



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 134 • NUMBER 049 • 2nd SESSION • 35th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Friday, May 17, 1996

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 17, 1996

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

CIVIL AIR NAVIGATION SERVICES COMMERCIALIZATION ACT

The House resumed from May 15, 1996, consideration of Bill C-20, an act respecting the commercialization of civil air navigation services, as reported (with amendments) from the committee; and of Group No 2.

The Deputy Speaker: Dear colleagues, I believe the hon. member for Laval Centre has the floor.

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to say that you are right. Besides, what could be more fantastic than to be the first one to speak in this House on a beautiful Friday morning, before an eight-day recess, not a holiday, but a change of pace?

I am pleased to speak to Bill C-20, an act respecting the commercialization of civil air navigation services. As you know, the Bloc Québécois supported the principle of this bill. However, you will agree with us that this bill is far from being perfect, as demonstrated by the several amendments proposed by the official opposition. As it is now, we are sure the commercialization will not be done only in the best interests of users. I will deal more precisely with the Bloc's motions in Group No 2, before us this morning.

First, I would like to comment on the bill in general. As I mentioned, the Bloc Québécois is not against the bill as such. We are not against the privatization of air navigation services, but the one thing that concerns us the most and that we must not forget, is the issue of safety.

Privatization must never be done at the expense of the safety standards inherent to navigation services. Too often, privatization

of public services entails a deregulation leading to a certain lack of rigour concerning safety standards for example.

Last week's tragedy in Florida involving a ValuJet aircraft may be an indication of that. We have every reason to wonder if, as an effect of deregulation, some carriers more interested in profits than in passenger safety are not ignoring minimum safety rules.

The motions in Group No. 2 we are debating today are about the distribution of Nav Canada's notices concerning its decisions on airport facility closures. Bill C-20 states that these notices should be sent to local newspapers and band councils by mail or electronically. It is true that this is the age of the information highway, but is it reasonable to choose one way or the other? We believe not.

The motions presented by the Bloc Québécois, only 18 motions concerning six clauses or three motions per clause on average, are mainly intended to change this so that notices are sent both by regular mail and the more modern medium, e-mail. As members know perfectly well, not everyone has access to e-mail and it is of capital importance that all those concerned, all the groups that could be affected by a Nav Canada decision to reduce or close airport facilities, receive an advance notice early enough to be able to take action.

That is simple respect for users. The fact that air service is privatized does not mean that this service should be less accessible. Services must be maintained, particularly in remote regions where news information is sometimes harder to get and less timely. God knows there are many remote regions in this huge territory that is Canada. The people who live there are entitled to a quality service.

My colleague from Abitibi gave a very good description of the concerns of remote regions as regards air service, which is very often an essential service in cases of medical emergencies or other such problems. Privatization does not mean the government can forget its obligations in matters of aviation safety and air services that must be provided to Canadians.

• (1010)

The government cannot do what it did so blithely with ADM, saying it had no say in the closing of Mirabel because it was a private sector issue. It can try to hide behind a private corporation, but Quebecers and Canadians will not admit that. On the contrary, when the government adopts such an attitude, Canada and Quebec reject it.

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If privatization is necessary to reduce costs, very well, but it must not be done at the expense of services to users. They must not do it for the sole purpose of reducing the deficit and, at the same time, transfer costs to the taxpayers. It seems this government has developed that habit, but you can be sure the official opposition will be there to remind members of the government that we find it totally unacceptable.

Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in this debate, at second reading, on Bill C-20, an act respecting the commercialization of civil air navigation services.

As my colleague, the member for Louis-Hébert, said in this House on Wednesday May 15, when the former Minister of Transport, now Minister of Human Resources Development, first announced the policy on commercializing airports and air navigation, in July 1994, the Bloc Québécois agreed with the principle.

Since then, we have been thinking long and hard about how the principle is to be applied. The creation of Nav Canada, a non-profit organization providing a public service, is aimed necessarily at being cost-effective. This corporation bears a striking resemblance to ADM, Aéroports de Montréal, the corporation managing Montreal airports, airports being plural, of course. It is not for profit and has no capital stock.

On August 1, 1992, ADM signed a lease with Transport Canada giving it the mandate to manage, run and develop Dorval and Mirabel airports. ADM is headed by a board of seven directors representing businesses in metropolitan Montreal, and by a CEO appointed by seven agencies making up SOPRAM, the body responsible for promoting Montreal airports.

Even though I am not a member of the Standing Committee on Transport, I have a particular interest in Bill C-20 as the Lachute municipal airport and Mirabel airport are located in my riding of Argenteuil—Papineau. Both airports, together with about 600 airports across Canada, are affected by Bill C-20.

Before I continue, I would like to give a brief history of Lachute airport. It was built in 1950 by Ayers Limited and acquired by the City of Lachute in 1973. Considering the enthusiasm of the local population and private companies for the municipal airport of Lachute, it was decided to proceed with a study on development of the airport with a view to attracting companies in the aviation sector, without taking anything away from the recreational aspects of the airport.

Improvement work was started in the Fall of 1992, with the help of a federal contribution from the Financial Assistance Program for Local and Commercial Airports at Transport Canada. Today, Lachute airport, with 200 acres of industrial and commercial land, close to Dorval and Mirabel airports, is a major drawing card for

the region. The amendments that the Bloc Québécois proposed would protect taxpayers and air carriers.

The first motion of the Bloc Québécois is very important. It would add to the preamble of Bill C-20 that the safety of passengers, personnel, air carriers and the public take precedence over all other considerations in the business decisions taken by Nav Canada. It is essential that safety and the interests of the public come before the commercial interests of Nav Canada.

• (1015)

Motion no 2, also presented by the Bloc Québécois, is equally important since there are some similarities with ADM, and since the board of directors is constituted the same way. Only large carriers are represented on the board of Nav Canada. In the case of ADM, we now realize that the public has really no voice to choose representatives to protect its interests.

For these two companies, only business interests counts. And what about these political appointments that certainly do not necessarily ensure the interests of taxpayers and air carriers, especially small carriers?

The federal government is transferring to local authorities responsibility for the management and operation of airports. There must therefore be close and increased monitoring to prevent abuse. Bill C-20 must not be passed without including the amendments proposed by the Bloc Québécois, amendments that will ensure a minimum of protection for the public and air carriers.

With my colleagues from the Lower Laurentians, the hon. members for Blainville—Deux-Montagnes and Laurentides, the mayor of Mirabel and many other stakeholders, I personally intervened in the issue involving the transfer of flights from Mirabel airport to Dorval. I can assure you that ADM had no scruples making decisions without public consultation.

Indeed, a public hearing request was made repeatedly by local representatives and others, a request that was supported by Quebec's transportation minister, Jacques Brassard. The answer was shocking: ADM gave a one-month deadline, without going over the decision taken a long time before.

This brings me directly to motions No. 25 and 26, which would delete clause 96.1 and add Nav Canada to the list of institutions in the act. The Bloc Québécois categorically opposes Motion No. 25, which attacks the very foundation of transparency. The federal government would be well advised to exempt Nav Canada from the Privacy Act. As in the case of ADM, the public would be unable to be informed of major information regarding them.

I myself recently asked for the reports on which ADM based its decisions regarding the transfer of flights from Mirabel to Dorval. ADM told me flat out that, as a protected corporation, it was under

no obligation to provide me with the studies or reports, just as Nav Canada will be protected by the government's proposed amendment.

Taxpayers' representatives then commissioned an economic study on Dorval and Mirabel airports. This study, which was done by Professor Yvon Bigras, from the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières; Professor Robert Gagné, from the École des hautes études commerciales; and Professor Jacques Roy, from the Université du Québec à Montréal, was in complete contradiction with ADM's arguments for consolidating flights at Dorval. The public could read this report, but not some of the studies allegedly done by ADM.

This report scientifically outlines the myriad disadvantages of consolidating flights at Dorval. All the measures to be implemented were estimated at \$643 million by ADM in 1993. Moreover, compensating Mirabel's current franchisees would cost some \$80 million. The transfer of flights to Dorval raises the problem of noise with the resulting operational restrictions.

• (1020)

This report shows that the advantage of concentrating flights at Mirabel lies in the airport's quasi-unlimited ultimate capacity and few noise restrictions. ADM even admitted that, in any case, flights will have to be consolidated at Mirabel within 10 to 15 years because of Dorval's limited capacity.

What will be the fate of regional airports, which will have to pay charges without having a say in this?

This brings me to Motion No. 15 put forward by the Bloc Québécois, whose purpose is to ensure that aircraft belonging to DND or to a national government are not exempted from paying charges. In the opinion of the Bloc Québécois, if clause 32(2) is not amended, it will, once again, hide DND's spending. The Bloc Québécois has always been in favour of reducing defence spending. The bill would force taxpayers and carriers to pay DND's charges.

In conclusion, I urge the government to join us in protecting taxpayers and carriers.

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MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill C-275, an act establishing the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians, with amendments.

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CIVIL AIR NAVIGATION SERVICES COMMERCIALIZATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-20, an act respecting the commercialization of civil air navigation services.

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise in this House at report stage to speak on Bill C-20 respecting, as mentioned previously, the commercialization of civil air navigation services.

The purpose of this bill is to privatize air navigation services across the country through the establishment of Nav Canada, also called NAVCAN. This is a name worth repeating a few times so that the public will get used to it, because it may well become infamous for the problems it will create.

This corporation will be responsible for supervising air navigation services throughout Canada. As someone already pointed out, this kind of organization is being established as part of an overall Transport Canada strategy to modernize transportation services across the country.

