cleaning up messes but make sure the messes do not occur in the first place.

This policy does not offer overnight miracles but it does provide a solid foundation for dealing with toxic substances and getting those persistent bioaccumulative toxins out of the environment permanently. The need to take action is easy to understand which is why we are moving today on a policy I think will put us at the forefront of dealing with toxins into the 21st century.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, every year more than 228,000 tons of pollutants of all sorts are dumped into Canada's waters, atmosphere, soil and sub-soil. The cause of all this alarming dumping is simple: it is negligence, whether on the part of careless individuals, unscrupulous manufacturers or governments unable to halt the flow.

I am pleased to rise and speak about the new toxic substance management policy the Minister of the Environment is proposing, which, I hope, will prove to be a practical response to the problems of prolonged toxic dumping that may lead to bioaccumulation. As I have not read the documents tabled today, I am not in a position to express an opinion on the value of the policy. I will therefore simply make four general comments expressing the concerns and worries I have about the minister's speech.

First, I would like to point out that I find it rather surprising the minister is tabling her new policy even before the standing committee of this House has issued its report, due in a few days, on the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. The minister would definitely have benefited from the committee's work, which took a year's time and which enabled many witnesses to express their concerns and suggest solutions with regard to the problem of managing toxic substances.



*Routine Proceedings*

Second, the minister alluded earlier to the principle of reverse onus. According to her, manufacturers will now have to prove that their products are safe and may be properly managed. This principle, which the Bloc supports without hesitation, arises from another, very simple one: caution. The idea of caution is relatively new in environmental matters; up to now, it has not been a particular concern for governments, including this one. I offer as evidence the minister's unspeakable attitude in the matter of the barge, the *Irving Whale*, which may well spill its contents of 3,100 tonnes of oil. The minister's decision was clearly motivated by a desire to limit operating costs, as her officials have said publicly, which flies in the face of the most elementary caution.

I hope the minister, whose rhetoric is full of fine principles, will have the courage and the influence in Cabinet to apply them uniformly and not only when it suits her.

(1225)

My third comment has to do with the way the minister intends to deal with the provinces in the future. Even though she admits that her new policy only applies to the federal areas of jurisdiction, she states, and I quote: "It is the federal government's intention to use the policy that we are announcing today in order to pursue a national strategy for managing toxic substances".

I will remind the minister that, whether she likes it or not, the environment is a shared area of jurisdiction, in which provinces have a determinant role to play. They should and must not be treated as second class actors in the federal plans. Before talking about national standards, the minister should give tangible evidence of the efficiency of her policy. Obviously, an aggressive approach by the federal government will only lead to counterproductive confrontations.

Finally, I notice that the minister is once again boasting that she wants to make Canada a world leader in environmental matters. The Bloc Quebecois and myself have every right to question such a statement and fear that it is just so much hot air. Indeed, the last time the minister said that she wanted to make of Canada a world leader, she was presenting her plan to reduce greenhouse gases which, as we know, was far from revolutionary.

This very morning, *The Ottawa Citizen* reported that the Sierra Club gave the Prime Minister an admonition to give marching orders to his Cabinet on the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions.

I humbly remind the minister that Quebecers and Canadians are not necessarily demanding to become world leaders; all they want are realistic environment policies yielding real and tangible results.

In conclusion, I can understand the minister's desire to improve the management of toxic substances in Canada. In fact, the World Wide Fund for Nature reports that the port of Hamilton is one the most polluted areas in the Great Lakes. The

sewage treatment plants located there are not equipped to properly process the waste from surrounding industries and generate close to 40 per cent of the PCB burden and 10 per cent of the zinc burden in the port. According to the World Wide Fund for Nature, decades of pollution in Hamilton have completely ruined what used to be first class spawning grounds for many fish species.

I hope that the policy proposed by the Minister of the Environment will enable us to find efficient remedies to solve an environmental dilemma we can no longer ignore.

[English]

**Mr. Paul E. Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to reply to the environment minister's policy statement on toxic substances management.

I listened very closely to the minister's speech and for the most part I agree that toxic substances in air, water, soil and sediment will jeopardize the existence of all living things. I agree that if toxic substances are not brought under control Canada's environment will suffer. Action should be taken immediately rather than later.

However, I do not agree with the halting path the minister has chosen. The minister's policy applies only to areas under federal control. While the federal problem is a serious concern, another problem does exist, those industries in the private sector, those currently under provincial jurisdiction.

This is the continuing problem with this minister and her department. She introduces policy after policy which might be described as nothing but fluff. In other words, they sound great but the implementation is later evaluated as disappointing.

She never seems to get to the core of the problem of some of our biggest polluters. Perhaps there is a reason. Perhaps it is more political than sensible.

In late April of this year Environment Canada released a national pollutant release inventory, an extensive list of Canada's worst polluters of toxic chemicals. Among the list were some very large companies, primarily from the hub of Ontario as well as Montreal.

The country's biggest polluter was Kronos Canada in Montreal, which dumped 66,000 tonnes of sulphuric acid into the water. Another large pollutant was benzene. A total of 3,000 tonnes of benzene was released countrywide by steel and chemical manufacturers. Interestingly enough, Dofasco and Stelco Steel in Hamilton combined 882 tonnes, 29.4 per cent of the total amount of benzene released in 1993; two large companies right smack in the middle of the minister's riding. Any political handler would say to the minister stay away from that issue. Where is the integrity? Where is the will? One of the country's worst polluters of a toxic chemical is in the environment minister's backyard and the minister does not want to touch it with a ten-foot pole.

*Routine Proceedings*

(1230)

How can she claim to be environmentally friendly? If the minister were a true friend of the environment she would put politics aside and take action in cleaning up the plants that grace her riding. What this country does not need are politicians who think first about how things appear for the political image and second about real benefits to Canadians. We just need to get on with it.

This polluters list tells us where the polluters are. Well that is fine. Canadians know where they are. What they want to know is how they are going to be dealt with. Canadians want actions, not just another data base.

I will read an interesting quote from the minister regarding this data base: "It is intended to encourage industries to voluntarily reduce their releases and develop pollution prevention plans". This is coming from a minister who is supporting Bill S-7, which will legislate government departments into increasing the number of automobiles using alternative fuels, even though the Treasury Board already has guidelines for them to do so.

The minister is not promising miracles with this policy today. One does not have to be a genius to figure that out. The clean up of federal contaminated sites will be no small task. In the last auditor general's report it was estimated that there are 2,000 to 3,000 potentially contaminated federal sites, of which 500 to 1,000 would require immediate remediation. The projected cost was a minimum of about a billion dollars. The auditor general's report also mentioned that a high priority should be to clean up all federal PCB sites, at a cost of perhaps \$2 billion.

This policy paper does not clearly outline how it will clean up these sites. It does not determine where the money will come from, and it does not state a deadline when all federal sites should be toxic free. I think the minister clearly has some questions to answer.

Further, with this policy we find out that the one who is going to be overseeing the policy will be the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, the office of the auditor general. The federal government does not seem to listen to what the auditor general says now, so what will change with the commissioner, who will only report to the auditor general?

The minister says that Canada is sending a message to the world that we will do our part to deal with toxic substances. How can a strong message be sent when we are only dealing with half the problem?

Whenever the government initiates something new, it never changes the whole picture substantively. It never wants to get serious with the issues that mainstream Canadians want. Take the federal budget, for example. Canadians wanted a zero deficit plan and the government gave us a fraction of a dent to the deficit and no long term hope.

Another example is the Young Offenders Act. Canadians wanted a tougher, more accountable law. Yet the justice minister gave Canadians a watered down bill. Now we have this policy paper, which the environment minister thinks represents a solid foundation for dealing with toxic substances.

The Canadian Environmental Protection Act sounds good, but in practice has not been sufficiently delivered. The Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development will soon be tabling its recommendations to improve CEPA. I hope the minister will take heed.

We have a fisheries minister who advertises his defence of Atlantic fish. Who in the government is defending the Fraser River basin and the salmon of the Pacific coast?

The Reform Party is not against control of toxic substances. Quite the contrary. What we are saying is if there is a problem, and in this case the minister has admitted there is, deal with the problem comprehensively and not just a fraction of it.

I do not have some great scheme of how we could get industries like Dofasco and Stelco to reduce or eliminate their benzene dumping tomorrow. Then again I do not have thousands of employees at Environment Canada to work for me on this one either.

Cleaning up Canada's environment is a priority of the Reform Party and it is a priority of the minister. However, do not do it with a policy statement that federal departments can continue to ignore. Do it with legislation that is binding and that has some real bite.

\* \* \*

**BILL C-89**

**Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present in both official languages the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Transport.

Pursuant to order of reference of Tuesday, May 16, 1995, your committee has considered Bill C-89, an act to provide for the continuance of the Canadian National Railway Company under the Canada Business Corporations Act and for the issuance and sale of shares of the company to the public, and has agreed to report it without amendment.

\* \* \*

**BILL S-7**

**Mr. Robert D. Nault (Kenora—Rainy River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour and privilege to present in both official languages the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, concerning Bill S-7, better known as the Kenny bill, an act to accelerate the use of alternative fuels for motor vehicles, with amendments.

*Routine Proceedings*

(1235)

**ENVIRONMENT**

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the document pursuant to the speech I just gave. I neglected to table the document entitled "Toxic Substances Management Policy", the report on the consultations and La politique de gestion des substances toxiques.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It will take unanimous consent to do that. Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL HOUSE OF CANADA ACT .BREV**

**Mr. Ian Murray (Lanark—Carleton, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-329, an act to provide for the recognition of the Canadian horse as the national horse of Canada.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to introduce a private member's bill today entitled "An Act to provide for the recognition of the Canadian horse as the national horse of Canada".

