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(HANSARD)

Tuesday, September 19, 1995

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, September 19, 1995

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 76 petitions.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have several petitions to present today with well over 2,500 signatures from all across Canada but primarily from the province of Ontario.

The petitioners pray and request that Parliament not amend the Canadian Human Rights Act or the charter of rights and freedoms in any way which would tend to indicate societal approval of same sex relationships or of homosexuality, including amending the Canadian Human Rights Act to include in the prohibited grounds of discrimination the undefined phrase of sexual orientation.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

EXPLOSIVES ACT

Hon. Douglas Peters (for the Minister of Natural Resources) moved that Bill C-71, an act to amend the Explosives Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. George S. Rideout (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise before you today to support Bill C-71, an act to amend the Explosives Act.

[*English*]

The Explosives Act is an act of public and worker safety which regulates the composition, quality and character of explosives as well as the manufacture, importation, sale, purchase, possession and storage of explosives.

[*Translation*]

The amendment to the Explosives Act is important for a number of very good reasons.

• (1005)

[*English*]

First, at the present time there is no way to detect plastic explosives at airports. This act proposes the marking of plastic explosives by adding a chemical which would be detected by equipment at Canada's international airports and thus ward off the threat of terrorism.

Second, this amendment will allow Canada to be among the first nations to ratify an international convention requested by the United Nations and co-ordinated by the International Civil Aviation Organization with respect to the marking of plastic explosives. This convention was signed in March 1991 by 40 countries and 14 countries have already ratified the convention. Five of these nations, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, are producer states where plastic explosives are manufactured.

Third, given the fact that Canada is a world leader in vapour detection technology, Canadian equipment manufacturers will be able to take advantage of international market opportunities

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for their products as more and more countries ratify the convention.

Fourth, Natural Resources Canada which maintains the authority to inspect and approve the manufacture, distribution and storage of explosives in Canada will be responsible for the application of measures to mark plastic explosives following the proclamation of this amendment.

Let me explain these reasons in greater detail. Members of the House will certainly remember the tragic events involving crashes of two passenger aircraft caused by the detonation of bombs made of plastic explosives. The first instance I wish to refer to involved Pan Am flight 103 from London which exploded over the small town of Lockerbie, Scotland. The other was UTA flight 772 which crashed in Niger, Africa. A total of 442 people were killed in these two crashes.

Then of course there were the Air India tragedies involving two 747 aircraft both of which began their journeys here in Canada. One crashed in the Atlantic Ocean south of the Republic of Ireland while the other miraculously made it to Narita International Airport in Tokyo, Japan, before a bomb made of plastic explosives blew up in the airport's baggage handling area. That bomb killed at least two innocent baggage handlers.

Although the cause of the first Air India crash has never been officially determined there is strong belief that it was the result of a plastic explosive device. In any case, plastic explosives have emerged as the weapon of choice for terrorist groups, both for bombing aircraft and other targets such as public buildings because this type of explosive is small, powerful, stable, malleable and most important, difficult to detect.

It is quite likely that if plastic explosives had been marked or tagged with a substance that could have been detected by equipment in Canadian airports it is almost certain that the Air India tragedies would have been avoided. Consequently, terrorists would be discouraged from attempting any attacks in Canada using plastic explosives.

For these reasons an international effort to mark plastic explosives for the purpose of detection was initiated by the United Nations and has been co-ordinated by the International Civil Aviation Organization. The resulting international convention requires states to ensure the marking of plastic explosives to enhance their detectability. At the same time the convention requires controls over the import, export, possession and transfer of marked plastic explosives and the destruction of most unmarked plastic explosives.

In March 1991 more than 70 states and six organizations attended a diplomatic conference where the convention on the marking of plastic explosives for the purpose of detection was adopted by consensus. Forty states, including Canada, signed this convention.

The main features of the convention are: only plastic explosives as defined in the convention are required to be marked; existing unmarked commercial stocks of plastic explosives are to be destroyed within three years; an international explosives technical commission will be created to assess technical developments; the cost of Canadian participation in such a commission will be low; and the convention will come into force after 35 states including five producer states have ratified it. Canada is one of the world's producer states and as I mentioned previously, we will be among the first countries to ratify this important convention.

It is evident that the proposed bill respects the terms of this convention. The proclamation of this amendment to the Explosives Act will ensure Canadian official ratification of this important international agreement.

• (1010)

Bill C-71 specifies that the explosives branch of Natural Resources Canada will take the lead role in the implementation of the provisions of the convention. Plastic explosives are manufactured by the private sector in Canada.

Following the proclamation of Bill C-71, Natural Resources Canada's explosives inspectors who issue explosives factory licences to the private sector under delegation from the minister will refuse to license any manufacturing operation to make unmarked plastic explosives.

Inspectors again under delegation from the minister will refuse import or export permits for unmarked plastic explosives. Inspectors could take samples of explosives to verify that they are marked and could seize and destroy unmarked shipments, unmarked stores or abandon unmarked quantities.

The explosives branch is best placed to determine the location of unmarked plastic explosives and to assure control over them through a stringent system of licensing which would be supported by regular compliance inspections. Regulations would require prior notification of change of ownership along with a statement of the details of the physical transfer.

The military agrees that it can, except in times of emergency, observe all of the terms of the convention. Unmarked stocks of plastic explosives would be incorporated in munitions or used up during field exercises on a priority basis.

Transport Canada, which is responsible for the operation of detection equipment at Canadian airports, has indicated that the current technology can detect the marked plastic explosives.

Further, the extra costs of producing detectable plastic explosives are expected to be negligible. The industry has been involved in efforts to develop substances to mark plastic explosives for the purpose of detection. Therefore the industry acknowledges that the impact of extra costs will not be serious. The industry, the Canadian police community and the military

were all consulted throughout the process to prepare this proposed amendment to the existing law.

The major consumer of plastic explosives in this country is the Canadian military. The construction industry is a relatively minor consumer using plastic explosives for the demolition of large buildings. Given this comparatively concentrated consumer base, it will be easy to monitor compliance with the amended act following proclamation.

While the Canadian military has a 10-year supply of unmarked plastic explosives, the convention on the marking of plastic explosives provides for a 15-year period of grace for ratifying nations to use or destroy unmarked plastic explosives.

In addition, given the low volume of plastic explosives compared to the volume of conventional industrial explosives, the challenge of enforcing the provisions of the proposed amendment and by extension the international convention will not pose a significant problem or cost to the respective regulatory bodies.

I wish to emphasize that Canada's position as a leader in the development of vapour detection technologies will be enhanced as a result of the ratification of this international convention.

Increased foreign market penetration by Canadian equipment manufacturers is virtually a certainty. Therefore the proclamation of this amendment has the potential to help stimulate job creation and contribute to Canada's future economic growth.

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, this amendment to the Explosives Act clearly shows the Canadian government's will to provide good government. We are committed to doing our part to protect the health and safety of passengers aboard aircraft using Canadian airspace and to doing everything in our power in co-operation with our partners around the world to ward off the threat of terrorism in the skies above Canada and other countries.

[*English*]

Passage of this amendment will allow Canada to ratify an important international convention which sends a strong message to terrorist groups that plastic explosives will be detected by equipment in our airports.

Further, Canada's ratification of the convention will demonstrate our leadership among signatory nations and encourage them to follow our example. In addition Canada is contributing to the development of substances to mark plastic explosives for detection.

With the ratification of the convention by more and more nations, Canadian manufacturers of vapour detection equipment

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will also be able to take advantage of significant marketing opportunities.

● (1015)

As a result this proposed amendment to the Explosives Act will contribute to two major federal goals: job creation and Canadian economic growth. Moreover, the passage of this amendment will protect the health and safety of all Canadians.

I urge the House give speedy passage to this legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to what the hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources had to say. It goes without saying that the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-71, an act to amend the Explosives Act, but I still have many questions to ask him.

I must admit that I was surprised when I saw Bill C-71 to amend the Explosives Act on the orders of the day. I was also surprised not so much by the bill itself, although one can easily wonder, but by the delay, the time it took the government to react. It should be pointed out that this bill implements the 1991 Montreal Convention. The Montreal Convention was produced at the March 1, 1991, meeting of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

The bill came five years later, give or take a month, considering that it was read for the first time on February 24. So, it took the government five years to produce a bill only a few pages long, two pages and a half to be more precise, giving the impression that this government is a bad student. Like some students, only a few, it put off doing its homework till the last minute, if not the last second. To look good in front of the international community, it has now seen fit, five years later, to make the Canadian explosives legislation consistent with the terms of the Montreal Convention.

The impression we get from that is that this government is not efficient. It seems to indicate that this government is no better in terms of efficiency than the previous one, which we gladly got rid of.

As we can see, this government is not efficient. Unfortunately, acting on the Montreal Convention is not the only area in which the government is not very efficient.

Unemployment remains high throughout the country in spite of election promises and other commitments. Regions in Quebec and Canada are still in an extremely difficult situation in spite of repeated promises. This government tells us day in and day out that it is concerned with the economy, yet the country is going from bad to worse.

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With Bill C-71, the government is hoping to convince the public that it is deeply concerned with the problems associated with criminal use of explosives. If that were the case, it would be great.

One wonders however what purpose this bill is intended to serve. Note that I said the purpose of this bill, as opposed to that of the government, because in my view we must distinguish between the two.

Officially, the purpose of the Explosives Act is to ensure the public and workers' safety, and that is fine. It also regulates the ingredients, quality and properties of explosives as well as their manufacture, importation, sale, purchase, possession and storage.

• (1020)

Its scope even includes pyrotechnics commonly called fireworks. The act requires the marking of most plastic explosives, so as to detect them. It prohibits the manufacture, storage, possession, transportation, importation and exportation of unmarked plastic explosives.

The act also seeks to control the proliferation of plastic explosives used in terrorist incidents. It provides for exceptions which include research purposes, as well as police and military uses. These are the official objectives. However, from the outset, we can easily question the effectiveness of such a bill.

First, it must be remembered that the Montreal convention could not even be implemented because there were not enough signatories. Therefore, why bother marking our explosives if we are practically the only ones to do so? Sure, it can be argued that we should set an example. Canada has always been very good at that, but when we are faced with the reality, it is an altogether different matter.

Canada is a peaceful country, but it is also a major producer of military equipment and explosives. I would love to think that, with this bill, we will solve the problem of international terrorism and that tragedies such as the Air India bombing and the incidents currently occurring in France will never happen again. Unfortunately, I cannot be convinced that this will be the case, because not all countries of the world are members of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Those countries that provide weapons and explosives to terrorists will be even more reluctant to sign such a convention. They will certainly not pass similar legislation. If they do, they will continue to act like hypocrites. They will continue to make unmarked explosives and to sell weapons and ammunition on the international market.

The government's only real objective is to save face and to make Quebecers and Canadians believe that they will be better protected. With this legislation, the government is trying to look better than the others; however, there is a huge gap between

theory and reality. Indeed, the government's real objective is to give the impression that it is doing what it should at home and on the international scene. This enables it to publicly pat itself on the back, even though it is well aware that the problem will in no way be solved and that the safety of Canadians will not be improved at all.

As a matter of fact, this government has always created illusions: illusions regarding safety, better economic performance, debt reduction, greater social justice, etc. So, we are going to mark our explosives. We cannot go against virtue. Once explosives are marked in Canada, so as to make them easier to detect, terrorists will surely be scared to buy them. They will no longer dare bomb anything in Canada. They will no longer dare fly on our airlines and use our airports. At least this is what the government would like us to believe.

Let us be honest with Quebecers and Canadians. Let us tell them that we are in fact passing this bill to ease our conscience. What will terrorists do once our explosives are marked? You know as well as I do they will go buy explosives somewhere else, where they are not marked.

• (1025)

The question immediately arises: Who sells explosives to terrorists? The federal government has no answer to this question. However, we do know that Canada is used by many criminal organizations as a convenient gateway to North America. This is true, for instance, in the case of organizations linked to the drug trade. It is common knowledge. Canada has a lot of trouble controlling drug trafficking within its own borders.

Canada has always had and still has trouble controlling alcohol, tobacco and cigarette smuggling. And now we are supposed to believe that this legislation will help them control the smuggling of explosives.

Now, do not get me wrong. I would be delighted if this happened. However, I am not so naive as to think that, all of a sudden, this legislation will give us a superefficient government. Once the legislation is passed, its implementation will not be easy. Marking explosives is pretty straightforward. Of course we have the technology, but do we have facilities across the country to help us detect marked explosives? What is the use of marking explosives if we do not monitor them?

Are border controls stringent enough to prevent smuggling of explosives? Will this government invest enough money to ensure the bill is actually implemented? I doubt it.

Good intentions are fine, provided they lead to tangible results. The government will have to answer all these questions if it wants to be taken seriously.

We support marking explosives if it can really make a difference. I am still waiting for evidence that marking will have any impact on international terrorism.

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The bill also provides for certain exceptions which I had not discussed so far. These exceptions are substantial and have the effect of considerably undermining the whole credibility of this bill. Everyone knows Canada manufactures arms and explosives. The bill provides that explosives for use in research by the police or the military will not be marked.

The reason is obvious. If you go to war and the enemy can detect your explosives, you lose a lot of your effectiveness. That I can understand. But these exceptions, necessary though they may be, make the bill practically useless.

They have the effect of telling international terrorists where they can purchase unmarked explosives, and since we do not mark explosives destined for research for use by the police or military, we can say this bill will only affect a negligible part of the explosives used in this country.

Fine, we can say we will carefully monitor unmarked explosives destined for researchers, the police or military, although here again, do not depend on it. Everyone knows that, even where security is supposed to be tight, there is always a leak somewhere. And another thing, the Canadian border is in many respects as leaky as a sieve. Government cutbacks have also affected controls at the border and in our airports.

• (1030)

So, even if we do mark explosives and if we cut services further, it will not serve much purpose. There are good examples both past and present of the permeability of the Canadian border thanks to the carelessness of this government.

Canada is currently facing serious problems involving a number of well armed native communities. Some members of these communities are almost as well armed as members of the Canadian armed forces and certainly better armed than the police. We have experienced this sort of problem in Quebec, unfortunately. We might ask ourselves where these individuals got the weapons, ammunition and explosives. Are they Canadian or were they imported?

The Montreal region is currently in the midst of a veritable war among organized gangs of bikers. They are also well armed, as you know. Where did they get their weapons, ammunition and explosives? Can the government tell us?

They have shown that Canadian controls are not very effective. They have shown that this supposed great country where people allegedly enjoy a remarkable quality of life is living on a lot of illusions.

It cannot be claimed that this bill will give people greater security. It is true that the government has to legislate. It was

established to govern our society. But it has yet to acquire the means to carry out the legislation it enacts. What is the point of enacting legislation, if we are unable to carry it out?

Instead of trying to ease its conscience, as it is attempting to do, and to improve its image internationally and endlessly repeating that Canada has one of the highest ratings in the world, this government should really make an effort internationally to try to correct certain injustices.

Except in the case of organized crime, the use of explosives in Quebec and in Canada for purposes other than those for which they were intended is neither obvious nor particularly frequent.

Along with adopting legislation on marking explosives, would it not be a good idea for the government to take steps to fight organized gangs, to acquire the means to monitor the movement of terrorists within the country as closely as possible and to tighten controls at border points as well as at ports and airports, ensuring more effective surveillance?

There is much public pressure now for anti-gang legislation. We know that gangs are the ones using explosives for criminal purposes. Having such a statute would be a hundred times more effective than marking our explosives.

Perhaps Canada once enjoyed a certain credibility on the international level. By adopting Bill C-71, the government is trying to bolster that credibility, which is seriously drooping these days.

The aboriginal problem has markedly lowered Canada's degree of credibility.

The Prime Minister's statements implying that he will not respect the choice of 7 million Quebecers in the coming referendum suggest that this government does not have a great deal of respect for democracy. In fact, this government's sole purpose in passing a bill on marking explosives is to give the illusion that it is fulfilling its commitments. It is proposing this five years after the Montreal convention, when it could have done so far earlier.

The effectiveness of such a statute is questionable. Do they really believe that Quebecers will be fooled, that Canadians will be fooled? On the international level, will the body of nations be fooled? Will international terrorism quake in fear of this new measure? I beg to differ.

• (1035)

I would be especially happy if this government really respected democracy and promised to recognize the results of the upcoming referendum in Quebec. I would be especially happy if this government did honour another one of its commitments by really creating jobs. I would be quite satisfied if this government could show me how it will succeed in reducing the common debt while respecting the most disadvantaged in this country.

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I would be satisfied if Canada managed to regain a certain credibility at the international level, but not by taking action at the last minute in order to ease its conscience, as this government is doing by proposing this bill. Because contrary to what some members of this government and some Canadian extremists may think, we in the Bloc Québécois are not ill-disposed toward Canadians. We simply want to give ourselves a country that will respect its neighbour.

The present government's attitude toward the traffic of explosives in Canada and toward the commitments made when the International Civil Aviation Organization met in Montreal shows everyone that we simply have a vision and that reality is quite different when one has to manage a country.

For ordinary citizens from the small towns and villages in my riding, this bill, whose only purpose is to enable the government to save face at the international level, is a little ridiculous. These people really feel that the government is wasting its time instead of dealing with the big problems they must face every day: earning an honest living so they can put bread on the table, as the Prime Minister keeps repeating every day; keeping their small businesses afloat; living safely and peacefully at home.

You can mark manufactured explosives all you want, these people will say, but if you do not fight social injustice and take real steps against violence, organized crime and terrorism, you are simply wasting your efforts. I am convinced that is the message I will hear back in my riding, and I can only agree with these people.

I urge this government to be a little more serious and take action for reasons other than to ease its conscience, because although we support this bill so far, we still have many questions. Is the bill's only purpose to allow the government to show off at the national and international level, or is it a real bill that will be acted on because we will give ourselves the means to do so?

[English]

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be addressing this, the first bill I have had the pleasure of addressing in my new role as the critic for natural resources. I would like to make a few general comments about the department before I detail our support for the bill and the reasons behind it.

I would like first of all to tell the Minister of Natural Resources that in my travels around the country this summer, checking into the background of the department, how her program is being received both in industry and among the provincial natural resource people, in many ways she seems to be moving in the right direction. She has been working hard. I think she is sincere in downsizing her department and getting out of areas that are traditionally and constitutionally in provin-

cial jurisdiction. As she continues to do that, she will have my support certainly in getting the federal government out of those areas and allowing the provincial governments to carry out their mandate.

The resource industry is tremendously important to Canada. The energy, mines and forest sectors account for something like 13 per cent of Canada's GNP and a full 39 per cent of its exports, so the minister has an important resource to look after. If we were to add up the mining, forestry and gas and oil sectors alone, we have direct employment of almost two million people in Canada, again emphasizing the importance of that department.

● (1040)

It is interesting that under the new system we heard about the other day, the new system of rating countries in the world, Canada came out as the second wealthiest country in the world, based largely on its natural resources. Again, it is very important, obviously, that we must be good stewards of our wealth, make sure that our natural resources are properly managed, and that we take advantage in a sustainable way of ensuring that prosperity is made available to Canadians.

With that background, it is a privilege to be the critic in this very important area. I remind the minister that she will have my support as long as she continues to move.

It is also interesting that the areas in which the government has moved in natural resources have stuck very closely to the demands we made during the last campaign. For example, we warned against the idea that if we are not careful we could have a carbon tax in the country. The carbon tax did not come to fruition in the last budget, and I am not sure why. This was positive for the industry.

The minister has also taken steps to sell off the government's share of Petro-Canada, which is something we have been calling for, for some years. That is certainly long overdue. I have registered my concerns about the process by which the brokerage firms were chosen, but other than that we are pleased to see that Petro-Canada is being privatized. It is unfortunate that the cost to the Canadian taxpayer will probably be something in the neighbourhood of \$20 billion, so the \$2 billion that will be raised by the sale will be a small consolation to the Canadian taxpayers who are on the hook for about \$1,480 each. Be that as it may, it certainly was a positive move.

Another encouraging move the minister has made was the guarantee that the government is out of the megaproject business. Again, that is something the Reform Party has been advocating for years. We will be out of the Hibernia project after this year, which is another positive step. It is interesting that all the things I would like to congratulate the minister on were certainly things we advocated before and during the last election campaign.

I am here this morning to speak to Bill C-71, an act to amend the Explosives Act, which will allow Canada to formally participate in the international convention on the marking of plastic explosives for the purpose of detection.

The purpose of the convention is to make sure that as many plastic explosives as possible are detected by the legal authorities, particularly at airports, in an effort to stop terrorism. This is really an anti-terrorism bill. I and my colleagues agree with the intention behind it.

After the Air India tragedy and the Pan Am bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1989 the United Nations passed two separate resolutions. One was passed by the Security Council and the other by the General Assembly. The resolutions urged the International Civil Aviation Organization, which is another UN body, to intensify its work on an international regime for the marking of plastic explosives for the purpose of detection. Out of the resolutions was born the convention I have already mentioned. It was put forward in Montreal in 1991 and signed by 100 nations. Although Canada signed at that time, it did not have the legal authority to ratify it. The bill we are talking about today will give Canada the authority and the ability to formally ratify that convention.

For the last four years research has been ongoing to consult with the industry and to develop an appropriate chemical marker, which has now been developed at laboratories in New Jersey. The time has come to ratify the convention.

Unfortunately the convention will not take effect until 35 nations become signatories. At least five of those signatories must be producers of plastic explosives. I understand that five producer countries have now signed, among them Slovakia, Switzerland, Norway, the Czech Republic, and Spain. Canada will be the sixth producer country to sign. That still means that only 13 countries, including Canada, will have legally ratified the convention, which is a long way from the 35 needed to actually put it in place.

• (1045)

Doubts have been raised as to the effectiveness of the convention when it is finally put in place. I fear that it may simply increase the black market for unmarked plastic explosives which will still be in circulation. It may also strengthen the network of terrorist groups that will continue to communicate with each other, more regularly perhaps, to get a supply of unidentifiable plastic explosives.

However I agree that the ordinary terrorist, if I can call such a thing ordinary, without international connections will be harder pressed to obtain material that will escape detection devices. Therefore the convention is a positive thing. I am recommending to my colleagues that the vote in favour of it.

Interestingly enough, although the United States has signed the convention, it has not yet introduced legislation to ratify

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that convention. We talked with the explosives industry organization in Washington called the Institute of Makers of Explosives. Its representatives say they endorse the convention. The Federal Aviation Administration, which is a leading agency in America, may introduce legislation soon to ratify it. To date nothing has come about to make sure this happens.

We have not had an instance for a long time like the Lockerbie incident or the Air India explosion. The urgency has somehow died down and the issue has probably taken a lower political priority, at least in the United States. I hope that it will not take another tragedy to bring this issue to the world stage once again.

The convention is not in force right now and therefore is not really relevant. Until the United States recognizes it, the remainder of the significant players in this game will not join in ratifying the convention.

The amendment to our act that we are discussing this morning will continue to be irrelevant until we do something on a political level to bring the United States into the game. Until that happens, nothing will get done and airline passengers all over the world will not receive the benefits that marking plastic explosives will bring.

Today I am calling on the Minister of Natural Resources to address this on a political level, to call her American counterpart and bring him up to speed on this issue and to urge the United States to move on this issue and formally approve the convention so we can keep terrorism in its hole where it belongs.

The minister has shown leadership. I have mentioned some of the positive things she has done in her portfolio. I would ask and encourage her to put her words into action now on the political front internationally and show some leadership with our American friends in urging them to sign this convention as quickly as possible.

I have some relevant comments to make regarding other issues about the Explosives Act. Allow me first to give our listeners some background on explosives in Canada and then I will get to the amendment.

First let me talk a little bit about the general explosives regime in Canada. There are about 100 licensed producers of other explosives but only one manufacturer of plastic explosives in the country. This producer is located in Quebec and only produces plastic explosives on an as needed basis, mostly for military demolition charges. We are not talking about a major market for plastic explosives or, for that matter, a major problem with them.

Our 100 producers of conventional explosives are served by a 30-employee branch within the Department of Natural Resources Canada and there are five regional offices including one on West Hasting Street in Vancouver.

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I have some personal experience with the explosives branch in my former life as a logging contractor and a road builder. Certainly in British Columbia one does not do a lot of that without dealing extensively with explosives. I have in the past received my blaster's certificate, taken the exams and so on in order to deal with explosives. However, we have not had an extensive problem with abusive explosives in Canada. Historically that has been a blessing and I hope that will continue.

However, there is an ongoing problem that seems to be happening in one region of the country. It is what happened when the Hell's Angels decided to take things into their own hands in Montreal. These ongoing biker wars in Montreal with cars, kids, restaurants, bystanders and even the odd member of the biker gang have been a concern to Canadians and are a growing concern about the use of explosives in terrorist activities. Police warn that this could be just the beginning.

• (1050)

The Hell's Angels are the biggest, wealthiest motorcycle gang in the world. It is working hard to tighten its grip on drug trafficking, prostitution and gun running right across Canada. It seems to have chosen explosives as the anonymous method of choice for killing rivals.

As the police begin to scrutinize these groups more and more closely, the groups may be driven to use more covert methods. There is always a possibility that plastic explosives that currently are not being used for these purposes will be used in their terrorist acts and innocent people may continue to be killed.

I have been assured that plastic explosives have not been used to date in any of the Montreal explosions, but only explosives that are more easily obtainable from regular construction, mining and road construction.

Who knows when some biker gang could put plastic explosives on some kind of public transport and kill many more innocent people? Plastic explosive that is marked with a chemical identifier would ensure that this would become much more difficult and may even deter criminals from using it. That is why Bill C-71 is a positive move. Although it may have a very negligible impact on that market, at least it is a positive step and deserves to be supported.

I also have some concerns with conventional explosives. The last example is in Montreal, which is not a worker health and safety problem that the Federal Explosives Act is meant to address. It is a security problem, with these same biker gangs that seem to trust their stuff by killing innocent 11-year old kids and so on.

What about the explosives used in these biker bombings? It is interesting that Quebec has the strongest provincial security regime regarding explosives in the entire country, something which it put

in place following the FLQ crisis years ago. Yet it cannot seem to find out where these people are getting their explosives.

I want the House to know that not every piece of explosive was detonated in those killings. In one bombing police came upon several sticks that did not explode. Why could these explosives not be traced back to the original vendor so we could find out who sold these explosives to whom and try to catch these thieves and black marketeers? Someone must be currently licensed to store or use explosives and is selling it via the black market to these gangs. However we just cannot trace them. Although the boxes are marked at the factory, the individual sticks or cartridges of explosives inside the boxes are not. To mark each one individually would be an incredible amount of work and probably far too costly to contemplate.

However a solution to this has been suggested by the American Institute of Makers of Explosives, the industry representative of explosive manufacturers in the states. Its solution could help Canada's growing security problem with explosives. It is not a solution that would require legislative change but only a change to the regulations attached to the act.

The Institute of Makers of Explosives is calling for a study on a proposal it has made of including tiny plastic and metal chips in the explosive material itself which is coded by colour to identify the manufacturer. After an explosion investigators would look for the chips in the debris and be able to trace the explosives in that way.

I have a description paper on the study that has been proposed. The institute suggests studying this to see whether it is either economically possible or even a positive move. At least the study should include whether those types of identifiable tags of plastic and metal parts should be used.

The institute promotes the objective study of placing such tags into the explosives and whether it would be an effective law enforcement tool. It wants to study whether it would be a negative impact on the environment because of the presence of these chips. It wonders how efficient it is and whether a significant number of bombings would be traceable. Although there were 2,300 bombings in the United States last year, only 36 involved commercially available high explosives. They also want to know about the cost.

The institute is willing to take part and participate in a study on all those things. It would investigate whether this could help to deter things like the Montreal bombings. It would certainly make the explosive traceable to where they are manufactured and sold.

• (1055)

This study is worthy of support. It may be a suitable way to trace explosives. I hope that the Canadian government will participate in the IME study to see if it could have application here.

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I believe that knowing explosives were traceable might deter people from being dishonest and selling them on the black market. If they do that, they should know they are contributing to murder and violence. At the current time they are getting away scot free because the explosives are untraceable.

I mentioned earlier my support for this amendment. However I need to mention, in light of the couple of negative comments I have about this bill, the timing of it and so on had to do with what is really minor housekeeping business being brought to the House. Admittedly, as I mentioned, we will support it.