Under this strategy, the government has already privatized CN, recently commercialized some services provided by the Canadian Coast Guard and is currently contemplating the possibility of commercializing the operation of the St. Lawrence seaway.

Canada is selling off its ports, airports, railway lines, railway cars and even bridges. This is like some kind of huge liquidation sale. The sale of bridges, and the Quebec bridge in particular, will obviously give rise to untold difficulties, since whoever buys the bridge in Quebec City will not have to take on the obligations the government had regarding the bridge. In fact, the government has gone into business.

Today, it is civil air navigation services that are being commercialized. The federal government tells us that we must agree in principle with improved efficiency and lower prices. The federal government's real motivation in creating Nav Canada is quite obvious. Its main concern is really to make air navigation services cost-effective—or so it says—at the expense of safety and regional development.

The former Minister of Transport himself has admitted that the government can no longer afford the cost of maintaining adequate air navigation services. We must therefore ask ourselves if the new corporation will be able to do any better. Several of the stakeholders who spoke on this issue expressed their concern about the possible costs of the new system and their impact on charges paid by users of air navigation services.

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Only large carriers will have a representative on the board of directors of the new corporation known as Nav Canada. Regional air transportation associations and companies will not be represented.

• (1025)

We know that, for a long time, in Quebec as well as in other provinces, the government has been asked to decentralize its operations so that local residents, who are familiar with local conditions, can have a say in something affecting their community. Again, in this bill we see an excessive centralization that will result in large carriers being the only ones to be heard.

Thus, regional air transportation associations and companies will not be represented. Large carriers are being given an advantage over small ones, especially as far as passenger fees are concerned. This aspect must be followed very closely, and we will do so as this bill progresses.

My colleagues and I are worried about the impacts of Bill C-20 in this regard. That is why we are proposing to add to the preamble a note indicating that Nav Canada must agree to maintain equal opportunities for small and large carriers in setting all charges.

This way, we will ensure small carriers a certain degree of fairness in this regard, and we know how important this is. Usually, large companies always end up deciding on everything, and everybody abides by their decisions. Nav Canada is meant to be a non-profit corporation with a mandate to manage public interests, and as my hon. colleague was saying a moment ago, we can draw a comparison with Montreal, where private companies will determine the future of Montreal airports without involving anybody else, without holding any public hearings, without making any studies available. The government is about to do something similar with this bill and the establishment of Nav Canada.

This creates a risk for users and the general public, since Nav Canada will hold a monopoly over air navigation services in Canada. The corporation will impose user fees and will have absolute control over the tariff structure. We want to make sure that Nav Canada's financial interests do not take precedence over the public interest. This is why the Bloc Québécois motion seeks to include, in the preamble of the bill, a recognition that the safety of passengers, personnel, air carriers and the public has priority over all other considerations in the decisions taken by Nav Canada.

The first motion in the first group aims to have the government and Nav Canada recognize that public safety and interest take precedence over Nav Canada's financial interests. We have to ensure that someone is still accountable for safety standards, which must always remain the top priority. The government would be ill-advised to oppose the motion, since the minister sponsoring the bill said, in a speech, that Transport Canada's top priority is to

maintain and, whenever possible, to improve the safety and security of Canadians.

The government can really not vote against a motion confirming such priority in the bill, since the minister himself alluded to it. I do hope government members will support the statements made by one of their ministers, even though what we saw and heard in recent weeks might lead us to think otherwise. Indeed, as recently as yesterday, the government did not even support a declaration made not too long ago by its Prime Minister, in some kind of autobiography, not posthumous of course.

The third motion in the first group seeks to add to the preamble a mention that Nav Canada recognizes that "Canada is a country where air services to northern and remote regions is essential". The purpose of this motion is to establish a basis for interpretation. Again, I do not see how government members could oppose the motion. We want to make sure that regional services will effectively be provided, particularly in remote regions.

This parameter will serve as a basis for interpretation by stressing that one of Nav Canada's fundamental objectives is to provide services to the regions. The idea is to make sure that large carriers do not impose their rules on smaller ones, without regard for regional markets and needs. Co-operation and understanding are essential between all carriers, large and small.

• (1030)

As you can see, the first group of motions includes three motions that would fit into the preamble in order to recognize the legitimate rights and responsibilities that Nav Canada should always respect.

What these motions propose is, roughly, that the government and the new corporation recognize that the safety of passengers is one of the most important concerns and must take have paramouncy over all other considerations, including the financial interests of large carriers and the new corporation. I would like to mention, not as a vision of doom nor as something that could happen—because I hope it will never happen—the plane crash that happened recently in the United States, in the Florida Everglades.

The possibility was clearly raised on television, at least according to some comments I heard, that the accident could be related to the financial problems suffered by the airline, which would appear to have great difficulty in performing the technical checks needed to ensure the full safety of its passengers. This is currently under investigation in the United States.

I mention this case to ensure that we do everything to prevent such an occurrence here. As we know, this country's two largest air carriers have financial problems. And we do not want them to take advantage of the establishment of this new corporation to bail themselves out by increasing rates, for example, which would immediately impact negatively on small regional carriers. We do not want to find ourselves once again in the situation where the

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little guy is made to pay for the big guy. This seems to have become the rule nowadays.

We only have to think of what the Auditor General of Canada just told us. Large family trusts have no problem because, through nebulous rulings made behind closed doors, and often in matters that could be judicially examined, they can transfer billions of dollars out of Canada without paying taxes. When you are big, there is no problem doing that. We are even setting precedents that will allow all the others to do the same afterwards.

Last week, the *Financial Post* quoted Revenue Canada documents to the effect that over \$60 billion in assets were taken out of Canada in 1991 without any tax being paid. It is obvious that big shots in Canada have no trouble whatsoever making their sweet little deals. Included in those big shots were most Canadian banks who advertise on television and tell us how much they care about the public's interest. What we would not like to see happen with this bill is big companies ending up with an advantage over the small ones.

In conclusion, there is no reason why the government should oppose these motions, especially those in the first group, since they are a mere confirmation of principles the government itself has applied repeatedly. All we want is to see these principles clearly entrenched in the bill and included in the preamble.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased this morning to have the opportunity to take part in debate at second reading stage of Bill C-20, an important piece of legislation to privatize Canadian airports.

As my colleague from Laval Centre mentioned earlier, the Bloc Québécois is not against any privatization initiative that could improve the efficiency of airport management throughout the country. However, there is privatization and privatization. When privatization leads to security problems, as we saw recently in the United States when a ValuJet airplane crashed, then the Bloc Québécois cannot give its assent. Also, when basic principles such as fairness and transparency are set aside, then again the Bloc cannot give its assent.

In the bill before us, two basic principles are violated. First, the local communities are not treated fairly. As for respect for the local communities, nothing in this bill leads us to believe that regional and local communities will have their say in the privatization process and the management of the airports in Canada, or will receive the information they need and be treated fairly and respectfully for what they are.

• (1035)

It is not surprising that this bill shows no concern for local communities. The former Minister of Transportation, now Minister of Human Resources Development, reacted the same way when the issue of unemployment insurance reform was addressed recent-

ly. He showed that he did not care about some local communities who depend on seasonal work, by overlooking the many concerns expressed by people from his own riding, people who live in these communities, who know them well, who are able to assess the bad decisions made by the government and the real negative impact they have on the local economies.

It does not surprise me that Bill C-20 reflects a lack of concern for local communities and that the government has turned a deaf ear to our numerous requests in this regard.

Such a bill should not only aim to ensure, directly in the mandate of this new organization created by the federal government—Nav Canada—air transportation in remote areas, for example, but also to advise local communities, which are the first concerned and the main clients of the air carriers, of any change in services—rates, frequency, schedules, etc.—and in air transportation equipment or infrastructure.

The bill is rather deficient as far as information to be provided to local people is concerned, since, according to the government, one notice only in a national newspaper like the *Globe and Mail* or *Le Devoir*, for example, should do. Thus, this group of motions, that is, motions Nos 4 to 12, aims essentially at ensuring one thing: information.

It is not normal that people living close to the airport in Mont-Joli, for example, should be informed in the *Globe and Mail* of changes that concern them. The normal and respectable thing to do would be to publish these notices of changes in the Mont-Joli local newspapers. *Le Devoir* would not be the normal vehicle for such a notice on the North Shore, since this newspaper is not that easy to find in that area.

Local communities should have a guarantee that they will receive notice directly, through their local media, of changes in the frequency of service, in the schedules, etc., or of more substantive changes such as the reduction of some services or even the closure of some airports. The same holds true for Native bands. It is not always easy to reach them, even through the local media. The band councils must be informed of the changes regarding local airports.

Today, information is not only a privilege, it is also a basic right, all the more so since the communities that will be the first affected by the changes made by Nav Canada are the local ones. It will not be the communities in major centres, where there is a larger density and frequency of services. This then becomes a necessity.

In this respect, let me praise the member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup for being sensitive to these issues, that is to say for insisting on service, respect and fairness for local communities. As you may know, our colleague, the member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, is also the official Bloc Québécois spokesman for a major organization in Quebec called Solidarité rurale, and I think it is much to his credit to have succeeded in making our party, our

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caucus and our members more aware of the needs of local communities and of the respect we owe them.

• (1040)

It is more and more obvious that this government wants to carry out all its reforms by betraying the very principles it says it wants to protect. In the red book or the speech from the throne, much is made of respect for people, for rural communities and the people's decisions. But this government's actions give a completely different picture.