This bill will bring widespread attention to a national symbol, the Canadian horse. This horse was introduced to Canada in 1665 by the King of France, who sent horses from his own stables to the people of his North American colony.

The Canadian horse is well known for its strength, endurance, resilience, intelligence and good temper that distinguishes the breed.

I invite all members of the House to support this bill, which will bring well deserved attention to this cherished Canadian symbol.

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

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS****INCOME TAX ACT**

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I wish to present a petition that has been circulating across Canada. This portion of the petition comes from the area of Calgary, Alberta.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that managing the family home and caring for preschool children is an honourable profession, which has not been

recognized for its value to our society. They also state that the Income Tax Act discriminates against families who make the choice to provide care in the home for preschool children, the disabled, the chronically ill or the aged.

The petitioners therefore pray and call on Parliament to pursue initiatives to eliminate tax discrimination against families who do decide to provide care in the home for preschool children, the disabled, the chronically ill and the aged.

**VIOLENCE ON TELEVISION**

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I have four petitions, three of which I will present orally.

The first petition deals with violence on television. The undersigned petitioners humbly pray and call on Parliament to ensure that the CRTC recognizes that Canadians do not need to be shocked to be entertained. Foul language, excessive violence, and explicit sex are not necessary to provide quality entertainment.

**ASSISTED SUICIDE**

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition contains 112 signatures and calls on Parliament not to enact any legislation that would allow doctor-assisted suicide.

**GUN CONTROL**

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition has to do with gun control. It calls on Parliament to reject this legislative proposal, Bill C-68, and to direct the Minister of Justice to reconsider his approach to this entire issue.

**HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition is not from my constituents exclusively. The majority of the petitioners are from other parts of Canada.

**PAROLE**

**Mrs. Sharon Hayes (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present a petition from citizens of the province of Alberta. They are concerned about making their streets safe and are opposed to the early release of violent offenders.

The petitioners urge the government to allow reclassification of offenders as dangerous after sentencing, allow indefinite detention of dangerous offenders, and allow violent offenders to be ineligible for parole.

## DIVORCE ACT

**Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from 42 of my constituents. Basically they are concerned about access to children by grandparents.

The petitioners ask that the Divorce Act be amended in such a way that in no case may a father or mother without serious cause place obstacles between the child and grandparents. It goes on to talk about giving them access to the child, the right to make inquiries and to be given information as to the health, education, and welfare of the child.

(1240)

## GUN CONTROL

**Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present three petitions. In total there are 1,290 signatures.

The petitioners are opposed to further gun control legislation and want to go on record as asking the justice minister to deal with the criminal use of firearms rather than registration.

## EUTHANASIA

**Mr. Ron Fewchuk (Selkirk—Red River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present two petitions on behalf of the constituents of my riding of Selkirk—Red River in Manitoba.

In the first petition my constituents pray that Parliament continue to reject euthanasia and assisted suicide in Canada.

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION

**Mr. Ron Fewchuk (Selkirk—Red River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the second petition my constituents pray and request that Parliament not amend the human rights code, the Canadian Human Rights Act, or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to include the undefined phrase sexual orientation.

## GUN CONTROL

**Mr. Cliff Breitzkreuz (Yellowhead, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, according to Standing Order 36, I rise to present two petitions. The first petition is signed by almost 1,000 people, the majority coming from Yellowhead.

The petitioners call on Parliament to support legislation that would repeal and modify existing gun control laws, which have not improved public safety, have proven not to be cost effective, or have proven to be overly complex so as to be ineffective and/or unenforceable.

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION

**Mr. Cliff Breitzkreuz (Yellowhead, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am pleased to present on behalf of Mr. Ken Rij of Evansburg, which is in the riding of Yellowhead.

*Routine Proceedings*

The petitioners request that Parliament not amend a code, act, or charter in any way that would tend to indicate societal approval to include in the prohibited grounds of discrimination the undefined phrase sexual orientation.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the following question will be answered today: No. 139.

[Text]

Question No. 139—**Mr. Karygiannis:**

With respect to the Interstate Unemployment Insurance Claims agreement since 1992 (a) how many non-Canadian citizens living outside of Canada have received benefits, (b) how much has been received by these beneficiaries, (c) how much was collected in U.I. premiums from these people, (d) in what states do the recipients live and (e) how many of the U.I. recipients collected maternity, parental, or sickness benefits?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.):** The available data on interstate claims including those made by Canadians residing in USA for 1992, 1993 and 1994 revealed the following:

	Total of claims	Total benefits paid
1992	826	\$4,131,873
1993	753	\$3,608,766
1994	659	\$3,199,900

Revenue Canada requires 25 per cent of the benefit amount be retained at source for income tax. The total number of claims represents the actual number of claims received but not the number of claimants who actually were eligible for benefits. This information is not readily available. We have no available data to distinguish if the recipients are non-Canadians, or their state(s) of residence.

Revenue Canada taxation does not require that employers report premiums per individual social insurance number. Therefore we cannot specify how much was collected from these recipients. We do not have statistics on the claim types such as maternity, parental or sickness benefits.

Historically the volume of such claims has been too minimal to warrant the design of computer programming to keep such detailed information as requested.

**Mr. Gagnon:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Government Orders*

**The Deputy Speaker:** I wish to inform the House that pursuant to Standing Order 33, because of the ministerial statement, Government Orders will be extended by 26 minutes.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### FARM IMPROVEMENT AND MARKETING CO-OPERATIVE LOANS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-75, an act to amend the Farm Improvement and Marketing Co-operatives Loans Act, be read the third time and passed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. House leader of the Reform Party has 27 minutes remaining in his available time.

**Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I will assure you that I will be very brief and not need anywhere near that time, as I was in the process of concluding my remarks when I was interrupted.

The priority of governments should be to get out of the business of being in business, which includes the granting of funds, the involvement in megaprojects and things such as FIMCLA and guaranteeing loans to small business.

What I was saying in conclusion was that the priorities of governments should be first to get out of the business of granting handouts, whether they be to business or special interest groups. Second, governments should not be in the business of being involved in megaprojects, even to the point of loan guarantees; they should not be involved in loan guarantees for small business and agriculture, and their priorities in getting out should be in that order.

The reason they should be in that order is because small business and farmers are supporting the granting of funds through their tax dollars. They are supporting loan guarantees that go bad to megaprojects such as the Lloydminster upgrader and those types of megaprojects. Hibernia is another example that comes to mind. It is the farmers and the small businessmen who are paying for the folly of government getting involved in these projects. Programs like FIMCLA should not be the first ones to go; they should be the last ones to be withdrawn. That is the direction in which we have to go.

(1245)

**Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, miracles never seem to happen to me in this House. I listened to the Reform Party go on and on, its members first stating they support the bill. They then spent almost all of their time saying why it was not such a good idea. I am a little confused by that approach. It seems they are saying government should not assist farmers.

Almost one in five workers in the Durham area are farmers with 3,500 families who either directly or indirectly owe their living to agriculture. The people of Durham very much appreciate the federal government's commitment to assist them in the capitalization of their farming operations.

Sometimes there is a lot of confusion in the House about what farmers do and the types of operations they run. Many members have talked about how other forms of capital are available to farmers, that lending institutions could take up the slack. That is not true. The Farm Credit Corporation and this program came into existence because the government recognized that problems within our capital markets prevent access to capital by not only small businesses but farmers in particular.

Farming is a capital intensive business. I could probably equate it with a utilities company. Everything done in farming involves substantial capital: equipment, the farm property, barns. Utilities are probably the closest example of similar operations that require capital over long periods of time.

Our lending institutions are often only interested in short term loans, which creates a disequilibrium in the capital markets. That is why this is an area government should be involved in. I know many of my farm constituents are very happy the federal government is part of this process.

I would like to speak about some of the specific aspects of Bill C-75. Some members have expressed concern over questions of overlap and duplication with the provinces. Only two provinces have similar programs, Quebec and Alberta. These are the two provinces where activity under FIMCLA has shown its greatest growth. The arguments about duplication being bad come from the very provinces that have utilized this system the most.

I heard some of my colleagues in the Bloc talking about how it was a failure. Interestingly enough, loan applications in Quebec went from 142 in 1990-91 to 1,700 in 1994-95. This is a success, hardly a failure. That growth has been largely a result of caisse populaire Desjardins' movement to become a lender under the program. In Alberta, the provincial government's treasury branches now offer FIMCLA loans and concentrate its resources in other areas. The concept of duplication is not real in this case.

Within the federal government we have to consider the different roles FIMCLA, Farm Credit Corporation and the Small Businesses Loans Act play. Of these FIMCLA is the only national loan program that can be accessed by farmers and farmer-owner marketing co-ops because FIMCLA loans are available from the six major banks. There are banks in almost all of our communities but there is not an FCC office in all communities. Similarly, the Small Businesses Loans Act is really oriented toward small business operations as opposed to farmers although farmers can also access this program.

*Government Orders*

Every rural centre has a bank or credit union but not all have FCC offices. In addition, the Farm Credit Corporation does not guarantee loans made by competing commercial lenders. Those lenders would not likely welcome audits by the FCC as is required under FIMCLA. So there is really no way FIMCLA could be offered by the FCC.

(1250)

It has also been suggested that FIMCLA should be amalgamated with the Small Businesses Loans Act. The problem with this idea is that the FIMCLA loss ratio is significantly less than the SBLA program. Most FIMCLA loans are made to establish farm operations because assets taken as security for FIMCLA loans generally have a higher disposable value.