There are a whole slew of very serious issues, some of them involving biker gangs, some of them involving other criminal justice issues that could be brought to the House and should be dealt with as quickly as we are prepared to deal with this one.

We have a multitude of problems that people were telling me about in my travels this summer, especially in the criminal justice area that are far more serious than this anti-terrorism bill. It could save more lives if the government would listen to the Canadian people and put the rights of the law-abiding citizen ahead of the rights of the criminal.

I wish today after we deal with this we would be spending time next on a crucial and critical bill dealing with amendments, for example, to the Young Offenders Act or on critical bills like enabling legislation that would allow for a national binding referendum on capital punishment. Those are measures of some substance that people would say are moving Canada toward a safer system or toward a system that I can have faith in.

This anti-terrorism bill we are dealing with today is not going to affect most people even a little. There are many issues that we could be and should be dealing with quickly that could reinforce people's faith in the justice system. Certainly I do not see them on the legislative Order Paper and that is one of the things that is unfortunate.

Allow me to sum up. I call on the minister today to contact our American counterpart and urge the United States to sign the convention, thus making our legislative amendment more relevant in the world.

I also urge her to take part in the study being proposed by the Institute of the Makers of Explosives in the United States which would look at the idea of placing identifiable chips in explosives so that we could trace them when we are confronted with criminal misuse of explosives, a problem that seems to be increasing.

For a long time we have had the luxury of concentrating on worker health and safety through the Explosives Act. These are important issues and it has been most of my experience with the Explosives Act in my own personal background.

I believe the day is approaching when the federal government will have to turn its attention toward enhancing the security of all Canadians through more accurately identifying the source of explosive charges. We should at least have in our possession the options identified and prioritized in case we need to move toward traceability of explosives in a more extensive way.

I reiterate my support for Bill C-71. I do not believe it is going to set the world on its head, but the intention behind it is good and I support it. I do not see why we should take any more of the valuable time of the House to deal with this matter.

There may even be unanimous consent to move directly to a committee of the whole and dispense with this bill in short order so that we can get on with dealing with some of the more critical issues that I mentioned earlier. If the government wishes to make such a motion, I will stand in support of moving to committee of the whole.

Mr. Joe Fontana (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his offer. I believe the parliamentary secretary to natural resources will take his suggestion under advisement. Perhaps there is a way to expedite the bill. I am pleased to speak on Bill C-71, the marking of explosives for detectability.

• (1100)

I congratulate the parliamentary secretary and the member for Moncton for his fine words this morning on the urgent need to essentially deal with an important piece of legislation concerning the security of Canadians, at the same time hopefully making it possible for us to deter terrorists from using plastic explosives to undermine the social fabric and security of the country.

There has been some experience around the world with plastic explosives being used by terrorists against civil aviation targets. The roll call of terrorist acts which have resulted in the deaths of innocent people on aircraft and the destruction of those aircraft as the result of sabotage by plastic explosives is a tragic one.

Unfortunately the world as we know it continues to have its dangerous and uncertain elements and conditions remain ripe for the emergence of people who will take the law into their own hands and cause such tragedies and suffering. Canada and all like minded nations must continue to be diligent in order minimize the chances of such acts of depredation occurring in their countries or be visited on their citizens.

The legislation before us to date cannot solve the problems of the world that give birth to terrorism. It can however enable us to put another brick in the wall which governments are building to reduce the ability of terrorists to act against the peaceful interests of states and their people.

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As has been described so clearly by my colleague, the bill is designed to ensure the so-called marking agent is inserted in plastic explosives. This action will improve immeasurably the ability to detect these explosives using the right equipment. This is an essential step in the development of a system which will provide Canada with the capability to respond effectively to terrorist threats of sabotage using plastic explosives.

It should also be a matter of some pride that Canada has played such a pivotal role in developing the international framework for marking and controlling plastic explosives. Canadian scientists and technical experts have been world leaders in solving the technical problems associated with putting markers in explosives in a way that ensures their detectability while in no way jeopardizing either the essential function of legal explosives or degrading their safety or environmental acceptability.

Both the government and the Canadian explosives industry recognize that Canada must continue to be in the forefront of developed nations ensuring all reasonable actions are taken to thwart the activities of terrorists. Our passage of this legislation will send a clear message to other countries including the United States that we are committed to improving the framework for combating terrorism and that we are taking positive steps to ensure this happens earlier rather than later.

We must continue to remain aware that the legislation represents not so much an end point of a process but rather a point along a continuum of actions which must be encouraged and nurtured to ensure Canada and other nations remain vigilant in the fight against would be saboteurs.

In consequence of this approach the government is extremely mindful that along with the ability to make explosives more easily detectable is the requirement to have the right equipment in the right places to detect terrorist activities. The sad history of terrorism demonstrates clearly that the air carrier industry has been a target for the such activities. We are confident the equipment in place at airports today is appropriate to the threat and the risk that prevails in Canada.

Let me assure members of the House as well as the public that we have the capacity today to detect plastic explosives. That does not mean the government is complacent about aviation security, far from it. For its part Transport Canada keeps its aviation security regime under constant review in order to ensure it is properly configured to respond both to the situation which prevails today as well as to any change in threat that might arise.

Mindful of the gains to security that might be available as a result of the improvements to the detectability of explosives which will arise in response to this new legislation, and keeping

in mind constant improvements in detection technology, Transport Canada in co-operation with industry and other interested departments will soon begin an in depth review of its equipment deployment strategy at airports. Once the review is complete the Minister of Transport will be looking to see what refinements might be needed to ensure Canada remains in the forefront in terms of our ability to respond to terrorist threats where and when they exist.

• (1105)

This legislation is an essential part of the mosaic to respond to the scourge of terrorism. It has been developed in close collaboration among many departments and is fully consistent with the overall approach among many countries. The principles contained herein have been embraced by the industry which it affects.

This collaborate endeavour should be enough to convince the most skeptical of observers that Canada is fully committed to combating terrorism. I entreat all members to demonstrate their personal commitment to this effort by voting for this legislation.

Mr. George S. Rideout (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I compliment the parliamentary secretary for his excellent address. I have a question relating to the role of transport and the detection of explosive devices and whether this bill will be of any assistance to the department in trying to regulate that.

We are hearing a number of speeches this morning talking about a number of things that are not relevant to what we are trying to achieve here, which is merely to detect plastic explosives normally in a situation in which they are being transported on an aeroplane. Transport obviously has an integral role to play with respect to that. Perhaps the parliamentary secretary could comment.

Mr. Fontana: Mr. Speaker, while my remarks may have addressed Transport Canada's concern with regard to the absolute necessity that we have this legislation in place, it is important to note—and I assure my colleagues in the House as well as the public—that Transport Canada has the ability and the equipment which are important at our airports to ensure we can detect plastic explosives.

It is in place now and we will continue to review any improvements required to ensure the travelling public at our airports that the aviation security regime is in place and is at the forefront of detecting these plastic explosives.

It is important that all nations ratify the convention. Our borders are open and Canada deals with every country in terms of trade, as well as tourism. It is important to ensure Canada take this leadership role today and move on with the legislation so that hopefully it will encourage other nations to participate.

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To answer the question of the parliamentary secretary, through him to the public, Transport Canada has the equipment and the confidence that we are able to detect any plastic explosives introduced in the aviation regime.

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus to say a few words about Bill C-71, an act to amend the Explosives Act.

The Explosives Act is an act of public and worker safety which regulates the composition, quality and character of explosives, in addition to their manufacture, importation, sale, purchase, possession and storage. It also controls the use of fireworks. This amendment is necessary, according to the government, to require the incorporation of a detectable additive in plastic explosives, coupled with a provision to make regulations to control unmarked plastic explosives.

It is claimed this will hinder terrorism and enable Canada to ratify an international civil aviation organization convention on the marking of plastic explosives for the purpose of detection.

The principal provisions of the bill require the marking of most plastic explosives for the purpose of detection and prohibit the manufacture, storage, possession, transfer of possession, transportation, import and export of unmarked plastic explosives, except that may be permitted by the terms of the convention or required by overriding military necessity. Also the principal provisions of the bill allow the governor in council to make regulations governing the possession, transfer and disposal of any unmarked plastic explosives.

• (1110)

New Democrats support positive initiatives which reduce crime, reduce terrorism or which make our country safer for Canadians, all those to be included in that heading.

The bill, although not as timely as we would like, will be a positive first step in addressing illegal and other terrorist acts. We are concerned as New Democrats that this initiative is a delay on the government's part.

We have other concerns about the bill. One is that in June 1989 a United Nations security council resolution called for the international civil aviation organization to intensify its work on devising an international regime for the marking of plastic or sheet explosives for the purpose of detection. Later that year, in December 1989, the same resolution was passed by the United Nations general assembly of that sitting. We are now looking at 1995 where the government is undertaking to introduce this bill which would achieve the convention.

I heard the parliamentary secretary say in the House that it was a leadership role. I have some questions with respect to how forthright and how strong this leadership is mainly because Canada has had five or six years to introduce the legislation in the House of Commons. The government is just meeting the requirements of the convention. Why is the government not undertaking to make it more restrictive to purchase explosives and safer for Canadians? Why is the government not undertaking to make it more difficult to purchase explosives?

We have seen a long and drawn out debate on gun control legislation and the registration of firearms. Where was the government in terms of saying there is one manufacturer in Valleyfield, Quebec, manufacturing explosives? However the government will not deal with making it more difficult to purchase bombs.

It is an indication of the weak leadership capacity of the government where it is not going beyond the convention. Why not go beyond the convention and undertake to introduce regulations which will make the purchase of plastic explosives and bombs more difficult for Canadians and for others outside the country? The government could have gone one step further.

Has the government undertaken to study whether there is new technology on the horizon which would detect existing plastic bombs? We have seen all sorts of new computer technology introduced in the last number of months. It is being introduced on a weekly basis from a number of different companies, not just computer companies but technologically based companies. Why has the government not pursued with private sector corporations developing a technology which would identify plastic explosives now as opposed to waiting for 35 other countries to sign this convention and hopefully in the next 15 years have this problem addressed?

I think 15 years is a bit long to be waiting to have this problem addressed. In 15 years a lot of people and a lot of organizations can purchase explosives and use them in a very damaging way, especially on the Canadian population.

We are wondering what the government is doing in that regard, why it has not taken a leadership role, as it calls it, in undertaking to make it safer as opposed to meeting the basic requirements of an international convention which will not be in effect internationally for another 10 or 15 years, or who knows how long.

I wonder what the bill will do with respect to diminishing terrorism in Canada, for example in the Montreal situation where motorcycle gangs are having a bit of a set to in essence. They are killing each other with bombs, perhaps not plastic explosives but with dynamite and other explosives. What is the government doing

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in response to making our communities safer, making Montreal safer and addressing this very serious problem in Quebec?

Let me share with members of the House and Canadians what the government is doing. It is not doing a lot. The Minister of Justice travelled to Montreal to meet with the mayor of Montreal to discuss anti-gang legislation which the mayor has asked the federal government to implement. What has the Minister of Justice done? He listened to the mayor, had a nice little trip and had a lunch, but he will not do anything with respect to this issue because there are more important issues like gun control and registering which are creating all sorts of problems. He will not look after the bombs. We will leave the bombs up to the gangs. We will let the manufacturers of explosives continue to manufacture these things and sell them in the communities of our country so that people can use them to kill each other and innocent bystanders in larger numbers than with rifles.

• (1115)

I am wondering what the government is doing with respect to solving this problem in Montreal. I share the concern of members of the House, particularly from the province of Quebec, who are very concerned that this very serious problem be addressed. The bill will have absolutely nothing to do with addressing this problem in Quebec. I am sorry to see that happen.

I will not take up a lot of time on the bill. As I said, it is a good first step. I have another concern, and it is in response to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources when he says that the military has a 10-year supply of plastic explosives.

Canadians are wondering what will happen with this 10-year supply of plastic explosives as it relates to the bill. Will the military use the explosives as they are, with undetectable components in the explosives? Will the government have the military destroy the undetectable explosives and have it purchase the new formula explosives so that they are detectable?

These are questions the government should be answering. I guess Canadians would like to ask what the military is doing with a 10-year supply of plastic explosives. Are they assuming that something very serious is going to happen internationally and we may require these explosives?

These questions have to be addressed by the government. The bill excludes the military use of plastic explosives being detected for emergency purposes. I would like to know how the government defines emergency use of plastic explosives by the military so that it may be exempt from the clauses of this convention. Does this mean that all the military in every country in the world is exempt as well, or is it just the Canadian military? If that is the case, does it have a very secure system of storage of plastic explosives so that if

it is undetectable at least it is safely stored away and for the purposes of military uses only?

What kinds of restrictions, what kinds of regulations, what kinds of registration systems do they have for plastic explosives for the military?

In summary, we are very concerned with respect to the bill. It is a good first step. It is not a large enough step in terms of addressing the issue. I do not think it is happening quickly enough. If the Canadian government is serious about passing the bill, it will have a plan of action in place to contact other countries that are co-signators of the convention to have them introduce their legislation in a very timely way so that we can address this problem quickly, as opposed to over the next 15 years.

I would ask the government in its initiative to undertake to contact these other governments in a very formal way to ensure that this convention is signed by the minimum number of countries required to make it effective internationally.

New Democrats support the bill in principle. If some of these questions can be answered accurately and satisfactorily, we will give our support to the bill. I wait for and look forward to the bill coming to committee so that we can ask these questions in greater detail.

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.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee.)

* * *

• (1120)

AUDITOR GENERAL ACT

The House resumed from September 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-83, an act to amend the Auditor General Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a very real pleasure for me to stand to speak in support of Bill C-83.

It is entitled an act to amend the Auditor General Act. It seems to me that it is very difficult to get excited about a bill with a title like that. However, I should explain that this legislation is designed to fulfil a commitment made in the Liberal red book and supported by all environmentalists and all environmentally minded business people before and during our election, that is a commitment to appoint an overseer for environmental matters in the federal government.

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I would like to read out the red book commitment before addressing the actual terms of Bill C-83. The red book states that the government:

—will appoint an Environmental Auditor General, reporting directly to Parliament, with powers of investigation similar to the powers of the Auditor General. This office would report annually to the public on how successfully federal programs and spending are supporting the shift to sustainable development. The report would also evaluate the implementation and enforcement of federal environmental laws. Individuals could petition the Environmental Auditor General to conduct special investigations when they see environmental policies or laws being ignored or violated.

Bill C-83 deals with that promise we made in the red book. It deals with appointing an auditor for sustainable development in government.

Sustainable development is simply common sense in government, in business affairs, and in our everyday lives. Sustainable development is human beings living on the planet in such a way that they maintain a healthy environment around them.

It is illogical and also immoral for us to think that we can live on the planet, conduct a business on the planet, or conduct a government operation on the planet without taking into account the health of our environment in the long term. If we do not, one day those bad policies would catch up to us. Our personal health would suffer, the health of our children would suffer, and so on.

Sustainable development, which is mentioned in our promise, is simply a sensible way of living on the planet, a sensible way of conducting business, and a sensible way of running a government.

I am delighted to see Bill C-83 before the House. Its purpose is to establish a commissioner for the environment and sustainable development within the office of the auditor general. I should explain this, because our red book commitment states that we will appoint an environmental auditor general.

When the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development was conducting public hearings there was a great deal of support for the idea of having an environmental watchdog in the federal government. There was a good deal of discussion on what form or what powers that person and that office should have. One view was that there should be a separate office called the environmental auditor general. That office would have functions very similar to those of the auditor general's office today, the general watchdog on government.

Another view was that there should be a commissioner. In some other jurisdictions there is a commissioner for the environment who performs not only the sorts of watchdog functions that our auditor general does for the federal government processes but also acts much more as a conscience for environmental matters as a point of contact for ordinary citizens who want to communicate their concerns with government, in this case about the environment and sustainable development.

• (1125)

Under Bill C-83, in fulfilling our promise to provide an environmental auditor general I believe we are going further. We are providing a commissioner for the environment and sustainable development, whose office will be within the present office of the auditor general.

It is important to realize that we are putting our environmental concerns in exactly the same place as our business concerns, our concerns about the efficiency of government.

Under Bill C-83 we will see the creation of a commissioner whose new office will confirm the government's commitment to put its own house in order from an environmental and sustainable development point of view. Any greening of government policies we put into place will be monitored by the commissioner.

This person will be available to the public and will be required to report to Parliament. By making the appointment the government is holding itself accountable for its own environmental performance. Because the federal government is a very large and powerful organization—and some of us think it too large and powerful—the commissioner will be able to promote sustainable development not only in our own government but throughout society by example and in other ways.

The commissioner will be the auditor general's right hand person on all environment and sustainable development matters. In addition to helping the auditor general in those very special and important areas, the commissioner will monitor and report to Parliament every year on how all government departments are putting their sustainable development strategies into practice, on how the ministers are responding to petitions from the public on environmental matters.

On reading the legislation I was also interested in something else, which actually is different from the way I have thought of the environmental and sustainable development commissioner watchdog as it was presented in the red book, that is the matter of appointment of the commissioner. To be honest, I was involved a little in developing parts of the red book and I had not given much thought to that. I had not thought through how one would appoint a person who is independent of government and who could criticize government.

In this case, it is interesting that the legislation we have before us provides for the auditor general, who is already well accepted as an independent arm's length office holder, to make this appointment. I like the fact that this will not be an order in council appointment. It will not be an appointment by the Prime Minister. It will be an appointment by the auditor general, who will be directed to seek out an appropriately independent person who will become our commissioner for the environment and sustainable development. I like that. That fits in with the already existing—and I think accepted by the general public—arm's length principle of the auditor general's office. It is very

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important that the commissioner for the environment be independent and be seen to be independent of government. I am glad the appointment is being dealt with in that way.

I mentioned earlier that one of the ideas discussed was the watchdog would be a separate office like the auditor general's office. In this legislation we provide for it to be within the auditor general's office itself. What are the advantages of that? Mr. Speaker, since you read the auditor general's reports from cover to cover when they appear every year, you will know that the auditor general already makes a point of reporting on environmental matters. It is not something that has been ignored by the auditor general. In a sense that function is already there and we are strengthening it by the appointment of a commissioner who will be working with the auditor general.

• (1130)

The commissioner, unlike some of the other people who are appointed to the auditor general's office, will be appointed because of his or her expertise in the area of environment and sustainable development. That is quite different from the present where naturally in the auditor general's office accountants and people who can read financial statements are needed. This is all very important.

There will be a specialist who can advise the auditor general on environmental and sustainable development aspects of government. This will strengthen the auditor general's office and will give the commissioner a sound foundation for his or her work.

Another advantage is that the auditor general already has a respectable reputation for independence. Instead of having to start spending considerable time building a new position and to show very clearly that he or she is independent of government, this new commissioner will already be working in a respected arm's length office which I believe helps.

There is a financial advantage to it. We already have an auditor general's office and there are efficiencies in terms of support and things of that nature. It fits in with our concerns for efficient and economical government at the present time.

There are a couple of other things about this matter. One is that by being in the auditor general's office the commissioner immediately has the advantage of sharing the spotlight which is on the auditor general's report every year.

One way the auditor general works, and I think ministries feel paranoid about it, is that the publicity which surrounds the release of the auditor general's report is used as a vehicle to make sure that the recommendations of the auditor general are implemented. That spotlight does exist.

The media now wait every year, as members do, for the auditor general's report. When the scandals appear they are in the spotlight. It is one way our system works to cleanse itself and make itself more efficient. By putting the commissioner in the auditor general's office we immediately get a share of that spotlight for environmental and sustainable development affairs. I like that.

The other reason I like the integration in the auditor general's office has to do with what I tried to say about sustainable development in the first place. The environment and sustainable development are not things which are separate from government. They are not things which are separate from the way we live our daily lives. They are not things which are separate from the way business is conducted. As I tried to explain at the beginning, if we do not live in a sustainable way on this planet, in the end the planet will destroy us. I do not believe the planet is at risk, I think it is human beings who are at risk.

By putting the commissioner for sustainable development and environment in the auditor general's office, we are sending out a signal that we realize business, environment and sustainable development are all part of the same thing, that the functions of our auditor general automatically include environment and sustainable development.

In the section of the red book I reminded the House of, the recommendation included the matter of citizens petitioning the government with their environmental concerns. I am pleased to see in this legislation that the commissioner is required to deal with petitions and to monitor petitions received by all of our ministries on environmental matters. This means that citizens dealing with ministers have someone watching over their concerns.

I like to think that most ministries take petitions seriously but in this case the commissioner is required to monitor each minister's response to petitions on the environment. This extends the public's power to influence government in what I consider to be a very important area.

Ministers will have 120 days to respond to the petitions with extensions to that only under very exceptional circumstances. The commissioner will see to it that the ministers respond. That is very important.

• (1135)

Another item which is built into the terms of reference for the new commissioner is the fact that our government departments are required to develop their own sustainable development plans. They have to develop these plans within a certain period of time. Once they are established, every three years they have to renew them.

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I know directives of this sort go out on various matters to departments from ministers' offices and we sometimes wonder if anything happens because the organization is so big. In this case the commissioner is specifically directed to monitor each ministry's ongoing plans for the environment and sustainable development within that ministry's jurisdiction. The commissioner is required to report annually on those plans. This is building checks and balances into the basic system of government which ensure that the environment and sustainable development are built into everything we do.

I know this is not easy. When the economy is difficult we have the tendency to forget environmental matters and the basic health of our population and the effects a polluted environment will have on us. When the minister introduced the legislation yesterday she mentioned some of the things which have been done. These are things which will help the commissioner to ensure that these measures are properly implemented.

In Environment Canada we have already implemented green procurement policies which emphasize reduction, reuse and the purchase of environmentally sound products. The fact that we have announced that policy and the fact that we will have an environmental watchdog to see that we implement it are very important.

We are already managing the ministry of the environment vehicle fleet to reduce emissions by 30 per cent by the year 2000. In all offices in the ministry zero waste is now the target. We are improving energy efficiency in all ministry buildings and conserving water by means of water audits in all Environment Canada buildings. Those are examples of what one ministry is doing. Those are the sorts of things which the new commissioner for the environment and sustainable development will be asked to monitor.

In summary, under Bill C-83 the auditor general's office is exclusively given the environment and sustainable development responsibilities and the staff to carry out those responsibilities. The commissioner will allow us to show leadership in a wide range of areas involving green government and sustainable methods of governing. The commissioner will monitor all ministries continuously and will ensure that they are accountable. The legislation will allow Canadians to approach the government much more readily with their environmental concerns.

In particular, the commissioner will integrate the environment into the normal business of government. That is what sustainable government is all about. I congratulate the Minister of the Environment on this legislation and I look forward to its rapid implementation.

[Translation]

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech indicates a certain naivety. I understand the creation of a commissioner of the environment and, moreover, we are in agreement with the bill, but it will not solve all environmental problems.

In listening to what he has just said, I got the impression that this commissioner was to solve all of the problems in place within departments and all of the problems in Canada, and I do not think that this will be the case.

• (1140)

If I may, I would like to make a small comment on the role of the commissioner of the environment, his or her appointment in particular.

It is our sincere wish that this commissioner's appointment be non-partisan and non-political. In environmental issues, I feel that the minister has made political decisions rather than environmental ones. Among others, the *Irving Whale* issue alone is a great scandal.

I would like to ask my colleague whether he feels that the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development ought to have total power to reverse a decision such as the one in the *Irving Whale* situation, where everyone is fully aware that the environmentalists were against that decision anyway. I would like to know his opinion. Should this commissioner not be totally empowered to act in a very timely manner so as to be able to reverse just such a decision as we have seen this summer?

Mr. Adams: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Bloc member for her question.

[English]

On the matter of the member's first point, I am sorry if in my enthusiasm I conveyed the idea that one step like this can solve all problems. We all know that in all areas of government there is no magic formula which solves everything. It does not.

I believe that this is not just one decision. It builds something into government which will tick away day in day out, year in year out for decades and I hope longer to come. It will continuously influence and produce changes which will go on for very long periods of time. I appreciate the member's point and I apologize if I gave the impression that it would solve everything.

On the appointment I explained that I like the idea it will not be an order in council, that it will be an appointment made by the auditor general. The auditor general is an arm's length person. He is not a political person. I believe it will be non-partisan. As I said in my remarks I like that idea.

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On the point about the power to reverse decisions, I do not believe for example in the case of the auditor general who overviews all government that a watchdog of that type should be able to step in and have draconian powers to interfere with the general running of government. I believe he or she should have all possible power to pressure for changes, but I do not believe it is feasible to have a watchdog who can stop government or change government on any particular issue.

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I will make my question very short and succinct for the hon. member.

Government watchdogs in the past have proven to be little more than government lapdogs taking the direction of the government. Is it the government's position that it is going to come up with a new concept of a watchdog, or is this simply the government's way to ensure that it can control the agenda of environmental processes?

Mr. Adams: Mr. Speaker, I really am shocked by this, particularly in the context of this debate. Perhaps there are some specific examples which the member can refer to. Is he really saying that the auditor general is a lapdog of this government or previous governments?

I believe it is something that the member should withdraw with respect to the person of the auditor general today and with respect to the office of the auditor general. He can criticize the way an office like that functions. He can criticize their views and things of that sort. I know he did not mention the auditor general and perhaps that is what he is going to say, but this is what the debate is about. It is about the office of the auditor general. I think that is a shocking aspersion on the auditor general.

I have agreed that such offices do not cure all our problems. I have to believe the auditor general is independent, is honest and is efficient. I know the auditor general cannot cure all the ills in government.

I hope the member will withdraw.

• (1145)

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I might just clarify my colleague's point to the hon. member for Peterborough.

He was saying that we have seen example after example in the House, during this Parliament and in Parliaments before, where the auditor general has come down with scathing reports about the operation of government departments and ministries, only to have these reports totally ignored by the government of the day.

Unless the government is truthfully committed to acknowledging, respecting and acting on the recommendations and the findings of the auditor general we could appoint a million government watchdogs and a million auditors general to keep an eye on the

government. If the government continually will not do anything about it, what is the use? That is the point.

What assurances do the House and the Canadian people have that this new appointment, if it is to be effective, will act on the recommendations and on the reports and criticisms of this position?

There has been no example in the past of the government making any meaningful move toward acting on auditors general's reports. What assurances do we have now?

Mr. Adams: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley for his remarks and for his clarification. I accept that and it was not as personal as his colleague intended.

It is the job of the House, including the member opposite, to see that governments of the day carry through with their commitments. In this case I mentioned environmental policies put into effect by the government. We are debating a promise the government made before it was elected, which it is putting into place. Here is an example of something being done.

When the commissioner starts to report and the member opposite receives this new information about what is happening in government I hope he will use it as a stick to see to it the government of the day, ours or any other, makes the government as green as possible.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to speak to the second reading of Bill C-83, an act to amend the Auditor General Act to establish an office for monitoring and auditing government departmental work involving sustainable development.

I am pleased to speak to the bill because it addressed a subject very important to me. In the previous Parliament I had a private member's motion that called for the government to establish an environmental auditor general. It had a lot of support from all political parties of the time, environmental organizations and ordinary Canadians. I also sat on the environment committee last year when it studied and reported on the idea of establishing such an office.

That report, issued in May 1994, looked at the need for environmental auditing and concluded Canada needed not just an auditor but a commissioner of the environment and sustainable development.

The committee stated in its report: "Virtually all witnesses saw the area of independent policy review as being the biggest gap that currently exists in the framework by which the government is to be held accountable for its sustainability efforts".

Most of the witnesses said more than an auditing function was needed. François Bregha, president of Resource Futures International, said a policy evaluation role was necessary because we do not have the criteria right now to measure our progress toward sustainable development.

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Bill Andrews, executive director of the West Coast Environmental Law Association, agreed: "What is missing is an independent policy analysis role so that if there are major gaps in policy decisions there is some way of knowing they will come to public attention".

The committee also recommended that the office of commissioner be established by new and separate legislation, not just with an amendment to the Auditor General Act.

• (1150)

Paul Muldoon, former member of the task force on the Ontario bill of rights, stated separate legislation is necessary because the roles, functions, mandates, scope and powers must be crystal clear in the minds of the public, in the minds of government and in the minds of other affected constituencies.