I was listening to the Minister of National Revenue who displayed such compassion for Canada's richest families. She said that there should more of them. In other words, she supported her department's decision, which allowed the transfer of \$2 billion worth of assets in the United States absolutely tax free, without one cent of tax being paid on capital gains. She displayed a lot of compassion for those families.

If her government displayed the same compassion for local communities and the needy, we would be one hundred per cent behind the government, but the fact is that there is an almost insurmountable chasm between what the government says and what it does.

Out of respect for local communities, for the human beings who live in these regions and who are the victims of the government's carelessness or of the cruel and inhuman decisions of the Minister of Human Resources Development concerning unemployment insurance, maybe we should, for once, be taking measures which favour them; in other words, we should give them an inalienable right to information when it comes to an important project such as the privatization of airports.

So this is the meaning of the motions moved by the Bloc Québécois, and it can seem strange for people who live in Ottawa, Toronto, Montréal, Québec, Winnipeg, Calgary, etc., to call for these notices to be given in the local media, but for the people concerned, it makes all the difference between the pride of being who they are and the respect due them by government.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to give the context of the series of changes proposed by the Bloc Québécois and included in the second group of amendments, it must be pointed out that the objective of the bill is to commercialize the air navigation services, which is to say to transfer to a not for profit organization a service that had been up to now in the public domain.

As I said in my speech on the first group of amendments, that is something that could be interesting and commendable but only if we can guarantee the population that the security and safety level of the services will be maintained and that it will have its say at the

regional level on all decisions having a major impact on the local economy.

For that reason I would like to correct an impression left by the parliamentary secretary on May 15, when he said that our motions contained errors because we were not referring to the right clause. This is not the case because, as we also said in committee, we want to ensure that information is made available not only on the formula for calculating the fees, but also on the services because, in isolated areas, services are as important as fees.

If decisions taken by Nav Canada have the effect of depriving airports of safety equipment and have an impact on the volume of local air traffic, we must ensure that the local population has its say. That is the reasoning behind our amendments. If we want regions to have their say, they must be informed of the decisions.

We want to give people the opportunity to send their comments by traditional or electronic mail and ensure that they will be informed of all planned changes.

We added special consideration for the native band councils because, due to their particular situation, the traditional media are not necessarily the best means to reach them. We must ensure that they are well informed also. I think that, considering the special interest of the government for the natives, it should accept our amendment to guarantee appropriate coverage.

• (1045)

An airport is vital to a remote area, to an isolated area, because it often has a strong impact on the region. Let us take, for example, the Mont-Joli airport, in eastern Quebec. It is obvious that any decisions made with regard to aviation safety at this airport will likely have an impact on the activity at this airport.

We want people from the regional county municipality, people from Mont-Joli, all stakeholders in the tourist industry and other industries to have their say in any decisions that will have an impact on safety at the airport and that could ultimately have an impact on the economic activity around the airport.

That is why we want to ensure that the information is adequate and timely so that people can have time to react and make their opinions known accordingly.

We have a very good example of that in the decision of Aéroports de Montréal to possibly transfer international flights from Mirabel to Montréal. It is not for me to say here whether this decision is good or bad, but I just want to show that this organization created by the federal government to manage both Montreal airports has changed its position drastically in a relatively short period of time. At first, it was saying that both airports could survive, that it would share out responsibilities and transportation opportunities between both airports, and that everything should

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work out this way. Now it is saying that it wants to transfer all international flights to Dorval.

This situation is provoking reactions in the Dorval area because people have certain fears in terms of safety. We saw it again today in the newspapers. There is even talk of taking this matter to court. So would it not be preferable for the consultation mechanisms allowing people to voice their opposition and express their views to be provided for in the bill that creates Nav Canada, the organization which will be responsible for air traffic control, instead of ending up with very expensive legal battles in which economic decisions will be challenged?

I take this opportunity to urge the government once again to take its responsibilities in this matter and also to make the comparison with the bill before us today. If we have an example like the one concerning ADM, because there is an unwillingness to let people have their say about the future of their airport, the future of air navigation in their region, is there not a risk that, in the years to come, there will arise two, three, five, ten problems of the same sort as we are seeing in Montreal, with negative reactions from local communities, who are forced to take a very vocal approach or go through the legal system in order to make their views known.

This is the reasoning behind our amendments today in Group No. 2. We want to ensure that people living in the Northwest Territories, in northern Quebec, as well as in large centres, because there are decisions about large airports that affect urban populations, have a say. When an airport has a lot of traffic, take Pearson in Toronto, it is certain that there are decisions that, in the medium term, have an impact on all economic development in a region, and it would be very appropriate if, before decisions about safety equipment in these airports were taken, the people in the surrounding areas were heard from.

That brings me back to the safety aspect. Last week, there was a very unfortunate plane crash in southern Florida in the United States, pointing up just how important the question of air navigation is. No margin of error is acceptable in this sector. It is a sector where guarantees of safety with respect to decisions taken are essential, and if accidents happen, that they be truly unforeseeable and not in any way due to decisions made either by the government or by the new agency known as Nav Canada.

Imagine what we could have in a few years' time, if there were a similar accident here and Nav Canada officials refused to accept any responsibility, saying: "The legislation did not oblige us to have safety take precedence over our economic commitments. In the case of the airport where the accident took place, we did everything we were required to do. We did not necessarily buy the latest equipment it would have taken, or put in place all the required safety measures, but it was not in our mandate".

• (1050)

There would be costs in terms of human lives and of equipment, and no way of ascribing the blame to anyone. It is important that the bill provide some balance.

Originally, the costs of air navigation were extremely high. Steps were taken in conjunction with the industry and most of the stakeholders, although the small carriers were not given enough of a say, with a view to ensuring lower and more acceptable costs.

The bill fails to make safety paramount, and also to ensure that decisions will not have a negative economic impact on the regions. The approach to this matter, as in a number of other current government bills, is to make things uniform across Canada. This is a trend which, in my opinion, ought to be resisted, and I think this is important.

We have proposed a preamble, a sort of interpretive clause, to restrict somewhat the considerable leeway afforded to Nav Canada, and to require that it take the elements referred to into consideration.

Our amendments on the distribution of information prior to a decision and on finding out the regional point of view reflect issues of importance to us, and we feel they would make for a better bill.

Government acceptance of the proposed amendments would provide the satisfactory balance the bill lacks at this time. We are making a transition from a very costly system to one where the costs will be well controlled. Let us ensure that passenger safety will be guaranteed. This is the purpose of our amendments.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my thanks to my colleagues who spoke on the motions in Group No. 2, namely: the member for Laval-Centre, the member for Anjou—Rivières-des-Prairies, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot and the member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

Why? Because those members spoke on a fairly important group of motions. I take this opportunity to say that I am somewhat concerned by the lack of interest hon. members from the other parties seem to have for this very important group of amendments on which I will speak in a moment.

Those amendments do not seem to raise much interest in Reform and Liberal ranks and this concerns me. As I said, I will explain why in a few seconds.

It seems that because these amendment motions were introduced by the official opposition they have no merit and are not interesting. Actually the reason Liberals have no interest in these amendments is that they are not the ones who had the good idea of

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introducing them. This is why they oppose them and do not even bother to discuss them.

As my colleagues did this morning, I must emphasize that the Bloc Québécois is not opposed to the principle of privatizing air navigation services. It does not oppose privatization if that will help these services to become viable to some degree.

What we are troubled by are the precedents. My colleague from Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup referred to the case of ADM, the acronym for Aéroports de Montréal. I do not wish to take sides in the debate on Mirabel or Dorval or on the timeliness of privatizing Mirabel or Dorval or not, but I must say that this government, on the pretence of making the industry aware of its responsibilities, uses privatization as a means to shirk its own responsibilities.

• (1055)

The other day we saw the minister wriggle shamefully out of answering opposition questions by saying: “That is not the responsibility of the Minister of Transport. It does not come under the authority of the federal government, but rather under the authority of the ADM. We no longer have any say in this”.

It is totally unacceptable to have the government, under entirely credible and honourable guise, trying to wriggle out, to take French leave, to avoid making a decision when one needs to be made.

Still on the subject of the ADM, we should note that this sort of privatization suffers from a certain lack of transparency. Decisions can be made without public consultation; decisions can be made without an environmental impact study. When studies are done, as was the case apparently in the ADM decision, the public does not have access to the impact studies, since these corporations are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

Finally, here I am at the main point of my remarks—information. Information, according to René Lévesque, means freedom. The purpose of the motions in group No. 2 is to provide better public information.

No one in this House will argue against, at least I hope they would not, the importance of airport facilities for local communities in the regions. In my riding, at Saint-Mathieu-de-Beloeil, there is a tiny regional airport, which is very important to Saint-Mathieu-de-Beloeil and of course to the neighbouring communities as well. The same is true in the ridings of my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois and in other parties: regional airports are very important.

Given the importance of airport facilities to these local communities, it is essential we provide proper information on decisions

that have been made, particularly if a decision has been made to close an airport facility. So as my colleague for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot rightly said a few minutes ago, we cannot count on people in the regions being necessarily informed by the dailies—and I am thinking of the people in Mont-Joli—such as the *Globe and Mail* or the *Toronto Star*. We have to be able to inform them directly through the local media.

It is not utterly silly to claim that it is important to include in this bill a clause forcing the government to inform the public, through the local and regional media, about the major impact of decisions by Nav Canada.

Obviously, it is also important to inform native bands that would be affected by Nav Canada’s decisions to close airport facilities.

I will conclude by saying a few words concerning the use of the information highway to inform interested parties about Nav Canada’s decisions to close airport facilities.