This gets back to what I was originally saying. Farms are highly capitalized, therefore they also have capital to put up for credit purposes more so than to some smaller type businesses. As a consequence there are fewer loan loss provisions. It would be unfair to charge farmers higher interest rates and registration fees to subsidize small business loan losses.

In addition, most commercial lenders have segregated their commercial lending and agricultural lending divisions. Government loan guarantee programs currently mirror this structure.

FIMCLA gives farmers a better interest rate than they could normally get and allows them borrowing credit with only 20 per cent equity. In other words, they have the ability to get up to 80 per cent financing on their assets.

Finally, there has been some confusion about the meaning of the loan cap. The legislation provides that the total amount of the loans registered over a rolling five-year period will not exceed \$1.5 billion. This legislation is really quite simple in that it doubles the cap, increasing the total cap to \$3 billion within the program.

The parliamentary secretary was saying earlier that we were quickly approaching that cap. If we do not pass this legislation shortly we will have to curtail the program. I can assure members that as the spring work continues on the farms that some farmers would be unduly penalized if for some reason this legislation did not continue.

I repeat, this is the total amount of loans registered over the five-year period. It is not the total amount of loans outstanding because at any one time repayments have already been made on the loans registered in the first four years of the period.

In other words, it is a total loan application. Loans come and go. The total exposure of the government is substantially less than even \$1.5 billion today or \$3 billion in the future as we increase the cap.

The government's liability on the program is for defaults. Historically these have been very low, around 1 to 1.5 per cent. I can assure members that this is a very significant loan loss provision. It tells members a lot about our farm communities. It tells you that these people pay their bills. In spite of the fact that they are highly capitalized, and they do have a high debt structure, once again it is because of their type of operations.

I know this quite well because I actually farmed at one time. I can tell members that every time there was an extra dollar on the farm, it seemed to go back into some form of equipment. This is why farmers are highly exposed when borrowing.

I understand that all the parties I have heard of today are still in support of this legislation. I encourage members to pass it forthwith.

**Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member for Durham would comment on a couple of matters. I ask his views.

Earlier this morning, the member for Frontenac from the Bloc Quebecois made the statement that he did not feel that the minister of agriculture could represent farmers from the province of Quebec because he was not as fluent in both official languages as some other people might be. Does the member for Durham agree we must be totally fluent in both official languages to represent each other?

The member for Frontenac certainly professes to know about agriculture in Canada. I feel that I know a fair bit about agriculture. We may or may not be as fluent in languages as we would like to be.

(1255)

I compliment the member for Durham on his comments when he explained to the House, and hopefully the member for Frontenac understands the point he was making, that there are a number of management tools and different types of loans that need to be available to primary producers and co-operatives in Canada. One is the Farm Credit Corporation, which is used for land purchases and other major purchases along that line. Another example is the farm improvement or the FIMCLA loans which are usually used for renovations, improving buildings or buying pieces of equipment which are important and can be major.

Does the hon. member agree that we need these types of vehicles? I question the sincerity of the member for Frontenac when he says this is a duplication. They are different tools serving different purposes.

*Government Orders*

Could the member for Durham comment on those two issues?

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

My experience with the farm community is they can use as much help as they can get. Farmers often tell us that they are not getting enough access to capital and they wish the government would do more.

It seems incredible to me that the member for Frontenac would try to minimize the amount of access that the farm community in Quebec has to the financial institutions in that province.

Farmers can never have enough. The more people who are active in the business of financing farms the better. Certainly the federal government has shown for as long as I can remember its commitment to farming from sea to sea. I do not believe that the farmers of Quebec would want to lose that benefit.

The second point that the hon. member made was the concept that people cannot be represented here because of one language or another. I do not apologize but I am unilingual English. I have attempted to learn French from time to time but I have not been very successful. I guess I am not a good scholar in languages.

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food represents all the farmers of Canada and has done so ever since I have been here. He has been to the GATT and NAFTA negotiations. I know he negotiates in the best interest of Canada from sea to sea to sea, which includes those interests which affect the farmers of Quebec.

I am very honoured that the minister of agriculture represents the agricultural community as well as he does. He has a very balanced approach. He very much tries to balance the interests of the agricultural sector in Quebec within the country as he does with all provinces. I have heard him on numerous times talking about a balanced approach, that we do not trade off one sector of commodities against another. That is nothing but good for Quebec and Canada and the operations of stable agricultural markets within our country.

I must confess I do not know the name of the agriculture minister in Quebec. I do not know the one in Ontario either. The one I do know is the federal minister of agriculture who represents us so well.

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

\* \* \*

(1300)

**BUFFALO AND FORT ERIE PUBLIC BRIDGE COMPANY  
ACT**

**Hon. Marcel Massé (for the Minister of Transport)** moved that Bill C-81, an act to amend an act respecting the Buffalo and

Fort Erie Public Bridge Company, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. John Maloney (Erie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions between the parties. I believe you will find there is unanimous consent to deal with the bill this afternoon at second reading, at committee of the whole and at third reading.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Maloney:** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak this afternoon on Bill C-81, an act to amend an act respecting the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company, which is the formal name of what we in southern Ontario and western New York State refer to as the Peace bridge authority.

I will give a little background on the Peace bridge authority. The authority was incorporated in 1923 under a special act of Parliament, following which the construction of the international bridge commenced in 1925 and was completed in 1927. An act respecting the Buffalo and Fort Erie Bridge Company was enacted in 1934. It empowered the authority to acquire, hold and manage the property and assets within Canada.

The authority owns and operates the Peace bridge and has 10 appointed members, five Canadian and five American. The authority is profitable and has no outstanding long term debt. It is self sufficient with any profits being used to improve and maintain the facility.

The Peace bridge and this act is very important to Fort Erie, the Niagara peninsula, the province of Ontario and Canada as a whole. The Peace bridge is located at the Niagara River crossing between Buffalo, New York and Fort Erie, Ontario. It is the second busiest cross-border highway link between Canada and the United States. More than 300 million vehicles have crossed the bridge since it opened in 1927.

In 1994 the bridge carried nearly eight million vehicles. Over one million or 14 per cent of these were trucks. It is estimated that \$65 million worth of trade crosses the bridge daily.

As a result of continued expansion and development of international trade and traffic between the province of Ontario and the eastern United States, passenger car traffic and freight truck and other commercial traffic over the Peace bridge into and from Ontario has steadily increased over the years. Commercial traffic increased to 975,000 vehicles in 1993, an increase of 5.8 per cent when compared to 1992. When comparing 1992 to 1991, commercial traffic increased by 11.6 per cent.

In recent years particularly increases in traffic flow have accelerated due to regional and economic factors and international agreements between the two countries, including but not limited to the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement, the North American free trade agreement and GATT. This has resulted in substantial increases in congestion on the bridge and the adjacent Peace bridge plazas.

*Government Orders*

Congestion is now at the point where it is not uncommon for traffic to back up on and sometimes across the entire bridge to and from Canada. This has resulted in substantial traffic tie-ups on the Queen Elizabeth highway and on local streets in Fort Erie as well as similar problems on the New York State thruway, the Peace bridge plazas and on local streets in Buffalo. The congestion problems presently being experienced on the bridge will only increase in the future.

To improve traffic flow, the authority plans to implement a 10-year \$89 million capital improvement project called the gateway project. This project will have a positive economic impact on both sides of the border.

In Fort Erie alone over \$58 million will be spent on improvements that include: \$11.6 million for a new commercial facility for Canada bound commercial traffic which will house Revenue Canada's commercial customs operations, commercial brokers and freight package firms; another \$25 million on a commercial vehicle processing centre for U.S. bound commercial vehicles; and another \$4.3 million for a Canadian gateway complete with new customs booths that will serve as a landmark for residents and tourists entering Canada. It truly will be a gateway to Canada, a gateway to the province of Ontario and a gateway to the riding of Erie.

A further \$17.6 million will be spent on bridge painting and structural improvements. The bridge is presently painted with a lead based paint which must be removed for environmental reasons. It will be expensive, but is very necessary.

On the U.S. side there will be upgrading of the traffic plaza and the Buffalo terminus to the bridge which will include a reconfigured plaza providing improved access to major highways and into downtown Buffalo.

It can be appreciated that these proposals will translate into short term construction jobs and long term administrative jobs with a tremendous economic spin off impact throughout the region.

The bill also allows for a borrowing increase for the current projects that I have just mentioned. The amendments to the act will allow the authority to increase its borrowing authority from \$50 million to \$100 million. The authority's reputable financial adviser has reviewed the financial plans of the authority and has indicated that it has the capacity to borrow this sum of money.

(1305)

I would like to emphasize that there are no costs to the Canadian government associated with the amendments. Section 6 of the current act specifically protects the government from

liability for the authority's debt in the event of a default. All borrowing costs will be borne by the users of this facility.

I was concerned with the user pay implications for my constituents as we now enjoy very reasonable bridge tolls on the Peace bridge. Tolls will have to be increased to fund the necessary bridge improvements. I am assured however that they will remain competitive with tolls charged at other international bridge crossings in the Niagara region and southern Ontario.

The Peace bridge authority is very sensitive to this issue. Presently the passenger tolls are the cheapest of all bridge crossings in the Niagara region. Owners of commercial vehicles will continue to pay slightly higher tolls than those charged at the adjacent crossings. They will benefit from reduced costs resulting from the shorter line ups at the border. The authority is fully cognizant that excessively high tolls would divert traffic to other crossings and will act accordingly.

I was also concerned about the debt servicing of these loans and the ability of the authority to meet its financial obligations. I have been assured that the authority's debt repayment plan is sound. The need for this government to satisfy its concerns on this issue and on the environmental impact are the reasons for an almost one year indepth study and the necessary delay of this bill getting to the floor of the House. This government has acted cautiously and prudently.