Sadly, as with so much the government does, its actions in response to the good words of the committee and to the witnesses who appeared before it fall short of what is needed. Bill C-83, as we will see in our study of the legislation, has little to do with sustainable development and is not what is desperately needed in Canada today.

When second reading concludes the legislation will return for clause by clause study to the same standing committee on the environment which drafted the original report. I hope the other members of the committee will challenge Bill C-83 aggressively and defend the interests of the report they wrote. The committee cannot overlook the fact that the Minister of the Environment in drafting Bill C-83 has ignored 11 out of 17 recommendations contained in that committee's extensive report.

At the same time it is important that we do not lose sight of the fact that witness after witness told the committee environmental auditing would not be proactive enough.

Art Hanson, president and chief executive officer of the International Institute for Sustainable Development, said the audit of how well existing policies are implemented does little to inform the need for new policies.

Kenny Blacksmith, deputy grand chief, Grand Council of the Cree, agreed: "It would be preferable to have no commissioner than to have a commissioner whose terms of reference are so restrictive that she or he cannot influence the substance of policy, implementation and content and interpretation of laws on environmental issues".

I quoted yesterday in the House Helen Hughes, New Zealand's commissioner for the environment, who said she would find it very difficult to operate without being able to look at government policy.

As these witnesses confirmed, what is needed is an independent commissioner who can take a forward looking approach to evaluating the effectiveness of the federal government's policies, laws, regulations and programs in moving Canada toward sustainability. Instead of independent policy analysis what we have in Bill C-83 is an auditing function of how well existing policies are being implemented and whether government departments are meeting the objectives of their own sustainable development plans.

For all intents and purposes and with all sincerity this is a role that should be carried out by the departments and the auditor general today. There is nothing new in Bill C-83 that could not be done without it.

Truly effective environmental auditing is something different. Truly effective environmental auditing would look at the policies and objectives which govern the departments and their programs and tell us if those policies and objectives are adequate or desirable.

The function proposed by the minister for this new office through Bill C-83 is a reflective model. It asks the office holder to look at the past and tell us what we have done wrong. The function proposed by my previous work and the function supported by Canadians and the committee as most needed is a proactive one, one that looks at the future and guides us through policy and program design to that future, a future in which Canadians through their efforts and activities can live a sustainable life and ensure our activities on the earth are sustainable.

It is most important that this generation leave the earth a better place for the next generation. This means we have to change many of the ways we are currently doing things. Obviously we can learn from looking at the past and therefore an audit function in and of itself about to be performed by the auditor general's office, if the legislation passes, is important. I am not saying we should scrap the legislation and go back to the status quo, which is obviously even more inadequate. What I am saying is that simply knowing we have done something wrong is not good enough.

• (1155)

More than anything else it is important Canada have a vehicle to help promote sustainability in all that we do. This means knowing how something can be done right and then steering the mechanics of government in that direction. We do not get where we are going simply by looking at where we have been and acknowledging the mistakes we have made along the way. We need a map in hand and the foresight to design our travel route to achieve our stated and understood goals.

Bill C-83 will not help in moving Canada's environmental and sustainability goals forward. It will not give us the tools we need to

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evaluate our policies until whatever damage those policies will cause have already been done.

There is a big job in this field to be done. When the environment committee concluded its review of this matter it said the new commissioner's office should have many functions. I will outline a couple of those functions as set out by the environment committee's report.

The commissioner should evaluate all federal policies, laws, regulations, programs and guidelines to determine those which encourage and those which impede Canada's progress toward sustainable development and to make recommendations accordingly.

The commissioner should examine all federal policies, laws, regulations, programs and guidelines to determine the extent to which they comply with Canada's international commitments, including protocols, treaties and conventions in the area of sustainable development. We know how important this function is in relation to the latest round of agreements Canada has signed, particularly those reached in Rio de Janeiro in 1992; agenda 21 comes to mind immediately and Canada's commitments to the international community.

In this regard Bill Andrews, whom I quoted earlier, told the committee: "We have a glaring lack of systematic assessment of the extent to which we are meeting our international commitments".

The committee also recommended the commissioner be given additional tasks to encourage consultation and co-operation between federal and provincial levels of government with respect to sustainable development, to liaise with government, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders to monitor and report on the evolution of sustainable development concepts, practices and technologies. The committee further recommended to advocate to Canadians the necessity for sustainable development in all of our actions.

These were among the many functions recommended by the environment committee one year ago, recommendations worth defending by every member of the environment committee who debated these issues before the report was written.

In response Bill C-83 guts that report and instead sets out the following function. Section 23(1) of Bill C-83:

The commissioner shall make any examinations and inquiries that the commissioner considers necessary in order to monitor (a) the extent to which category I departments have met the objectives, and implemented the plans set out in their sustainable development strategies.

What a difference in approach. The committee which studied this field extensively says many important functions are necessary for this office to operate successfully. The Minister of the Environ-

ment responds by saying in Bill C-83 it is just enough to monitor how well the departmental staff has succeeded in meeting the targets it has set, targets that have been designed with this in mind.

These sustainable development strategies do not have to be written for another two years. The legislation exempts departmental staff from rewriting them for another three years, if it wishes. Under the terms of Bill C-83 the new auditor will not even have plans to monitor for the first two years of his term of office. None of the matters before government, as I mentioned earlier as set out by the committee, can be looked at during that period of time.

All the plans the departments write during those two years will be recently written plans. This whole thing strikes me as being a bit ridiculous.

Another provision of the legislation requires our attention as well. We should all object in principle to the provision that directs government departments to respond to public petitions on matters of environmental concern. As it stands, if Bill C-83 passes unamended, any public petition to investigate a complaint received by the auditor general's office must be passed on to the relevant government department for review, report and response within four months. This means that any department that wants to justify its actions rather than evaluate them is given carte blanche to do so.

• (1200)

What is needed is an ombudsperson function where members of the public can petition the commissioner to conduct special investigations if they think that environmental policies or laws are being ignored or violated. The minister called for this in the original terms of reference given to the committee. Writing polite responses to serious environmental concerns is simply not good enough.

A further provision in the bill allows the minister to tell a petitioner that it is not possible to reply within four months. My question to all on the government side, and particularly those who have served on the committee, is what happens then. How long can departments take to respond to petitions?

What moves me to speak at length about this is the recent court case involving the government's decision to raise the *Irving Whale* off the coast of Prince Edward Island when the environmental impact assessment had not considered the PCBs which were in the heating system of the barge.

The court upheld the citizens' petition and threw out the government's nice words defending itself. If Canadians and myself as concerned environmentalists want real teeth in our environmental legislation, there must be real independence and enforcement in the monitoring and investigating office charged with protecting all of our long term interests. Bill C-83 provides none of that.

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At the same time there is plenty of other evidence, including the collapse of the east coast fishery, to show that we need a truly independent environmental auditor. By not recommending this independent ombudsperson function for the commissioner, the environment committee's report did not go far enough. This missing investigative role is an important aspect of the issue before us today as we review Bill C-83 and before the committee studies the issue for a second time.

In conclusion, in support of my argument that Bill C-83 is inadequate and different legislation must be written to take its place, let me, as I did yesterday in comments and questions, quote briefly from the chair of the environment committee, the hon. member for Davenport who has contributed a great deal to the debate already. I quote from the foreword to the committee's report, written by the chairperson a year ago:

In the 1993 election campaign, all major political parties committed themselves, once again, to the concept of sustainable development. In particular, the current government made several specific promises designed to further the implementation of environmentally sustainable policies.

As a result of its deliberations, the committee has concluded that the most appropriate way to implement the government's proposed functions is through the creation of a commissioner of sustainable development in conjunction with an expanded role for the office of the auditor general.

The committee believes the creation of a commissioner of the environment and sustainable development is a priority, one which appropriately answers the requests of the government and which will provide the necessary momentum for the shift toward sustainability.

Obviously the member for Davenport thinks as I do, that Canada needs to begin the shift toward sustainability at the first available opportunity, not two years down the road from now as Bill C-83 implies.

The member for Davenport, the chairperson of the committee, acknowledged that his party campaigned on such a platform. He clearly states that at the very least to fulfil those campaign promises, a new office with new functions is required.

If Bill C-83 passes it is clear to me and to Canadians watching that yet another Liberal promise to the people of Canada on the environment has been broken. More important, the needs of the planet and its ability to sustain life have once again been ignored by the government.

At this time when the environment department's budget is being cut by 30 per cent to 40 per cent and the government's commitment to the environment seems to be lapsing, a commissioner working for the auditor general is not necessarily what is needed. This response to Canada's long term sustainability needs does not go far enough.

• (1205)

Yesterday, as I listened to many of the speeches that were made relating to this issue, I questioned certain members of government on this issue. It totally amazed me that as Liberal members of the environment committee stood to speak to this issue not a single one defended the report. Not a single member of the environment committee that met last year on this issue, who worked so hard and listened to so many witnesses testify about the need for an independent proactive commissioner of the environment and who signed that report indicating their support for that position, defended the report in the House.

The environment committee has just finished a major report reviewing the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. Thousands of hours have been committed by members of the environment committee. They produced a report of which I think most members of the House would be most supportive. The recommendations of the committee have been well received in the environmental community across Canada.

I am most concerned these members who will not defend their own report on an environmental auditor will now not defend this important report on CEPA when the government responds to it in five or six weeks. I would hope the members who worked so hard on the Canadian Environmental Protection Act review are prepared to defend the interests of the committee, the witnesses who appeared before the committee and the recommendations contained in that committee report when the government responds.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time today to speak on this important issue. I look forward to the work the committee now has to review the clause by clause study of Bill C-83.

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the last speaker talked about the need for independence and authority on the part of an environmental commissioner. I agree.

In follow-up to the comments made by the previous speaker on the Liberal side, trying to twist and make light of the integrity of the auditor general, I find it very curious that he defends the integrity of the auditor general at a time when his party ignores most of what the auditor general recommends.

To put into perspective what I was talking about with regard to watchdogs being lapdogs I would point his attention away from the auditor general and toward the ethics counsellor. It is absolutely useless to appoint someone who is either going to do whatever the government tells him or her or who is going to make recommendations only to have them ignored.

The last speaker has clarified the issue. If we are going to have some kind of commissioner or special watchdog—if we can use

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that word—it has to be someone who has both the independence of this body and the authority to see these actions are carried out.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, the member was not actually posing a question to me but responding to a matter that occurred earlier this day in the House. I want to comment briefly also on the auditor general who appeared before the environment committee as a witness during our deliberations on this important matter.

It is worth stressing, as the member for Davenport did yesterday, that even the auditor general indicated to the committee that it was beyond the scope of his office to do some of the things the government is now asking his office to do. The auditor general's office is one that functions as an auditor of government programs. The audit can only occur on matters that have already been set out as objectives of the government. If the government's objectives are wrong, the auditor general is not in any position to comment on that. Obviously those rules would apply to any desk or any worker within that office including the new commissioner of the environment.

• (1210)

It is quite possible that the auditor general's response to Bill C-83 will be that he is willing to take on the task before him, but we must bear in mind that some of the mandate which he has been given goes beyond the realm of what his office is capable of doing.

It is important to recognize in reviewing Bill C-83 that the auditor general performs a valuable function, but to ensure sustainability we need to go beyond the office of the auditor general. The Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development last year supported the view that we need something over and above the role which an auditor general can perform. I am surprised that members of the environment committee have not defended their own report.

Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House to speak on Bill C-83. It has been over a year since the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development took on the task of examining the government's commitment to establish an environmental equivalent of the auditor general. This was a key commitment of the Liberal red book in the 1993 election campaign and it is a commitment to Canadians. It is an idea which has been discussed and debated for many years and a request of the public.

One message which came through loud and clear from the stakeholders was the message that there is a real need in Canada for leadership in making the shift to sustainable development. For more than a decade we have been exploring the concept, examining the implications and considering the measures it requires. Now is the time to move words into action. That will take bold and

decisive leadership. That is the leadership which we are seeing in Bill C-83.

Another message was that, above all, the leadership must come from the federal government. This is the largest business in Canada and what it does has an immense influence throughout our society. That is true not only of federal policies, programs and regulations affecting various sectors, but also of the way in which the Government of Canada operates. The federal government must be held publicly accountable for its progress in making the shift to sustainable development and to sustainable policies. These are not only sustainable policies which are fiscally responsible and economically responsible, but, specifically, environmentally responsible.

At the same time the government must look back and assess whether existing initiatives create barriers to the achievement of sustainable development. The government must consider how to achieve existing policy goals in a way that promotes sustainable development. We must build the cost of the environment into the cost of doing business in Canada today.

I know that in preparing its report the committee paid careful attention to the stakeholders' messages. The office of the auditor general has much clout and that is why in preparing these amendments the bill has put into the Auditor General Act. We are creating a commissioner who is part of and the responsibility of the auditor general's department. It is independent from government. The reason is because the auditor general's department has high respect among the public of Canada. It has solid expertise which can be put to use at once. It has the framework and the structure in place that may be held responsible to the public. For all of these reasons it can greatly enhance the auditing of the government's environmental performance.

In addition, by giving this department specific environmental responsibilities we can ensure that the issues of the environment and issues of sustainable development will be integrated solidly and directly into economic considerations. This kind of integration is what sustainable development is all about. The office of the commissioner will provide leadership. It will put Canada in the forefront in making the shift to sustainable development.

• (1215)

The amendments create a commissioner of the environment and sustainable development. This official will report directly to and work closely with the Auditor General of Canada on matters relating to the environment and sustainable development.

One priority is for the work to carry on. No matter what happens to the position of auditor general there would be continuity. The position of the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development would be ensured. By doing this we are guaranteeing that it becomes a post created for a commissioner who will serve the sustainability of the environment for Canada.

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There are other amendments in the bill which do provide for more leadership in making the shift to this sustainable development policy. They require that federal government departments, that is every department of the Government of Canada, prepare and table results oriented sustainable development strategies within two years. That is, they must set goals and spell out the action by which they will achieve those goals.

These strategies will promote the shift to sustainable development policy at the program level and also in other ways the departments operate their buildings and facilities. This is a means of control, a watchdog, over all departments in the Government of Canada.

The departmental strategies will be developed in an open, transparent manner with the involvement of external stakeholders such as the national round table on environment and economy. We will involve the environmentalists, the public sector, the private sector and all citizens of the country so that they have an opportunity to be heard to express their views on what the country should be doing to maintain a sustainable environment, sustainable economic development.

They will also establish benchmarks against which to measure the government's performance. These will enable the commissioner and the auditor general to do their job effectively and independently.

What is more, every three years each department must update its sustainable development strategy and the minister responsible must table this update in the Parliament of Canada. This makes sure that the strategies are continually updated, continually responsible to new technologies and new developments which occur throughout the country.

Public accountability has come up this morning. The amendments provide for enhanced public accountability by the government in making the shift to sustainable development. The commissioner must submit a yearly report to this House on matters relating to the environmental aspects of sustainable development whatever the commissioner considers appropriate. By that amendment I believe he has the freedom to look at any issues in any department of this government and to make assessments to report on those if he deems it appropriate in his opinion.

The report will focus on the environmental performance of all federal departments. In other words, the extent to which the department has implemented its plan of action it will be held accountable and the extent to which the department has achieved its sustainable development objectives it will be held accountable.

Further, the report will present the number, the subject and the status of petitions received by ministers on environmental matters. Let me refer to the bill. In this context the public has the opportunity to present a petition; that is any citizen of this country might present a petition, if he takes the time to get citizens' signatures.

● (1220)

The petition would be received by the commissioner. It would be forwarded to the minister responsible for that specific department. The recipient minister would then be required to acknowledge in the House receipt of that petition within 15 days and to respond to the petition within four months. The four-month period might be extended by the minister if the petitioner and the auditor general were notified that it would be impossible to respond within the four months.

This puts the petition on a time line. It holds the commissioner, the minister and the department responsible to the citizen who has presented the petition. That is accountability on behalf of the government in the introduction of Bill C-83.

The task of appointing the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development will be the responsibility of the auditor general. This arrangement will give the commissioner the needed and utmost independence from the Government of Canada. This again gives him credibility and accountability to carry out his duties responsibly.

The third message of stakeholders was the need to assess new and existing government initiatives for their consistency with sustainable development. The government has already acted in this area. Keeping track of its performance will be the responsibility of the auditor general and the commissioner.

Last November the task force on economic instruments and disincentives to sound environmental practices submitted its report. It contained recommendations to the ministers of finance and environment. These advised on how to review existing policies, to check whether they contained barriers to the promotion of sustainable development. This reviews some of our policies and legislation that might be outdated, that might be antiquated and will inhibit or maybe even prohibit the advancement of sustainable development in a sustainable economy. They also advised on how to prevent the unnecessary creation of barriers in the future.

As promised in the budget, the ministers will respond to the task force within the coming months. Once again this holds the government accountable to sustainable fiscal policy, to sustainable economy and to sustainable environment for the people of Canada.

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As I mentioned, in preparing their sustainable development strategies, federal departments must act in an open, honest accountable way. They must involve the citizens of Canada and the stakeholders, the environmentalists.

In their part III estimates which will come out annually departments will again be required to report their progress toward sustainable development. They must provide information on the number, the type and the status of environmental assessments which they are conducting.

There are additional actions that will integrate the environment into decision making. The third component of the government response is a commitment to additional steps we will take to integrate the environment into all decision making in all departments of the government.

I spoke of the task force to identify barriers and disincentives to sound environmental practices. The government followed up on its short term recommendations in the last budget. We are in the process of preparing a formal response to the task force report, including its longer term recommendations. The response will set out how the government plans to move forward on implementing economic instruments and on identifying barriers and disincentives to these practices in the existing government policies. The commissioner will play a very important role in holding this government and all future governments publicly accountable with ongoing efforts in this area.

These measures along with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act will do much to integrate environmental considerations, environmental evaluations into virtually every federal government decision.

• (1225)

So many things are happening in Atlantic Canada in development, whether they are large pulp mills, lumbering industries, the transport of chemicals and products, that are detrimental to our environment should there be difficulties and accidents. We talked about the *Irving Whale* this morning.

The legislation will be a tremendous asset. Citizens will have the opportunity to bring a petition forward to a commissioner, to a minister of the department to assess, to evaluate, to judge objectively what is economically feasible, what is environmentally sustainable and what will serve the country for the long haul.

The government has taken a strong stand in Parliament on no quick fix solutions, a strong stand that we will be part of long term sustainability. This is part of our policy and philosophy. In each and everything we do, we will build for the next generation.

The Brundtland report "In Our Common Future" uses technical terms describing what is meant by sustainability. I studied that in doing some university work at the masters level. The kind of responsibility we have to a global society today is to act in a responsible way particularly here as legislators over and above the citizen's responsibility.

We are caretakers of this environment, of this earth only for a short time. We have a grave responsibility during that period to act responsibly. We should take only from the environment and the economy what we need to meet our needs today so that we do not build our economy on greed but on need. In that way we leave something for those in the next generation so that they too might take a living from the environment, from all the wonderful great natural resources we have been so fortunate to have had bestowed on this great Canada.

The amendments to this auditor general act are part of the broader effort I have just described. They are a fundamental and crucial part of what the philosophy of the Government of Canada is today. It will radically change the way in which the federal government does its business, in which the federal departments do their business.

This will be a major step forward, making sustainable development a reality to this country. It will be a major step forward in the eyes of the world. Canada will be viewed as a progressive nation that is caring, looking to the economy and to the environment and that one must be integrated into the other.

[Translation]

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise in support of the bill now before the House.

Mr. Speaker, the bill to amend the Auditor General Act provides for the appointment of a Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, who will report to the auditor general and provide him with an overview of all federal government activities and operations related to the environment and to sustainable development.

Bill C-83 also requires all federal government departments to develop sustainable development strategies to be laid before the House of Commons.

• (1230)

[English]

The bill has particular relevance in light of a report that was released this past week by the World Bank regarding the wealth of nations. By this report, Canada is the second richest country in the world. This is not what we are used to hearing about our economy. We are used to being ranked well down in the teens by the old way of looking at the wealth of a nation based on income, investment,

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and those things that can be measured in dollars moving about in the economy.

The ranking that was done by the World Bank last week was formulated using a system of measurement that derives wealth from the value of a country's natural resources as one of the components. Based on this measure, the majority of Canada's wealth lies in its natural resources. Therefore, our capacity to develop a healthy economy not only for our future but for future generations lies in how we use those resources. It lies in using those resources in a sustainable way.

The system used by the World Bank in this new methodology challenges conventional thinking by looking beyond the normal measures of wealth that have been used until now. It starts moving the assessment of the worth of nations to a process and a standard based on sustainability in the long term.

That is why the measures we take to husband our natural resources, to use them in a way that ensures that future generations also have resources on which to build their prosperity, are not only matters of economic well-being. They are matters of survival. Perhaps that gives this bill new relevance. We can begin to see it not only in the context of how much we have in land and the quality of that land, what we have in forests, what we have in subsoil resources and the quality of our water, but we can begin to see it in the context of the whole quality of life.

We had one horrendous reminder this year that if we do not husband those resources, if we do not regard those gifts the world has to give as something that has to sustain our country and the world for future generations, then we face tragedy. We have had the virtual elimination of the cod stock, which has been a source of income and an important part of our country and other countries around the world for generations. That source has now been virtually lost. We would be only guessing if we tried to estimate whether that resource will ever be restored.

The World Bank is starting to recognize that the wealth of nations has to be looked at in a different way, that the value of the resources we have and how we use them is an important component of our present and future prosperity and that depleting those resources in fact depletes our wealth.

I would like to give another example to make the point quite concretely about what was wrong with the old system and how we have to start changing how we look at things.

Under the old system the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill was a tremendous benefit to the economy. It put up our GDP quite significantly because it generated millions of dollars in lawyers' fees and millions of dollars in clean-up costs. It was good for the economy under the old system. I do not think any one of us wants to stand in the House to say that the spilling of oil into our oceans is a positive benefit for our country.

• (1235)

Let me now turn to this particular bill and how it is consistent with this concept of sustainable development. It requires government to look at every policy, program, spending decision, activity and operation of government to determine its impact on the environment. It requires every minister to look at every aspect of that minister's department and table a strategy to ensure that the operations, programs, and policies of the department are consistent with sustaining the environment of the world in which we depend not only for economic prosperity but for our very survival.

It requires the government to establish an environmental commissioner who will oversee the environmental impact and the impact on sustainable development not only of new policies, new legislation and new programs, but of all existing policies, legislation and programs.

The legislation sets up a new public accountability for the government. One thing that has been learned by the nations of the world over the years is that it is public oversight of our responsibility that determines how responsibly we act. One of the key messages coming out of the earth summit in Rio a couple of years ago was that transparency, public oversight, and accountability of governments is vital to achieving the plan of action that all nations agreed to at that very important world conference.

The World Bank report made it clear that Canada, as one of the wealthiest countries in the world, based largely on its tremendously wonderful supply of natural resources, also has the most to lose if it does not act in a sustainable way. If we do not set up a society in which government, in our partnership with the private sector, informs and motivates individual Canadians to do their part as well to sustain the environment, then all of us lose. The country will lose. To the extent that any country in the world fails to exercise its responsibilities for sustainable development, the world itself and future generations lose.

[*Translation*]

Before closing this morning, I must say that I have a little trouble understanding the Bloc's position on this bill. Personally, I remember very clearly the time when the current leader of the Bloc Quebecois was minister of the Environment in this House and a member of the government. I remember very clearly his commitment to the environment and his belief in the government's responsibility to take action in order to protect the environment.

I also remember that the Bloc tabled in this House a minority report proposing exactly what is being proposed in this bill, namely that the government create the position of Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development as part of the Office of the Auditor General, instead of creating a new, separate office.

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• (1240)

[*English*]

I find it difficult to understand today why the Bloc is opposing legislation which does exactly what it has proposed to the House of Commons and to the government.

[*Translation*]

I see this as a step back from their previous position and that of their leader, who is now Leader of the Official Opposition, as regards environmental protection, sustainable development and the government's responsibility to show leadership in these areas.

[*English*]

Canada has a right to be proud of the leadership role it has played globally on many of these important environmental issues, particularly in the area of global climate change.

It is easy to think of this as an administrative bill that relates to the Government of Canada and to how it conducts its business and to how ministries are administered on a day to day basis. I believe its impact is far greater than that. It demonstrates leadership on the part of government, just as Canada has traditionally played a leadership role in these very important issues for some time now. It demonstrates the kind of leadership that was there when the previous Parliament implemented the program of greening the Hill, believing that we as the Parliament of Canada first and foremost had to demonstrate we were taking our responsibilities both personally and seriously.

However, the bill does more than that. It addresses some of the key issues facing the world today. Those issues were again very much front and centre at the United Nations conference held in Beijing, which ended just last week. The concerns of women in developing countries about things we take for granted, like basic health needs, basic protection and a safe environment for them and their children, were very much at the forefront of the agenda.

We still face the situation in which 14 million children around the globe die every year of diarrhoea. That is 40,000 children a day simply for lack of access to clean water. That is the importance of measures we take as a nation and measures we take as an important actor in the global community to ensure that preserving the wealth of this world, which we hold in trust for the next generation, is a priority for us as a Parliament, for us as individual parliamentarians and for our government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, it is therefore a privilege to witness this bill being tabled in this House and to have the opportunity to support it.

[*English*]

I urge all members of the House to support the legislation, to let us get on with the important work of making sure that everything the government does is consistent with the preservation of the environment as part of our global responsibility.

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think that my hon. colleague from Ottawa West, who just spoke on Bill C-83, did not have all the facts, when she was wondering what the position of the official opposition, that is to say the Bloc Québécois, was regarding the establishment of a position of Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. I would like to remind her that, yesterday, around 1:50 p.m., I rose in the House of Commons to say, and I will quote this slowly to make sure she hears me very clearly: "The official opposition does not intend, at least for the time being, to challenge the mandate that the minister wants to give to the commissioner of the environment. However, we deplore the fact that, ultimately, the commissioner will merely have the power to make suggestions".

If she had listened to me as carefully as I listened to her a moment ago, she would have found out that the Bloc Québécois does not intend to oppose the establishment of a position of Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. On the contrary, we want the commissioner to have power to do more than just make recommendations like the auditor general at present.

After the Christmas holidays, the auditor general will once again present his annual report. We, the official opposition, will have a field day as the terrible things this government has done are revealed to Canadian taxpayers. There will be much talk about it the first week, hardly any the second week and, by the third week, it will be all but forgotten.

My hon. colleague from Ottawa West mentioned future generations. I would like to remind her that, as we speak, between the Magdalen Islands and Prince Edward Island, we have a barge that has been sitting in the bottom of the Gulf of St. Lawrence for over 25 years, as of last week. This barge contains bunker C oil and, as we learned at the end of June, large amounts of fuel contaminated with PCBs. In 1970, and for the next 14 years until 1984, the Liberals were in power in Ottawa. Within three weeks, your government will be celebrating its second year in office. Yet nothing has been done.

Your government is all talk and no action. It is all fine and well to talk about future generations and say that every Canadian is a billionaire. Those are fine words, but idle talk nonetheless. If my colleague wants to get richer, I suggest that she buy shares from

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Quebecers or Canadians who may be prepared to sell their shares to her for a very reasonable price.

To conclude, I wish my colleague from Ottawa West would urge the Minister of the Environment to ensure that the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development has not only the power to make recommendations but also effective power to force the government and its departments to respect the environment and sustainable development, favourite topics of certain government members these days.

I remember the St. Lawrence action plan, phase 1, phase 2, designed to depollute the river. Just last week, there was a report where they were catching fish to analyze their flesh. It is worse. Really.

Mr. Lincoln: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My colleague should be given an opportunity to respond and there is very little time left to do so. The hon. member has embarked on a windy discourse that will leave no time to my hon. colleague to respond to his tale of woes.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair always gives the hon. member who asks a question and the one answering it equal time.

• (1250)

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac): Mr. Speaker, as you know, it is a tactic of the member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis to try to distract the opposition. These days, it seems as though the government wants to gag the official opposition. It is afraid to hear what our fellow citizens are telling us in our ridings.

I was talking about the St. Lawrence action plan to clean the St. Lawrence River. Listen to this: out of a budget of \$19.2 million, this government took \$6 million to commission studies on the cleaning up of the river. However, these studies were conducted in Miramichi, New Brunswick, several thousand kilometres from the St. Lawrence River. Where is the logic in that decision?