As an example, I will tell you about a discussion I had with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It will not take too long. The minister told us that he wanted to consult Canadians through electronic mail. That is good, but not all our fellow citizens have access to these services yet. Therefore, other means, include the good old fashioned postal service, must also be used to consult the public.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

MINING

Mrs. Marlene Cowling (Dauphin—Swan River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we walk into the House of Commons, the foyer depicts much of Canadian history, including the important role that natural resources generally, and minerals and metals specifically, have played in our development. In fact, minerals and metals are essential. Everything in this House involves products from the mining industry.

• (1100)

National mining week, May 13 to 19, helps celebrate not only mining’s contribution to the Canadian economy but that this is a high technology sector. Our prospecting experiences, combined with our expertise in mineral technology, remote sensing and creation of geological maps put Canadians at the forefront of technology and environmental development.

This experience and expertise will keep Canadians at the vanguard of mineral wealth creation well into the 21st century.

[Translation]

THE FAMILY

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this week Quebec celebrates the family. This year the emphasis is on young families. In order to accomplish the delicate and important task they are faced with daily, they need support.

Quebec society has gone through gradual changes to become the modern society we know now. Today, the family has many faces, but behind each face are the same needs, and the same requirements, since each member of the family unit has to deal with his or her own needs and reality.

I invite all the members of this House to think about how to collectively provide our young families with the support they need to improve the society they live in.

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[English]

GST

Ms. Margaret Bridgman (Surrey North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government has added several new meanings to the GST letters.

We still have the goods and services tax but we also have a government House agenda GST, a grossly sedate tempo, and the firearms registration GST, gun control silly tactics.

Then there is the east-west coast fishery GST, a gadoid, salmon and turbot fiasco, gadoid being a type of cod fish.

From the budget there are a couple more GSTs: the gasoline sales tax which increased the government's revenues, and the opportunity for the former deputy prime minister to gurgle 'slipped tongue' song.

Through all this we watched the rat pack disintegrate to the grovelling sorry twosome, and from there to the grumbling solo tenant.

Two more GSTs the government can add to its list are get sensible today, and Canada's got serious troubles.

* * *

QUILTING

Mr. John Richardson (Perth—Wellington—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to a talented group of individuals, Canada's quilters.

Recently Canada's quilters proclaimed the month of May as national quilters month. I believe these talented artisans deserve the recognition. For years quilts have been an important part of the

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fabric of rural life. In a larger sense quilts are a mirror reflection of the lives of all Canadians.

In the same fashion as our country was formed, quilts were built with hard work, perseverance and dedication. While each individual part in its own way is unique, together the individual parts form a cohesive unit, a true piece of art.

I salute these tireless artisans and invite all Canadians to take a moment to recognize these talented Canadians during national quilters month in May.

* * *

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. John Maloney (Erie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to recognize national police week. It is an occasion for all Canadians to pay tribute to the professionalism, dedication and personal sacrifice exhibited by our police officers as they carry out their duties, often under unpleasant or adverse circumstances.

This year's theme of police in the community promotes the links between Canada's police forces, large and small, with the communities they serve. Community policing projects continue to record tremendous success in the war against crime and community security. An ounce of crime prevention is worth countless pounds of cure.

I would like to particularly acknowledge members of the Niagara Regional Police Service, the Ontario Provincial Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, all of whom serve with distinction in various capacities in Erie riding.

I encourage all Canadians to shake a police officer's hand this week. Thank you for helping to keep our streets safe, our homes safe and our families safe. Thank you for being there when we need you.

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GAELIC CULTURAL AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton—Highlands—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, beginning this year May has been declared Gaelic cultural awareness month in Nova Scotia. This month is being designated to celebrate the important role which the Gaelic language has played in the history of the province.

The descendants of the highland Scottish settlers, the Gaels, have contributed greatly to cultural diversity in Nova Scotia and throughout North America. Their language and culture have influenced countless individuals, communities and institutions. Canada's first two prime ministers spoke fluent Gaelic.

I congratulate the Nova Scotia Gaelic Council on its efforts to promote Gaelic and I invite members of the House to celebrate Canada's cultural diversity and the importance of all minority languages in Canada.

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• (1105)

[*Translation*]

TOURISM

Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the 11th gala of the Grands Prix du tourisme québécois was held last weekend in the Montcalm hall, in Quebec City.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my most sincere congratulations to all the winners of the Grands Prix du tourisme québécois. I would like to pay tribute specifically to Father Fernand Lindsay, Cleric of Saint Viator, founder and artistic director of the Lanaudière international music festival. Father Lindsay received the award of excellence. Every summer, thousands of spectators flock to the Lanaudière amphitheatre to listen to the best musicians in the world.

The exceptional quality of this festival makes the Laurentides-Lanaudière area and the rest of Quebec very proud.

Nine other awards were given in various tourism fields of activity. Over a thousand prominent members of the Quebec tourism industry and business sector were in attendance.

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[*English*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is in the newspaper this morning that recently four boys aged 10, 11, 13 and 15 abducted a 13-year old girl and forced her into an apartment where she was raped by the 11-year old. This horrendous act of abduction and rape was done because the government failed to protect this 13-year old girl by providing her attackers with a shield of immunity.

The untouchable 11-year old who raped this innocent girl had a string of offences against him, including terrorizing and trying to rob a clerk at a gas station. All the police could do was return him to his mother on each of these occasions.

Reform, with the support of police and victims' groups, strongly urges the government to lower the age governed by the YOA from 12 to 10, remove the publicity ban on violent young offenders, and hold parents legally and financially responsible for the crimes of their children if there is proof parental negligence is a contributing factor.

Society needs these amendments to protect the lives and the safety of our children.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Canadians witnessed a closing chapter in the history of Central America where all but one of the civil conflicts have come to an end.

Yesterday Central American leaders gathered at the Canadian peacekeeping monument to pay tribute to those Canadians who served in UN missions in the region. That the ceremony was organized at the request of the Central American leaders illustrates the close relations among our countries.

What we all celebrated was the seed of hope that these UN missions have helped plant in Central America. It demonstrated the courage and dedication of ordinary Canadians who have willingly offered themselves to support Central America.

Canadians and Central Americans will continue to work together to demonstrate that peace and the protection of human rights are achievable in all regions of the world.

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[*Translation*]

QUEBEC DIRECTOR GENERAL OF ELECTIONS

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is, to say the least, surprising and deplorable to note in the report he tabled this week that the director of elections in Quebec gives little importance to the rejection of several thousands of referendum ballots, even though it compromises our democratic system.

The director of elections even goes on to say: "In a way, the rally for Canadian unity compromised Quebec democracy in general during the referendum".

Again, it is disturbing and deplorable that Pierre F. Côté did not focus on the systematic rejection of thousands of ballots, knowing full well that the right to vote is the most basic, the most crucial aspect of our democratic system.

In a way, this is a fine example of a double standard.

* * *

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Bernard Deshaies (Abitibi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, filling up has become a luxury, especially in Abitibi. In the last three weeks alone, the price of gasoline at the pumps, in my region of Abitibi, has gone up by an average of 9 cents a litre, a 15 per cent jump.

According to the gas price review board, this increase is the highest recorded since the Gulf War crisis, which had made prices rise by 11 cents a litre.

• (1110)

The current situation—and it is difficult to predict how long it will last—is intolerable in regions like mine, where long distances require us to consume a lot of gasoline.

One thing is clear and revolting for the people of Quebec and Canada: they are at the mercy of American oil companies and the government lacks the courage to take the actions needed to protect us.

* * *

[English]

SERGEANT ROBERT GUTHRIE

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, at this hour, His Excellency the Governor General of Canada is awarding the Medal of Bravery to my constituent RCMP Sergeant Robert Guthrie of Leduc, Alberta.

While off duty on May 17, 1992, Sergeant Guthrie came upon a serious traffic accident near the town of Millet. With the help of Darrell Paul Robertson, he attempted to save three people trapped in a burning car. As an explosion rocked the vehicle and engulfed it in flames, they managed to bend the window frame and extricate the dazed driver.

Heroism is often depicted in movies and on television by famous actors portraying fictitious characters in unrealistic setting. Real heroes are everyday people like Robert Guthrie who disregard the threat to their own safety and risk life and limb in the face of imminent danger to extend a hand to their fellow man.

I add my personal congratulations to Sergeant Guthrie for his part in this valiant rescue. I know members of the House join me in saying thanks for your courageous act.

* * *

[Translation]

PARTI QUEBECOIS

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only thing on the rise in the PQ's argumentation these days is the level of abuse they have been trying to outdo one another in hurling.

After Bernard Landry, who, the day before yesterday, described our government's behaviour as more authoritarian, intolerant and closed-minded than that of the former totalitarian communist governments, now we have the ever subtle Jacques Brassard.

At a press conference yesterday, Mr. Brassard called the federal government's latest initiatives a campaign of political terrorism. Moreover, he accused our Prime Minister of throwing his weight around in front of Quebecers.

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It is a well known fact that using insult as a weapon is a sign of weakness. Judging by the imposing arsenal Quebec's separatists are building up, we are forced to conclude that they do not have much confidence in their cause.

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[English]

FOCUS ON CANADA

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 23, 1996 in the town of Alexandria in my riding residents of Glengarry organized a citizens assembly on the future of Canada. I congratulate the organizers of this event.

Aptly named "Focus on Canada", the assembly was aimed at having its participants voice their concerns over the future of the country, especially in light of the 1995 referendum.

I was present at the conference to hear my constituents' comments. I have recently received a copy of the recommendations of the group, which I intend to present to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

[Translation]

The participation of residents of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell in the March 23 assembly as well as in the historic rally held on October 27 can only lead to one conclusion: we all care deeply about the future of Canada, a future which includes Quebec.