I was very concerned about the environmental impact of the proposed capital project as well, but my concerns have been satisfied. Pursuant to section 5 of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, the bridge is not required to be subjected to a specific federal environmental assessment.

Given the potential impact of a commercial vehicle processing centre project on adjacent neighbourhoods in the town of Fort Erie and the fact that all transborder functions are a clear federal responsibility, Transport Canada completed an environmental screening of the commercial vehicle project in November 1994. The environmental screening determined that the commercial vehicle project may proceed as its environmental impact is either insignificant or mitigable with known technology. The authority has agreed to comply with the recommended mitigation measures. The commercial vehicle processing centre also meets all local, regional and provincial land use and environmental requirements which I think is very important.

Consequently, the decision to increase the borrowing power and transfer administrative powers will have no adverse environmental impact. Other initiatives under the gateway project will be assessed if need be in accordance with the requirements of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.



*Government Orders*

The legislation before us today also deals with the issue of future requests for increases in borrowing. This legislation gives the governor in council the power to fix the authority's borrowing limit at an amount greater than \$100 million if a need can be shown. We can avoid the need for future legislative amendments which become costly and time consuming and are basically administrative in nature.

This administrative change will give the Peace bridge authority additional flexibility to meet more immediate operational needs and future major capital requirements. The simplified procedure will be more responsive for the Peace bridge authority.

The reduced time required to authorize an increase in the borrowing limit will also be less costly for taxpayers. Any increases of this nature will still be thoroughly reviewed before authorization by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Transport. As a matter of note, such review would also be undertaken in the state of New York.

The act also provides for a transfer of authority. It is understood that the Minister of Transport has the prime responsibility in co-ordinating the role for federal policy on the international crossings. Of all the international bridge crossings, the Peace Bridge is the only one that comes under the authority of the Minister of Finance. This change therefore is an administrative rationalization. The transfer of legislative responsibility between ministers will correct what can be referred to as an administrative anomaly, as it is understood that the Minister of Transport again has the primary responsibility.

There are currently 24 international highway crossings between Canada and the United States. The Minister of Transport is directly involved in three that are federally controlled: the seaway, Thousand Islands and Blue Water bridges. Furthermore, some of these international crossings combine rail functions which are also the responsibility of the Minister of Transport.

It should be pointed out that Transport Canada assumes certain responsibilities associated with all 24 international crossings, such as policy directives, system planning, granting of construction and operating permits, environmental assessments and as previously mentioned, ownership in certain cases.

These activities are being co-ordinated and more often than not are being carried out jointly with our U.S. counterpart, the federal Secretary of Transportation, who shares similar responsibilities. In fact, in the United States all international crossing matters are dealt with through the International Bridge Act of 1972. It authorizes the United States president, secretary of state and secretary of transportation to negotiate, co-ordinate and sign international agreements in order to allow these crossings to be built, operated and maintained.

(1310)

Therefore, transferring responsibility to the Minister of Transport will result in streamlining the relationship between the minister and the various bridge operators, whether private or public, dedicated public authority or provincial government. It will also facilitate the process of dealing with our U.S. counterparts. As well it will indicate to Canadians that this government is committed to efficiencies in public administration.

Henceforth, both the New York state and U.S. federal governments will be able to deal more effectively through the Minister of Transport. The minister and his U.S. counterpart meet regularly, particularly as a result of the North American free trade agreement, in order to facilitate the transborder movement of people and goods. International crossings are often a priority topic at these meetings.

The transfer of responsibility to the Minister of Transport will indicate to the various bridge operators that the current Transport Canada policy of promoting and supporting decentralized commercialized operations will be maintained and enhanced.

I will not say that these initiatives have been without their opponents who legitimately questioned debt servicing concerns and the environmental impact on adjacent neighbourhoods, especially as it relates to noise and pollution. In particular, the residents whose homes will border on the commercial vehicle processing centre had some very real concerns. I am satisfied that these concerns have been met.

I urge the authority notwithstanding to take its role as a community partner very seriously and to be mindful of its responsibilities to these community concerns. To date it has met these responsibilities and I am confident it will continue to do so.

There is no doubt in my mind that these upgrades and new facilities are urgently required. The planned improvements of the gateway project will speed the movement of traffic, particularly trucks, across the bridge. Streamlining the flow of bona fide cross border traffic is in keeping with the more liberalized international trade environment under the NAFTA. The importance of cross border trade in our community is enormous. The benefits of these improvements will be felt throughout the region, throughout the province and throughout our country.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Paul Mercier (Blainville—Deux-Montagnes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-81 is the bill before us.

The Buffalo and Fort Erie Bridge Company is a company formed by the Government of Canada in co-operation with the Government of the United States. The increased traffic on the international bridge resulting from the free trade agreement, which, it will be remembered, the Liberals opposed vigorously at the time, has now necessitated construction work.

*Government Orders*

The bill will accordingly allow the company to borrow up to \$100 million on the private market through bond issues. This \$100 million will help to pay for part of the Gateway project—a ten year \$144 million project. Construction is planned on both sides of the border. It should be noted that the Government of Canada does not guarantee the \$100 million loans. Theoretically, then, these loans are not binding on the Government of Canada.

The need to increase the borrowing power of the company will also enable the government to correct an anomaly. This bridge is the only one to come under the authority of the Minister of Finance. All the other international cross-border highways are the responsibility of the Minister of Transport, and the bill assigns him responsibility for this bridge as well.

A third aspect of this bill is that in order to facilitate future increases in the borrowing power of the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company, the governor in council is authorized by this bill to increase the borrowing limit.

It should be noted that the bridge authority must cover its expenses and that moneys spent to improve the bridge will be recovered through an increase in traffic and tolls.

For all these reasons, we support this bill, all the more so because the Bloc Quebecois has always supported the liberalization of trade and the NAFTA. The increased traffic on the bridge is a good example of the economic benefit to both countries of this liberalization. In opposing the free trade agreement, the Liberals showed at that time that they were unable to take economic decisions that would benefit Canada.

(1315)

By proposing legislation in this House today that would help the bridge handle the increase in traffic resulting from this agreement that they so vigorously opposed, the Liberals are making amends, and in the same spirit I would be prepared to let bygones be bygones.

[*English*]

**Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to inform the House the Reform Party is supporting Bill C-81.

The bill amends the act for the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company, the company responsible for the Peace bridge linking Fort Erie and Canada with the city of Buffalo in the United States.

The Peace bridge is the second busiest border crossing highway link between Canada and the United States. This bridge carried nearly 8 million vehicles in 1994. One million of these were trucks containing over \$20 billion of traded goods.

With the implementation of our trade agreements and as a result of positive economic conditions, the Peace bridge finds itself not quite up to the task of facilitating smooth traffic flows.

Commercial traffic has accelerated to the point where there is a lot of congestion on the bridge and at the adjacent plazas. This has caused traffic jams on the access roads and local streets on both sides of the border.

To ensure the bridge can facilitate all trade and traffic, the bridge authority would like to implement bridge improvements called the gateways project.

To finance the gateways project, the bridge authority intends to market two 30-year bond issues in the United States totalling \$70 million in 1995 and 1997. It will use its toll revenue to service this debt.

We in the Reform Party recognize that strong north-south infrastructure links are crucial to building on trade agreements we have implemented with United States.

If these infrastructure projects can be financed by the private sector, so much the better. It is our understanding that the bridge authority is profitable and has no long term outstanding debt. It is also our understanding that the government is protected from liability should the bridge authority ever default on debts in the future.

Since the federal government is not financially responsible for the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company, it is appropriate for the governor in council to approve borrowing increases.

In the future we will have to look at a different way of financing these projects. There will have to be more infrastructure financed by the private sector, by municipalities, as we cannot sustain these from the federal government. That would be looking down the road and I hope that approach could be used.

The other reservation we have is that the bridge authority should be held accountable in its meetings to the public. If various parties want to present briefs on the effects of toll increases or any environmental concerns, these briefs should be available to the public.

With this reservation, the Reform Party would support the bill.

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

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Private Members' Business*

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time, considered in committee, reported and concurred in by unanimous consent.)

(1320)

**Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.)** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

**Hon. Christine Stewart (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to report stage and third reading stage of Bill C-76, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 27, 1995.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3) I give notice that a minister of the crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at said stages.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Returning to Bill C-81.

**Mr. John Maloney (Erie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the position taken by the members of the opposition parties on this measure. The co-operation exhibited here is something to be commended.

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there consent to call it 1.56 p.m.?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed in today's Order Paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, and as the anniversary of the original Official Languages Act approaches (1969-1994), the government should thoroughly assess the way the act is applied in Canada by appointing some individual to carry out a detailed and balanced review of the work done so far, and reaffirm Parliament's commitment to a just and adequate policy on official languages.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today to begin debate on this private member's motion which calls for a review of the Official Languages Act.

This motion may seem familiar to members, and so it should. It originally appeared on the order of precedence last fall as M-107. At that time it was sponsored by Ottawa—Vanier MP Jean-Robert Gauthier who, as we know, has since moved on to the other place.

When Mr. Gauthier answered the call from above his worthy motion was dropped from the order of precedence. More than likely Mr. Gauthier and I have different motives for bringing this motion forward. The fact that I have chosen to do so speaks to the credibility of the motion and the widely held view that the Official Languages Act is not working as it was intended.

(1325)

The Reform Party supports individual bilingualism but we oppose enforced bilingualism as dictated by the Official Languages Act. We would replace the Official Languages Act with legislation reflecting the philosophy of territorial bilingualism. We believe the primary responsibility for language and culture should rest with the provinces. Parliament and other key federal government institutions would continue to offer bilingual services.