I would like to hear the member for Ottawa West tell us about the effect that this will have, other than to suggest the appointment of a commissioner of the environment.

Mrs. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, first I want to remind the member opposite that, when the Bloc leader was Minister of the Environment, it was his responsibility to take action regarding the *Irving Whale*, but he did not do anything.

Personally, I asked specific questions in this House, but the government at the time, with the Bloc leader as its environment minister, did not do anything about the *Irving Whale*. The current environment minister was the first to have the courage to make decisions regarding the *Irving Whale* and take action to have it refloated.

We know, and so does the hon. member, that the operation must be conducted with great caution because it involves risks and danger.

I also have an answer regarding the auditor general's responsibilities. It may be that the Bloc would like a government structure whereby the only way to make things move would be for people to rely on the courts to enforce actions. We prefer a system where the departments, which are accountable to this House, to the Prime Minister and to the people of Canada, have a duty to do what they can and what they should to ensure that their initiatives comply with the principles of sustainable development and environmental protection.

• (1255)

If the Bloc thinks that the commissioner of the environment will have no power, then it does not believe in the power of the public. The commissioner will be required to inform this House and the public, and he will be accountable to members of Parliament, to the government, to the departments and to the ministers. This is the strength of a democracy that works.

[English]

Mr. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to talk about Bill C-83. This is a very important bill. I want to talk about this on behalf of my constituents in Vancouver South. To them this is a very important issue.

The environment is an issue which I have learned a lot about recently. I have probably learned more about the environment from my children. I have three young children who have made my wife and I learn more about the environment than we knew before. It is very important because our young people often lead in a lot of ways and we do not pay the attention we should to them. We can learn from our younger generations, as I have learned more about the environment.

I was interested to talk about the environment because as we have learned in history economic prosperity is closely linked to our respect for the environment. There are lots of examples in history of how when civilizations do not respect the environment they can destroy themselves. There are many examples in history of how societies deforest areas around them and sometimes continue to do that because of their need for fuel only to be left with erosion and then have problems in agriculture and in growing their food. Lo and behold they have taken a resource that was valuable to their society and destroyed it.

The legislation is in the red book. The Liberal government said the national environmental and economic agendas can no longer be separated, which means our future economic prosperity is very important. We want to preserve that economic prosperity. We want to grow and respect the environment.

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That is why this is very important from the point of view that government action will be determined by a commissioner and the environmental factor will be considered when government decisions are being made. Bill C-83 demonstrates to Canadians the Liberal government is serious about the environment and sustainable development.

We often use the term sustainable development. It is a term used very wisely and widely. We should define sustainable development. For members in the House and for those watching, to me sustainable development is that our actions do not take away from future generations their standard of living or their quality of life. We in this generation must ensure our actions do not take away from future generations.

In a lot of ways we have already failed in that. We have taken away from future generations that which we have had. For example, we often hear the warning that children should not play outside during certain hours because of depletion of the ozone layer and the effect this can have on our children. I can remember as a child there was no such warning. We did not have to heed these warnings but our children do. We have already taken away from future generations in that by having a higher standard of living now future generations will be deprived of things like being able to play outside during the day at any time.

• (1300)

We have a long way to go but this is a start and sustainable development is all about ensuring we are not taking anything away from generations to come and we want to give them more. We want to make sure future generations have more than what we have today. I hope we can have that philosophy of giving them more. We are only the trustees of the resources we have to pass on to our children at the minimum in the same condition and hopefully in a better condition than how we received them.

I had an interesting experience when someone who often lectured about the environment put a time line on the board, a long line from the start of plant and animal life and stretched on to the time of mankind on earth. On this huge line there was a very tiny spot during which mankind has been on the.

Other animals have lived as long as 400 million years, but mankind between 1 million and 3 million years. If we collectively destroy our environment and destroy future generations, in respect of that time line we will barely be a footnote in the history of animal life on earth. That really opened my eyes to say we have been on the earth for such a short time and we have done so much damage already and we have lots of work to make sure we continue on that time line for a long time to come. We can only do it if we respect our environment.

Bill C-83 ensures federal government policies and operations are closely looked at in terms of the environment, as well as what effects it has on the economy. Canadians look to the federal government for leadership on sustainable development. By getting its house in order, by showing leadership the federal government can promote the shift to sustainable development throughout Canadian society. This is what Bill C-83 is all about.

The government's response to the committee's report focused on integrating the environment into federal decision making. The government has already followed up with a number of initiatives. To name a few, proclamation of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, actions to green government operations, the task force on economic instruments and disincentives to sound environmental practices and the initial follow up to the task force in the last federal budget.

Bill C-83 explicitly incorporates the environment and sustainable development in the Auditor General Act. This is very important because we do not want a commissioner without clout. We want a commissioner with clout and that is why I commend the Minister of the Environment who has brought this in under the Auditor General Act. It will give the auditor general the clear legal mandate to include environmental effects alongside the conventional considerations of the economy, effectiveness and efficiency among the considerations he uses to determine the observations he will bring to the attention of the House of Commons.

• (1305)

As I said earlier, Bill C-83 will also provide federal government leadership in making the shift to sustainable development. The amendments will proactively promote sustainable development across all federal departments by requiring ministers to table in the House sustainable development strategies that include their departments' objectives and plans of action to further sustainable development. Departments will be required to update these strategies every three years and ministers to table the updates in the House.

Bill C-83 will also authorize the auditor general to forward petitions from the public on environmental matters to the responsible ministers. The ministers will be required to respond within a specified time frame.

These amendments are significant in and of themselves. However the bill goes much further. Bill C-83 also creates a truly independent commissioner of the environment and sustainable development. The commissioner will be within the office of the auditor general. He or she will be appointed by the auditor general and will report directly to him as his right hand person in all his environmental and sustainable development related duties.

The committee had recommended a stand alone commissioner. However, the commissioner can operate effectively and efficiently in the office of the auditor general because the office of the auditor general is well respected. It has clout and it has solid existing expertise which can start implementing the amendments right away.

Moreover, it means environmental and sustainable development issues will be integrated with the economic considerations in that office just as they should be in a sustainable development world.

The commissioner will also assist the auditor general in addressing the environmental and sustainable development aspects of his general auditing work. The commissioner will monitor and report annually to the House on the government's progress toward sustainable development. The commissioner will review departments' sustainable development strategies and monitor the implementation of the action plan and the achievements of the objectives. The commissioner will be required by Bill C-83 to report annually to the House on anything related to environmental aspects of sustainable development he or she considers merits attention, including the extent to which action plans have been implemented and objectives met and on the number, subject matter and status of petitions received by ministers.

These amendments are historic and unprecedented. They have far reaching implications for the way the federal government does its business. They ensure that no matter who the auditor general happens to be, environment and sustainable development will have a high profile in the workforce. They will provide leadership on sustainable development by proactively promoting and operationalizing sustainable development within federal departments and across major economic sectors of our country. They will hold the government fully accountable to the public for its leadership and progress in making the shift to sustainable development.

As I look back over the past year or so I am gratified that the government has taken a red book commitment and engaged Parliament and Canadians in fulfilling it and in going beyond.

However, this is only the beginning of the road to making sustainable development a practical reality. Because of the bill, in the months and years ahead departments will be engaging stakeholders in the development and implementation of sustainable development strategies.

I know some members on the other side have said we should have gone further and that we did not go far enough. This is a very important start because it recognizes how important the environment is. It recognizes how important the environment is to future generations. It recognizes the importance of the environment to our future economic prosperity. It is no use

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enjoying tremendous economic prosperity now only to have it taken away from future generations.

• (1310)

We must ensure we protect for generations to come that we have a liveable environment, an environment with clean water, clean air, and that our decisions as a government fully take into consideration a development that is sustainable, a development that maintains a quality of life for future generations, a development that does not put hardship on any sector of society.

We have seen in some developing countries where when they do not respect the environment, when there is no clean water available, for example, sometimes the poor, the women have to pay a very heavy price when they have to go two miles to get it. Children die because they do not have clean water.

We have come a long way and I am sure my colleagues and the Minister of the Environment will continue to work on this. It is very important to me and to my constituency. In the west this is a very important issue and I am very thankful I had the opportunity to speak on behalf of my constituents of Vancouver South.

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to comment on some of the statements made by the hon. member for Vancouver South.

I think all Canadians recognize the importance of paying close attention to what is happening with our environment, and certainly sustainability in our environment is a most important factor.

The member mentioned that Bill C-83 contains some amendments unprecedented in Parliament in dealing with the environment. We have had the auditor general's department operating as an exclusive body making a critique of the government, scrutinizing the operations for many years now.

We have seen report after report from the auditor general being critical of the different government departments and making recommendations only to have those reports go somewhere on a shelf and collect dust.

It is one thing to appoint a commission, a body or an individual to be independent, to look at how the government runs its business. It is one thing for the reports to be made, for the recommendations to be made, for the observations to be made clear, for that outside body to call for accountability. Another thing is for the government to act on those recommendations. We have not seen a very glowing record of governments acting on recommendations and criticism by the auditor general's department. We have not seen it in many years. Certainly the government has not done anything to stop that record of ignoring the auditor general's report.

As Bill C-83 contains some amendments unprecedented in Parliament in the field of environmental sustainability, I suggest the government begin to take some unprecedented steps in not only acknowledging the reports of the auditor general and not only receiving them but actually acting on them. It would be a

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most unprecedented step if the government would start to act on some of the recommendations of the auditor general's department.

I will leave the hon. member with that thought. I am sure he will want to give me his assurances that whatever criticism and recommendations come from the new position will be acted on by the government.

• (1315)

Mr. Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his statement and his question.

I assure him that as a government we would not be setting up such a commissioner without taking full responsibility and ensuring that the reports that are issued are taken very seriously and that the government respond to those reports.

There have been many occasions in the House when the auditor general has brought forward concerns. On many occasions I have seen the minister or the appropriate department respond very quickly and assure the auditor general that they take those matters very seriously. I have seen members on the opposite side stand and quote the auditor general. Obviously they also take it very seriously. I know all members take the issues very seriously and bring them forward.

There are a lot of examples that have shown that governments do respond, take action, and investigate to assure that anything the auditor general puts out, where it is possible and where it is felt to be advantageous, is responded to and dealt with in an effective manner. I can assure the member that this will be continued by the government whenever those reports are issued.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the member went on for a considerable time talking about clean water and the necessity of being aware how important it is. That almost goes without saying, but it does not hurt to repeat it. I wonder if the member is aware of the swim for the Fraser River effort by Finn Donnelly from British Columbia, who is currently swimming the entire length of the Fraser River in an effort to raise environmental awareness about the necessity for cleaning up what is really the major water artery in British Columbia.

When he talks about sustainable development, on which coast of British Columbia does he think the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has done the best job on sustainable development in the area of fisheries, the east coast or the west coast?

Mr. Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Fraser Valley East said, clean water is a very important asset. As we saw recently in the World Bank report, clean water is going to be a very important resource for the world.

I also acknowledge the gentleman who is swimming the Fraser River to raise awareness of having clean water. An important thing to remember is when a resource like water is polluted it is expensive to restore the resource and bring it back. It is much easier to prevent pollution from happening in the first place.

As parliamentary secretary it has been a great experience to learn about sustainability and how all resources are so interdependent. Our ecosystem is so sensitive to change, and we do not understand a lot of it. We do not understand what water temperature does to fish. We do not understand the interdependence of our whole ecosystem. We have a lot to learn. We have to do a better job for our future generations.

I will do everything I can to ensure that we have sustainable development and do not take away from future generations. To the best of my ability I will try to achieve that.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

• (1320)

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: At the request of the deputy whip for the government the matter stands deferred until 5.30 p.m.

* * *

MANGANESE BASED FUEL ADDITIVES ACT

The House resumed from June 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-94, an act to regulate interprovincial trade in and the importation for commercial purposes of certain manganese based substances, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the federal government is given the opportunity to protect jobs, save the environment, protect consumers, and keep Canada on the leading edge of automotive technology, should we take it? You bet. You bet that we will seize a chance to support technology that helps us improve fuel economy and meet our climate change objectives. You bet that we are going to do everything we can to reduce air pollution and smog. That is why we have taken action to remove MMT from Canadian unleaded gasoline, and that is why I am

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happy to stand today in support of Bill C-94, the manganese based fuel additives act.

[*Translation*]

This bill will prohibit the importation of and interprovincial trade in MMT, a manganese-based fuel additive manufactured in the United States. The proposed bill will come into force sixty days after the day on which it is assented to. At the present time Canada is the only country in the world still using MMT in unleaded gasoline. Even in Bulgaria, studies have even been carried out, and it was decided not to use it. The USA banned it in 1968 from their unleaded gasoline. Bulgaria and Argentina are the only other countries showing any interest whatsoever in its use and, as I said, Bulgaria finally decided against it.

Why is MMT not used by more countries? Because it adversely affects the operation of the pollution control equipment in today's cars and trucks.

[*English*]

My department has received and reviewed study after study of the effects of MMT on this equipment. I have seen the studies myself: studies from Ford, Chrysler, General Motors, Toyota, Honda, Subaru, Nissan, Mazda, Mercedes, BMW, Volkswagen, Volvo, Saab, Lada, Jaguar, Land Rover and Hyundai. They are separate studies, which all say the same thing: MMT adversely affects onboard diagnostic systems where pollution control equipment is found. These systems are extremely important for the environment.

One only has to travel in the lower mainland of British Columbia to know how we need strong legislation on vehicle emissions. MMT is preventing the kinds of clean emissions governments across this land are seeking.

These systems of onboard diagnostics are crucial for environmental gains. They are responsible for monitoring a vehicle's emission controls and for letting a driver know when an anti-pollution system is not working. They make sure that the cleaner burning engines coming off the production lines today operate as they are designed. They make sure that automobiles are properly maintained, resulting in decreased tail pipe emissions and improved fuel economy.

One only has to drive a new car off the lot to know that the models of this year and next year and the year after are substantially improved in terms of their emission levels, fuel economy, and anti-pollution devices. Those cars should be given a chance to work, not only in the best interests of their drivers, but particularly in the best interests of the lack of air pollution in our cities.

• (1325)

This is critical technology. It is technology that has to be given the chance to do its job. With the legislation we are making sure that modern anti-pollution technology can be put to work in Canadian cities, cities that were reeling last summer under the burden of smog caused by too many cars clogging the arteries of our nation's communities.

[*Translation*]

This government would not allow MMT to stop the Canadian automobile industry from designing far less polluting vehicles. Canada's environment and Canada's consumers are entitled to the best pollution control equipment possible.

The federal government had been waiting since 1985 for the automobile and petroleum industries to get together on a solution to this problem, which the government had already identified ten years ago. I made a personal appeal to the two industries to pool their efforts towards finding a solution. I even proposed to the MMT manufacturers that they give consumers the choice, that there be at least one pump without MMT, and they absolutely refused. They are not interested in what consumers want. They are not interested in anti-pollution matters. They are interested only in a polluting product imported from the United States, which is not even used there, because its use has been prohibited since 1978. But we have to allow it here. How can that be?

[*English*]

I want to repeat that, because I think it is important to this debate that the House understand we have waited 10 years for the importers of this product to get together with the automobile manufacturers to find a common solution. We are not interested in legislating solutions to all consumers' problems.

I offered in personal meetings with the importers of the particular product to have a solution where at least one gasoline pump per gas station was free of MMT. Give the consumer the choice. They refused. They categorically refused, even though there has been study after study after study. I believe at last count there 17 automobile companies either manufacturing or selling in Canada that have asked for gasoline free of MMT. Somehow there is this tremendous conspiracy inflicted on them by consumers.

How do Canadian consumers feel about the fact that sparkplugs in Canada fail at a rate 17 times greater than in the United States? Why do Toyota manuals right now advise against using MMT gasoline? The new manuals will have disclaimers in them that if you use MMT in your gasoline they may not be able to guarantee your warranty. Why have automobile manufacturers in Canada suggested that if we cannot move on MMT they may be forced to

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add up to \$3,000 to the cost of a new car in Canada, the same car they sell in the United States? The variable is MMT.

For some reason, despite direct offers by the Government of Canada for the importers of this product to find a replacement or a consumer alternative, they refuse again and again. Ten years of waiting for a solution is long enough. With the new requirements of automobile emissions pending, we have to move quickly. As we speak there are cars rolling off the assembly line dedicated to the 1996 market that do not have an onboard diagnostic system attached because at the moment the companies cannot be guaranteed it will work as long as we have MMT in the gasoline.

[*Translation*]

Even then, I waited, I gave the companies a deadline of last December to resolve the problem. They could not do it. I waited until February, but for some reason, the companies importing ethyl could find no other way but to force it on all fuel levels.

• (1330)

Once again, we waited. Well, the ten-year wait has gone on long enough. It is time now for the government to act on consumers' behalf, in support of anti-pollution technology and above all in support of the environment.

[*English*]

Without action our vehicle emission reduction programs will be put in jeopardy. We risk missing out on major reductions in smog, carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons.

If we do not act now, Canadian consumers will be prevented from taking advantage of state of the art emission technology because they do not have access to MMT free gasoline. If we do not act now we will face the situation where automakers will turn off the diagnostic systems for the 1996 models because of the damage caused by MMT.

Right now General Motors is bringing cars off the assembly lines with on board diagnostic functions disconnected from the system. It is no longer prepared to assume the increased warranty risks for damage caused to pollution control equipment by MMT.

In the end it is the Canadian consumer, the Canadian taxpayer, the Canadian who drives a car who has to pay more. The maintenance of our cars is costing more because of the presence of MMT. We will not let this happen. We will not allow leading edge Canadian technology to be put at risk.

This substance is not manufactured in Canada but imported from the United States where it has been banned for almost 20 years. The Americans can make it there but they cannot use it there so they use it in Canada, the last bastion of MMT. We will not allow the buck to be passed to Canadian consumers.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Ms. Copps: We will not allow anti-pollution equipment in Canada to be less effective than anti-pollution equipment in the United States. We will not allow the competitiveness of our automobile industry to be threatened. We will not allow investment and the thousands of Canadian jobs which depend on that investment to be put in jeopardy.

[*Translation*]

Properly resolving the MMT question will have positive effects on the environment through the use of the most sophisticated emission control techniques. Moreover, Canadians will enjoy the same guarantee as American automobile owners. Resolving the MMT problem will guarantee that Canadian automobile emission control programs are in line with American programs. This means that Canadians will continue to enjoy the economic and technical benefits of having a standardized North American automobile population.

It also means that the Canadian automobile sector, whether in Quebec or Ontario, will remain competitive.

[*English*]

Let us be clear. The job of reducing motor vehicle pollution can no longer be addressed just by an industry, whether it be the automobile industry, the petroleum industry or the government. Progress at reducing vehicle pollution demands action by every single Canadian.

The petroleum industry needs to move forward in making improvements in the composition and properties of the fuels burned by those engines. The auto industry needs to make improvements in vehicle emission control technologies such as those offered through on board diagnostic systems.

[*Translation*]

As for the government, it must act to reduce pollution from vehicles. This is the sort of action we have begun with Bill C-94, the sort of action we take when we establish a global automobile emission control strategy, which includes more rigorous standards on vehicle exhaust systems.

In meeting these standards, we are counting on sophisticated emission control techniques and the fuels they require. We need new technology. We must reduce smog and carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon emissions. We have to reduce this type of emission, which have a significant negative effect on the quality of the air and on the greenhouse effect on the climate. This government takes its responsibilities seriously in the area of climatic change.

• (1335)

[*English*]

Temperatures increase when carbon emissions increase. Carbon dioxide has reached concentrations that are 25 per cent higher than at any time in the 220,000 years of atmospheric history. The average global temperature today is four to six degrees higher than during the last ice age.

The member of the legislature from Prince Edward Island in the gallery today will no doubt be aware of the profound impact of what the failure to address climate change will have on our coastal regions, including the lower mainland of British Columbia and Prince Edward Island. If we fail to take action average global temperatures will rise another 1.5 to 4.5 degrees within the next 50 years.

In other words, our children could confront the kind of global warming which triggered the end of the ice age. They could face the kind of global warming that causes sea levels to rise, that dries forests, that desertifies farmland, that wipes out communities and in some cases that wipes out entire countries.

Climate change is not like other environmental problems. Action after the fact is not an option. If we wait for the problem to overwhelm us, if we ignore the scientific evidence that is coming in harder, faster and stronger than ever before, it will be too late. With climate change preventive action is the key. Preventive action means producing goods more cleanly. It means having access to cleaner automobiles. It means using less energy through the likes of onboard diagnostic systems which can warn us when the systems are malfunctioning and when in fact our conversion is not as efficient as it should be. It means using less energy. It means conserving our natural resources and developing and implementing the latest in green technologies like the emission reduction technologies in today's cars and trucks.

The bill before the House is one small measure in the battle for a better environment. The bill is pro-environment. It is pro-consumer and it is pro-jobs. Eighteen of Canada's automobile companies think we are doing the right thing. Canadians think we are doing the right thing.

MMT can no longer stand in the way of progress that we continue to make on reducing vehicle emissions in the face of the continuing need for environmental protection.

Let us protect Canadian jobs. Let us protect Canadian investment in high technology. Let us protect the pocketbooks of Canadian consumers. Let us above all protect the air we breathe. Let us make Canada the last country in the world to finally to put an end to the use of MMT in unleaded gasoline.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I applaud the Deputy Prime Minister's commitment to the environment and what she professes to say. I would like to point out a few facts which she omitted from her speech.

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If we were to withdraw MMT from gasoline the nitrous oxide content of the environment would increase by 20 per cent which is a very important additive to smog, a causative agent for smog.

The Deputy Prime Minister brings forward a whole host of studies. Every one of those studies was done by an auto manufacturer. The EPA just came out with studies which show that MMT does not do anything to damage onboard devices.

I ask the Deputy Prime Minister how she can account for removing MMT from gasoline if the nitrous oxide content coming from cars is going to increase by 20 per cent. Also, will she commit to having an independent party review MMT to determine once and for all if it damages onboard computers and also if it will harm people?

• (1340)

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, in the preamble to his question the member implies that somehow these 18 automobile companies have an interest in destroying the market for MMT. The only studies I have seen in support of MMT are coming out very thick and fast from the company that imports the product, the same company that I am sure supplied the figures to the member that talks about the level of environmental contribution made by MMT.

If he wants to put it in context, the abolition of MMT will create a situation where air emissions can improve by up to 600 per cent specifically because it will permit the onboard diagnostic systems of new cars to work. The presence of MMT will not help the environment. The presence of MMT will hurt the environment.

Companies such as Toyota, Ford, GM and Saab are in competition with each other for a market. They are not in collusion. For some bizarre reason 18 automobile companies both domestically producing and importing cars have all done independent studies which have identified a single variable between the Canadian and the U.S. gasoline which contributes to the failure rate of onboard diagnostic systems. That single variable is MMT. Those same companies have provided the department with studies that show the failure rate for Canadian spark plugs is 17 times higher than in the United States.

Should a consumer in the lower mainland of British Columbia have to change his spark plugs 17 times? If we buy the rather weak argument of the Ethyl Corporation that this is such a fantastically great product, why would the Ethyl Corporation not accede to the demand of the government that it offer the consumers a choice? Why would the CPPI producers not arrive at a gas station and let people have the choice? If this is such a fantastic product why not let the consumers decide? Why did the company refuse my offer made to them in person to have only one pump in gas stations across the country which would be MMT free? If this is such a

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great product why is Canada the only country in the world that currently authorizes its use?

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate some of the remarks the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has made. I wonder if the Deputy Prime Minister would be willing to table some of the studies she has quoted from today, referenced and held physically in the presence of this assembly for our use and examination.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, those studies were shared. As the hon. member will know, when companies test their automobiles it is a very confidential matter. As I gave my word, the companies in question actually met with CPPI in a private meeting organized through my department where they could individually review all of those studies.

Unfortunately CPPI broke the agreement of secrecy and those studies ended up being passed to other individuals. It was a breach of the confidentiality that every automobile company expects to have in terms of its own testing of vehicles.

I can provide him with analyses of the material that went before the CPPI. I can provide him with some general views from the industry. I cannot provide the individual studies because when they were provided to CPPI through an agreement with my office they subsequently found their way into the public domain.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister of the Environment for her efforts today.

I believe the bill in front of us does receive the support of the majority of members of the House of Commons. I congratulate the minister for bringing it forward. At the same time, as she knows, a lot of what she says about the environment and fuel, about the need to be proactive and moving ahead into the future, can also be done through the support of ethanol based fuel additives.

• (1345)

Many in western Canada are engaged in ethanol development projects as a way of not only assisting the environment but also of assisting in regions which require assistance with economic development. I am wondering if in the course of her remarks today the minister might indicate her support and commitment for ethanol based fuel additives and what she can do for western Canadians.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, when we introduced legislation which will require 75 per cent of all new federal government vehicles to be run on alternative fuels it was in part to try to accelerate the market. The federal government currently has an annual fleet of about 25,000 cars. If we factor in the number of cars in crown corporations there are 39,000 cars that are on the road as a result of federal government activities. We are mandating that 75 per cent of those cars be fuelled by alternative fuels within the next five years.

We think that will provide the kind of niche market which will hopefully be a catalyst for further development in the area of alternative fuels by the private sector. We have not in a sense mandated a particular kind of fuel, but certainly ethanol is an alternative and particularly is one which can be mixed into current vehicle emissions. It is a very positive alternative.

We have tried to build market demand for consumer moves to alternative fuels in a very large way which will help a rather fledgling industry. As the hon. member will know, ethanol can currently be mixed at a 10 per cent ratio. Any further conversions will be good for renewable resources and an alternative for the current growth in global warming.

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be able to debate this issue, particularly after having had the summer months to do research and become more familiar with this topic.

I was quite flabbergasted when I heard the Minister of the Environment in her impassioned speech. I could not help but think that the passion was little more than the political puppet dancing when the strings are pulled by the masters of the power brokers in the country.

It is my understanding that the bill has come before the House today because the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association claimed that MMT was setting off the warning lights on onboard diagnostic systems when nothing was really wrong with the systems. I understand the association basically told the minister that she had to ban MMT in Canada or it would disconnect the onboard diagnostic systems on cars headed for Canada, or it would increase the cars' warranty costs or shorten the warranty period. The MVMA also claims that MMT has caused the misfiring of certain sparkplugs.

I fail to understand, in view of how extensively this topic has been studied, particularly in the United States where the product has been banned for 18 years and will again be available for use before the end of the year, why the minister has accepted without question the position of the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association.

Furthermore, I understand that the proponents of the bill claim that banning MMT will lower pollution and health risks to human beings. There have also been numerous claims in favour of banning MMT, such as the need for uniformity in gasolines in the North American market. I would like to address all of these points briefly in my presentation to the House today but most important I wish to show how the ban on MMT could be detrimental to the Canadian market.

Let me say before I get into my presentation that I and numerous other members of my caucus have met with both sides of this argument a number of times, the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association and Ethyl Corporation, which is more than I can say for what the minister has done. She has consistently refused to meet with both sides of the argument and has only met

with the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association. I hardly think one can form a balanced view of the issue without meeting and listening to both sides of the argument.

• (1350)

After having done so, I firmly believe that there is no health, environmental or technical reason for banning MMT in Canada. MMT has been used in Canada since 1977. It was used in the United States until 1970 and was banned in 1970 due to a U.S. clean air act establishing a process requiring new fuel additives not substantially similar to gasoline to obtain a waiver by demonstrating compatibility with vehicle emission systems.

The company that manufactures MMT, Ethyl Corporation, undertook an extensive fuel additive testing program which resulted in the Environmental Protection Agency's conclusion in December 1993 that MMT will not cause or contribute to the failure of any emission control device or system.

Contrary to the minister's statement of May 5, 1995, the U.S. court of appeal ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to grant waiver approval to Ethyl Corporation on April 14, 1995. The minister was fully informed of this decision.

In December 1993 following a large fuel additive testing program, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency concluded that the use of MMT will not cause or contribute to the failure of any emission control device or system, including onboard diagnostic systems. The Environmental Protection Agency and subsequently the U.S. court of appeal rejected concerns about the impact of MMT on onboard diagnostic systems presented by U.S. automakers.