* * *

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to bring to the attention of the House the outstanding performance of Christian Bellemare, a student at the aerospace trades school in Montreal, who, on May 5, at the Palais des congrès de Montréal, earned the gold medal award at the Canadian vocational training olympics.

Mr. Bellemare showed remarkable composure and skill in the machining competition, becoming the first student in his school to win the top prize in the Canadian olympics.

L'École des métiers de l'aérospatiale de Montréal, which is located in my riding, opened two years ago already; it has an enrolment of more than 600 and a teaching staff of 50. Thanks to an exceptional partnership with the industry, the school offers specialized training in the aerospace and aeronautical sector.

It is important to draw attention to Mr. Bellemare's accomplishment, thus underlining the key role played by vocational schools in producing skilled manpower able to meet the needs of an ever-changing economy.

*Oral Questions**[English]***IMPAIRED DRIVING**

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are crying out for justice concerning drunk drivers who kill, and the Liberal government knows it.

Over and over we see slap on the wrist sentencing given to people who choose to drink and drive and as a result of their choices kill people on our highways.

My private member's bill, if the government had the guts to support it, would ensure that anyone found guilty of impaired driving causing death would receive a minimum seven year sentence.

• (1115)

My bill is supported by number of Liberal MPs, but the Minister of Justice will not let them speak in favour of it. Why is the Liberal government denying its own members the opportunity to speak in support of this important bill as their constituents wish?

How many more innocent Canadians have to die at the hands of drunk drivers before the government does something? How many more senseless deaths? How many more?

* * *

FILIPINO CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when bestowed upon its members community distinction is always a source of special pride to any ethnocultural group. The Filipino Canadian community claims this special pride, as two of its young women were recently honoured in Manitoba.

Last week Hygia dela Cruz received the Gerrie Hammond Memorial Award of Promise, the junior equivalent of the YWCA Women of Distinction Award. Last month Mary Joyce Cabigting received the Premier's Youth Volunteer Service Award. These awards assume greater meaning at a time when some Canadian youth have problems in society.

Both young women were honoured for their personal achievements and for their excellence in the service of others. They are role model citizens.

I am honoured to salute them. Please join me in wishing them continued success.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD*[Translation]***CAPITAL GAINS**

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue.

While the minister is busy complaining that there are not enough rich families and refuses to suspend the decision of Revenue Canada on taxing capital gains, the precedent set by this decision could mean the loss of several hundreds of millions of dollars in Canadian tax revenues, thus putting more pressure on taxpayers.

Is the minister of revenue in her job only to serve the very rich families in Canada, or is it her responsibility to defend the interests of all Quebecers and all Canadians, particularly the most disadvantaged?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my mandate is to ensure the tax system is fair and equitable to all. The interesting result of the conversations in the House and in the popular press is there needs to be more information on how tax rulings work in our system, on how taxable Canadian property is interpreted and used. The best venue for that is a public domain like the finance committee.

[Translation]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday her colleague from Brome—Missisquoi said on television that people expected the government to act.

So when will the minister suspend the decision of Revenue Canada until we find a permanent solution to this thorny problem?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are taking direct action. Our view, the best view, is to ensure Canadians have an opportunity to hear all aspects of this case, decisions on which were made in 1991 and 1985. We are taking direct and urgent action. We encourage the committees to carry on with their work.

[Translation]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister must understand that she ought to suspend the decision by Revenue Canada. Otherwise, by refusing to act quickly in this matter she becomes an accomplice in tax evasion worth several hundreds of millions of dollars annually, which all come out of the pockets of Canadians, because the rich will have taken their money elsewhere.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not refusing to do anything. It is very important for the community to understand how tax rulings play a significant role in our tax system and the underpinning they provide to Canadian taxpayers. Our tax system is very complex. Very often individuals need an advance ruling from Revenue Canada. That forms the basis of a fair and equitable process.

These things will be discussed fully and openly in committee. I encourage the hon. member to ensure her members are part of that review.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, complexity is not a reason not to act. If she thinks it is, let her step aside for someone more competent, who can handle it.

Yesterday, the minister of revenue stated in this House, in connection with tax loopholes, that she was acting “in a very public way”, with complete transparency. She also repeated for the gullible that she was serving and defending the public interest.

• (1120)

To what public interest was she referring, that of very rich Canadian families, or that of the many Quebecers and Canadians who are being crushed by a tax burden which is constantly increasing because of her government’s inaction?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset, my job is to ensure fairness and equity for all Canadians.

As the hon. member participates in these open reviews, and I understand he is a member of the finance committee, he will come to understand that this aspect of the law does have implications not only for rich Canadians but also for Canadians of more modest means.

I look forward to his response and the report. I encourage him to continue his participation.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general, who is responsible for monitoring government actions, has said that a Revenue Canada decision will result in the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in the future.

Would acting in the public interest not mean suspending Revenue Canada’s advance decision, revealing the other cases that may have come up since the decision, and putting in place a permanent solution to this problem?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member participates in the process where there is full co-operation and officials from my department and finance providing advice, outside witnesses perhaps coming to explain the position as well as chartered accountants who are Canadians and understand the system and perhaps individual Canadians, we will have clarity on this topic.

I continue to believe that having the discussion in an open forum where members of Parliament can listen to witnesses and experts and then provide advice to the government makes the most sense in this case.

* * *

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, recently we have learned that a 13-year old girl in Toronto was abducted and raped by a so-called untouchable, an 11-year old who cannot be charged under the Young Offenders Act.

This 11-year old has a string of robberies under his belt but all the police could do was hand him over to his mother. What is more, this child criminal was well aware that he could not be charged and taunted police with the fact when he was picked up.

Will the government now listen to police officers and victims groups as well as members of my caucus and lower the minimum age under the Young Offenders Act to include 10 and 11-year olds?

Mr. Gordon Kirkby (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is aware, the federal government has already enacted changes to the Young Offenders Act to stiffen up the penalties for the most serious crimes.

As the hon. member is also aware, the Minister of Justice has asked the justice committee to go across the country and gather input specifically looking at further changes to the Young Offenders Act. Very specifically, the minister has asked that the committee look at the age at which a young person could be made subject to the act. The committee will be reporting and we will be responding to that report.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, during the latest amendment to the Young Offenders Act, members of our caucus pressed the government to look into this very question and include that within Bill C-37 as an amendment so that society could be protected from the criminal acts committed by 10 and 11-year olds across the country.

After apprehending the 11-year old repeat offender responsible for this vicious rape, Toronto police detective Duncan Miller said:

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“He is using the Young Offenders Act to protect himself from the law. He is fully aware of his rights”. The 11-year old offender warned police that he could not be charged.

My question is for the justice minister’s representative. Why will he not protect our children from these horrible acts? Why will he not unhandcuff our police forces and provide them with the legal means to protect our children from these horrible criminal acts? When will he stop providing the immunity to these violent young offenders?

Mr. Gordon Kirkby (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reiterate that the justice committee will be making recommendations on this very specific point.

No matter at what age the line is drawn, cases will always appear that would suggest the line should be drawn somewhere else. As all the evidence and studies indicate, there needs to be more action taken by the provinces, communities and individuals across the country to assist young people before they get into trouble with the criminal justice system. An ounce of prevention is certainly worth a pound of cure.

• (1125)

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely unacceptable that people can knowingly commit crimes of violence and not be held accountable by our justice system.

Federal justice officials maintain that treatment and community programs, not prison, is the best way to reform child criminals.

Let us take a look at this 11-year old rapist. He has a thick police file and is believed to be responsible for a string of auto thefts and robberies. One week before he raped the young girl he was caught trying to hold up a gas station with a toy gun. The only thing police could do was return him to his mother or place him with the Children’s Aid Society.

I ask the government, where was the treatment or community programs the Liberal government likes to talk about? Why will it not simply change the system to hold children, and their parents if negligent, responsible for the crimes they commit?

Mr. Gordon Kirkby (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated on a number of occasions, the justice committee is looking at the issue. The Minister of Justice has asked the committee to look at this very specific issue.

After listening to Canadians and stakeholders within the justice system from coast to coast, the committee will bring forward a report. When the government acts on the report we hope the hon. member will support our actions.

[Translation]

REFERENDUMS

Mr. Paul Mercier (Blainville—Deux-Montagnes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister said on several occasions that the next Quebec referendum, and the declaration of sovereignty, would have to comply with the Constitution. However, the Constitution is silent on the issue.

Does the Prime Minister intend to make a constitutional amendment to this effect?

Mr. Paul DeVillers (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is very clear on these issues. Our plan is to promote reconciliation. We are trying to avoid another referendum.

Any discussion on what will happen if another referendum is held is purely academic. The government said in its speech from the throne that, as long as the prospect of another Quebec referendum exists, the government will exercise its responsibility to ensure that the debate is conducted with all the facts on the table, that the rules of the process are fair, that the consequences are clear, and that Canadians, no matter where they live, will have their say in the future of their country.

Mr. Paul Mercier (Blainville—Deux-Montagnes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government seems to have a peculiar notion of clarity.

It is getting increasingly bogged down in its clarity. Since the Prime Minister refuses to recognize a 50 per cent plus one vote in favour of sovereignty, how can the minister claim that the federalist status quo side won the 1995 referendum, given that it only got 50.4 per cent of the votes?