Why do I say the act is not working? A quick look at the Commissioner of Official Languages 1994 annual report provides us with some insight into this claim. According to the commissioner our audits showed that French does not have equitable status as a language of work in the national capital region. He went on to say the shortcomings are essentially the same in Quebec and in Ontario.

[Translation]

This is what our present commissioner had to say about the act. A look back reveals that his predecessors shared a similar point of view. Former commissioner D'Iberville Fortier said: "It seems to me that we are clearly not at the point where we can claim to have translated the act into action in a manner that is judicious, consistent and unequivocal".

In a similar vein, former commissioner Max Yalden accused the government of being inconsistent, unimaginative and indiscriminate in its implementation of the act.

[English]

The first Commissioner of Official Languages, Keith Spicer, was often critical of the government's implementation of the act. His 1991 report "Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future" clearly spelled out Canadians' view on the issue:

The view was often expressed that Canada's official languages policy has contributed significantly to the current crisis, including animosity toward Quebec and/or toward French. Frequently used terms describe bilingualism as divisive and as breaking up the country.

An independent review of the application of the official languages policy is badly needed to clear the air, with a view to ensuring that it is fair and sensible. Otherwise

there is risk that rising public dissatisfaction and misunderstanding will lead to rejection of the policy as a whole with irreparable damage to the principles of linguistic equality in federal institutions.

One purpose of the review should be to make clear to Canadians the cost and benefits of official languages policy and activities and explain far more clearly its goals and methods. Such a review should evaluate public information efforts as well as investigate all of the public's expressed concerns.

This recommendation, like all the others contained in the \$25 million document, was ignored by the government of the day, just as the Liberals continue to ignore the views of the thousands of Canadians who took part in this process. Despite this lack of government attention to the concerns expressed by Canadians, that recommendation is as valid today as it was in June 1991.

The people intimately involved with the act, the commissioners, say the act is not working as it should.

(1330)

Other noted Canadians share this sentiment. In an interview celebrating the 20th anniversary of the founding of the B and B commission, nine of the commissioners talked about their original work and how it had been implemented by the Official Languages Act. Mrs. Gertrude Laing was less than complimentary about the way the act had been implemented in the public service. In discussing the wholesale creation of bilingual positions and the massive second language training program, Mrs. Laing said that they "failed to respect individuals' feelings and needs, fears and aspirations".

On those same issues co-chairman Davidson Dutton commented that it was "two steps forward and one step back". Mr. Paul Lacoste, in discussing language of work, lamented the decision not to follow the commission recommendation to set up unilingual language work units and called the language of work policy in the public service a failure.

Similarly Mr. J. B. Rudnyckyj regretted that the Official Languages Act contained such weak provisions with respect to Canada's ethnic minorities. All the commissioners were disappointed that bilingual districts had never been proclaimed as they were a key feature of the blueprint for equal partnership.

Gilles Lalonde, deputy commissioner of official languages from 1980 to 1985 and co-secretary of the B and B commission also called the bilingual districts a cornerstone of language reform but said the subject had received little more than lip service and empty declarations of intent. He also said:

The language reform envisaged by the B and B commissioners never took place.

Mr. Lalonde was equally pessimistic about the act itself saying:

### *Private Members' Business*

Implementation of the act remains fragmentary and tentative.

He concluded by saying:

We have to admit that collectively we may have been overly ambitious and taken the wrong tack. It is high time to get our priorities straight.

Other prominent Canadians have also questioned the validity of the current act. Professors Denise Réume and Leslie Green in their 1991 article published in "The Network on the Constitution" wrote:

The main goal of any language policy should be to promote linguistic justice. Nothing in the conventional analysis even addresses this question.

Noted Concordia University sociologist Hubert Guindon stated in a 1978 article: "No matter how lofty its ideals, the legacy of the political disaster created by" the federal "official language policy is there for everyone to see". According to Professor Guindon, the act hinders rather than facilitates the changes needed as a consequence of the social modernization of the Quebecois. It contributes to a climate of ambiguity for immigrants in Quebec and uncertainty for the large private corporate sector in Quebec.

We have seen that several language commissioners, bureaucrats and academics believe the act has failed. If we return to the Spicer forum for a minute we could also see that average Canadians hold similar views. I have heard that firsthand in the west.

Here are a few short quotes from that 1991 report:

Pierre Trudeau's vision of a multicultural and bilingual society for Canada was a noble one, but it is apparent now that it simply will not work.

**An hon. member:** Hogwash.

**Mr. Ringma:** "Bilingualism has failed". It continues:

Two languages should be an asset, but administration of "official bilingualism" has taken a potentially wonderful and unifying asset and made it hurtful and divisive.

I could go on with many more such quotes expressed by average Canadians, but I believe this sampling gives a very good picture of the public's attitude toward the act.

If I heard "hogwash" from across the way, referring to what ordinary people are saying, I resent it. Canadians should have the right to express their opinion, especially on commissions such as the Spicer commission.

Now that we have clearly established the shortcomings of the act it is time to address the merits of the motion as it pertains to reviewing the act.

(1335)

In his 1975 annual report on official languages, Commissioner Spicer wrote:

But surely there is merit in keeping more meaningful accounts. Without them, those dealing with language reform will have to continue waffling on the recurring questions of costs—hearing, but being unable to contradict convincingly such delicious polemical estimates—as \$3 billion per year for bilingualism.

*Private Members' Business*

It would seem more sensible to pull the whole lot of linguistic items together, specify the purpose for each, tote up the terrifying sum, add 10 per cent for integrated cost, then publish and defend the thing as the high but necessary price for being Canadian.

Those words were written 20 years ago but have been ignored ever since. I am not here to make any wild claims about the cost of official languages because the truth is that I do not know the cost. The truth is that no one knows the cost.

Why do we not know the cost? It is because the accounting practices used for these programs have taken more twists and turns than contestants in a Chubby Checker dance—a—thon.

Mr. Spicer knew this in 1975 and the government knows it today but refuses to act. On two separate occasions I put motions before the Standing Joint Committee on Official Languages but was turned down both times. That is why I am getting rid of some of my frustration in proposing the motion originally put forward by Jean-Robert Gauthier.

The people in this committee say that we have the numbers from the commissioner and there is no need for verification. However the truth is that the numbers are not verified in any meaningful way. The commissioner gets the numbers from the Treasury Board which he accepts at face value. Treasury Board produces these numbers based on cost reports produced by all departments and agencies.

The guidelines for producing the reports clearly state that certain costs are not to be counted, such as the person years and salaries of employees taking language training as well as those of staff hired to replace the employees on language training. They do not count those costs.

Treasury Board says that its books are open to the auditor general, but if the books do not contain all the information it is difficult to conduct a thorough audit. It must also be stated that the auditor general has never turned his attention to the full range of language policies and programs.

We know that in 1991 the auditor general looked at the Translation Bureau, found many problems and concluded:

It became clear the Translation Bureau would have to undergo major changes to correct the weaknesses we identified.

In 1993 a follow up audit was conducted and the following conclusion was reached:

Despite these efforts, however, we note that significant weaknesses still exist. We are particularly concerned about cost reduction.

This is but one small area of the official languages program. After 26 years has not the time come to fully probe the entire menagerie created by the Official Languages Act?

The only question that remains is: Who should carry out such an important review? I have already stated that the official languages committee has no desire to perform such a task. Nor would it be the appropriate body as it is out of step with the demographic and linguistic realities of Canada. It would also be impractical to impose this duty on any parliamentary committee as they are dominated by the Liberal government which I believe is committed to the status quo.

My motion simply calls for the appointment of someone to conduct a thorough and balanced review of the work done so far. This someone should be the auditor general. The office of the auditor general is highly respected by all Canadians. It is at arm's length from Parliament and therefore free from political interference. The auditor general is already on the payroll, meaning there will be no extra cost to the taxpayer to conduct this vital review.

(1340)

[Translation]

As indicated in the Reform Party's blue sheet, we support the concept of official bilingualism. However, we do not approve the way the act has been implemented during the past 26 years. That act was never subjected to a complete review. This is totally unacceptable to those who care about the linguistic policy's integrity.

It should also be mentioned that the B and B commission correctly pointed out that each province is the ultimate authority on its own territory. Consequently, any future linguistic reform should be conducted through the provincial authorities. The Reform Party shares these views but, unfortunately, the principle is not found in the act as such.

[English]

Over the past nearly 20 minutes I have illustrated the shortcomings in the act as seen by official languages commissioners, bureaucrats, academics and average Canadians. I have stated logically why we must revisit the act and who should carry out the review: the auditor general.

The issue of language has proven to be the subject of very emotional and sometimes illogical debate in the House. We have seen it directly within the year. It is regrettable as the issue is far too important to be reduced to such a level of squabbling and name calling. Therefore I call on all members of the House to be cognizant of the sensitivity of the issue as they enter into debate today and in the coming months.

I bring the motion forward in the hope of furthering open and honest discussions on Canada's language policy. Partisanship and ideology will do nothing to enhance a true exchange of ideas.

*Private Members' Business*

I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts and look forward to hearing some intelligent and thought provoking debate on the motion before the House.

**Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have the opportunity to speak to the motion presented by the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

[*Translation*]

The motion being debated today includes two proposals. The first one is that the government should thoroughly assess the way the Official Languages Act is applied in Canada, by appointing an individual to carry out a detailed and balanced review of the work done so far. The second proposal is that the government should reaffirm Parliament's commitment to a just and adequate policy on official languages. These are good intentions, no doubt about that.

However, do we not already have all the required processes to ensure that the act is properly applied and to see how it is implemented? I listened carefully to the hon. member's speech. It is true that the implementation of the Official Languages Act could be improved. It is that aspect that we, parliamentarians, should look at.