The U.S. automakers have experienced significant difficulties in the certification of onboard diagnostic systems in the United States where MMT is not currently used in unleaded gasolines. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the California Air Resources Board have recently changed the regulations to allow for certification of vehicles that do not comply with the OBD-II requirements.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has stated in the federal register that automobile manufacturers have expressed and demonstrated difficulty in complying with every aspect of the onboard diagnostic requirements and such difficulty appears likely to continue into the 1996-97 model year.

In Canada the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association appears to be blaming the OBD-II system difficulties on MMT. The Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association members have lobbied the Canadian government threatening to disconnect onboard diagnostic warning systems and pass the cost on to consumers unless the government passes legislation to ban MMT.

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The Canadian government appears to have responded to these threats without noting that the vehicle manufacturers have failed to achieve OBD-II certification in the U.S. for most new models.

Furthermore, I would like to know if this minister can explain her statement that if vehicle manufacturers carry through on threats to remove onboard diagnostic systems this would result in a tenfold increase in vehicle emissions. This false claim shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the technical issues involved and underlies the need for independent technical assessment of the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association claims.

Onboard diagnostic systems do not reduce emissions on vehicles. Onboard diagnostic systems are a monitoring system designed to notify the driver when emission control equipment is not operating properly. Removal or more likely disconnecting the onboard diagnostic systems would only serve to prevent a dashboard malfunction indicator light from illuminating. No emission control equipment would be removed.

On the sparkplug issue that the minister makes much of, the Minister of the Environment cited the claims to help justify her proposal for the legislation to remove MMT. However, she failed to point out that the automakers' claims related primarily to one type of platinum tipped sparkplug used primarily on one engine version only in GM automobiles. The sparkplug in question was discontinued by GM indicating that problems were related to design, not MMT.

No causal links have ever been established between MMT and sparkplug problems. To my knowledge no warranty data have ever been made public.

• (1355)

I have learned that to further assess the validity of GM's concerns independent testing was conducted at the Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio, Texas, using the platinum tipped, long life sparkplugs used in all 1994 2.2-litre Chevrolet Cavaliers. The goal of the study initiated with General Motors Corporation in the U.S. was to determine the differences between new sparkplugs, failed sparkplugs and sparkplugs used which have had no problem.

The sparkplugs were fired by a power supply which increased output to the plugs in a ramped manner. Current leakage up until the plugs fired was measured. Movies were taken to document whether arcs occurred between electrodes or from electrode to shell.

The sparkplug test program showed that MMT is not associated with reported sparkplug related problems. To satisfy the U.S. clean air act requirements for the reintroduction of MMT in unleaded gasolines in the United States, Ethyl Corporation informed me that

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it had conducted the most extensive series of tests ever undertaken on a gasoline additive.

The testing program was designed with the assistance of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. automakers to evaluate and document the effective MMT performance additive on automobile tailpipe emissions and to determine the implications for air quality if MMT additives were used in the U.S. gasoline.

The initial MMT emissions test program involved 48 cars representing a broad cross-section of automobiles driven in North America operated for a total of more than three million miles. Half of the 1988 cars used the test fuel with the additive and half used the same fuel without the additive.

Tailpipe emissions were checked every 5,000 miles. Testing demonstrated conclusively that MMT decreases nitrous oxide by approximately 20 per cent. As a note, the EPA participated in determining the test protocols. Also, independent testing data analysis organizations used procedures similar to those used by the Environmental Protection Agency.

On the issue of health, I would like to address the concerns with MMT. On December 6, 1994 Health Canada released the results of an independent risk assessment focusing on new epidemiological studies and Canadian exposure data titled "Risk Assessment for the Combustion Products of MMT in Gasoline".

The Health Canada study concluded that the use of MMT in gasoline does not represent a health risk to any segment of the Canadian population. Specifically the report states: "Airborne manganese resulting from the combustion of MMT in gasoline powered vehicles is not entering the Canadian environment in quantities or under conditions that may constitute a health risk". The study also concluded that there is no connection between levels of ambient respirable manganese and MMT sales or use in unleaded gasoline whether examined by geographical area or by season.

Back on April 25, 1995 the hon. Minister of Industry stated that it is crucial that we have uniformity in standards of gasoline in the North American market. The hon. Minister of Industry was referring to the fact that at the time MMT was not used in the U.S.A. but was in Canada and it was important to have the same gasoline—

The Speaker: Of course the hon. member will have the floor right after question period. It being 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 30(5), the House will now proceed to Statements by Members pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

NEW BRUNSWICK ELECTION

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Liberal Party of New Brunswick and Premier Frank McKenna for a decisive victory at the polls on September 11. The citizens of New Brunswick have reaffirmed their commitment to the provincial government's vision of job creation growth.

The former official opposition party, the Confederation of Regions, is a party that opposes bilingualism both in Canada and in New Brunswick. It is important to note that it was completely shut out of the legislative assembly. In my own riding, five core MLAs were defeated and only one finished second. This sends a message to the people of New Brunswick that both linguistic communities are an integral part of our province and our country. I applaud the citizens of Fredericton and of New Brunswick for asserting their vision of an equitable and tolerant society.

I once again congratulate the Liberal Party and Mr. McKenna on their victory.

* * *

[Translation]

SOCIAL PROGRAM REFORM

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, students will hold rallies throughout Quebec to protest against the federal government's cuts to social programs and its intransigent attitude toward the Quebec National Assembly's unanimous and legitimate demands.

The budget cuts made by the federal government will have a disastrous impact on the provinces' tax burden, which the Prime Minister is loath to admit. His government's cuts to social transfers have left the provinces and the students with no way out. These cuts are forcing the provinces to impose an unprecedented hike in tuition fees, on the one hand, and to increase student indebtedness to unmanageable levels, on the other hand.

Given all the secretiveness and tricks used to hide the consequences of his reforms, how can Quebecers trust the Prime Minister of Canada?

* * *

[English]

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, since 1970 in the U.K. 89 per cent of Conservative MPs and about 81 per cent of Labour MPs have voted at least once against the

orders of the whip. This free voting has resulted in the defeat of some unpopular government bills but it has never caused the fall of the government. MPs in the U.K. have gained the courage to stand up and represent their constituents because the benefits of doing so far outweigh the disadvantages of punishment by the whip.

On Wednesday the House will debate my motion that asks the government to hold a binding referendum on capital punishment at the time of the next election. I will be asking members to make the motion votable and to subsequently support the motion so that the people who pay our salaries can have their say on this important issue.

Let us show our constituents that we are prepared to represent them and to do so in the interests of real democracy.

* * *

CROW BENEFIT COMPENSATION PROGRAM

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister of agriculture needs to reconsider at least one decision he and his department have made about the Crow benefit compensation program.

Farmers on the prairies and particularly in northwest Saskatchewan who grew forage crops in 1994 in rotation with their grains have been declared ineligible for compensation on those land acres seeded for forage. All summer long I received calls and letters from producers caught in this unfair situation. Most recently I have been receiving letters from individual rural municipalities asking that this unfair situation be changed because forage acres will see the same reduction in land values as cultivated acres.

Prior to the decision being made, the minister of agriculture said he consulted with the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities and valued its opinion. I hope he continues to value its opinion and will now reconsider so that producers who are managing their lands properly will not be unduly penalized by this unfortunate and unfair circumstance.

* * *

CANADIAN COUNTRY MUSIC AWARDS

Mr. Peter Thalheimer (Timmins—Chapleau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Shania Twain, one of many famous musicians from my riding of Timmins—Chapleau, was enormously successful in last night's Canadian Country Music Awards. Among other awards, Shania won female vocalist and album of the year.

Shania worked hard to get where she is today and continues to work hard. No doubt Shania is the fastest rising country music star. She thanked her home town of Timmins in one of her many appearances at the podium to receive awards.

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In return, I would like to thank Shania and her family, friends, teachers and neighbours, who can all take great pride in her achievement last night. I would also like to congratulate all nominees in the awards. Showcases of such Canadian talent make me proud not only to be from Timmins but from Canada.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating Shania and the other Canadian nominees.

* * *

THE LATE WALTER ALBERT TOBIN

Mrs. Bonnie Hickey (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a funeral was held yesterday for a distinguished Newfoundlander who passed away on Friday. Mr. Walter Albert Tobin, 97 years old, was the last survivor of the first world war Battle of Beaumont Hamel.

Mr. Tobin was only 17 years old when he enlisted in the army. He had no way of knowing then that on July 1, 1916, his Royal Newfoundland Regiment would be virtually wiped out at Beaumont Hamel. Over 300 people died or went missing; 386 were wounded. The next morning only 68 men were able to answer the roll call. Mr. Tobin was one of them. Although wounded, he received medical attention and then returned to the battlefield.

● (1405)

I recently spoke with Mr. Tobin at a veterans ceremony in St. John's and I was indeed honoured to meet a man of such courage and stature.

There are fewer than 2,300 first world war veterans living today. As we mourn the passing of Mr. Tobin we would do well to listen and learn from their experience and their wisdom. We should seize the opportunity to tell these men and women how grateful we are and how proud we are of their service to our country.

* * *

LAND MINES

Mrs. Jane Stewart (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently returned from Cambodia and subsequently from the second world parliamentary conference in support of the United Nations, in Gifu, Japan.

I again draw the attention of the Chamber to the important issue of land mines. Despite real progress in Cambodia toward political and economic sustainability, the people in the rural northwest are still subject to the aftermath of the war with the Khmer Rouge. I saw internally displaced people who cannot go home because their fields are mined. There is still a steady stream of men and women and children into the hospitals with seriously disabling injuries as a result of land mine accidents. We know that the de-mining activities are going to take generations to complete because the process is so painstakingly slow.

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At Gifu, the world's parliamentarians voted unanimously to work aggressively toward a ban on the manufacture, deployment and use of land mines. I would ask the members of the House to please consider doing the same.

* * *

QUEBEC REFERENDUM

Mr. Glen McKinnon (Brandon—Souris, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians, including the residents of my riding, are concerned about the Quebec referendum. In their view, now is the time for all Canadians to speak about the advantages of Canada. Now is the time for calm and competent leadership by all elected people who care about our country.

Everyone seems to understand that except for the Reform Party. I am saddened and disappointed with the irresponsible behaviour of that party. Rather than speaking up for Canada, the Reform Party appears to be interested in contributing to the success of the separatists.

Whose side are the Reformers taking? Do they secretly want a yes vote? If they want a vote for Canada, as all federalists do, I hope they will show the kind of positive leadership that will help the people of Quebec choose Canada.

The residents of Brandon—Souris and I are happy to have the sound and sensible leadership of the Prime Minister to defend the interests of Canada, not the irresponsible exploitations of the Reform Party.

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[Translation]

MEMBER FOR BROME—MISSISQUOI

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canadians had yet another opportunity to see how ignorant some federalists are when they heard the comments made yesterday in this House by the hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi.

The commercial against drugs made by the Matane local community service centre and broadcasted by Radio-Canada in eastern Quebec was withdrawn because it failed to disclose the name of the advertiser as required by CBC regulations.

After the correction was made, the message went back on the air and is still being broadcasted. It is obvious that the hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi is totally misinformed. He would have been better off not saying anything about a matter he was not familiar with.

Saying no to drugs is a wise decision, especially at a time when we are getting ready to say yes to our future.

* * *

[English]

CULTURE

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday the heritage minister gave what he claimed would be a visionary speech on the future of Canadian culture. To be kind, we will just say it fell somewhat short of its billing.

The speech was really a little temper tantrum replete with contradictions and embarrassing pleas for respect from the big bad Americans. The sub-theme of the speech was: "It is not our fault; we are all victims".

In the face of worldwide competition the Canadian cultural industry needs to take full advantage of American capital markets. We need competition. We need international partnerships. We need new markets. Subsidization and protectionism will only produce trade wars, feeble and inefficient companies, and the loss of the choice and value that Canadians deserve.

Yes, change sometimes can be frightening, but the minister should quit his whining and stand out of the way. Even while he spoke and with no help from the government, individuals and private sector Canadian companies were charting new ground in introducing Canadian culture to the world and the 21st century.

* * *

● (1410)

JOHN AND JESSE DAVIDSON

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow two special constituents, their families, friends, supporters, and hopefully many in this Chamber will walk the final kilometres of a courageous journey.

Jesse's journey started on May 20 when John Davidson began pushing his son Jesse across Ontario to raise awareness and funds for gene research. Jesse is 15 years old and is confined to a wheelchair, afflicted with Duchenne muscular dystrophy. Together they have seen the faces, hearts and beauty of our province and its people. It was a humbling experience for those who have shared some road time in these past months with John and Jesse.

Medical research has gained from this 3,300-kilometre walk. To date, funds donated are in excess of \$700,000. I believe though that for John and Jesse the summer of 1995 has been more a testament to the love and the caring of the Davidson family.

Congratulations. Félicitations et bravo.

[Translation]

QUEBEC REFERENDUM

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is surprised to see that the public is questioning the validity of the referendum process.

Essentially, this resistance has to do with the three separatist leaders deciding not to honour their promise to make the question clear and simple.

Does the leader of the Bloc Québécois remember making a speech on October 19, 1994, in which he said that Quebecers would be asked a simple question that would go something like this: Do you want Quebec to become a sovereign country, yes or no?

Instead of fulfilling this promise, the Bloc leader decided to do precisely what he had condemned by asking a question so subtle that it makes no sense and is ridiculous, to use his own words.

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QUEBEC REFERENDUM

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond—Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister stated that he may or may not recognize the Quebec referendum depending on its results. If the no side wins, the answer is clear, but if the yes side wins, he would consider holding a federal referendum. This new concept involving various levels of democracy is shocking and must be denounced by anyone who believes in democracy.

Mrs. Lysianne Gagnon was quoted in *La Presse* as saying that Mr. Parizeau has reason to be proud because he kept his promises; he had promised to ask a clear question and that is what he did.

It is obvious that the Prime Minister is out of touch with reality in Quebec. Even Quebec federalists recognize the validity of the referendum results. But such faulty reasoning is hardly surprising coming from the very man who masterminded the 1982 show of force and killed the Meech Lake accord.

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[English]

STANDING COMMITTEES

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there are only so many chances for a Liberal backbencher to make a decision that will affect the direction and tone of the parliamentary session. They face one of those chances now with the opportunity to elect leaders to the House of Commons standing committees.

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Last year backbenchers followed the dictates of their whip and handed over the vice-chairmanship of every committee to the Bloc Québécois. If they once again reward Bloc members with each and every vice-chair position, backbenchers will be rewarding people who are determined to tear the country apart. However, if they choose instead to allow Her Majesty's only real and national opposition, the Reform Party, to have a fair share of the committee work, they can send a message to all citizens that the House is determined to cultivate leaders from every province and region who want to participate in building a new and united Canada.

It is up to the backbenchers. Are they going to take orders from the whip or are they going to do what is right?

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

STUDIES COMMISSIONED BY GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC

Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): On September 2, 1994, Quebec's premier wondered out loud about alleged studies that the previous government would have kept from Quebecers. He said to the *Journal de Montréal*: "These studies exist. They were commissioned by Robert Bourassa. If he does not make them public by September 12, we will have to draw conclusions about the honesty of these people."

One year later, after the minister responsible for restructuring wasted millions of dollars in fancy studies, the pequiste government too finds itself with studies which it refuses to make public because they do not serve its separatist propaganda. Will the pequiste premier finally agree to make public all these studies which Quebecers paid for with their tax dollars, and will he stop hiding the truth on the real cost of separation? Separation is a costly proposition and Quebecers will say no to the waste of public moneys used for the ego trips of the likes of Lisette, Jacques, Mario and Lucien.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Colleagues, in a slight departure from our normal routine, I wish to draw to your attention the presence in the gallery of the Governor of the Tula region in Russia, Mr. Nikolay Sevryugin.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

QUEBEC REFERENDUM

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the fog thickened yesterday around the Prime Minister's real intentions, following statements he made in this House. When he speaks French, he remains ambiguous about the recognition of a yes vote, but when he answers in English, he makes it clear he will reject a yes from Quebecers.

Since the very future of Canada and Quebec is at stake, the public has the right to expect the Prime Minister to be consistent and to be clear about his position.

My question is directed to the Prime Minister. Will he, as the Reform Party did yesterday, respect Canada's democratic traditions and recognize a yes or a no to the Quebec referendum question as equally valid?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I said yesterday in English was translated into French, as you can see in *Hansard*. We have a system: if I speak French, it is translated into English, and if I speak English, it is translated into French. I said the same thing.

And perhaps I could explain this to the Leader of the Opposition. I would like to quote to him from a document produced by the government of Mr. Lévesque, and of course he knows Mr. Lévesque. In 1977, in a document which appeared under the title: *La consultation populaire au Québec*, they said: "Referendums would be consultative in nature". I agree. The document says: "The first imperative of politics in a democracy is a clear majority". I agree. The document goes on to say: "The consultative nature of referendums", they should have said referenda, in any case, "means that it would be unnecessary to include in the legislation special provisions on the majority required or the minimum participation rate".

It is a consultative system, as Mr. Lévesque and his government admitted in 1977. Today, we have a confusing and ambiguous question, and I am asked whether we would recognize a vote with a majority of one. As Mr. Johnson put it so well yesterday, we are not about to separate from Canada on the basis of a judicial recount.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister just quoted Mr. René Lévesque. However, I am sure he will remember, the day after the 1980 referendum, that Mr. Lévesque accepted the people's decision. He did not see it as just a consultation, a point of view. He agreed and bowed to the people's wishes, while the Prime Minister reneged on commitments he made to get a no from Quebecers in 1980.

Some hon. members: Right on.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Bouchard: We are all aware the Prime Minister is trying to treat the current referendum as a mere consultation without consequence. I would ask him to confirm, and he also hinted at this yesterday in one of his replies, whether it is true he is preparing to call a federal referendum to put pressure on the Quebec yes side?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not even have to consider that, because we will tell Quebec that the Leader of the Opposition is proposing Quebec's separation from the rest of Canada. They will vote to stay in Canada. If the question had been clearer—The leader of the Leader of the Opposition said this during the election campaign: "Do you want Quebec to become a sovereign country on such and such a date"? He said that would be the question.

However, when the Leader of the Opposition realized he could not win, he said: "We will come up with a winning question". Is that respect for democracy, coming up with a winning question because they cannot convince Quebecers to leave Canada?

I have great confidence in the judgment of Quebecers. They will stay in Canada, and the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition is doubly hypothetical.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister continues to maintain a state of confusion and ambiguity. He refuses to tell us outright whether or not he will feel bound by the results of the referendum. He refuses to set aside the prospect of a counter-referendum by the federal government.

I would ask him to raise the veil of secrecy at least partially and clarify the following: Would he not see as illegitimate any federal referendum aimed at short-circuiting a democratic decision by the people of Quebec on their political future?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, is the Leader of the Opposition saying that when Quebecers voted against the Charlottetown proposal that would have given Quebecers a distinct society—the Leader of the Opposition himself voted against it—the referendum was legitimate because everyone was consulted? Canada's future is not the business of a single group of citizens. This has an impact on all Canadians.

I must say I hardly have to consider holding a national referendum as authorized by Parliament, since Quebecers will realize that the separatists are trying to hide the truth. The leader of the Leader of the Opposition has refused to table documents paid for by taxpayers because these documents will clearly

Oral Questions

prove they are trying to hide the truth from Quebecers, because they know perfectly well that Quebecers want to stay in Canada.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the Prime Minister's efforts to create a diversion in order to avoid answering the real question that the Leader of the Opposition has been asking and that all Quebecers have been asking through us over the past two days. I will try for an answer once again.

He is becoming the ambiguity champion, shifting subtleties according to whichever language he is speaking or leaving the possibility of a second referendum in doubt. His answers are never clear. I will ask him the question once more. I want to give him an opportunity to respond clearly.

Does the Prime Minister of Canada not realize that he himself is confusing the whole question with his ambiguous statements? Does he not realize that his role as Prime Minister in fact is to act democratically and responsibly in response to the choice of Quebecers and to say so clearly and unambiguously?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is no.

I would like to thank the hon. member for criticizing me for being too subtle. This is the first time this has happened to me in my life, and so I am very happy. For me, my duty is clear. I do not need any lessons from the hon. member for Roberval on what my duty is. I understand my duty very well. I was elected to administer this country, to give Canadians good government, to create jobs and to make this country even better. To do so, we must ensure that Canada remains united.

• (1425)

This is what I am going to do over the next forty days with Mr. Johnson in Quebec City, to do my duty as Prime Minister and keep this country united for the future.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is true that subtlety is a quality, but shifting subtleties according to the language you are speaking is devious.

Speaking of Daniel Johnson, the chair of the no committee, he refused this morning to reiterate before the National Assembly the commitment he made last week to honour Quebec's yes vote.

Are we to understand that the Prime Minister of Canada has just called the chair of the no committee in Quebec order as he did last week in the case of his Minister of Labour? Did he use the same process?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Johnson understands the current debate very well. He has said we are not about to divide a country following a judicial recount to find out whether there was one more vote or not. It was in fact Mr. Lévesque himself and his government that

clearly established the rules whereby a majority must be clearly expressed in such a situation. These are the words of the person the Leader of the Opposition wants to replace. He admires and reveres him, he is always saying. I am therefore simply following the democratic principles established by Mr. Lévesque; and Mr. Johnson has said so as well: "Democracy begins with treating people honestly and asking them a clear cut question".

I challenge the opposition once more; I defy the Leader of the Opposition to call Mr. Parizeau. With one day of debate still to go at the National Assembly, let him replace the question with a clear one: Do you want to separate from Canada on a given date? They will have a clear cut answer. Quebecers will say: We are staying in Canada. That is being clear.

[English]

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has rightly accused the separatists of softening and confusing the referendum question in a vain attempt to guarantee a yes vote. This is obviously the separatist strategy and we denounce and deplore it. However, the Prime Minister is also sending out contradictory signals on the meaning of a yes vote that is hurting the federalist cause.

Last week the Prime Minister said that a yes vote would be a one way ticket to separation, but yesterday in question period the Prime Minister implied that the one way ticket might include the return fare.

Will the Prime Minister now make it perfectly clear to Quebecers that a yes vote means separation and not just a new round of bargaining with the federal government?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always said that the goal of the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois is to separate from Canada. It is clear to me.

I am very disappointed that the leader of the Reform Party is trying to position himself in a situation like this. I would like to tell him that as Canadians we have to be united to make sure that Quebec remains in Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, for 25 years I have worked in the political wilderness of western Canada, working to build a better—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

• (1430)

Mr. Manning: If the Prime Minister wants to make comments about the loyalty of members to Canada let him direct them to the Leader of the Opposition, not the leader of the Reform Party. The difference is I am committed to federalism with my head as well as my heart. My head tells me—

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The Speaker: I am having a little difficulty hearing.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I am committed to federalism with my head as well as my heart. My head tells me the only way Canada can lose this referendum is for some Quebecers to think they can vote yes for separation and avoid the consequences of that vote. They think they can vote for separation and still enjoy the benefits of federalism. That is why we asked the Prime Minister to make clear that yes means separation and only no means federalism.

I will again ask the Prime Minister sincerely, as we are not playing games here, why he is so reluctant to make that distinction crystal clear.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 32 years I have travelled to every part of Canada and have made the same speech about this great country. I have travelled to Quebec and to the west, Alberta and B.C. It is my duty to say what I said. They want to create separation but they do not have the intellectual honesty to ask a clear question. This is what I have to tell them.

In a country like ours to recognize that at one time a rule of majority plus one could break up the country would be irresponsible on my part. Even in the Reform Party, as a journalist wrote this morning, in order to change its constitution one has to ask for two-thirds of its membership.

Therefore I will not break up the country with one vote. It is not real democracy. Real democracy is to convince the people they can express themselves clearly, which is what we are doing.

This is why we are telling Quebecers these people want to separate but they will not succeed because it is our collective duty to tell all Quebecers the scheme they have, the virage, the mirage and so on will not work. They will not succeed in fooling the people of Quebec because the people of Quebec will know when they vote 39 days from now that they will not separate. They will stay in Canada because it is their destiny, their future and their desire.

• (1435)

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we are asking for volume and cheering and we are still not there.

On September 12 the federal Unity Minister said: "Quebecers have the right to express themselves about the future of Quebec in Canada. We are a democratic country, so we will respect the vote". On the same day Daniel Johnson, the leader of the no forces in Quebec, when asked if he would accept a 50 plus 1 yes vote, said: "Yes, everyone will have to live with the result".

The federal unity minister and the leader of the no forces in Quebec have endeavoured to be clearer on the meaning of yes than the Prime Minister.

For the sake of national unity, we are not disagreeing about the goals, for the sake of making the issue crystal clear, will the Prime Minister get on side with the unity minister and with the leader of the no forces in Quebec by saying he agrees with them on the meaning of a yes vote?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very sad to see the leader of the Reform Party asking exactly the same questions as the Bloc Quebecois.

I have said all along the minister replied very clearly yesterday that we want a clear question on separation. This is not a clear question on separation. It is a confusing question which we are denouncing. When I hear that confusing question from the leader of the Reform Party, saying that with one vote he will let Canada go, it is a very sad day for the people of western Canada.

[Translation]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Labour, responsible for the no side.

Yesterday in this House, the Minister of Labour tried to justify her about-face with respect to the referendum results by claiming that the question was ambiguous.

On September 12, when she said she would respect the decision of Quebecers in the referendum, would the Minister of Labour agree that at the time she already knew what the referendum question was and had known for several days?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Rimouski—Témiscouata certainly did not pay attention to the statements I made in my own riding. I was in the Lower St. Lawrence the day after the question was tabled in the Quebec National Assembly, and I said then that we were dealing with a question that was ambiguous, and I still say so today. And that is why the no coalition will work very hard during this referendum campaign to make the stakes clear to Quebecers, and the stakes are the separation of Quebec.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Labour agree that it was intellectual dishonesty on her part to refuse to admit that a reprimand from the Prime Minister caused her to change her position on the results of the referendum?

The Speaker: My dear colleagues, today we have used the words "intellectual honesty".

Mr. Bouchard: The very words of the Prime Minister.

The Speaker: Order, please. Now we are saying "intellectual dishonesty". I would ask hon. members to be very careful in their choice of words. These are very important matters, and I realize that, but I would ask all members to please be very judicious about the kind of language they use.

Oral Questions

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder who is obsessed with hiding the facts. They want to hide what is basically at stake in this referendum, the separation of Quebec. They want to hide the consequences of this referendum, should the outcome be yes, the economic consequences first of all, and the political and legal consequences.

• (1440)

As well, they are trying to hide studies that would be unfavourable to the option of the Parti Quebecois and the Bloc Quebecois. Who is acting democratically in this country?

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government claims to be champing at the bit to deal with other issues in Parliament and Canadian taxpayers from coast to coast are concerned about their economic security regardless of the outcome of the Quebec referendum.

Can the Minister of Finance give us a precise date for his fall financial statement and will that statement include a target date for elimination of the federal deficit?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, taking the questions in the reverse order, we will proceed as we have stated to operate on the basis of rolling two year targets so that in the course of the next budget we will obviously be setting a target for the year after 1996–97.

It will be a pleasure at that time to be establishing that target since it will be the fourth year in a row the government will have hit its deficit target.

We intend to proceed in terms of the fall update exactly as we did last year. At a certain point following the beginning of the consultation process when it is important to make that appearance after there has been enough consultation so that the government reacts I would be delighted to appear.

There is one major distinction between this year and last. It was very important last year to very clearly establish the direction the government was taking. That direction has now turned out to be very successful. What I will be doing this year is confirming that direction.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we had all summer to deal with this issue and I am surprised we are back here without a set date for an economic and financial statement.

[Translation]

My supplementary is for the same minister. Among the eleven governments in Canada, the PQ government and the federal government are the only ones without a commitment to deliver a balanced budget. Why has the Minister of Finance pursued the fiscal policy of the separatist government by avoiding a commitment to a deadline for a balanced budget?

[English]

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has no shame. His allies are laughing.

We have made it very clear that the way the previous government operated, the government for which the hon. member once worked, which never once met its deficit targets—that is to say to simply set five year targets, long term targets out of the way after an election was held and never meet them—was not the way to go.