Mr. Paul DeVillers (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member refers to the acceptance of a 50 per cent plus one vote. A referendum is a consultation process and two have already been held in Quebec in the last 15 years. We accepted the results. The idea is definitely not to set a specific number. It is clear that the rights of 30 million citizens are at stake and that Canada will never be broken up by a 50 per cent plus one result.

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[English]

NEWFOUNDLAND

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Oral Questions

It seems that the sweetheart deals between Liberal governments did not end with the GST pay-off. Term 29 of Newfoundland's terms of union granted an annual payment of \$8 million from the federal government. Now we hear that the Liberal government has changed the rules and will give a lump sum payment of \$160 million, a windfall, to Mr. Brian Tobin.

• (1130)

Why is the federal government asking Newfoundlanders to pay a penalty tomorrow for saving Brian Tobin's career today?

Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the annual payment to Newfoundland is some \$8 million a year. It is to be made in perpetuity as part of the original Constitution.

Newfoundland is facing some exceptional and difficult fiscal and economic challenges with the fishery and with the phase down of Hibernia. It has been requested that the payment be moved forward and we have agreed. It covers an advance of some \$50 million this year and further payments later on. It is a fair and reasonable substitute for the \$8 million statutory requirement.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, paying the money up front today means it will cost Canadians hundreds of millions of dollars more over 20 years than it would if Newfoundland were receiving \$8 million a year. At the same time, today's sweetheart deal will deprive future Newfoundland governments of that \$8 million in yearly income. In other words, Brian Tobin is clinging to his credibility by his money grabbing fingernails on this issue.

Why is the Government of Canada continuing to steal from Newfoundlanders and other Canadians today just to pull Brian Tobin's fat out of the fire?

Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member obviously does not understand interest. To think that there would be a payment of \$160 million up front instead of \$8 million a year for 20 years is entirely wrong. It will be discounted by an appropriate interest rate. That is exactly what I meant when I said it was a fair and reasonable substitute, with the discounted factor. That is the amount we will paying.

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[Translation]

FISHERIES

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Gaspé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

In order to make known their dissatisfaction with the crab fishery plan, deckhands and processing plant workers are still

refusing to go back to work. They are thus protesting the displacement of part time jobs resulting from the minister's plan.

Today, the minister is allocating crab quotas to ground fishermen. Does the minister realize that, unless he first resolves the present conflict with workers, there is a risk that this already very tense situation will blow up?

[English]

Hon. Fred Mifflin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a certain sympathy for the—

[Translation]

Mr. Gagnon: Go fish for groundfish.

Mr. Bernier (Gaspé): Mr. Speaker, could you ask the member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine to be quiet. It would do him good to hear this. He, too, has one of these plants in his riding.

Mr. Robichaud: The member for Gaspé could be asked if he—

[English]

The Speaker: Colleagues, many times we are sitting at a desk where the microphone is open. I would caution all of you to watch your words.

Mr. Mifflin: Mr. Speaker, I have to tell the hon. member, notwithstanding the acting lessons, we really need to look at what is happening with respect to the crab resource.

The plan was devised in such a way as to break down the 16,100 tonnes between the midshore large crabbers and those many small inshore fishermen who need a part of the resource. The distribution was fair. It was done by consultation. There was 77.5 per cent given to the large midshore crabbers and 22.5 per cent was given to the inshore smaller fishermen. This was a justifiable, fair and equitable distribution.

The idea was that everybody would go fishing at the appropriate time. The time has now arrived. I would suggest that all those who are interested in the industry release the plant workers and those who are innocent in this play. Then everybody can get on with the fishing and the resource can be enjoyed by all those who are involved in the industry. In particular, the plant workers and all communities can benefit from the resource of the ocean.

• (1135)

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Gaspé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to be very certain that the minister understands. This is not a quarrel between traditional crabbers and ground fishermen at the present time, this is a problem with plant workers.

What does the minister intend to do in response to the decision by the president of the Acadian ground fishermen's association, which is showing its solidarity by giving up 1,520 tonnes of its crab quota under the plan and handing them over to traditional

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crabbers, thus helping to save the jobs of deckhands and processing plant workers?

[English]

Hon. Fred Mifflin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asked me what I intend to do. I intend to promote the partnership among the fishermen, all crab fishermen, among the plant workers, among the communities, among all those who are interested in having a partnership with those poor innocent crabs. There are 16,100 tonnes of crabs sitting on the ocean floor just waiting to be caught and distributed for the benefit of all the communities.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the finance committee examined family trusts and tax exemptions last year but the Minister of Finance chose to keep the committee in the dark regarding the loopholes for billionaires. It seems obvious that the Minister of Finance and the Minister of National Revenue only take action on loopholes when they become a public issue.

Will the Minister of National Revenue commit today to a public inquiry of this billion dollar loophole or is she content to cut other secret deals with well connected friends of the Liberal Party?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: My colleagues, in our questions we should not impute motive of any kind. I was wondering if the hon. member for St. Albert would simply withdraw that last sentence.

Mr. Williams: I will withdraw, Mr. Speaker, but I would like—

The Speaker: The question as is without that sentence will stand, if the hon. minister chooses to answer it.

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will just say that the laws as they are written apply to all Canadians. I cannot imagine any more public venue than two committees of the House of Commons to look at these particularly important issues.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is becoming quite clear that there was a secret tax ruling which was in favour of some people in a public tax opinion and denied the same opportunity to everybody else. We need to get that cleared. We want to know why it happened. We want to know why this government is standing behind that ruling as it stands today. Why will it not close the loophole and act today to prevent this type of opportunity from happening at the expense of all Canadians?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us set the record straight for the umpteenth time.

The decision was a decision of a former government. It was drawn to our attention by the auditor general. We acted immediately, the day of the report, to draw attention to the House and ask that the matter be put before two public committees, the public accounts committee and the finance committee, for a full consideration and review.

I did not get here by defending a former government. I do not expect to do that in the future, but I sure as heck expect to get things right for the Canadian public. We have acted with urgency and have put it in the public domain. The member himself is a member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and we look forward to his recommendations.

* * *

[Translation]

TRAN TRIEU QUAN

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

While the federal government continues to drag its feet in the matter of Tran Trieu Quan, he continues to languish in a Vietnamese prison. However, more than a month has passed since the minister received documents from Paul Morgan proving that the cotton was indeed delivered to Vietnam. The minister was to verify the authenticity of these documents.

As more than a month has passed since the government received the documents, which could hasten Tran Trieu Quan's release, could the minister tell us what stage this longstanding matter has reached?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you know, we created the position of special adviser and he has Mr. Tran's file. I hope he will act quickly in this matter. Mr. Tran's case is now the responsibility of the special adviser.

● (1140)

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the minister that the appointment of his special adviser has produced little to date.

Is the minister telling us that he does not intend to take the initiative in this matter preferring to await the outcome of the appeal procedure, among other things, and that, in other words, regardless of the information he has in hand, he will continue to do nothing while Mr. Tran continues to languish in prison?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, within our jurisdiction everything possible has been done.

Representations have been made by the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, myself and my predecessor directly to the Government of Vietnam.

We have provided special provision for consular services. We have ensured that Mr. Quan has full access from relatives, friends and family. We transmitted all the information we have to the people in the government of Vietnam. It is their government, not ours, and we have to be able to work with them.

That is why I had established the post of special adviser, consular matters who takes on these difficult cases and negotiates directly with other governments. We do not have the power to tell another government what to do. We will do everything possible to ensure that Mr. Quan's rights are fully recognized and fully protected, but we have to do it within the range of powers and jurisdiction that we have.

I can assure you that we will continue to work actively on this case.

* * *

MINING

Mr. Lawrence D. O'Brien (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

With the new mineral exploration in northern Labrador there are now as many as 230 air vehicles using the air strip each day. This enormous increase in traffic has resulted in three crashes and many aborted flights. I have had a close call at Nain when the plane I was on nearly went down.

Can the minister reassure the people of Nain and Labrador generally that measures will be taken without delay to ensure the safety of the travelling public?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the first question by our new colleague, the hon. member for Labrador. I thank him for the energy he has displayed and the initiative he has taken with this issue, organizing as he did in his first weeks in this House meetings with the premier of Newfoundland, a senior minister from Newfoundland, myself, the Minister of National Defence, the entire municipal council of Goose Bay and others.

Aviation staff from my department have been monitoring the increased aviation traffic around the Nain airport which is a serious matter of concern. An aviation safety review team, including officials from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and from my department visited Nain at the end of April.

The aviation safety review team is finalizing its report and we are confident that working with the province of Newfoundland and with the hon. member, we will be able to resolve this issue to everyone's satisfaction.

Oral Questions

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

Citizens of Hamilton, Ontario are concerned that their city could soon become a main dumping ground for hazardous waste. The proposed Taro dump could be home to more than 10 million tonnes of industrial waste, not to mention being situated right next to the Niagara escarpment, a UN declared biosphere.

Can the minister tell us whether a federal environmental assessment panel review will be conducted, or does he plan to follow the steps of Sheila Copps and sacrifice the good of the environment for political reasons?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the question has more to do with the political reasons of a faltering Reform Party candidate in Hamilton than it does with the environmental issues that this member pretends to be genuine.

I do not need to defend the record of the former and future member of Parliament from Hamilton East. She has promoted and defended not only the best interests of Hamilton, but the best interests of the environment.

• (1145)

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Sheila Copps was environment minister and did nothing on this issue, even when it affected her own riding.

The leachate from the Taro dump will pollute the federal water of Lake Ontario. The environment is in danger in the Hamilton area all because Sheila Copps repeatedly ignored the concerns of her community.