I heard about a number of flaws, but I did not hear anything about the positive aspects, and that makes me feel uncomfortable.

I also want to say that, from what I understood, the former MP, now a senator, had proposed something very similar in terms of assessing the way the act is applied across the country, from coast to coast. He was interested in reviewing the application of the act. So, I will discuss the topic from this perspective.

(1345)

[*English*]

Let me explain. A number of mechanisms are available today. The Official Languages Act confers very clear responsibilities and rather precise mandates on three federal departments with respect to its application. These are the departments of justice, treasury board and Canadian heritage.

The Department of Justice has special responsibilities in the area of the administration of justice in both official languages under the act. The act clearly stipulates that English and French are the official languages of the federal courts and that either language may be used by any person in any oral or written proceedings.

The act further stipulates that the federal government is required to use the official language chosen by the other parties in a civil case to which it is a party before a federal court and that any final decision, order or judgment issued by any federal court must be made available simultaneously in both official languages under the circumstances specified in the legislation.

These are fundamental rights which guarantee all Canadians, whether they are English speaking or French speaking equal access to justice. This access is reinforced by the fact that the Official Languages Act requires all federal institutions, including the federal courts, to comply with the provisions of the act.

[*Translation*]

The second department with a specific mandate regarding official languages is Treasury Board. It is responsible for developing and co-ordinating the official language policies and programs of our federal institutions.

Treasury Board's mandate covers all federal institutions, including Crown corporations, and all agencies which have obligations regarding official languages under any other federal act. By virtue of the scope of its mandate under the Official Languages Act, Treasury Board is a key player in the management of the official languages program.

[*English*]

It is the responsibility of treasury board to ensure that federal institutions respect official language obligations regarding services to the public and the language of work with regard to the language of services. Federal institutions are required to provide services to the Canadian public in the official language of its choice in those locations and under the circumstances prescribed by the legislation.

Federal institutions have a further obligation to inform the public of the availability of services in the official language of its choice.

The official languages regulations adopted in 1991 identify the circumstances under which federal institutions are required to provide their services to and communicate with the public in both official languages. These regulations are essential to the application of the legislative framework enacted to ensure that Canadians receive the services they require from federal institutions in the official language of their choice.

[*Translation*]

In so-called bilingual regions, federal institutions must also provide a work environment which promotes the use of both official languages in the circumstances covered by the act. In particular, the federal institutions in question must provide bilingual human resources and central services, among others, to their employees, and must provide them with the general and common working tools in the language of their choice.

They must ensure that supervision is available to employees in both official languages, when this will contribute to the creation of a work environment promoting the use of both official languages. These institutions must also ensure that senior managers are functional in both official languages and that general and common information technology tools can be used in both official language. Lastly, federal institutions must be able to provide a comparable level of service in either

*Private Members' Business*

official language from one predominantly unilingual region to another.

The third element of the program, the equal representation of French speaking and English speaking Canadians, bears witness to the commitment of the government and Parliament to official languages.

(1350)

This commitment means that federal institutions must ensure that their workforce reflects the presence of both linguistic communities in the Canadian population. Under the terms of this commitment, federal institutions must see to it that French and English speaking Canadians alike have equal employment and promotion opportunities.

[English]

It is the responsibility of treasury board to see to it that federal institutions effectively fulfil their legal obligations under parts IV, V and VI of the act and to report to Parliament annually on the status of official languages within the federal institutions covered by its mandate.

To this end, treasury board has been given the authority to recommend regulations and to give effect to the provisions of the act. It is also empowered to issue directives, to monitor and to audit the general compliance of federal institutions with official languages policies, directives and regulations. Treasury board may also evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programs of federal institutions and provide the public and federal employees with information on these policies and programs.

[Translation]

These are powers that the Treasury Board exercises every day in one way or another. These powers enable the Treasury Board to ensure not only that federal institutions fulfil their obligations but also that Canadians receive the services they need in the official language of their choice where prescribed by law and that they have equal employment and promotion opportunities in federal institutions.

The third federal department given specific responsibilities in terms of official languages, which I mentioned earlier, is the Department of Canadian Heritage. This department is responsible for encouraging and promoting a co-ordinated approach to the implementation by federal institutions of the government's commitment to enhance the vitality of official language minorities and to promote both French and English in Canadian society.

I had so many things to say, but I am coming to the end of my 10 minutes. I would simply want to add that I have not yet mentioned the fourth major player, the Commissioner of Official Languages, who also plays a key role in this matter. The

Commissioner of Official Languages has the duty to ensure recognition of the status of each of the official languages and compliance with the spirit and intent of the act, in particular as regards the advancement of French and English in Canadian society.

Unfortunately, I must conclude my presentation. I had so many things to say, but if some of my colleagues are interested in my speech, I am ready to share it with them.

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ):**

Mr. Speaker, let me start by restating the motion before us today, for the benefit of those who are watching us: As the Official Languages Act is 26 years old, it deem it important that the government thoroughly assess the way the act is applied in the country by appointing someone to carry out a detailed and balanced review of the work done so far and reaffirm Parliament's commitment to a just and adequate policy on official languages.

The Bloc Québécois will have no difficulty voting for this motion. In fact, I requested almost exactly the same thing in a speech I made in this House on October 3. Let us look at where the need for this assessment comes from.

The Official Languages Act stems from the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism set up by Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson in 1963. The act was ultimately passed in 1969 by the Trudeau government in response to the sense of urgency felt at the time.

We will recall that the early 1960s were marked by the first manifestations of the FLQ, which were symptoms of profound discontent within Canada.

(1355)

In fact, in a preliminary report issued in February 1965, the B and B Commission, as it was nicknamed in those days, stated that measures were urgently required as Canada was undergoing a major crisis.

According to a booklet published by the federal government and entitled *Official Languages Act in Brief*, the objectives of the act are as follows: first, to ensure respect for English and French as the official languages of Canada, and equal status, rights and privileges for these languages in federal institutions. Second, to support the development of English and French language minority communities and to encourage the acceptance and use of both English and French in Canadian society. Third, to set out the powers and duties of federal institutions in the area of official languages.

The document also points out that the provisions of the Official Languages Act stem from the linguistic rights guaranteed by the Constitution. So, the Official Languages Act provides that Parliament and the federal courts must work in both official languages; that the federal government must provide its

services in both official languages, based on certain conditions, and that it is committed to achieving full and equal participation of the two official linguistic groups. Since it was reviewed in 1988, the act also provides that the Minister of Heritage is committed to enhancing the vitality of linguistic minority communities, while also being responsible for co-ordinating the efforts of the various departments toward the fulfilment of that objective.

It is also important to take a look at the preamble of the Official Languages Act. It says that the Constitution provides that English and French are the official languages of Canada and have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament. It also provides that the public can communicate with these federal institutions in either official language; that public servants should have equal opportunities to use the official language of their choice while working; that English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians should, without regard to their ethnic origin or first language learned, have equal opportunities to obtain employment in the institutions of the Parliament and government of Canada; and, finally, that the federal government is committed to enhancing the vitality of linguistic minority communities.

Given all these good intentions, what is the situation, after more than 25 years under the Official Languages Act? There are a number of criteria that can help us determine the positive or negative impact of this legislation, including assimilation rate, education, income, availability of federal services in the minority language and, finally, language of work of federal employees.

The situation in Canada's francophone and Acadian communities is certainly not as rosy as the official line would have us believe. In fact, there is every indication that the francophone community outside Quebec is being assimilated, is losing ground where education is concerned, is getting poorer and generally does not have access to the federal services to which it is entitled in its own language. Furthermore, most francophones in the federal public service have to work in English. Warnings come regularly from spokespersons for these communities and the Commissioner of Official Languages. Apparently, to no avail.

Let us take a closer look at some of those criteria. First, the assimilation rate. To calculate the assimilation rate, we take the total number of persons who say their mother tongue is French and subtract the number of persons who tell the census taker that French is still the language spoken in the home.

According to information provided by Statistics Canada, between 1971, the year of the first census that included questions on language, and 1991, the year of the latest census, the assimilation rate of francophones outside Quebec rose from 27 per cent to 34.8 per cent.

### *Private Members' Business*

French is losing ground across the country, including in New Brunswick, the only bilingual province, where the assimilation rate is still 8.4 per cent.

(1400)

Of course, the trend is more dramatic in communities in western Canada. In British Columbia, for instance, it was 71.8 per cent in the 1991 census; in Alberta, 64.4 per cent; in Ontario, although the province has the largest francophone minority, the assimilation rate was 36.7 per cent, an increase of ten points over 1971.

In other words, English is spoken in the home by 71 per cent of francophones living in British Columbia; 64 per cent in Alberta; and 36.7 per cent of francophones in Ontario. It should therefore come as no surprise that Bob Rae, the present Premier of Ontario, said on CBC radio that, unfortunately, there were not enough francophones in Ontario for the province to become officially bilingual. Naturally, every effort was made to assimilate them—we can see the results 26 years later.

Statistics on the level of education in francophone communities are also alarming. Thirty per cent of the francophone minority outside Quebec is considered illiterate. In Ontario, the group for development stated recently that the level of illiteracy among the province's francophones was 31 per cent, compared with the figure of 17 per cent for its anglophones. We should, however, perhaps not be surprised by these figures, when all Canadian provinces officially prohibited teaching in French for decades and when, despite the present constitution, the many decisions by the Supreme Court and the many battles waged by the country's francophones, the right to education in French—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I remind you that you have about two minutes left.

**Mrs. Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, that is impossible. I was told I had 20 minutes, like Mr. Ringma.