As far as we are concerned what this country wants is credibility in government. We have provided it by establishing clear targets and hitting them and we will continue to do that.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, whereas the official opposition has done nothing else for the past two years, the Prime Minister only yesterday discovered a sudden desire to address real problems: job creation, economic growth, public finances. His finance minister does not share that interest, however, since he will not be taking part in the work of the finance committee leading up to the pre-budget consultation before the Quebec referendum is held.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. How does the Minister of Finance explain his decision not to personally initiate the pre-budget consultations starting up today, but to wait until November to appear before the finance committee?

[English]

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is nothing but a coincidence that the Reform Party and the Leader of the Opposition asked exactly the same questions on national unity, but now that they ask the same questions on the finances of the country I wonder why we need the two parties. Perhaps one would do or maybe one research branch between the two would do.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Oral Questions

• (1445)

[Translation]

At any rate, Mr. Speaker, I will give you the answer. It is our intention to follow exactly the same timetable as last year. In other words, I went before the Finance Committee around October 17, or after the financial statements had been tabled. They are not yet ready for last year. Presentations were made to the finance committee by four or five other groups. I certainly intend to go before the committee, once I am able to make worthwhile interest and growth rate projections. I want the submission by the Minister of Finance to be worthwhile for the members. And I shall make it when the time is right.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if a prebudget consultation process is initiated, the minister should be present to provide guidance. Last year, he gave direction to prebudget consultations. So, why is his office now telling us that he will be available from November 1 to 4 only? Is it because he has things to hide from the people of Quebec, who are about to make a decision regarding their future? Is he trying to hide his incompetence, seeing that there has been no net job creation since November 1994 and that economic growth is stalled?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reason why I testified slightly ahead of schedule last year, on October 17, was to clearly set out the government's economic policy. This year, as I said, we intend to confirm this.

Now, I must say that I am quite pleased to see that the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe is looking to me for guidance. I was under the impression that he always took his orders from—

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*[English]***HEALTH**

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, October 15 is the deadline this government has given to the provinces on the issue of semiprivate medical clinics. Does the Prime Minister know this edict will affect not only Alberta but high quality health care and choice in Ontario as well as Quebec?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the federal Minister of Health as we speak is meeting to follow up on the suggestion of all provinces, with the exception of Alberta, which agreed at a September 1994 meeting "to take whatever steps are required to regulate the development of private clinics in Canada".

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, some examples of those clinics, MédiClub in Montreal and IVF Canada in Toronto, would be gone as we know them. Does the Prime Minister feel so passionate about outdated legislation that he is willing to withdraw funds and decrease choice to Canadians coast to coast on quality health care?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian one tier health care system costs 25 per cent less than the American system. It has full coverage whereas in the United States, the king of private clinics, they pay 25 per cent more and they leave 30 million Americans without a penny of coverage.

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*[Translation]***SOCIAL PROGRAMS**

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister stated in this House that his only priority was to deal with the real problems. How does the Prime Minister explain then the fact that his government has postponed until after the referendum every major reform affecting ordinary people, seniors, families, the unemployed and the poor? Is this what dealing with the real problems means?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the contrary is quite the case.

• (1450)

If the hon. member had been more actively looking at the initiatives being taken over the past several months, she would know that we have been able to very successfully introduce a new program to aid students. Under this initiative 300,000 students will now have a new program of loans and grants for the first time, including new grants for those in the province of Quebec.

We have a new program where close to 25,000 young people will now be enrolled through various private sector initiatives in a series of apprenticeship programs. This will give them a real chance to move from school to work.

We have introduced a brand new system of delivery across the country. We will now be able to tell senior citizens that their applications for pensions can be processed in half a day rather than eight days and that they can get coverage in close to 700 centres.

If the hon. member had been more active in looking at the real things going on in the country rather than campaigning for separatism, she would have seen that we are in fact improving the lot of Canadians.

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we did look carefully. We saw that Quebec is number one in the poverty sector and that nothing serious was done about that.

Will the Prime Minister admit that he decided to postpone the announced reforms because he wants to save the bad news for Quebecers until after the referendum?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again the hon. member shows that rather than looking carefully at the important initiatives being taken this summer, she was off on her political campaigns.

If she had been more aware, she would recognize that we have an agreement with the Government of Quebec for about \$80 million to support the APPORT program. It directly provides assistance to poor single mothers to help them go back to school and to get income supplement to help their children. That is how we are dealing with poverty in the province of Quebec.

* * *

[Translation]

STUDY COMMISSIONED FROM ECONOMIST GEORGES MATHEWS

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, talking about hiding the truth, the Quebec minister responsible for restructuring claims that the methodology used for the study prepared by Georges Mathews of the Institut national de recherche scientifique was flawed in many ways, which is why it has not yet been made public. As for the author, he claims to have been censored.

Could the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs tell us in what way this study done by Mr. Mathews is so embarrassing to the Quebec government?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first reason why the Mathews study, which was kept secret by the Quebec government, is so embarrassing to the Parti Québécois is that it shows that, in recent years, Quebecers provided 21 per cent of federal revenues, while accounting for 24 per cent of total federal expenditures. This clearly contradicts the claims made by the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois.

Second, the study shows that the deficit resulting from the transition would be much higher than indicated in previous

Oral Questions

studies. The PQ government has always tried to hide the transition costs and that study shows what these costs would be.

* * *

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the residents of the town of Ipperwash at Ipperwash are the victims of an illegal occupation. The town feels betrayed by the federal government and wants the laws of Canada enforced. The town issued a press release yesterday directed to the federal government and is considering legal options.

Why do federal ministers continue to refuse to meet with the town?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be back. I did not expect to be congratulated by the Reform Party but I think in the last three weeks even Reform could admit that we can deal face to face with aboriginal people.

• (1455)

Quite frankly I went into Ipperwash when everybody said don't go, that it was dangerous. I found spiritual leaders and I found people who wanted the Liberal Party there, who wanted some leadership there. I am sorry that the Reform could not come.

What has happened in Ipperwash is that we have an outstanding agreement from 1942. It is about time that we implemented the agreement. They have been waiting. We have agreed to do it. We will have a credible negotiator there. He will meet with the First Nations and presumably he will meet with the townspeople.

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, everyone agrees that Camp Ipperwash is going to be turned over in an orderly fashion. That is not the question.

The minister of Indian affairs stated that he would not involve himself in situations where there were illegal activities. The people who have not been involved at all in any of this are the residents of the town who have to live with the consequences.

Yesterday the Minister of National Defence stated that negotiation is better than enforcement of the law. Why is the government so obviously refusing to enforce the laws of Canada? Why this double standard?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even the hon. member realizes that we are dealing with human emotions and grievances go very deep. At the Ipperwash camp I thought it was better that the First Nations be out there policing and they are the peacekeepers there.

We practise the policy of hope. We are not always going to be successful because we never accomplish everything we want to accomplish. Reformers practise the policy of despair and they prove every day that they have reached their goals.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Recently, representatives of various student associations wrote to the Prime Minister to express their concerns regarding the impact of the Axworthy reform on the rise in tuition fees and on student indebtedness.

How does the Prime Minister justify his refusal to reconsider the decision to drastically reduce the federal government's transfer payments, as the students were asking him to do?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the hon. member has his arithmetic a little bit mixed up. In fact, this year the federal government will be increasing its transfer for education to the province of Quebec by \$20 million. In the meantime, the government of Quebec cut the budget for education by \$200 million.

[Translation]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would simply point out to the Minister of Human Resources Development that I did not mention any figures.

My other question is also for the Prime Minister. Since the Prime Minister said yesterday that he wanted to talk about the real problems, is he aware today that by ignoring the students and standing by his decision to cut tuition fees, he is creating a major problem for students?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Prime Minister, I am quite satisfied with the answer given by the minister responsible.

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*[English]***CANADA PENSION PLAN**

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

The Canada pension plan is a fiscal mess. On February 2 of this year the HRDC policy director sent a memo to the chief actuary of Canada and said that the Canada pension plan disability benefits program is financial healthy. However, an internal HRD briefing note dated February 23 indicates that a senior policy analyst directly contradicts this assessment.

How can the minister explain this contradiction?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by welcoming back the hon. member for Calgary Southeast who has the very important responsibility of being a commentator on matters dealing with the social programs of this country. I am sure she will be offering constructive suggestions along the way which will be a refreshing change from what we have heard so far from members of her party.

● (1500)

First, if I could provide the hon. member with a word of comment or advice. It is unfortunate the hon. member is using language such as "the Canada pension plan is in crisis or in collapse", which I saw her being quoted as saying a few weeks back.

The Canada pension plan is not in a state of collapse. In fact it is providing very secure pensions for all Canadians. We will be changing the Canada pension plan as we are required to do every five years. The Minister of Finance will be meeting with his counterparts to discuss those matters because it is based on a pay as you go system.

We will have to look at funding the program to make sure it is sustainable for generations in the future. That is the position of the government: we want to maintain a sustainable Canada pension plan and we intend to do that.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the hon. minister but I would very much like him to address his answer to me with respect to the question I asked regarding the contradiction in those two documents I mentioned in my first question.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should get used to the fact that all kinds of strange and weird documents will be circulated in this field. I would ask her to check with me to make sure of their authenticity or their reliability.

If those do not interest her, she might check with a document produced by her own party which talks about privatizing the Canada pension plan. This would mean a reduction of benefits for 1.6 million senior citizens.

We would like to check on that before she issues such a document.

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JUVENILE PROSTITUTION

Ms. Judy Bethel (Edmonton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

The effects of street prostitution are devastating to street involved youth and to those who live in the affected communities. At our street prostitution forum in Edmonton East there was

an overwhelming consensus that stronger penalties must be imposed against pimps and johns who exploit our children and our young people.

What measures will the minister take to protect the victims of prostitution and by when?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the summer I visited and travelled with police officers in seven Canadian cities, spending evenings with the police, learning something about the criminal justice system from their perspective.

Among other things, I saw the nuisance of street prostitution and the tragedy of juvenile prostitution for the children who are exploited. It served only to deepen the commitment I have to doing something about juvenile prostitution.

Edmonton was one of the cities I visited. The Edmonton police force was kind enough to take me with it in its work.

The government is now preparing legislation. We expect to introduce proposals later this year to amend the Criminal Code to deal particularly with juvenile prostitution.

The hon. member should also know we have distributed an options paper to the provinces with respect to other measures and we are awaiting the completion by at least three of those provinces of their own internal consultations before taking further steps.

* * *

HEALTH CARE

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. There are many things today that are not unifying Canada but one thing that does unify Canadians is our belief in a national health care system.

Now that the ministers of health are meeting, as Minister of Finance what message did he give to the Minister of Health to take to this meeting about the federal government's commitment to stable funding by the federal government for our health care?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the budget produced last February we stated unequivocally that the principles of the Canada Health Act were there to stay. They were conceived by a Liberal government, they are part of this country's greatest heritage and we will defend them to the hilt.

Oral Questions

Subsequently the Prime Minister, the Minister of Health and I all stated that as part of the negotiations of the CHST we are going to ultimately stabilize cash at a level that will enable us to protect the health care system for as long as Canada is here.

* * *

• (1505)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Colleagues, today we have some rather special guests with us. In keeping with an initiative that I started in the last session, on your behalf I am inviting distinguished citizens of our nation to be with us. Today we have with us five members who were chosen by our national magazine *Maclean's* to be part of its honour roll.

I would like you to hold your applause. I am going to introduce the five recipients. We can all be justly proud of them and for what they were noted. At the end, if you would join me in saluting them on behalf of our Canadian citizens, I would appreciate it.

I would like you to recognize in the gallery Dr. Adolfo de Bold, whose medical research led to the discovery of a substance linked to the control of high blood pressure; the Right Hon. Brian Dickson, whom many of us have known for many years as Chief Justice of Canada from 1984–1990; Colonel Don Ethell, Canada's most decorated peacekeeper; Mr. Bill Kelly, one of our outstanding labour negotiators; and Mr. Arnold MacAuley, a search and rescue specialist. These are our distinguished Canadians.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

[Translation]

POINT OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our Standing Orders provide that matters raised during question period must have to do with, and this is clearly spelled out, government or ministerial responsibilities.

Here is my question: How can the Liberal member for Vaudreuil be allowed to question the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of Canada about something that is not within his jurisdiction or that of the government, about a document tabled by another government? How can the minister be allowed to be asked a question, and then proceed to give an answer for over two minutes, when the matter falls outside his purview?

The Speaker: Dear colleagues, as you know, our colleagues are entitled to ask questions and that is what one of them did. I

Government Orders

will review today's Hansard. The hon. member is right in saying that questions put to government members must be related to their administrative responsibilities. I will look into this matter and return with an answer shortly.

REQUEST FOR WITHDRAWAL OF MOTION M-208

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if you were to ask, you would certainly find unanimous consent to withdraw Motion M-208 standing in my name from the order of precedence of Private Members' Business.

• (1510)

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion withdrawn.)

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, were you to seek it, I think you would find unanimous consent that private members' hour this evening be cancelled but that all items on the order of precedence retain their position on the order of precedence so that we can proceed with item number one tomorrow.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: This concludes question period.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

MANGANESE BASED FUEL ADDITIVES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-94, an act to regulate interprovincial trade in and the importation for commercial purposes of certain manganese based substances, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, before I was interrupted by question period I attempted to raise substantive questions concerning the position taken by the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers' Association as voiced through the Minister of the Environment.

In continuing my presentation, I would like to talk about some of the difficulties that will be imposed on Canadians if this bill is to proceed and become law.

On April 25 the Minister of Industry stated that it was crucial to have uniformity of standards in gasoline formulation in the North American market because we exist in one North American market. I hope that the minister still agrees with that statement and still agrees that it is crucial to have uniformity of standards, particularly since the U.S. court of appeals has now ordered that the U.S. EPA grant Ethyl Corporation's application for waiver, paving the way for the use of MMT in unleaded gasolines in the United States. In fact, several refiners in the U.S. have provided written notice of their intention to use MMT in gasoline formulation.

Uniformity of gasoline additives within North America would now require that Canada maintain rather than restrict MMT. Certainly it should not mean that it is no longer crucial to maintain that uniformity of standards.

Also the refining industry has raised a number of objections to the initiative, basically that it would increase the cost to refiners and it will increase refinery emissions. A 1995 study by T.J. McCann and Associates Limited of Calgary concluded that removing MMT from Canadian gasolines would add significantly to the refinery cost for formulating gasoline and increase the severity of the refining process required to achieve cleaner burning fuels, leading to increased refinery emissions and higher oil consumption.

The Minister of the Environment made much of need to control pollution in this country. The study by Calgary based T.J. McCann and Associates and Environ International Limited of California showed the likely range of increase in nitrous oxide emissions if MMT were banned. The testing utilized Environment Canada's own criteria, Mobile 5-C data and Ethyl fleet test data. The study concluded that the banning of MMT would increase Canadian nitrous oxide emissions from its vehicle fleet by 32,000 to 50,000 tonnes by the year 2000, an equivalent of adding over one million automobiles to Canadian roads.

• (1515)

Last May, Environ California concluded that Environment Canada and the McCann study underestimated the annual increases in tonnes of nitrous oxide emissions that would result from the removal of MMT. Environ examined the inappropriate use and application of the Mobile 5C emission factor by Environment Canada and concluded that Canadian nitrous oxide emissions increases resulting from the removal of MMT would range between 49,000 and 62,000 tonnes.

Putting these studies in a non-technical format, removing MMT would increase nitrous oxide levels from automobiles by up to 20 per cent. I cannot believe the Canadian Minister of the Environ-

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ment is pushing legislation that would increase pollution in Canada.

Almost all provinces in Canada oppose this initiative by the environment minister. In the interest of time I will quote Alberta's position. Ty Lund, Alberta's minister for environmental protection, said:

It is unclear that the removal of MMT from gasoline has net environmental benefits.

Alberta favours the design of a suitable, binding process to resolve the dispute in a fair and timely fashion. An open, multi-stakeholder review of the environmental and economic merits of MMT should be key to this dispute resolution mechanism to credibly solve the vehicle-fuel compatibility issue.

Further, Alberta is concerned that the actions of the federal government to affect the interprovincial trade of MMT appear to contradict the provision found in the energy chapter of the draft agreement on international trade. Article 1209, section 1 of the draft agreement currently states: "No party shall prohibit or hinder access to its petroleum markets or its petroleum products markets". It is our understanding that the intent of the federal-provincial agreement was to remove interprovincial barriers to trade in petroleum products.

I also have similar objections from Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

When we examine all the evidence before us and if we examine the evidence impartially we cannot help but to at least conclude there is some doubt to the argument and position put forward by the Canadian Automobile Manufacturers Association.

Based on that information it is only reasonable that instead of passing this bill the government should ask—in my mind there is no doubt—if there still remains a doubt and ask for an independent study to determine what the affect of MMT in gasoline is required in Canada.

The minister says she has seen numerous studies on the issue in Canada but those studies come from only from the automobile manufacturers association which has refused to release those studies or the minister has refused to table those studies in the House so that we might all have a look at them in order to decide whether they are legitimate studies containing legitimate evidence.

I challenge not only the Minister of Industry to reject this bill and vote against it, but I challenge Alberta's only representative in cabinet, the Minister of Natural Resources, who professes to support the industry and Alberta's position, to vote against the bill on that basis.

I am disappointed that Canada's environment minister has been unwilling to listen to both sides in this argument and judge the evidence from both sides. She chose instead to simply voice, as a political puppet, the concerns of the motor vehicle manufacturers association and carry it forward on its behalf instead of taking the interest of all Canadians into consideration on this issue.

• (1520)

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about the minister being a political puppet of the auto manufacturers association, which is a very serious accusation. Contrary to what he stated in his speech, is he aware the minister met with the Canadian Petroleum Producers Association directly as representatives of the Ethyl Corporation on this very issue twice and that they twice flew in in the corporate jet to meet with the minister?

Is he also aware the minister has met with the CPPI on at least four or five occasions? I do not think the hon. member is fair when he says the minister never gave the Ethyl Corporation or its representatives any hearing. That is completely false.

If this is your information, I suggest you correct it. I do not think the minister is the type to be a political puppet of anyone I know.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Before I grant the floor to the hon. member to reply, I simply caution both sides of the House and all members to please make all interventions through the Chair and not directly across the floor to one another.

Mr. Chatters: Mr. Speaker, I have been advised by Ethyl Corporation, one of the stakeholders in this issue, the other being the Canadian Automobile Manufacturers Association, that the Minister of the Environment refused to meet with it. That is the information I have to go with.

Mr. Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, maybe the member should, because he seems to have very close relations with the Ethyl Corporation, ask it to correct this misstatement. The minister has assured me personally that she met twice with the CPPI on behalf of the Ethyl Corporation to discuss this very subject.

Mr. Chatters: Mr. Speaker, the real issue here is not who has met whom and on whose behalf but whether both sides in this issue have had a chance to argue directly with the minister the question at hand and whether both sides have had an equal chance to produce unbiased independent studies on the issue, which has not been the case in Canada.

This issue has been studied to death in the United States. The conclusion by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has been that MMT has no detrimental effect on the environment, on health, on the onboard computer equipment in cars. That should indicate at least some doubt in the minds of the Minister of the Environment and the parliamentary secretary to the validity of the automobile manufacturers association's evidence, which it have refused to provide to the public.

The very lease we should do is provide an opportunity in Canada for independent study, independent of both stakeholders in this issue. We should then make a decision based on that impartial,

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independent evidence. I do not think that is an unreasonable request.

Mr. Julian Reed (Halton—Peel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend from Athabasca initially made what one would consider a rather unwise accusation in his speech. He suggested the government was succumbing to big powers or big business or the shakers and movers in the country and so on.

I listened intently when he talked about the wisdom of continuing to use this American produced product and I wondered where he was getting his information and the kind of thing he was reading into the record.

• (1525)

The first of three questions is who is turning his crank? Who is cheering him on to stand up and deliver his own set of figures especially when a perfectly valid Canadian produced substitute is available?

No oil refiner would feel threatened in any way to be substituting an oxygenate like ETBE or ethanol or whatever for MMT. Some refineries are in the forefront of that change right now. He suggested refineries have been reporting they would have increased emissions. Did all refineries say that? Some refineries are a way out in front.

He referred to the pollutant nitrous oxide. NO_x is the one pollutant whose quantity increases without the use of MMT or with the inclusion of an oxygenate, but it increases from what? What is the base line of the pollutant?

If the pollutant increase were 150 per cent it would still be incredibly small. How does that tiny increase in nitrous oxide emission compare with the decreases in all of the other emissions when one takes MMT out?

Maybe it is not fair to ask the hon. member to deliver statistics but I want to get on the record the fact that NO_x, while it is an admitted pollutant, is not the big ticket item here. There are other things.

In terms of the minister's supporting the industry she has supported the petroleum industry very well and has been written up. Her support has been publicized.

Mr. Chatters: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite perhaps sheds some light on the mysterious position of the minister and the government on this issue.

I was under the impression the issue here was one of a problem with onboard diagnostic equipment and environmental protection. He raises the issue of perhaps finding a way to force the refining industry to use a Canadian product rather than an imported American product. Perhaps that has something to do with the position the government has taken on this issue. Others would find interesting under the free trade agreement with the United States that it would choose to do that. That was not my understanding as part of this issue.

Certainly the people who turn my crank on this issue are my constituents and the Canadian people who are being sold a con job, a fraud job on this whole issue because the environment minister and the government refuse to do independent studies on the issue and to gather independent unbiased information. They choose rather to accept solely without question all the evidence presented by the one stakeholder in the issue.

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a couple of hours ago the Minister of the Environment indicated in the House her meetings with industry and the offers she made to industry in the period preceding the introduction of this bill. Was the member in the House when the minister spoke a couple of hours ago?

Mr. Chatters: Mr. Speaker, I certainly was in the House. I called into question her sincerity in offering to meet with all the parties involved in this issue. That is not my understanding of what has happened. I raised what I think is a valid question. According to my information, she consistently refused to meet with—

• (1530)

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chatters: I heard her and I questioned the validity of that remark. I think it is a legitimate question and I will continue to raise it.

She also raised a lot of other issues. I might point to the one concerning sparkplug failure. In a very emotional manner she raised the issue of Canadians having to change their sparkplugs 17 times more frequently than Americans. However in an independent, valid and verifiable study it was concluded that was an absolute fraud. One particular sparkplug failed 17 times more often than others simply because of a flaw in the manufacture of that sparkplug. It did the same with MMT or without MMT. It had no significance.

If I am not allowed to raise questions concerning the validity of the comments made by the minister, then what am I doing here? I believe my question was valid and reasonable and I will continue to raise it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my support of Bill C-94 on the abolition of MMT in the gasoline we Canadians use every day comes out of a strong conviction.

For me it is not a question of backing this or that kind of production, this or that manufacturer.

[*English*]

I have no brief for the automobile industry nor have I a brief for Ethyl Corporation. That is not my business. I believe very deeply in the environment. I have always done so. I am convinced that the bill will go a long way to solving a very significant environmental problem relating to gasoline in our cars.

For me it is a question of pollution prevention. I have satisfied myself, not because I believe in Toyota, General Motors or any other company. Frankly I do not care.

Unfortunately there are more and more cars on the road. I wish we had cars that used ethanol, electricity and hydrogen rather than gasoline, but that is a fact of life. As long as there are cars the only way to ensure that they perform with the least damage to the environment is to ensure, first, that they are equipped with the latest technology and that they are inspected and maintained properly.

That is why all provinces across Canada have an inspection and maintenance service which ensures that the drivers of cars, especially older cars, go to inspection stations in order to verify that their cars are safe and sound for the environment. The idea of putting new technology on board the cars is to prevent damage before it occurs, to ensure that we have less need for inspection and maintenance stations and the cars will tell the drivers when the systems have failed.

I have satisfied myself that MMT does not help the systems. The manufacturers in Canada have said if we continue with MMT they cannot and they will not install the latest diagnostic systems in these cars. That is not hypothetical, it is a fact.

If we are conscious of the environment, and if we use a precautionary system, we have to make decisions in favour of what is the most environmentally and technologically sound decision.

• (1535)

Acting to ban MMT makes us uniform with the United States, paradoxically. The speaker before me was pretending that we should do exactly the reverse. He was quoting the Ethyl Corporation's many appeals to the United States' courts—which it eventually won—to force the EPA to permit MMT to be added again to gasoline.

I will correct the member because the EPA has still not agreed. Contrary to what the member stated, in August 1994 Mrs. Carol Browner, the administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, indicated the EPA had concerns about the potential effects of manganese emissions on public health, especially in light of the broad exposure of Americans to car emissions.

A risk assessment on manganese emissions conducted by the EPA determined there were important unanswered questions about potential public health risks and that studies on health effects and exposures are needed.

The EPA has said: "Despite the appeals of Ethyl Corporation we want a risk and health assessment to be completed before we will okay MMT".

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[*Translation*]

Some time ago, the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development held environmental hearings where Ralph Ferguson, a former MP and colleague, gave testimony on the MMT issue. He raised a number of points relating to health. I know that they will tell us that Health Canada has found that MMT presents no significant problem for health. This is their decision. Still, according to many experts we ought to be very careful. I would like to quote from this hearing we had on the environment, where Mr. Ferguson spoke of a hearing that the American EPA had held on June 22, 1990. Helen Silbergeld of the University of Maryland and the Environmental Defence Fund gave the following testimony:

[*English*]

"Manganese, like lead, is a cumulative toxin in that both its absorption and retention as well as its toxicity increase with time".

[*Translation*]

She also cited well-known Canadian scientists specializing in neurotoxicity, Dr. John Donaldson and Dr. Frank Labella and others who have carried out experiments at the University of Manitoba on the manganese question. Dr. Donaldson also stated the following at that same EPA hearing in Washington:

[*English*]

"I believe that manganese is such an age accelerating toxin and I believe it is the answer to manganese's ability to produce biochemically, pathologically and clinically the picture that is very similar but not identical to Parkinson's disease".

[*Translation*]

Later on, the health and environment committee of the United States House of Representatives also appeared before the EPA. Its representative said:

[*English*]

"Like lead, manganese is not only neurotoxic, it is an element and thus does not degrade or lose its potency with the passage of time. As a result the manganese released into the environment through the use of MMT in a given year accumulates over time with all the MMT released in the next year and all subsequent years".

[*Translation*]

The University of Pittsburg, the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, said the following in a report to the EPA:

• (1540)

[*English*]

The 15-page appendix to their waiver application, *parlant de la corporation Ethyl*, that deals with health, nowhere mentions

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the newer toxic properties of manganese, nor does it attend to the extraordinary risks to the brain of alkali manganese compounds. This document cannot be taken as a credible submission in support of this application. It is incomplete, biased and tendentious.

[Translation]

That is why Ms. Carol Browner, the administrator of the EPA, said as recently as June 1994 that many health questions remained unanswered and that additional assessments were needed before MMT could be approved.

So there are potential problems. I am not saying that it has been proven 100 per cent or 50 per cent safe, but if we feel that caution must be a guiding principle in health and environmental matters, we must be very careful indeed. If we really believe in climatic changes and are convinced that cars are the main source of air pollution in Canada, it is because it is a fact.

According to a recent study by all deputy ministers of the environment in Canada, cars are the main source of harmful atmospheric emissions. These figures are quite striking. Gasoline—and diesel—powered motor vehicles account for 60 per cent of carbon monoxide emissions; 35 per cent of nitrous oxide emissions, which cause smog; and 25 per cent of hydrocarbon emissions. I know we will be told that MMT reduces nitrous oxide emissions.

[English]

As stated by my colleague very recently in a question to the Reform Party, what is the basis of that? Our studies show in the Ministry of the Environment that the way this figure is contrived, used in test cars of Ethyl Corporation, results in a completely insignificant factor when explained in actual ratio relating to all cars in Canada.

The gains produced by the use of onboard diagnostic systems in new cars are so much greater in proportion that the environmental advantages far outweigh any disadvantages by the removal of MMT.

We have been debating this issue since 1986. Contrary to what the member from the Reform Party said a few minutes ago, the minister not only sat with both sides but talked to the Ethyl Corporation directly twice on this issue, and as she stated very recently in the House, offered Ethyl Corporation this compromise: "I won't put legislation through if you will agree with me to produce one type of gasoline blend without MMT to let the consumers make their own choice". Ethyl refused this very fair and open compromise because it did not want to let the consumers judge.