Will the minister use his power and commit to launching a full environmental assessment of the Taro dump so all sides will be allowed real influence rather than just the political insiders of a very questionable deal?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the Reform Party candidate fired his campaign manager. Maybe he has a new candidate right here because the member is only interested in political partisan gain.

That is the last thing that Canadian citizens want the environment to be. They do not want it to be a volleyball. They do not want it to be traded between federal and provincial governments. They want it to be respected. They want all levels of government to manage the environment in the best interests of people today and for those who inherit Canada and the world tomorrow.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: I mentioned earlier about imputing motives. That would go not only for the questions but also for the answers.

* * *

[Translation]

CULTURAL PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FUND

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Heritage Canada has had three ministers in just under two and a half years and the new minister is a part time acting minister. Meanwhile, there are priority issues that require attention, issues like copyright legislation and the creation of a fund for the development of cultural products.

Does the latest heritage minister intend to act quickly on these issues and could she tell us what her priorities are and what time frames we are looking at?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and Acting Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): I hope, Mr. Speaker, that my second question will elicit the same response.

The CBC, the NFB and Telefilm Canada are putting high hopes in the upcoming announcement of the cultural product development fund, which should be made sometime in the middle of May. Will the minister act on this commitment or leave these organizations high and dry?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and Acting Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at present, work on all issues concerning Heritage Canada is continuing very actively, at all levels, both within the department and in co-operation with our various client groups and community partners. The same will hold true for the copyright legislation.

My colleague, the Minister of Industry, and myself intend to keep things moving along in this area. There is very clearly a very strong will to proceed as quickly as possible. As for the cultural product development fund, work is under way so that a decision can finally be made in the near future.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in 1990 when Bao Ngoc Lam, a refugee claimant and five buddies, were robbing a night club in Toronto, Lam put his handgun to the head of detective Peter Leung and threatened to kill him.

After serving a two-year sentence, Lam was held in custody by immigration. It was trying to deport him back to Vietnam but Vietnam refused to take him. After declaring that it took too long to deport Lam, an immigration adjudicator released him. Soon after being released, Lam disappeared and is now the subject of a Canada-wide warrant.

How can the minister ensure Canadians that her department puts public safety first when people like Lam are released?

• (1150)

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and Acting Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that this individual was released as a result of an adjudicator's decision. As you know, this decision was made by a quasi-judicial organization, which is totally independent from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

I can assure the members of this House that the department is doing all it can to deport this individual as soon as possible and in accordance with Canadian law.

[English]

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the department does not know where this individual is right now.

On December 1, 1995 I asked the previous minister of immigration about the recently signed agreement with Vietnam that would allow for the return of criminal refugees and immigrants from that country. At that time, the former minister boasted that the agreement would permit the removal of: "individuals who should not have been here in the first place. And that is being done".

If the agreement is as great as the previous minister claimed it to be, why is Lam the subject of a Canada-wide warrant and not back in Vietnam?

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and Acting Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that this government's policy is to deport people who have committed serious offences here in Canada.

We have no intention of giving special treatment to a serious offender. In this case, everything is being done to deport the individual in question.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Oral Questions

A number of farmers in Oxford have received funding under the tobacco diversification program to help develop new crops and other opportunities in the tobacco producing regions of Ontario and Quebec. For example, Joe Strobel in my riding is experimenting with industrial hemp.

Could the minister update the House on the performance of the tobacco diversification program?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the current tobacco diversification program in Ontario is a joint federal-provincial initiative. It totals about \$5.7 million and has been in place since 1994.

As of March of this year, 88 projects submissions had been received; 44 had been approved for total of \$2.5 million. The majority of these projects have been associated with commodity pioneering and value added activities. They have created in excess of 200 jobs and leveraged \$15 million in new investment.

The government is obviously committed to assisting tobacco growing regions in diversifying through initiatives like the tobacco diversification program.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada will host the 11th International AIDS Conference to be held in Vancouver from July 7 to July 12.

This conference is the largest in the world. It brings together the greatest scientists from every country, community groups and people with AIDS. Unlike his predecessor, Brian Mulroney, who opened the Montreal Conference in 1992, the Prime Minister has casually declined the organizers' invitation.

My question is for the Acting Prime Minister. Since the Prime Minister attended the Paris AIDS Summit last October, why did he decline the invitation to participate in the official opening of the International AIDS Conference in Vancouver, something that is unacceptable?

[English]

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite the rhetoric of the member, the Prime Minister's commitment to the issue of HIV-AIDS, stands without reproach. He knows quite well that the Minister of Health will be in attendance. He knows also that the Standing Committee on Health has commissioned a subcommittee, of which he is a member, to send two members and he is one of the two.

He knows also that the Prime Minister's commitment will be translated into over \$2 million in contributions from five separate ministries of the government.

That is an indication that the Prime Minister is not only living up to the signatory obligations signed in Paris in December 1994, but that he is going well beyond it. He knows also that there is one other country which comes close, and that is France.

• (1155)

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that, since 1987, all heads of state have opened the conference, and it is unacceptable for the Prime Minister to break with this tradition.

My supplementary question is for the parliamentary secretary or the Acting Prime Minister. Are we to understand from his refusal to open the Vancouver conference, the largest in the world, that the Prime Minister is no longer interested in the fate of people living with AIDS? Shame on him.

[English]

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the public will be forgiven for thinking these kinds of theatrics are shameful. When one takes a look at the record of the country's and the government's commitment to solving the problems of HIV-AIDS, the member will retract his rhetoric.

He will know, as the House knows, that Canada commits in excess of \$40 million per annum toward research and epidemiological monitoring, \$5.5 million is administered through the national health and research development program, \$1.5 million annually in national welfare research grants, an average of \$3 million annually for infrastructure of Canadian HIV trials, the remainder is allocated through the health protection branch, and a further \$2 million is directed through the medical—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Northeast.

* * *

CORRECTIONS CANADA

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Edmonton women's prison is a well publicized disaster: one inmate murdered, one-quarter of the prison population on the escape list, and a rash of attempted suicides, all within a few weeks of opening.

All the parliamentary secretary to the solicitor general can say is: "We believe this model of incarceration represents the best

Privilege

approach to addressing a very special need that women have". God help us if this is the best Corrections Canada can do. One thing Corrections Canada could do is sell the place to the Holiday Inn before it is too late and someone else dies.

Is the solicitor general planning to provide room service for the remaining inmates or is he going to shut the place down and admit that his gender experiment has failed?

Mr. Nick Discepola (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am touched by the rhetoric that goes on week after week. Shutting the place down will not solve the problem.

It has to be recognized that female inmates need special treatment, which is what has been done. There were two task forces in 1989 as well as the Arbour commission which stipulated that women's needs in terms of incarceration have to be looked at.

I agree the incidents which occurred in Edmonton were sad and deplorable. It is an underlying situation which is more symptomatic of the special needs of women. Often the histories of incarcerated women reveal abuse, for example, in early childhood. As a result, we are heeding the recommendation of the task force. We are opening five regional centres to better serve their needs.

One centre has had problems, while the other two have not. I would point that out to the member. Truro and Maple Creek, Saskatchewan have not had any problems.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, after that reply is it any wonder that Corrections Canada is in such disastrous shape?

The Correctional Service of Canada has repeatedly stated that Warden Jan Fox at the Edmonton prison for women is one of our best. Yet Warden Fox has refused to take responsibility for a string of problems at the prison which includes assaults, escapes and inmate Fayant's death.

What will it take for the government to recognize that Warden Fox is incompetent? Will the solicitor general make her resign, yes or no?

Mr. Nick Discepola (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we assumed responsibility immediately. We took almost 14 concrete measures, which included \$400,000 of renovations. We made important improvements to assure that security would be addressed which included enhanced surveillance.

We are looking at a review of all the incidents which have occurred over the past several months to ensure the safety of people in the region is addressed before we open the other two centres. I believe that is very responsible action.

• (1200)

FISHERIES

Mr. Derek Wells (South Shore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

I have been hearing many concerns from the processors and importers of fish in my riding of South Shore with respect to inspection fees. Now that the 30 day prepublication period is over, will the minister indicate to the House what kind of reaction was expressed by the industry and whether he is prepared to consider making changes based on those expressions of concern to make this cost recovery program equitable for all sectors?

Hon. Fred Mifflin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and for the fantastic support he gives fishermen and other constituents in his riding.

The hon. member is right. The regulatory amendments were recently prepublished in Part I of *The Canada Gazette* and a final date for comments was May 13.

The department has received many comments and my officials are now in the process of reviewing them and re-evaluating the regulatory proposals in light of the comments and the proposals received.

My instruction to the officials is to make sure the many comments are reviewed with great care for the institution of these fees, of which the total has to be collected. The consideration will be for all plants and in particular for small plants so that smaller plants are not harmed to the extent possible that we can offer any relief.

I thank the hon. member for his question. I assure him we will give this matter great care and attention.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

MEMBER FOR RIMOUSKI—TÉMISCOUATA

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa-Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege concerning a remark that was made yesterday by the member for Rimouski—Témiscouata during debate in this House, around 5.00 p.m., and that can be found on page 2912 of *Hansard*. On three occasions, the member for Rimouski—Témiscouata used language that was unparliamentary.

At the time, I rose in my place to point this out to the Chair, but unfortunately, because of the noise, the Chair was not really able to hear what was being said. After that, I checked in *Hansard*, and with Journals of the House of Commons, and I have now found it in writing on page 2912 of *Hansard* for May 16, 1996.

I think that the three words used yesterday were unparliamentary, and I ask the member for Rimouski—Témiscouata to take the next opportunity to withdraw them.