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, no. I am sorry. Speeches during private members' business are 10 minutes in length.

**Mrs. Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, no, I am supposed to have 20 minutes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Joliette has the floor on a point of order.

**Mr. Laurin:** Mr. Speaker, it is 20 minutes' speaking time, is it not?

**The Deputy Speaker:** For the first speaker, and 10 minutes for all other members.

**Mr. Laurin:** Yes. For the first speaker of each party.

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, no. For the first speaker.



*Private Members' Business*

**Mr. Laurin:** For the first speaker who introduced the bill, and then the others have 10 minutes?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Exactly.

**Mr. Laurin:** So, there is a mistake.

**Mrs. Tremblay:** Then, I will have to conclude, and that is really unfortunate.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, it is most unfortunate that I have not had the time to read all my speech and that I was misinformed. I guess that is part of the procedure in this House and that, by now, I should have known better.

Anyway, the important thing is to say that we will support the motion of the hon. member for Nanaimo, because it is extremely significant, since we have to recognize that bilingualism in Canada is a failure. Now that multiculturalism has replaced biculturalism and bilingualism, it is no wonder that there are no longer any Canadians in Canada, but only Greeks, Japanese, Chinese, Germans, Ukrainians and Quebecers, who will make the right decision when the time comes.

So, I want to move the following amendment, seconded by the hon. member for Joliette.

That Motion M-381 be amended by adding after the word "languages", the following: "and that the Act be strengthened and applied in full from coast to coast".

**The Deputy Speaker:** The proposed amendment is in order.

(1405)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise this afternoon and support the motion put forward by my hon. colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan.

Twenty-five years ago the first Official Languages Act was passed, as has been noted. Since that time we have never fully reviewed its operation to see if this multibillion dollar ship is taking us where we want to go.

In 1988 the act was revised incorporating three main objectives: first, to ensure the equal status of the two official languages; second, to support the development of official language minority communities; and third, to set out the powers, duties and functions of federal institutions in this area.

To ensure compliance with the spirit and intent of the act, a commissioner of official languages has been appointed. His job is to protect language rights of individuals and groups, evaluate linguistic performance of federal institutions and monitor the advancement of French and English. In other words, the commissioner's mandate is to promote the act, not to evaluate its effectiveness.

Unfortunately, the auditor general has not undertaken a comprehensive review of the act during its entire 25 year evolution. This is a serious flaw.

What we do have is a series of reports, studies and audits of particular aspects of the act. Nobody has looked at the whole thing. Even if problems are identified, no one has the mandate to change aspects of it that are not working.

For example, in past annual reports the commissioner has repeatedly criticized the failure of the government to communicate the basic purpose of the act to the Canadian people. In the words of the commissioner, this has resulted in negative hearsay and durable falsehoods. Despite being over two decades old, Canadians still do not even understand why the act exists. Something is definitely wrong, but the commissioner is not empowered to fix it.

The commissioner's 1993 annual report notes that the Canadian solution to the co-existence of two dominant languages is focused on individual rights rather than the establishment of a territorial linguistic regime. This means the intention of the act is to ensure Canadians can receive services from federal institutions in the official language of their choice regardless of where they happen to live.

During 1993 the office of the commissioner completed its own study of individual choice versus territoriality in the implementation of language rights. Again I quote: "The study concluded that Canada has struck its own balance between individual rights and territoriality, and has done so as a function of its own history and specific human needs".

Despite the fact that the act is not supposed to be territorial in nature, government services in both languages are not universally available, only where there is significant demand and where it is reasonable, logical and fair to do so. This makes some sense but it does not meet the demands of individual complainants who believe their rights to full services under the act have been violated.

Each province implements the act differently. This means the results are also measurably different in each province. Is this a failure of the act or was this the original intention? If we do not review the act nationwide, how do we know whether the overall objectives are feasible or even desirable?

The 1993 report began with a quote from Montesquieu: "Nothing is just merely because it forms part of the law; rather, it should be law because it is just". The Official Languages Act is the law but if we do not examine it impartially and thoroughly how can we know that it is just?

One example of a perceived failure illustrates this point. Many minority official languages communities are upset because they do not receive services of comparable quality to those afforded to the majority. Perhaps this is neither realistic nor affordable. Perhaps we should be looking at providing services of adequate quality rather than comparable quality. No

one is looking at alternative solutions to these problems. The commissioner's role is to pursue the goal of comparable services, not to question whether that goal is attainable.

(1410)

The Spicer commission studied Canadians' perceptions of the Official Languages Act. One participant: "Being able to speak both English and French should be a worthwhile personal goal for all citizens of Canada. It is also an achievable goal, if only the politicians had the courage to admit that the language policies they have been advocating for the past two decades failed miserably and left the country deeply divided. It is time to scrap the enforced bilingualism policy and heal the wounds".

As my hon. colleague mentioned earlier, another participant in the citizens' forum on Canada's future stated: "Pierre Trudeau's vision of a multicultural and bilingual society for Canada was a noble one, but it is apparent now that it will simply not work".

We are certainly a more bilingual country than we were in 1969, but we are far from achieving the goals of the act and it has been in operation for more than a generation. Surely if the act was workable we would have met most, if not all, of the goals by now.

The list of failures is long. We have failed to achieve equity in the language of work in federal institutions. We have failed to communicate the basic purpose of the act to Canadians. As a result, the act does not enjoy universal support. As I already stated, it has failed to provide comparable quality services to minority official languages communities. It has failed to establish universal access to services in the language of choice resulting in territoriality playing a significant role.

After 25 years why has the official languages policy failed to meet virtually all of its objectives? Without an independent review of the fundamental principles, structure and implementation regimes we will never know. We will merely continue to add to the list of failures because questioning the goals or the means of achieving them is beyond the mandate of the commissioner.

Let us compare the Official Languages Act to a sailing ship under Christopher Columbus. The office of the commissioner has certain tasks to perform, such as investigating complaints, auditing specific federal departments of compliance and ensuring implementation of minority language education programs. These are like the specific tasks of sailors to mend the sails, scrub the decks or feed the crew.

Every once in a while the auditor general comes along and performs an audit on a discreet part of the ship such as his 1991 audit of the translation bureau. This is like lowering a sailor over

### *Private Members' Business*

the side of the ship to chip off a few barnacles rather than checking the integrity of the hull. We fix one or two problems with the sails, replace some lines and bail out the bilge, but no one has looked at the whole ship. We are so concerned with the day to day operations and studying the individual components that no one has looked to see where the ship is going.

Columbus knew his mission was to get to the far east and he fixed the little leaks along the way, but after two months under sail he ended up in America instead. If we do not completely review the act, how can we be sure we will achieve the stated objectives? More important, how do we know our national objectives have not changed?

Right now we do not even know if we are still going in the right direction because we have not done one comprehensive audit in 25 years. Remember, his sails were repaired regularly but Christopher Columbus was not even in the right ocean, let alone on course.

I urge all members to support this motion to conduct a thorough review of the act. We may not all agree on where we think the official languages ship should be headed, but an independent auditor could make sure we are at least sailing in the direction supported by the majority of the crew, in this case the Canadian taxpayers who continue to foot the bill.

(1415)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Pierrette Ringuette—Maltais (Madawaska—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to enter this debate on the motion tabled in the House by the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan and, what is really surprising, supported by a Bloc member, which indicates that the Bloc Quebecois will vote for this motion.

Over the week-end, in New Brunswick, the Société nationale des Acadiens et Acadiennes du Nouveau-Brunswick is holding its annual assembly; as one of its members, I would have liked to be there, but as the member of Parliament for Madawaska—Victoria and co-chair of the joint committee on official languages, I think it is even more important for me to speak to this motion.

I will begin by recalling the history and the purposes of this act. The original Official Languages Act was passed by the Parliament of Canada in 1969, following the recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. The purpose of that act was to give French and English equal status, not only in Parliament and before federal courts, as was already guaranteed in section 133 of the Constitution Act, 1867, but in the whole federal administration.

*Private Members' Business*

[English]

In 1988 the Official Languages Act was thoroughly reviewed and amended. The new act defers from the old one in that it not only sets out the official languages right of the public but also clearly spells out the duty of the federal institutions in respect to these rights. It contains as well a solemn commitment by the government to enhance the vitality of the English speaking and the French speaking minority communities and to advance the recognition and the use of English and French in Canadian society at large.

We strongly believe that the Official Languages Act in its present form contains a complete legislative framework which is sufficient to ensure and to monitor the implementation of the act in a manner that is efficient, fair and transparent.

The House will know that all federal government institutions, departments, agencies and crown corporations are subject to the act. The key departments entrusted with specific responsibilities for the implementation of the act are treasury board, Canadian heritage and justice.

However, the administration of the act does not stop with federal government institutions. It is important to stress that the commissioner of official languages, the federal court and the standing joint parliamentary committee on official languages also fulfil important functions.

Allow me to review briefly the roles of the key federal institutions responsible for overseeing and reviewing the implementation of the act.

The Official Languages Act entrusts the treasury board with the responsibility for the co-ordination of the policies and programs of the government in the area of communication with and service to the public, the language of work within federal institutions as well as the equitable participation of English speaking Canadians and French speaking Canadians within those institutions.

[Translation]

The President of the Treasury Board informs the House when tabling his annual report.

[English]

It should be noted that the government on the recommendation of the treasury board has put into place regulations respecting service to the public in both languages. The final provisions of these regulations came into force last year.

Another key department under the act is that of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who is responsible for co-ordinating the federal government's commitment with respect to the enhancement of the vitality of official language minority communities and the advancement of English and French.