I ask the members here who believe that Bill C-94 is not needed, why environmentally sound countries, leaders in the field, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Germany and Japan do not use MMT. How come it is only in

Canada of all the countries in the world that is using MMT? Are we supposed to be the smart ones? The irony is that we do not even produce it ourselves. The Americans produce it but do not use it. Then we take the American product and use it on our own soil regardless of the fact that the rest of the world does not want any of it.

• (1545)

The Reform Party will suggest that we be uniform with the United States, co-ordinate so that MMT is used both in Canada and the United States when the EPA has been fighting tooth and nail for 18 years to ban MMT. The only reason they are now faced with the possibility of MMT being reintroduced is court case after court case after court case by Ethyl Corporation.

Does Ethyl Corporation care about the environment? No it does not care about the environment. It cares about its profits, about its existence. It cares about the Canadian market because it is the only market it has for selling MMT. If it was such a good product the Dutch, the French, the Germans, the Finnish and the Japanese would buy it to put in their cars but they do not want any of it. Why should we be the suckers?

Instead of defending Ethyl Corporation and MMT it is time that we started to think, as my colleague from London stated so clearly, about using our talents, our brains, our tremendous resources to use environmentally sound products. There are additives which are beckoning us. We could use ethanol in gasoline tomorrow morning and it would perform even better than MMT and is completely environmentally sound. It is time we started to use ethanol fueled cars, electrically driven cars, hydrogen fueled cars. I do not have any grief for the Ethyl Corporation which fights for MMT and goes back like the dinosaurs into the past. I want to see the future.

Bill C-94 points to a change of habit. It forces all Canadians to look at a different way of doing things and not to accept the dictates of a big corporation that only wants big profits and could not care less about the consumer or the environment.

I am an environmentalist. All I care about is quality of life and potential health dangers if it is slightly possible that there are health dangers. I have read these documents and they prove that there are significant health dangers. Many universities and many doctors of repute have said to beware. They said it about lead many, many years ago and we never believed them.

As a result of what I have heard and because of the weight of evidence I have read, I say let us go with Bill C-94. Let us change our habits and make our gasoline cleaner. Let us go to the new generation of fuels, the clean fuels, ethanol and the new energy patterns of electricity and halogen. Let us live more cleanly. Let us put the environment first. The automobile industry and Ethyl Corporation can come last. I do not care.

To Canadian consumers I say Bill C-94 is one step forward and I hope we all vote for it.

[Translation]

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House are well aware that, according to certain documents, MMT is said to be a dangerous pollutant, while other studies say that it has not been conclusively proven to be harmful.

The member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis made comments about Ethyl Corporation which, over the years, has commissioned a number of studies on MMT. Consequently, I do not think it is appropriate to lash out at a company which, after all, did its homework. And if the courts made some decisions in favour of that company, it is because Ethyl Corporation did its homework properly.

As regards MMT, the problem is that the United States could reintroduce that product.

• (1550)

I am not saying that they will, but they are considering re-introducing it on the American market. Personally, I am just concerned that Canadian companies, including our oil companies, will have to make major and costly changes in order to stop using that product.

As you know, we agree with Bill C-94. Nevertheless, I ask myself this question, which I put to the hon. member opposite: Is this truly the right decision to make? Should we pass this bill that quickly, without knowing what the United States will ultimately decide?

Let us not forget that we live in North America. We could pass Bill C-94 only to find out two years down the road that the Americans are re-introducing MMT. In the meantime, we would have asked our oil companies to change everything so as to comply with this legislation. I am not convinced that MMT is harmful to our health. I have read studies. Ethyl Canada provided us with its studies and we also had discussions with the EPA.

We were told that it remains to be seen whether that product is truly harmful. Sure, we have to promote progress, environmental protection and sustainable development. We fully agree with that. However, we should wait for the decision of the Americans, because it is vital for us regarding this issue.

Mr. Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, I think the points made by the hon. member for Laurentides were very constructive and they are well taken. I agree these are important matters that must be dealt with.

After a lot of soul searching, we finally decided that Bill C-94 was the answer. There was a decisive factor. The United States is of course looking into the MMT issue, following a number of appeals filed by Ethyl Corporation. However, the EPA is dragging its feet.

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Until June 1994, the EPA administrator was fighting very hard, but in fact they keep asking for studies and health impact assessments.

The United States might reintroduce MMT and it would then become legal. It is quite possible, but meanwhile, it is up to us as Canadians to take the kind of action that may also influence our neighbours to the south.

Today, we are part of NAFTA which includes Mexico, and I think that we have to make decisions on the basis of their intrinsic value. We think that, today, Canada could add ethanol to gas. My colleague has done an extraordinary study of ethanol. Today, we have an ethanol industry in eastern Canada. We have one in western Canada. The United States, because of the legislation, is now getting involved in massive production of ethanol. I believe that they want 10 per cent of the oil industry to be ethanol-based by the year 2000.

It seems to me we should start making an effort to seek additives that are more environmentally sound. I realize there are arguments for and against MMT.

I think the weight of the evidence would support a new process: gas without MMT. What strikes me particularly is that none of the countries that enjoy an outstanding reputation for the quality of their environment—the Netherlands, Germany, Finland and the Scandinavian countries—none of them uses MMT.

If tomorrow morning one of these countries were to opt for MMT, I would think again. If the United States had opted for MMT because it was environmentally safe, I would reconsider. However, the EPA does not accept it because it wants to but because it was a legal decision. I think we should go ahead with C-94.

[English]

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me this issue is not terribly unlike the issue of the ethics counsellor. We need to have some distance between the person who is making a judgment and the people who are directly involved.

• (1555)

What we have here are two studies being distributed by the principals of the dispute. We have a very strong reason to doubt the validity of the evidence.

I do most of my own mechanical work. I always have in order to save a buck or two. On Saturdays I change my own sparkplugs.

Not long ago I turned out the plugs on my car in order to replace them because they had 75,000 kilometres on them and I had never touched them. It stood to reason that by then I should be changing them. They were almost as good as new. I cleaned them up, regapped them and put them back in and finally replaced them at 100,000 kilometres.

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The studies we are asked to believe say that these plugs will fail 17 times as often using MMT. I am in an environment where as far as I know there is MMT in our fuel. If that is really a cause of sparkplug failure then either I was the recipient of a miracle or the studies are not to be depended on.

I have a tendency to think that it is the studies that are not reliable because I have many acquaintances and I talk to many people and not a single person has complained to me of premature sparkplug failure. That is a sample of I do not know how many thousands of people. If that were happening I would have heard about it as the representative from Elk Island.

If we cannot trust this study in the area of sparkplugs, why should we then trust the same study when it tells us that it is very harmful to the environment and has all these other dangers? It may or it may not.

I do not believe these are to be trusted. That is why we need to call for a truly independent agency that is reliable and trustworthy to evaluate the merits or demerits of the use of MMT. Let us have the truth instead of a bunch of wildly stated causes and effects that may or may not rest in truth.

I ask the member why there is a reluctance on the part of the government to submit this to a truly independent study.

Mr. Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, I have always considered that in these questions the government is there to make decisions after it evaluates both sides of a story.

The feeling is that only the automobile industry's case has been studied but that is not correct. I have letters from the deputy minister. There are evaluations made by the Minister of the Environment completely, impartially and objectively, including the minister's commitment to the Ethyl Corporation to suggest to Ethyl not to go with legislation, that the minister would prefer to have a compromise on this issue between the two industrial groups concerned and suggesting and offering to Ethyl to produce one type of gasoline without MMT to let the consumers judge and compare.

That is fair. It is objective. It is impartial. It is a fact. I know the minister made this offer. I know that this offer was turned down because Ethyl Corporation today has a solid market with MMT that it does not want to give up. It is a monopoly.

If Canada turns down MMT, there would be no MMT sold anywhere around the world. That is a fact. As I said before, if it is so good for cars why is MMT not used in the fuels in all the countries that are just as sophisticated as we are? I find that very strange. I am convinced the step we are taking today is a step forward for the environment.

• (1600)

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for the last number of years I have been involved along with the former member from London, Ralph Ferguson, in pushing the issue of better acceptance and more use of ethanol, one of the alternate octane enhancers to MMT.

I believe we were very close to passing, if we did not pass in the House in the last Parliament, a private member's motion to accept ethanol as a replacement for MMT. There was a lot of support at that time for replacement of MMT for many of the reasons the parliamentary secretary has outlined for us today.

At that time we were not made aware of the EPA's requirement to review the whole question of MMT because of the court ruling. However, one of the things we were trying to use at that time from the farm production point of view was the fact that ethanol was a very good replacement. It was renewable and at that point there was a surplus of grains, the source of ethanol, and they were very cheap.

Could the minister tell us what the economics of ethanol production have become? I know I have one of the larger ethanol production units in my riding. It is concerned about the sudden increase in the cost of inputs. Grain prices have more than doubled since the time that Ralph Ferguson introduced his bill.

Will this change make a sizeable change to the cost of gasoline because the ethanol may cost more than the MMT and what will the economic costs of such a change be? Has the Department of the Environment looked at the new costs of ethanol given that the raw material going into ethanol production, namely grains, has virtually doubled or more over the last three or four years?

Mr. Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, I do not have these figures with me at present. I know the ministry and others, including several MPs here, have made extensive studies on ethanol and the cost of ethanol as an additive. I will commit myself to make these figures whatever we have available to the hon. member as soon as possible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I think that you will obtain the unanimous consent of the House to revert to the presentation of committee reports.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The House had heard the motion of the hon. parliamentary secretary. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

[English]

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on Bill C-94 to ban the importation and interprovincial trade of MMT.

The bill is fascinating but for the duplicity inherent in the process of how the bill came about. MMT is methylcyclopentadienyl manganese tricarbonyl, an additive to unleaded gasoline, an octane enhancer. It reduces nitrous oxide emissions and makes gas burn a lot cleaner.

Nitrous oxides when released are the primary cause of smog which causes respiratory problems in a great number of people within our country, in particular those suffering from asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

The minister tried to ban MMT but found she could not do it. MMT has proven not to be a hazard to people's health. She tried to find some other way of getting MMT out of Canada by putting forth this bill to ban the trade of MMT which in effect is a ban on MMT in this country.

• (1605)

It has been demonstrated through Health Canada which has looked at MMT that this was a perfectly benign substance for the people in the country. Therefore there is no scientific ground to ban MMT.

Let us take a look at why is the minister doing this. Before the minister put the bill forward MMT was made the Ethyl Corporation. The Motor Vehicle Manufacturers' Association claimed MMT has been destroying its on board diagnostic computers which no doubt are very important to keeping cars burning cleaner so we can all have a healthier environment. No one would dispute having OBDs.

However, we dispute having one view from the manufacturers of automobiles saying MMT destroys its OBDs and one view from the Ethyl Corporation which says it does not. The Ethyl Corporation supports this view through studies done by an independent environmental protection association. It has proven conclusively, contrary to what the Deputy Prime Minister said, that MMT does not affect on board diagnostic computers. In spite of this the minister has proceeded with this ban.

We can see this is clearly not an environmental bill. Health Canada has even shown MMT has not been deleterious to the health of Canadians. However, it has been proven—

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member but I think there is now unanimous consent that I put these motions which are somewhat urgent because I understand there are committees waiting for and depending on these.

Routine Proceedings

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

HOUSE COMMITTEES

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 85th report of the House Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs on the list of members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, as well as the list of committee associate members.

[English]

If the House gives its consent I intend to move concurrence in this almost immediately.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I propose, seconded by the Chief Government Whip, that the 85th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House today be concurred in.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I move that the names of the following members be added to the list of associate members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs: Mr. Proud, Mr. Richardson, Mr. Solomon and Mrs. Ur.

While I am on my feet I thank the hon. member who was speaking and all hon. members for their co-operation in seeing these routine matters dispensed with this afternoon.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***MANGANESE-BASED FUEL ADDITIVES ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-94, an act to regulate interprovincial trade in and the importation for commercial purposes of certain manganese based substances be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this is clearly not an environmental bill. MMT has proven not to be deleterious to the health of Canadians. I quote from the Deputy Prime Minister's own press statement demonstrating our commitment to protecting the environment. It had nothing to do with that but everything to do with protecting the auto manufacturers' industry.

• (1610)

Before the bill came about both the Ethyl Corporation and the vehicle manufacturers' association were under negotiation to solve this problem outside of the House. They were close to making a decision. Then the minister came forward with this bill and the auto manufacturers, knowing they would get a response in their favour, understandably backed away. Sure enough this bill rather than solving a problem is muddying the waters. That is unfortunate. We would not be wasting House time with the bill if we had let nature take its course.

We have requested an independent third party to review MMT to determine if it damages onboard devices. If it does we have two options. We need to look for an alternative to MMT or we need to change the onboard devices and work out some agreement with the private sector.

The minister noted that MMT has been banned all over the world and Canada is the only country still using it. I bring to the attention of the minister that last year the U.S. district court of appeals said MMT could again be used in the United States. Therefore while we are pursuing a course to ban MMT the United States will now allow its use. Why are we engaging in this behaviour?

The Minister of Industry wants one unified gasoline for the entire continent. Why are we pursuing a course which would take us into a different type of gasoline when the United States is trying to bring back gasoline which contains MMT?

This is telling us there has been an abuse of power. We have seen legislative shenanigans and the government is favouring one group, the automobile association. That is reprehensible.

I hope the Deputy Prime Minister will take the mature course and ask for an independent study, as my friend from Elk Island has requested. That study would give us the answers we require and it would serve the people of Canada and the environment well. It is fundamental for us to get these answers not only for the citizens of Canada but for the environment.

If we remove MMT the minister must lay out another plan. She must be aware that nitrous oxide content would actually increase in the emissions from cars by up to 20 per cent or more, which would greatly increase health hazards to Canadians. Having seen many people with pulmonary diseases, that is grossly unfair.

She also spoke about having two types of gasoline in Canada. Quite frankly that is a fantasy. Why do we not have one gasoline, the best and the cleanest, which we could responsibly and cost effectively use, that would be fair to both sides, the auto manufacturers and the petroleum corporations?

I ask that we act together on this issue. It is not an issue of one side against the other. It is an issue for all Canadians and for the country.

I also strongly suggest that in the area of transport there is much which can be done by new technology. Fascinating advances have been made in making cars and other vehicles burn cleaner and safer. Much of these technologies have not been brought forward in an aggressive fashion. I believe we can take a leadership role in promoting these very substantial discoveries and bring them to the forefront. It is the responsibility of the House to bring them forward in order for them to become a practical reality for all Canadians.

• (1615)

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca for his comments.

I would like to get his opinion on a couple of suggestions we have put forward. What does he feel would be served by having a completely independent study done by an independent agency, for example something from the National Research Council, to study independent of the automakers or the Ethyl Corporation whether this MMT stuff actually does any harm? Is there a need for that? Is there a need to have a completely independent study? If so, is the National Research Council perhaps the group that could perform that?

Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, my apologies for getting up prematurely. It was such a good question from my friend that I could not resist it.

To echo basically what my colleague, the hon. member for Elk Island, just said, the reason we are asking for an independent study is that the Deputy Prime Minister brought forth a slew of papers, all

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of which were from members of the Automobile Manufacturers Association. They are very interested party in this debate, but in fact they are one side of this debate.

What we can do is determine whether or not the studies that have been put forth are legitimate, sound, scientifically based studies. If they are, then we should believe them. If they are not, if there is any question whatsoever, then we definitely need to have an independent third party to do the study. We cannot have a member or a group as intimately associated with the question at hand—a combatant in this debate—to decide what is true and what is not. That is why we in this party are asking for an independent review, an independent group to do this. Perhaps the National Research Council or some other group could do this. The important point to remember is that it must be an independent party that is not intimately associated with either the Ethyl Corporation or the automobile manufacturers association.

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I ask this question because I do not hear the question coming from the opposite benches and I think it is an important issue.

After we have heard all of the discussion about using ethanol as a substitute for MMT, given that the two products are equally effective and setting aside the argument of whether one is better for the environment or not, I ask my colleague to tell the House why this government would not choose to ban MMT in favour of ethanol in gasoline as an octane enhancer.

Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for the interesting question on ethanol.

Ethanol is a very important additive, but it unfortunately requires a government subsidy in the order of eight cents per litre in order to get to market. That would be an enormous cost to the government, and during these times of fiscal restraint we would not advocate in any way, shape, or form that the government put more money into this and spend more money. It would cost billions of dollars to do this.

This party has been very emphatic about prompting and encouraging scientists and researchers in the country to come up with a more cost effective way of making ethanol and other fuel additives so we can have automobiles burn fuel more cleanly.

• (1620)

We have always been strong advocates for the research and development sector in the country because it is one of the pillars that will enable our country to be highly competitive in the future to create economic niches for longlasting, high paying jobs.

I encourage the government to continue to support the research and development sector, which does some fantastic things in the

country. We must not lose sight of the fact that it is a pillar that will enable us to be economically competitive in the future.

Mr. Julian Reed (Halton—Peel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am always intrigued by how hard things die. Here we have a situation where a product has been on the market and it was discovered nearly 20 years ago that there were problems with it. It was discovered about 10 years ago in Canada by the Ministry of the Environment that there were some problems with it. Now there is an alternative.

I do not blame the vested interests that keep promoting these things, but the fact is that it has taken a long time for reality to set in and for life to take its course, as it should.

I would like to go back a little in terms of the history of fuel additives. In about 1928 it was discovered that tetra-ethyl lead added to gasoline would enhance the octane and provide some upper cylinder lubrication to engines. It was called the anti-knock compound and was produced by the Ethyl Corporation. At the same time another body of equally distinguished scientists and chemists promoted the idea of ethanol in gasolines. As a matter of fact, Henry Ford had been a strong advocate of ethanol. His first Model T ran on pure ethanol.

The debate raged through the 1930s and finally lead won out over ethanol. It is an interesting story. According to the information I have, the Du Pont Corporation owned and controlled the Ethyl Corporation of America and it also held 24 per cent of General Motors' stock. Consequently, General Motors became a promoter of lead. In 1929 Ford stopped putting extra jets on carburetors so that ethanol could be burned. That is not the only story like that in history.

When I was a young person spraying the apple trees at our home farm, I used arsenical to kill grubs and worms. It was discovered during my early teenage years that arsenic really was a heavy metal and it was not very nice to spray on trees and on the ground. Finally, by the time I got to agricultural college a solution had been found to the problem—mercurial. Mercurials were going to be the be all and end all. It was not for many years, too many for me to admit to, that industry realized that products used in these areas have to be biodegradable, able to return to the soil from whence they originate. The same realization is slowly coming with our fuel additives.

We went to lead. It was discovered that lead really was not what we wanted to be spewing around into the environment in ever increasing quantities. When government decided to take lead out, a substitute was found, which was going to be the miracle replacement for lead. It was another heavy metal, methyl manganese. There are a lot of \$10 words following that one that I am not prepared to repeat.

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• (1625)

For almost a generation we have realized that there are some difficulties. The people who support one side of the case and the other side of the case make their stories, but we know now that there is a better substitute. There is a substitute.

My friend from Athabasca felt that one of the motivations of the government was because the product ethanol could be manufactured in Canada. That has not been a motivation of the government. It is one of my motivations, because I believe that a Canadian ethanol industry has potential to be one of the great things for Canadian agriculture.

Since the government did its little arrangement about a year ago, about \$300 million has been committed in Ontario alone for ethanol development. If ethanol were to replace MMT at the rate of 10 per cent in Canada, it would take approximately 10 investments of the size that are taking place in Ontario right now in order to fill that need. One can see that there is great potential.

The cost of ethanol has been raised, and it is a very legitimate argument. What about the cost? The cost of grain is increasing at the present time, and of course grain is a cyclical thing.

The answer to that is twofold. One is that the cost of grain is not the only factor in determining the cost of ethanol production. There are byproducts. If we are making ethanol from wheat, gluten and some of these other things are important products and they are important in the economics of the ethanol industry. If we are making it from corn, corn oil, distillers grains, distillers solubles and so on, they are also very important byproducts and they are quite meaningful when we are calculating the cost.

The other part of the cost equation is not just eight cents, which was the excise tax on ethanol. The cost of any fuel is not just the direct cost. The cost of a shovelful of coal is not whether you are going to pay 30 cents or a dollar for that shovelful of coal. It has to be looked on as the whole cost. What is the cost of the impact on the environment? There is a dollar attachment to those things now. Things can be costed. I think I once saw the word monetized. When you have emissions into the environment, they carry with them a real cost, a real impact cost.

When we talk about substituting ethanol in gasoline for MMT, the actual cost of the ethanol itself is not the true cost. The injection of MMT and the cost of MMT is not the true cost. The whole costing is what is really important here.

If we have a product like ethanol that will result in certain reductions in emissions, which are positive, I think of carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide emissions. Carbon monoxide is touted to be reduced by about 20 per cent or 25 per cent and carbon dioxide by approximately 15 per cent.

Then we get to the cost of nitrous oxide, which tends to offset that to a certain extent. Look at the figures when looking at the emissions, because nitrous oxide is the smallest of all the emissions. It is very tiny. If we were to increase the nitrous oxide emissions by 150 per cent, we would still be looking at 150 per cent of zip. However, it is the only emission that increases in this whole scenario.

A comment was made about looking for one type of gasoline. I am not sure how that is evaluated. There are about four types of gasoline on the market right now. Most of them are based on octane. One of them is based on whether or not there is an ethanol additive which is presently increasing in interest and usage. About two years ago there were 50 outlets selling gasoline containing an ethanol additive. Right now there are 500 and the prognosis is that there will be 5,000 within the next two years.

• (1630)

The oil companies should not be the least bit concerned about enhancing their product with ethanol versus MMT. The kind of raw product they produce is a little different. The vapour pressure of the two is different but that is really where it ends. In terms of a public relations gesture they should be able to say that they are striving for a cleaner product. Here it is a cleaner product when they used ethanol instead of MMT.

I do not blame the Ethyl Corporation for wanting to protect its turf. One of the things I would say to a company like the Ethyl Corporation is that there is a time when one has to put the past by and move on into the future. If I were that corporation right now I would be looking very hard at producing ethanol, ETBE or whatever in order to get into a more modern mode.

We cannot spend our whole lives trying to hang on to the past forever. Some refineries have already made the switch to ethanol. I do not know whether my friend from Athabasca buys gasoline at Mohawk outlets, but the Mohawk adopted this some time ago and promoted it in Ontario.

Sunoco is refining ethanol gasoline and does it because it considers it to be good business. In Canada it should be considered good business.

We are starting to use grain to produce ethanol and it is helping agriculture. That will become a base line now. As science and technology and research and development continue in the production process the next natural move is into cellulosic waste, sawdust, wood waste and so on. That technology is known now. It is being done commercially in France but it is not competitive yet. When it is competitive in Canada, it will be more competitive probably than ethanol from grain. That is only a few years down the road.

What we are dealing with here is simply the conflict between moving on to something that is better and finally putting past us something we have been hanging on to for nearly two decades. According to what I know we are the only country left using

MMT. Even tiny Bulgaria considered using MMT and turned it down for whatever reason. We have every reason to get on with the modern age and let things move.

The automobile industry is supporting it for its own reasons. Whether or not those studies are correct it is amazing that all the studies the automobile companies did were independent unto themselves and they all came to the same conclusion. That is very interesting in terms of emission controls or the monitoring that reads the emissions and indicates whether or not the emission control system is working properly. Canadian citizens deserve to have on their cars the most modern emission control systems as can be manufactured and researched. I do not think we want to accept second best in order to continue on the importation of this manganese product in our gasoline.

• (1635)

My humble submission is we should get on with the job, allow the past to go by and get on with the future.

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it was an interesting presentation.

I would certainly agree with the member's presentation if it were a level playing field. If independent studies could show me reliably that MMT is harmful to the environment and ethanol could be produced in competition with MMT without government subsidization and the industry could stand on its own, then I would accept his argument as realistic. In that case we certainly should go ahead, but exactly the opposite is true.

The ethanol industry is not a viable industry in today's technology. Some day it may be and good for it if it is. Certainly the other side of the argument is that MMT has not been proven to be harmful to the environment. The endless studies done by the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States have stated that it is not harmful to the environment. In Canada the Minister of Health states that it is not harmful to the health of Canadians. By banning it we raise the levels of nitrous oxide. By banning it through the extra refining processes that must be done to obtain an equal octane rating in gasoline the refineries have to substantially raise the emissions of CO₂ and benzene.

The argument that it is a product of the past and we have to move on because it is so harmful to the environment and we should spend tax dollars to subsidize the ethanol industry is a false one.

Mr. Reed: Mr. Speaker, one of the member's colleagues brought up the question of waiting until the United States made its final decision and so on regarding the future of MMT. I should just point

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out to him that in the United States the tax relief on ethanol gasoline has doubled what it is in Canada. They gave it a leg up.

In the United States 39 cities mandate the use of gasolines containing ethanol for environmental reasons. This is because of what is called ground level ozone.

My colleague, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, talked about ground level ozone. Some people believe it is not a problem in Canada and that it really does not exist. If we divide the ozone emissions into the square footage of Canada it is not a problem. It does not exist. However, if we take the area of metropolitan Toronto, the Ottawa valley, Montreal, Vancouver or southwestern Ontario it is a serious problem. It was a problem this last summer with ozone warnings that stayed with us for a number of weeks. The previous year I believe it stayed on for two weeks.

There are real reasons that we might want to give an industry a leg up. In this case it is not subsidy but excise removal. We can worry about the semantics of it but the most industrialized country in the world has seen fit to promote ethanol this year. In 1995, 45 new ethanol plants are being built in the United States. There is only one reason for that. It wants ethanol as an additive. In the United States right now 8 per cent of all gasoline has an ethanol additive. That is pretty substantial when we consider that the whole thing began very few years ago.

• (1640)

An hon. member: They will be bringing back MMT.

Mr. Reed: We do not know whether the U.S. will bring back MMT but ethanol is a superior product notwithstanding that it will be manufactured in Canada in quantity. I do not think Canadian farmers would dismiss that out of hand and say it will not help them if MMT remains. They want ethanol gasoline. In southwestern Ontario farmers are clamouring for ethanol gasoline from dealers who do not normally handle them at all.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member says there is nothing wrong with giving an industry a leg up. That strikes at the heart of the bill. This bill has nothing to do with the environment; it is really an industry issue.

If the government wants to ban MMT just because it wants to ban it, then why does it not say so? If the object is to do that, then go ahead and do it. What annoys many of us is that this is being done under the pretence of an environmental clean up. That is the excuse which has been given. All that we can do is ban the cross-border traffic of MMT because there is no health reason to ban it. I wish the government would be honest and say that it decided to do it because it wants to do it. At least that would be honest if not prudent.

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As an example, why is it that Ford and GM in their 1996 models make no mention at all about MMT or the effect it has on the onboard computers?

This has nothing to do with the environment. This has to do with a decision of the government to ban it for reasons known mostly to the Deputy Prime Minister. It is not a health issue. It is not an arsenic issue, the example which was used earlier. This is a decision of the government to do it for reasons other than the environment. It is really an industry issue. If the government wants to promote ethanol, as the hon. member mentioned, then the Minister of Industry could do that. I do not know why the Minister of the Environment is picking on this issue when it is not an environmental or health issue.

Mr. Reed: Mr. Speaker, the argument that it is an economic or an industry issue is mine. It is one I have put to the House. I have put it to the House proudly because I believe that a crossover into ethanol will be a leg up for agriculture and the economy of the country.

The decision of the Minister of the Environment was based first on evidence of what was happening in the United States. Why would the EPA mandate gasoline containing ethanol in 39 cities? There is quite a wealth of evidence coming down to demonstrate that in the United States at least it was believed there was a problem. This country was faced with this conundrum long before the current government took office.

There is some counter evidence, which might or might not prove valid, but where do we stop the study process? Everything could stand more study. I do believe that a great deal of independent study has been done, so I do not know what independent study would be acceptable to my hon. friend.

An hon. member: You will not do one.

Mr. Reed: No, and you know why.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order. I was made aware earlier by the hon. member for Halton—Peel that he is some distance from the Chair, but I am at the same distance and I would not want to be forgotten. I urge all members to direct their interventions through the Chair.

Mr. Reed: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. There is a terrible temptation to get carried away at this end of the House. I am going to have to get stronger glasses to see you.

• (1645)

I hope I have answered the question as well as I can. The evidence was that this was a legitimate cause for concern. It has been aided by the automobile companies, that admittedly will not reveal their sources because of commercial confidentiality. Appar-

ently the statement by the Deputy Prime Minister was leaked. However, it gave us the opportunity to say Here is the evidence as we know it and in the name of cleaner air we should act on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Before we resume debate I would like to make the House aware that five hours have lapsed from the beginning of second reading. We will now go to the next stage of debate in which there will be straight 10-minute interventions without questions or comments.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure my colleagues will be very sad to know that I only have 10 minutes, but I will try to confine my remarks to that period of time.

I know many Canadians watch the debates in the House of Commons, odd as it may seem, and I remind them we are now debating Bill C-94. The name of the bill is an act to regulate interprovincial trade in and the importation for commercial purposes of certain manganese based products. That might not seem like a very gripping title. It sounds quite innocuous, quite routine and regulatory. However, the bill raises issues of which Canadians ought to be made aware and we on this side of the House are doing our best to raise those issues and to bring them out in the public debate.

The manganese product in question, the subject substance of the bill, is MMT. MMT is short for some long scientific name which probably none of us can pronounce or would want to. It is really an octane enhancer for unleaded gasoline. We all know that most of our vehicles use unleaded gasoline. We want to get the maximum mileage because it saves us a few nickels here and there. Therefore all Canadians should be quite interested in anything which enhances the octane of gasoline and MMT does that.

However, the Minister of the Environment now wants to prevent this product from being imported into Canada and does not want it to be traded as a common product across interprovincial borders. It is very interesting the way this dreaded product is being handled. Is this sudden concern on the part of the environment minister about MMT, this octane enhancer, because MMT is unsafe or dangerous? If it is, we certainly want to know. We do not want it floating around in the air and soaking into our fingers when we gas up our cars.

MMT is not dangerous. The minister will not ban the product outright. It will not even be labelled as unsafe. One wonders why the environment minister, since the product will not be banned as unsafe or labelled as unsafe, is mixing into this. It is very strange.

Surely if the product has been determined to be unsafe or if it causes injury, then it should not be readily available to the public. If that is the case, then why is the product not being banned?

Under the bill MMT can still be manufactured in Canada. A manufacturer could potentially set up a plant to produce MMT in every province of the country and not be breaking the law, since Bill C-94 merely prohibits the interprovincial trade or the importation of the substance.

The obvious question to be asked is: Why this bill at all? My hon. friend opposite just spent a great deal of time talking about ethanol. Maybe the conclusion we should draw is that MMT is being banned so that somehow ethanol producers can have a bit of an advantage and not so much competition from MMT. I do not know. We are not being given any answers to those speculations. However, the question is really puzzling because the substance has not proven to cause any harm to Canadians at all.

We have an environment minister who certainly should be concerned about environmental pollutants, environmental hazardous substances, and yet there is no hazard here. Nothing has been shown to cause any harm to us. This has been demonstrated not just by American studies, which I suppose we could dismiss, but a 1994 study by Health Canada found that MMT is not harmful to Canadians.

• (1650)

What is really happening here? We suggest the Minister of the Environment has dragged the government into a dispute between manufacturers of MMT and the automobile manufacturers in the United States. These manufacturers have plants and provide jobs in Canada. Some of those jobs are fairly close to Ottawa.

As we have heard, there are some suggestions that MMT in unleaded gasoline causes the onboard diagnostic systems in our modern computer chip driven cars to malfunction. Automobile manufacturers, therefore, want MMT banned. They are not being very specific about the data on which they base these allegations. They are holding it quite close to the vest. Some has been leaked. Therefore, because of a few allegations and suggestions and some leaked data we are now rising to the occasion and making sure that our onboard diagnostic systems are protected. I suggest that is not really a function of a highly paid environment minister.

The evidence is sketchy. It is inconclusive. The manufacturers of MMT have produced evidence that shows that their product is not harmful and does not cause the problems in question. Not only does it not harm the environment, does not harm Canadians, it does not even harm our cars, our onboard diagnostic systems.

However, that evidence is not good enough. The car manufacturers are saying: "We have a big problem". The two parties talked and one side said: "You are causing a problem" and the other side is saying: "No, this product does not cause a problem. We will have scientific studies done by experts that we both respect, who

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have credentials that we can both accept and we will get to the bottom of this".

In spite of that very sensible suggestion, before it could be carried out, before the independent expert advice could be sought, the minister jumps in and says: "I am going to come down on the side of the automobile manufacturers and I am going to decide that MMT should be banned", for reasons which do not seem to be very specific and certainly are not very persuasive. We object to this.

We agree with the submissions that have been made from the other side that Canadians are tired of problems being studied to death. However let us look at the situation. Has this been studied to death? We have had very sketchy and unspecified evidence on the part of the automobile manufacturers. We have heard allegations from the industry people who are producing MMT. We have no independent reports except Health Canada saying that there is no danger or harm from the substance. That is not studying the subject to death. This bill has been put in place willy-nilly without proper thought or evidence, without any proper reason. We object to that. We do not think that is how a government should run things. We do not think that is how decisions should be made and we certainly do not think this is an area in which the environment minister should be involved.

A ruling in the United States in June concluded that the tests on the impact of MMT that had been done were inconclusive. Presumably the Americans do have some experts worth listening to. Therefore, the ruling was that the substance ought not to be banned. Others have alluded to the fact that this will very likely result in having MMT again approved for use in unleaded gasoline in the United States as an octane enhancer.

The end result of all this is the Minister of the Environment is taking unwarranted action on an issue that should have been, would have been and could have been settled by the concerned parties themselves.

There is a lot of concern about the impact of this legislation. There is a lot riding on the bill in both of these sectors, the manufacturers of both the vehicles and MMT.

• (1655)

The provinces have also demonstrated real concern about this. Ontario, Alberta, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have all expressed concerns that any replacement of MMT might actually impair the air quality in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I move:

That Bill C-94, an act to regulate interprovincial trade in and the importation for commercial purposes of certain manganese based substances be not now read a second time, but the order be discharged, the bill withdrawn and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Industry.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The amendment is in order.

Mr. Ovid L. Jackson (Bruce—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the amendment of the member for Calgary North.

One of the things about the House that concerns me is how many of us become experts in certain fields in which we do not know anything.

Members of the Reform Party have said they want to cut taxes, they want to cut the deficit and this kind of stuff. Here they are asking us to go to the National Research Council, hire a group of scientists to work for the Ethyl Corporation and do all the work that corporation is supposed to do. We have all these automotive manufacturers, BMW, Volkswagen, Volvo, Saab, Lada, Jaguar, Land Rover, Mercedes Benz. The list goes on and on.

I will speak about how a car actually functions. We are talking about an octane enhancer. The octane rating is a unit of measurement established by the automotive industry to determine the action of variable fuels. In the laboratory is an engine with a variable compression ratio and various substances, gasoline, stoichiometric and some of these additives are added. At the point where it knocks—at 100 per cent it does not knock—the enhancers put into the gasoline are reduced.

Why do they do this? They want the combustion process to be predictable. Mr. Speaker, if you have ever driven a car and turned the ignition off and the engine still was running this is called after-runner or dieseling. What you have is the gasoline reaching so high a compression ratio that it explodes by itself. We do not want that happening in our cars. We want to trigger it when we turn the ignition on, getting a spark from the sparkplug. When we turn the ignition switch off we want the spark to stop and the engine to shut off.

What happens in a modern car with all this onboard diagnostic equipment? Starting with a PCV valve, exhaust gas recirculation, the use of a catalytic converter, a sophisticated combustion chamber design and raising the temperature of the engine by using higher thermostats is a sophisticated modern engine where we are trying get a stoichiometric mixture of 14 pounds of air to 1 pound of gasoline.

• (1700)

We want that condition all the time. We want a good spray in the combustion chamber. We want a certain amount of turbulence and we want the predictability so that when that gasoline explodes at a certain point in the cycle, when the piston is travelling down a particular angle, the maximum pressure is built up.

This is done by antiknock. For instance, if one went to a modern car, took a hammer and hammered on it, if the timing light is used the spark will retard when that happens.

These cars are very sensitive. The bottom line is that they have these onboard diagnostic pieces of equipment. The onboard diagnostic piece of equipment is a way of refining the entire combustion process from start to finish making sure the contaminants that come out in the air do not pollute the atmosphere.

That is what the Minister of the Environment is trying to do. The Minister of the Environment has said if there were no onboard diagnostics on cars in Canada but available in the United States, Canadians would get a inferior product to their counterparts in the United States. We would be actually manufacturing the cars in Canada and exporting them to the States while we are using cars with obsolete technology.

Study after study by the automotive manufacturers has said MMT interferes with diagnostic onboard pieces of equipment and causes them to foul up. It causes them to trigger warning lights. It causes them to take the car under warranty which in turn would cost more money for the car.

These cars are supposed to go well over 100,000 kilometres without these parts being replaced or without some major clogging up of the complicated three way catalytic converter.

What has the Government of Canada done? The Minister of the Environment went to the manufacturers and went to the Ethyl Corporation and said solve the problem and they could not solve the problem.

If the Ethyl Corporation feels so strongly that its product is so good, let it take the risk. Do not ask us to go to our National Research Council and use our researchers to prove its product is good or bad. Put it in sample cars and prove it. The idea that there is a court case in the United States is a sham because the Americans have not been using MMT for 17 years.

There is still a ban. It is not legal to buy MMT in the States and the Environmental Protection Agency has said it has to go through that series of tests which are so important to environmental protection. It has to go through that thumb print required by any fuel additives that have certain restrictions which have to be met.

Hydrocarbon emissions, nitric oxide emissions and all these things are calibrated through an acceptable level which cars have to go through in order to make sure they pass the test.

We have an automotive industry of which we use 10 per cent and 17 per cent is exported. It is important to get into the new model year. The minister had to act and she acted.

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I do not see why any of my colleagues being lobbied by the Ethyl Corporation are trying to tell the government side that we should be spending any more money.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to speak to the proposal of my colleague to refer this Bill C-94 to the Standing Committee on Industry to examine it further.

During today's debate we have fairly firmly established that the decision on the government's behalf to ban MMT is not an environmental decision at all but a decision made by one of the most political of our ministers, the Minister of the Environment.

It is interesting that years ago she made news by jumping over a table to confront a Conservative cabinet minister. Perhaps she feels she has not been in the news enough lately so she is tabling Bill C-94 to attempt to show that she is doing something about the environment. Obviously it is a purely political bill.

Bill C-94 is a bill which would ban the importation and interprovincial trade of MMT. It is interesting the Liberals have no reason to ban MMT on environmental reasons. This is why they cannot ban it. They can simply prohibit interprovincial trade of it, which of course has the same effect.

It is a shame they do not come out and say as a policy of the government under industrial diversification or whatever that they want to claim they are going to ban it. This would be the honest thing to say. It is not based on the environmental criteria.

• (1705)

Again it was interesting today when the environment minister quoted extensively from all the reports she has seen, none of which she will table in the House of Commons. They are all classified or secret or whatever.

If she would agree to an independent study or table the study so that everybody could have a look perhaps we could believe the purity of her motives. As it is now, because she will not table it, because she will not have an independent study, it raises the question of the sincerity of the minister on the environmental impact of it, especially in light of some of the other studies on what the EPA has said that MMT does not cause or contribute to the failure of vehicles to meet applicable emissions standards required by the U.S. clean air act.

The clean air act is much more stringent than our own. It is unfortunate that she has used this as a political statement of some sort. It is really to her detriment that she continues to push this idea instead of referring it to the committee on industry where it could be properly studied so we could get some scientific reason why MMT is good or bad.

On November 30, 1993 the EPA determined MMT does not cause or contribute to the failure of emission control systems in automobiles and the courts on April 14, 1995 ordered the EPA to grant a temporary waiver of its ban on MMT to a private

company that wants to market it again. The EPA, which I do not think is anybody's lapdog, has said it has no reason to prohibit MMT and will allow it again into the United States.

The United States is almost at the point where it will once again allow MMT in unleaded gasoline at the very time when Canada is trying to ban it.

The Canadian Petroleum Products Institute said its industries will not remove MMT unless there is conclusive proof the additive is harmful to the environment, which was one argument, or that it causes the onboard diagnostic computers to malfunction.

It is willing to move on that if the proof in either of those departments is forthcoming, but there is no such proof. The opposite is true. In December 1994 Health Canada published a study which said there is no health risk from MMT, and therefore the minister cannot ban it. All she can do is try to stop it from being transported.

In order to enhance the octane in gasoline refineries will have to substitute something else. What will that be? We have heard some arguments on both sides and one of the things could be an unpronounceable chemical additive called MTBE which will cost refineries some \$50 million to change over to and will cost an extra \$25 million every year to make the switch, not an insignificant drop in the bucket.

The higher prices will be passed on to the consumers at the pumps. The Minister of the Environment should also have included in her portfolio the minister of gas, not only for the political nature of her remarks but also for her notable contribution to the higher gasoline prices if this bill continues.

Even more ironically the new substance which will replace MMT is also known to cause increased pollution even while the substance she is banning has been determined to be safe by Health Canada. Her own officials say banning MMT will increase nitrogen oxide emissions by a full 20 per cent. Nitrogen oxide is the stuff that increases ground level ozone which makes the lives of people with lung problems a little harder to bear.

The Minister of the Environment, who also could be called the minister of gas, could be the minister of lung problems. Not only does it point out her normal tendency to rash comment but it also highlights her contribution to worsening an already serious air pollution problem in Canada.

If the banning of MMT hurts people and the environment, and if the American EPA says an MMT does not hurt automobile emission systems, what could be the real motivation behind the minister's introducing such a bill?

The obvious reason is purely political. Is it the lobbying efforts of the powerful automobile companies? Is it a weak minister who, when she is confronted by a powerful group in central Canada, buckles even though there is no evidence from her own department that this is causing serious harm.

Government Orders

• (1710)

The minister should remember she is a national minister who is supposed to look out for the entire country and that all parts of Canada will be affected by her decisions.

We all know the producing fineries are located mostly in western Canada and therefore western Canada will bear most of the costs. The big car manufacturers located near the minister's riding will not have to spend any more time or money trying to figure out what is wrong with their faulty on board computers. They will not have to justify their opposition to MMT on scientific or technical grounds but merely lobby really hard and hope the minister supports them, which apparently she does.

I wonder what the Minister of Natural Resources thinks about the bill. I mentioned earlier today on a different subject that I have been quick to applaud the Minister of Natural Resources when she has stood up for industry and when she has made decisions based on sound, scientific evidence. However, I wonder where she is on this matter. I would dearly like to ask her whether she agrees with the intent of this bill and whether she is willing to sell out the industry she represents so the minister of gas and lung problems can protect her own political turf. Is the minister really fighting for her industry at the cabinet table or is she losing out to the political heavyweights sitting across the cabinet table?

I am waiting for the Minister of Natural Resources to announce her own feelings about this bill. I want her to come out and say why on a scientific basis she thinks MMT should be banned. I would also like her to come out forcefully and either support or argue with the Minister of the Environment on those issues.

I hope the Minister of Natural Resources does want to represent all of the producers in this country, not just the automobile producers, but the people in the resource industries who are asking, as is the minister of the environment in, for proof as to why MMT should be banned.

The media release I have is from a respected international brokerage firm, the Solomon Brothers, with strong research capabilities in this sector. Talking about the EPA rulings in the United States:

We continue to strongly believe that the rule of law will prevail in this case and not some half baked EPA policy stance. In other words, MMT will get a full green light by year end.

The firm used the term half baked. We could use the same term to refer to Bill C-94. It is a half baked political attempt to appease some groups of people, although I am not sure who. The environment minister seems ready and willing to turn her back on her own

portfolio which is to protect the environment for all Canadians on a technical and scientific basis.

How ironic that even while the U.S. is moving forward on this issue Canada is furiously back pedalling. I encourage the Minister of the Environment to back pedal in one more way and do what she knows is the right thing and refer this bill to the committee of industry where it can have a detailed study and hearings on it to bring it to a proper scientific conclusion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi), Lib.: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-94, an act to regulate interprovincial trade in and the importation for commercial purposes of certain manganese-based substances, and in particular to the motion now before this House to adjourn the debate as proposed by the hon. member for Calgary North.

I feel it is important not to delay the debate under way. We cannot keep putting off indefinitely environment issues. Matters as important to our future as the environment cannot be postponed endlessly. But before talking about the proposal to adjourn the debate on this crucial matter, I would like to say a few words about some general environmental issues that deserve our attention.

This morning, we debated in this House a bill to amend the Auditor General Act, which provides for the appointment of a Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development reporting to the auditor general and requires departments to develop environmental strategies to be laid before the House.

• (1715)

Environmental matters are always a little less tangible than issues such as finance, revenue or day-to-day management. I used to sit on the public accounts committee and the auditor general often came to explain or question the regular management of various government departments. Regarding the environment, however, I think it is important for the government to be concerned about the environment, about the future of all Quebecers and Canadians.

Environmental issues transcend borders. Some examples come to mind. In my riding, we have one, in fact two international lakes, namely Lake Memphremagog and Lake Champlain, about which we are having environmental difficulties with our American neighbours.

It makes us realize that not all problems are resolved with borders. Agreements must be reached with neighbouring states. Over the summer, I participated in discussions with our neighbours in Vermont and people in Washington to try to resolve an

environmental problem affecting Lake Champlain. I think it is important for neighbours to make an effort to understand one another and ensure that future generations on both sides of the border, in Canada as well as in the U.S., can agree in future.

In that sense, I do not see the use of having borders sprouting up all over the place in terms of the environment. With NAFTA, with the World Trade Organization, we are now in an open economy and the same should hold true for the environment.

As far as this bill is concerned, I think we should move on this, and not in six months time. There have been enough studies. I think that the government should go ahead with this bill.

I mentioned earlier how important the environment is to this country. I would like to share with you more of what I have learned during the summer. We witnessed this wonderful co-operation between the federal, provincial and municipal governments across the country. I am referring to the infrastructure program which had an impact on the environment in Quebec. Some communities got funding from the infrastructure program to build a water treatment plant. The program helped promote environmental projects in several sectors.

I want to go back to the importance of the decisions which have to be made today, not tomorrow, to preserve our future. As you know, when a decision is made concerning the environment, it costs money. However, it may be better to pay today than to be blamed by future generations for not having acted quickly enough regarding the environment.

This is important for our safety. There is the ozone depletion, as well as all the problems with our lakes and rivers, pollution problems. We have to act immediately and this is what the government intends to do. It wants to take immediate action, so that our future generations can live safely.

We must also look at the impact on the industry sector. By acting now, the government prompts the industry to develop, produce and export new technologies and products. The environment is a promising sector for our engineering firms, our industries, our producers, our exporters, and everyone else. For that reason, we should not let the debate go on and on. We should look at this bill right now.

Earlier I alluded to the debate that took place this morning regarding the auditor general and the new commissioner of the environment and sustainable development.

• (1720)

I think that this act, which seeks to regulate interprovincial trade in and the importation for commercial purposes of certain manganese-based substances, shows that this government is a good government. This is a good government's program. It is a

Government Orders

program which makes people realize that environmental safety is important. It is important to all Canadians today and it is also important for future generations. Such an initiative does solve the real issues, even though it may not do much for hypothetical questions such as where will the border be located, etc. We are together in this country and we work together to find solutions to the real issues that confront Canadians. This is what is important.

There has been co-operation on environmental matters between the Canadian government and the provinces. To mention only two instances, under the previous Quebec government, the Liberal government, the environment minister at the time, Pierre Paradis, and the present Minister of Environment of Canada, Ms. Copps, signed a number of agreements. The plan for the St. Lawrence, for instance, referred to as Vision 2000, and the agreement between the Government of Quebec and the government in Ottawa on the St. Lawrence. The St. Lawrence starts in the Great Lakes. Everything is interrelated. So these agreements are extremely beneficial for Quebec and for Canada, for present and future generations. It is important to have this co-operation between the federal government and the provincial governments.

Ten months later we had a second agreement, an agreement with the pulp and paper mills, an agreement signed by the Government of Quebec and Ottawa. Incredible. We have not had many environmental agreements since the separatist government came to power, but we have had an agreement between Quebec and Ottawa on environmental matters. This bill, sponsored by the Minister of the Environment, makes me proud to be a Canadian, to be a member of a generous and sharing society, a society that is open and secure.

We live in a system that is evolving. We should let it evolve. Let there be new agreements and new ways of sharing. Let us also ensure that Canada, which, according to a UN report, ranked first on quality of life and, according to a report by the World Bank published yesterday, is the second richest country in the world, let us make sure that in the future, this country keeps up the good work through its environmental programs, as we have done in the past and will continue to do so.

[English]

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the motion to amend Bill C-94, an act to ban the importation of MMT.

My colleague, the member for Calgary North, proposes to withdraw Bill C-94 from second reading and refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Industry. I support this motion, because when we look at the facts it will become very clear that the banning of MMT is clearly an industry issue, not an environmental issue.

Government Orders

This bill revolves around an industry dispute, a dispute between the Canadian Motor Vehicle Manufacturers' Association, the MVMA, and the Canadian Petroleum Producers Institute, the CPPI. It should be referred to the Standing Committee on Industry.

The environment minister has Bill C-94 on a fast track through the House on environmental grounds, but there is no impartial evidence to support this approach or the minister's supposed environmental claims. That is the reason we are debating an interprovincial ban on MMT, as opposed to environmental concerns.

It concerns me that after a review of legislation proposed in Bill C-94 and of the scientific evidence or lack of scientific evidence presented both in support of the bill and in opposition to it, I am still left with one question: Why is the government proposing to ban MMT?

In the last session I asked the House to lay out the facts that support this proposed legislation. I am still waiting for those facts to be presented, which leaves me asking the same questions and drawing the same conclusions. The minister's decision to ban MMT is purely political. The minister's decision has been influenced by the MVMA.

• (1725)

The MVMA wants the minister to ban MMT because it claims that MMT is responsible for problems with onboard diagnostic systems. However, there is a problem with this claim. Automakers are experiencing the same problems in the United States, where MMT is not in current use. Given this fact, and without any impartial evidence, it is difficult to understand how equipment problems could be the result of MMT's presence in Canadian gasoline. We have two different cases.

There are many things that do not make sense with this bill. For example, it is difficult to understand why this government is proposing to ban a substance when research has shown that removing MMT will increase vehicle emissions that cause smog and poor air quality by up to 20 per cent.

Over the last decade Canadians have worked hard to reduce emissions of nitrogen oxide to meet international and domestic commitments to improve air quality. While we have been successful at freezing NOx emissions at 1987 levels, and we have pledged to do so with the OECD, can we now afford to consider increasing NOx emissions by 50,000 to 60,000 tonnes a year? This is what will happen by removing MMT from gasoline.

The government has yet to provide any answers regarding what will replace MMT in gasoline. MMT is the only fuel additive that has been scientifically proven to reduce emissions of NOx. Alternative fuels such as ethanol also benefit from addition of MMT, so this will affect their performance as well. Without MMT ethanol puts NOx into the atmosphere, but when MMT is added to a 10 per

cent solution of ethanol blend it reduces emissions of NOx by 30 per cent.

In addition, the minister has failed to address what the health impacts of banning MMT will be. Air pollution can be a threat to public health and health costs. NOx is one of the leading contributors to formation of urban smog. Scientific testing has demonstrated that without MMT, emissions of NOx will increase by 20 per cent over current levels. That means additional production of NOx every year, which would be equivalent to adding a million cars to our roads.

Despite the environmental and health evidence, the environment minister still echoes the concerns of the MVMA that MMT in Canadian gasoline is causing problems for the onboard diagnostic systems in the new model American cars. The minister says she wants to ban MMT so that consumers will not have to pay \$3,000 or more for their automobiles next year. However, there is no scientific evidence to support this claim. These claims were made by the MVMA's counterpart in the United States, and the U.S. court of appeals has determined they were totally unfounded. In addition, automakers are having exactly the same problems with OBDs in the U.S., and MMT is not currently used, so it cannot be the MMT that is causing the problem.

The environment minister has also stated that if vehicle manufacturers carry through on threats to remove OBD systems the result would be a tenfold increase in vehicle emissions. The OBD system does not reduce emissions. OBDs are monitoring systems, which provide drivers with notification by a dashboard light of a potential problem that could increase emissions. Removal or disconnection of the onboard system would prevent the dashboard malfunction light from illuminating, but it would not have the direct result of increasing emissions.

It concerns me that the minister does not appear to understand the function of these onboard systems, especially as she cited this as one of the major reasons for banning MMT. The environment minister also indicated that she has received studies from the MVMA that illustrate that MMT is the cause of onboard failures. I find this most interesting. If these studies exist, why has GM recently announced that it plans to conduct tests in the U.S. to determine the effects of MMT on the onboard systems?

* * *

AUDITOR GENERAL ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-83, an act to amend the Auditor General Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): It being 5.30 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 45(5)(a), the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred division at the second reading stage of Bill C-83, an act to amend the Auditor General Act.

Call in the members.

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

(Division No. 332)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anawak	Anderson
Arseneault	Assad
Assadourian	Asselin
Augustine	Bachand
Barnes	Beaumier
Bélair	Bélangier
Bélisle	Bellehumeur
Bergeron	Bernier (Gaspé)
Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)	Bertrand
Bethel	Bevilacqua
Bhaduria	Bodnar
Bonin	Bouchard
Boudria	Brien
Brown (Oakville—Milton)	Brushett
Caccia	Calder
Campbell	Canuel
Caron	Catterall
Chamberlain	Chrétien (Frontenac)
Chrétien (Saint—Maurice)	Clancy
Cohen	Collenette
Collins	Comuzzi
Copps	Crawford
Crête	Culbert
Dalphond—Guiral	Daviault
de Savoye	Debien
Deshaiés	DeVillers
Dhaliwal	Discepolo
Dubé	Duceppe
Dumas	Dupuy
Easter	Eggleton
English	Fewchuk
Fillion	Finlay
Flis	Fontana
Gaffney	Gagliano
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles—de—la—Madeleine)	Gagnon (Québec)
Galloway	Gauthier
Godin	Graham
Gray (Windsor West/Ouest)	Guarnieri
Guay	Guimond
Harb	Harvard
Hickey	Hopkins
Hubbard	Ianno
Irwin	Jackson
Jordan	Keyes
Kirkby	Knutson
Kraft Sloan	Landry
Lastewka	Laurin
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)	Lebel
LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)	Leblanc (Longueuil)
Lee	Lefebvre
Lincoln	Loubier
MacAulay	MacDonald
Maclaren	MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marchand
Marchi	Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
Massé	McCormick
McGuire	McKinnon
McLellan (Edmonton Northwest/Nord—Ouest)	McWhinney
Ménard	Mercier
Mifflin	Milliken
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)	Minna
Mitchell	Murphy
Murray	Nault
Nunez	Nunziata
O'Brien	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Paré
Parrish	Patry
Payne	Peters
Peterson	Phinney
Picard (Drummond)	Pickard (Essex—Kent)

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Proud	Reed
Regan	Richardson
Rideout	Rocheleau
Rock	Rompkey
Sauvageau	Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)
Shepherd	Sheridan
Skoke	Speller
St—Laurent	St. Denis
Steckle	Stewart (Brant)
Szabo	Telegdi
Terrana	Thalheimer
Torsney	Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)
Tremblay (Rosemont)	Ur
Valeri	Vancilief
Venne	Verran
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Wells	Whelan
Wood	Young
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Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Althouse	Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing)
Benoit	Blaikie
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)	Bridgman
Brown (Calgary Southeast/Sud—Est)	Chatters
Cummins	de Jong
Duncan	Epp
Frazier	Gilmour
Gouk	Grey (Beaver River)
Grubel	Hanger
Harper (Calgary West/Ouest)	Harper (Simcoe Centre)
Harris	Hart
Hayes	Hermanson
Hill (Macleod)	Hoepfner
Jennings	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayfield	McClelland (Edmonton Southwest/Sud—Ouest)
Meredith	Morrison
Penson	Ramsay
Ringma	Schmidt
Silye	Solberg
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PAIRED—MEMBERS

Blondin—Andrew	Dromisky
Duhamel	Fry
Jacob	Lalonde
Langlois	Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)
Leroux (Shefford)	Robillard

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, this bill is referred to the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee.)

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker, I think you might find unanimous consent to call it 6.30 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Do we have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): It being 6.30 p.m. the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 5.59 p.m.).

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