Last summer in New Brunswick the Prime Minister and the Minister of Canadian Heritage announced new initiatives, including an accountability framework for the co-ordination of government commitment to the enhancement of the vitality of official language minority communities and the advancement of English and French.

The Minister of Justice is the legal custodian of the act since he retains general legislative responsibility for it.

[Translation]

The Minister of Justice has particular responsibilities in the areas of drafting legislation and administering justice, in both official languages, in federal courts as well as in criminal prosecutions under the authority of the Solicitor general of Canada.

(1420)

[English]

We have already mentioned that the administration of the act does not stop with federal government institutions. The act provides for a linguistic ombudsman, independent of government and reporting to Parliament, who is charged with the duty of taking action to ensure that federal institutions comply with the spirit and the intent of the act.

The commissioner of official languages is not a court. He attempts to resolve issues relating to the application of the act through a process of administrative mediation. Through his annual and special reports to Parliament as well as his complaint reports the commissioner ensures that Parliament, the government and the public are kept well informed as to the administration of the act.

The act also provides Canadians with the right to seek court remedy. Pursuant to part X of the act the federal court may, if it finds that a federal institution has failed to comply with the act, grant an appropriate and just remedy.

Finally, I come to the role of the standing parliamentary committee on official languages which is charged, in the words of the act, with the duty to review on a permanent basis the administration of the Official Languages Act, any regulation and directive made under this act, and the reports of the commissioner, President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Canadian Heritage.

The committee has been very active in listening to the views and concerns of Canadians on official language matters. Both the commissioner of official languages and the Minister of Canadian Heritage have recently appeared before the committee as have a number of other ministers.

In my opinion the parliamentary committee is proving to be an effective, open forum for Canadians concerns with the implementation of the act.

*Private Members' Business*

[*Translation*]

I would like to add something to the speech. The hon. member who introduced the motion is a member of the Joint Committee on Official Languages. At the beginning of his speech, a short while ago, the hon. member said that his party, the Reform Party, supports the principles of individual bilingualism. At the end of his speech, he said that the Reform Party also supports the principles of official bilingualism.

In the Committee on Official Languages the hon. member did the same kind of flip-flop regarding the Official Languages Act, as I will demonstrate. At the beginning of our proceedings, the member made the following motion to the Committee: "Be it resolved that this committee endorse the recommendations contained in the commissioner's report on service to the public and further, that this committee encourage Treasury Board to draw up an action plan to implement these recommendations in as cost-effective and expedient a manner as possible, and that Treasury Board officials be invited to appear before our committee for the purpose of tabling their action plan at an early date", asking the committee to support unanimously the intent, the report and the Official Languages Act.

One month ago, the same member presented another motion where he proposed to abolish entirely the budgetary votes and the operating budget of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

This quite a turnaround. During the last Parliament, the Committee on Official Languages held only ten meetings over a two-year period. Since the beginning of our mandate, we have had 30 meetings in one year. Why? Because our government is keen on seeing justice done to both linguistic communities in Canada. And the main supporter of this justice and the primary promoter of the Official Languages Act is the Right Hon. Prime Minister.

If the Reform Party and the Bloc have doubts about that and are not sure that Canadians throughout the country support the Official Languages Act, they only have to look at the recent Gallup poll. It says it all.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The next time we debate this issue, it will be the Bloc Quebecois's turn to speak. The hour reserved for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired.

[*English*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

It being 2.25 p.m., the House stands adjourned until 11 a.m. on Monday.

(The House adjourned at 2.25 p.m.)

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# CONTENTS

Friday, June 2, 1995

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### **Farm Improvement and Marketing Co-Operatives Loans Act**

Bill C-75. Report stage (without amendment)	13163
Motion for concurrence	13163
Mr. Rock	13163
(Motion agreed to.)	13163
Motion for third reading	13163
Mr. Vanclief	13163
Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac)	13164
Mr. Hermanson	13167

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### **Aids**

Mr. Flis	13170
----------	-------

### **Recognition of Same Sex Spouses**

Mr. Crête	13170
-----------	-------

### **National awareness week**

Mrs. Hayes	13170
------------	-------

### **Child Support**

Ms. McLaughlin	13170
----------------	-------

### **Environment**

Mr. Caccia	13171
------------	-------

### **Royal Canadian Mounted Police**

Mr. Dhaliwal	13171
--------------	-------

**Violence Against Children**

Mr. Szabo 13171

**Sharing of Federal Debt**

Mr. Brien 13171

**Canada Health Act**

Mr. Mayfield 13171

**Health Care Reform**

Mr. Bertrand 13172

**Ontario election**

Mr. Harb 13172

**Sharing of Federal Debt**

Mrs. Bakopanos 13172

**Aboriginal Nations**

Mr. Caron 13172

**Infrastructure**

Mr. Epp 13173

**Transportation**

Mr. Keyes 13173

**Atlantic Fishery**

Mr. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso) 13173

**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD****Bosnia**

Mr. Duceppe 13173

Ms. Copps 13174

Mr. Duceppe 13174

Ms. Copps 13174

Mr. Duceppe	13174
Ms. Copps	13174

### **Agusta**

Mr. Leroux (Shefford)	13174
Ms. Copps	13174
Mr. Leroux (Shefford)	13174
Ms. Copps	13174

### **Bosnia**

Mr. Mills (Red Deer)	13175
Ms. Copps	13175
Mr. Mills (Red Deer)	13175
Ms. Copps	13175
Mr. Mills (Red Deer)	13175
Ms. Copps	13175

### **Human Rights**

Mr. Ménard	13175
Mr. Rock	13176
Mr. Ménard	13176
Mr. Rock	13176

### **Department of Justice**

Mr. Abbott	13176
Mr. Rock	13176
Mr. Abbott	13176
Mr. Rock	13176

### **Department of Justice**

Mr. Laurin	13177
Mr. Rock	13177
Mr. Laurin	13177
Mr. Rock	13177

### **Justice**

Mr. Thompson	13177
Mr. Rock	13177

Mr. Thompson	13177
Mr. Rock	13177

### **Foreign Affairs**

Mr. Leblanc (Longueuil)	13178
Mr. Eggleton	13178
Mr. Leblanc (Longueuil)	13178
Mr. Eggleton	13178

### **Youth Services Canada**

Mr. Finlay	13178
Ms. Blondin–Andrew	13178

### **Canadian Wheat Board**

Mr. Hermanson	13179
Mr. Gray	13179
Mr. Hermanson	13179
Mr. Gray	13179

### **The Environment**

Mr. Pomerleau	13179
Ms. Copps	13179
Mr. Pomerleau	13179
Ms. Copps	13180

### **Upper Nicola Band**

Mr. Duncan	13180
Mr. Anawak	13180
Mr. Duncan	13180
Mr. Anawak	13180

### **Forest Fires**

Mr. Fewchuk	13180
Ms. Copps	13180

### **Irving Whale**

Mrs. Guay	13180
Ms. Copps	13181



Mrs. Guay	13181
Ms. Copps	13181

### **Immigration**

Mr. Hanger	13181
Mr. Marchi	13181
Mr. Hanger	13181
Mr. Marchi	13181

### **Alzheimer's Registry**

Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	13182
Mr. Gray	13182

### **Point of Order**

#### **Comments by Member for Calgary Northeast**

Mr. Ménard	13182
The Speaker	13182
Mr. Hanger	13183
Mr. Duceppe	13183

## **ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

### **Government Response to Petitions**

Mr. Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)	13183
---	-------

### **Environment**

Ms. Copps	13183
Mrs. Guay	13185
Mr. Forseth	13186

### **Bill C-89**

Mr. Keyes	13187
-----------	-------

### **Bill S-7**

Mr. Nault	13187
-----------	-------

### **Tabling of documents**

Ms. Copps	13188
-----------	-------

**Bill C-329**

Bill C-329. Motions for introduction and first reading deemed adopted	13188
Mr. Murray	13188

**Petitions****Income Tax Act**

Mr. Szabo	13188
-----------	-------

**Violence on Television**

Mr. Schmidt	13188
-------------	-------

**Assisted Suicide**

Mr. Schmidt	13188
-------------	-------

**Gun control**

Mr. Schmidt	13188
-------------	-------

**Human rights**

Mr. Schmidt	13188
-------------	-------

**Parole**

Mrs. Hayes	13188
------------	-------

**Divorce Act**

Mr. Shepherd	13189
--------------	-------

**Gun control**

Ms. Meredith	13189
--------------	-------

**Euthanasia**

Mr. Fewchuk	13189
-------------	-------

**Sexual orientation**

Mr. Fewchuk	13189
-------------	-------

**Gun control**

Mr. Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)	13189
-----------------------------	-------

**Sexual orientation**

Mr. Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)	13189
-----------------------------	-------

## **Questions on the Order Paper**

Mr. Gagnon 13189

## **GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

### **Farm Improvement and Marketing Co-operative Loans Act**

Bill C-75. Consideration resumed of motion for third reading 13190  
Mr. Hermanson 13190  
Mr. Shepherd 13190  
    Mr. Vanclief 13191  
(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.) 13192

### **Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company Act**

Bill C-81. Motion for second reading 13192  
Mr. Massé 13192  
Mr. Maloney 13192  
Mr. Mercier 13194  
Mr. Penson 13195  
(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time, considered in committee, reported and concurred in by unanimous consent.) 13196  
Motion for third reading 13196  
Mr. Massé 13196  
Mrs. Stewart (Northumberland) 13196  
Mr. Maloney 13196  
(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.) 13196

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

### **Official Languages**

Mr. Ringma 13196  
Motion 13196  
Mr. Duhamel 13199  
Mrs. Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata) 13200  
Motion 13202  
Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River) 13202  
Mrs. Ringuette—Maltais 13203