The Deputy Speaker: Dear colleagues, earlier, the member for Ottawa Centre showed me the words in yesterday's *Hansard*. I would like, if possible, to hear the position of the member we are speaking about. Can the member come forward and give her point of view on this matter?

Mr. Crête: Mr. Speaker, this is quite astonishing. In the presentation we have just heard, the member for Rimouski—Témiscouata is accused of having used unparliamentary language. The allegation is made, but the words are not specified. Insinuations are made, but we do not know what the words were.

The attitude of the member raising this question of privilege is astonishing, because such a comment could be made about any remark made by anyone in this House, they could be said to have shouted out something irrelevant. He has not mentioned the words in question. I think that discussion of the matter could be deferred until the member knows what he is talking about.

The Deputy Speaker: I think that it is quite obvious, we have *Hansard* here right now. I can perhaps give a copy to the member and he can speak with his colleague. We could discuss it later at the convenience of the member. I believe she is still here.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1205)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Stan Keyes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 20 petitions, 3 from the first session of Parliament and 17 from the present session.

* * *

ROAD SAFETY

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to draw to the attention of hon. members that May 17 to 23 has been proclaimed national road safety week in Canada.

[*Translation*]

National road safety week, which is sponsored by the Canada Safety Council, aims to raise awareness of road safety issues and promote safe driving practices.

Routine Proceedings

[*English*]

Because 1996 marks the 15th anniversary of operation life saver, the focus of road safety week this year will be on the need to reduce the high annual number of grade crossing accidents across the country.

Operation life saver, sponsored by both the Railway Association of Canada and Transport Canada, works in co-operation with the Canada Safety Council and provincial organizations to promote rail safety.

Operation life saver's mission is to make people aware of the dangers associated with level crossings, grade crossings and the dangers of trespassing on railway properties.

[*Translation*]

Studies show that many drivers are unaware of just how dangerous railway crossings can be. They do not understand how fast trains move, or how long it takes them to come to a stop.

[*English*]

Operation life saver produces printed materials, films and audio-visual presentations. It assists in driver education activities and also hosts special events aimed at promoting greater awareness of rail safety.

Mr. Speaker, like you, many of the hon. members with children will be encouraged to know that operation life saver targets educational activities toward youngsters who use railway property as a short cut to school or to a playground.

[*Translation*]

Transport Canada has been a proud supporter of operation life saver for many years, and hon. members will be pleased to hear that the federal government intends to continue supporting this valuable program well into the future.

[*English*]

On another related topic, it is also my very great pleasure to announce the federal government has reached agreements with eight of the provinces and the two territories to continue the implementation of the National Safety Code. The last agreements are with the two remaining provinces for signature.

The National Safety Code was developed in 1987 by the federal, provincial and territorial governments to encourage trucking safety. It is to promote efficiency in the motor carrier industry and to ensure consistent safety standards in this area across the country.

[*Translation*]

The code covers such topics as commercial vehicle maintenance and inspection, hours of service, trip inspection reports, driver-examiner training, and the implementation of a national driver's license.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

As part of this announcement, the Government of Canada will provide the provinces and territories with \$20 million over five years to help put the National Safety Code in place.

This funding is a good human and financial investment. The National Safety Code will help reduce commercial vehicle accidents. That means fewer deaths and fewer injuries on our highways.

It will also help to ensure Canadians remain competitive by applying common standards across the country instead of the patchwork system of rules and regulations we have had in the past.

[Translation]

I would urge all members of this house to support national road safety week, specifically the efforts under way by this government and others to reduce railway crossing accidents and strengthen commercial vehicle safety.

- (1210)

[English]

I urge all hon. members to take heed of the message of road safety week and drive safely.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today in this House to bring attention, as the minister has, to national road safety week, to be celebrated in Quebec and Canada May 17 through 23, 1996. Since arriving in Ottawa, the official opposition has always made it its duty to support and promote issues around highway safety and safe driving.

I have listened to the federal Minister of Transport's speech with interest. We share his concerns, and we support his desire to reduce the number of motor vehicle accidents. We share his belief that improved safety is an excellent thing.

We were, however, a bit surprised to hear what the minister had to say on behalf of his government. Today he is trying to blow his own horn, to pass himself off as the great defender and promoter of road safety. As recently as last week, however, in response to a question by my colleague from Lévis on restoration of the Quebec bridge, he stated as follows: "The deterioration of the bridge, including the part on which vehicles drive, is due mainly to car and truck traffic— Motor traffic in the province of Quebec is the responsibility of the Quebec transport department; it is not a federal responsibility". Now today he is giving us a speech on road safety. We also need to see what that means in day to day reality.

The decrepit state of the Quebec bridge is beginning to be a threat to driver safety. The federal minister turns a deaf ear to any

question of accepting his responsibilities and restoring the Quebec bridge, in conjunction with Canadian National and the Government of Quebec. We see this as contradictory to the speech the minister has just finished.

Where road safety is concerned, I would like to raise a constitutional aspect which is very likely to pose an increasing threat to the safety of drivers and the general public. As you know, the Canadian Constitution recognizes rail transportation as a federal responsibility, while highway safety within each province is a provincial one.

This somewhat artificial division poses serious problems.

As you know in rail transportation, the government's inaction has forced many businesses to use trucks rather than trains to ship their goods.

The same situation could well arise with the new policy of fees for coast guard services the federal minister of fisheries has just announced. All transportation sectors interact. The effect of the policy is to drive many maritime carriers to American ports, requiring goods destined for Quebec and Canada to be transferred by truck.

Because the federal government has failed to finance, manage and develop the rail system properly and because it is proposing an unfortunate policy of charging for coast guard services, private firms have found alternate ways to make their deliveries. The increased number of trucks on the roads of Quebec and Canada is largely the cause of the deterioration in the state of the roads, threatening public safety particularly.

The arbitrary division of powers in the transportation sector therefore prevents our having an integrated national transportation policy. With intermodality increasingly popular, the obsolescence of Canada's Constitution may well threaten our road safety. I think this is the message we must bear in mind during this national road safety week.

Of course we must support initiatives such as operation life saver, but we must recognize that, if transportation is to be modernized, Canadian and Quebec firms will have to acquire modern equipment and set aside the antiquated aspects of the Constitution to permit an integrated national standard on transportation and thus greater road safety.

In closing, I would repeat our support for National Road Safety Week and encourage everyone to drive carefully.

[English]

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today in response to the minister's statement and acknowledge the proclamation of national road safety week in Canada, May 17-23. National road safety week,

which is sponsored by the Canadian Safety Council, is to raise the awareness of the need to promote safer driving habits. In particular, this year the national safety week is featuring Operation Lifesaver, which focuses on grade crossing accidents. It is being co-sponsored by the Railway Association of Canada, Transport Canada and the Canadian Safety Council.

• (1215)

I could continue to talk about the virtues of national safety week and, in particular, the minister's statement today regarding the high annual number of grade crossing accidents. I appreciate what the minister is doing. Certainly no one could say that it is not an excellent project. However, I would like to take this opportunity to speak about my recent parliamentary activities with respect to the terrible carnage taking place on our highways as a result of impaired drivers.

I would like to address my remarks, in particular, to the Minister of Transport. I know he shares the concerns of millions of Canadians who, on a daily basis, see in their newspapers, in the electronic media and hear from their friends about this terrible crime. They are touched every day by crimes committed by people who choose to drink and drive. They kill over 1,400 people every year on our streets and highways.

I know the number of accidents that occur on an annual basis at grade crossings is a huge concern. We have to do everything we can to decrease those statistics.

This might be a starting point for the government. Perhaps I can encourage the minister to join with this side of the House in supporting Bill C-201. The government could join with Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, Canadian Students Against Impaired Drivers in Canada and Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving in supporting Bill C-201. Locally there is the Nepean community council against impaired driving. The Canadian Police Association and other groups are crying out for the government to implement measures that express zero tolerance to people who even think of getting into their cars when they are impaired.

That would not be hard to do. It could be reflected easily in our criminal justice system. Penalties could be brought in like those in Sweden. Sweden has very liberal drinking laws, but its criminal justice system says that if a person drinks, gets behind the wheel of a vehicle and is caught, his or her driver's licence is suspended for life and the vehicle seized. Why cannot we reflect zero tolerance such as that?

The tragedies that occur at the hands of drunken drivers make the accidents that occur at grade crossings pale by comparison. If the government can take the initiative to proclaim May 17 to 23 as national road safety week and pay special attention to accidents which occur at grade crossings, why does the Minister of Justice stand speaker after speaker in the House to oppose Bill C-201?

Routine Proceedings

I will close by saying that I appreciate what the minister and the government is trying to do but, for God's sake, let us go further to address the impaired drivers who kill in this country.

* * *

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the first report of the Joint Standing Committee on Official Languages regarding its order of reference of March 7, 1996 concerning the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1997.

[*English*]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mrs. Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present, in both official languages, the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, regarding the selection of votable items in accordance with Standing Order 92. This report is deemed adopted on presentation.

Mr. Speaker, also I have the honour to present the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, regarding the membership and associate membership of various standing committees.

If the House gives its consent I intend to move concurrence in the 18th report later this day.

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INCOME TAX BUDGET AMENDMENT ACT

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (for the Minister of Finance, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-36, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, the Excise Act, the Excise Tax Act and the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Act, the Old Age Security Act and the Canada Shipping Act.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

INCOME TAX CONVENTIONS IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 1996

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (for the Minister of Finance) asked for leave to table Bill C-37, an act to implement an agreement between Canada and the Russian Federation, a convention between Canada and the Republic of South Africa, an agreement between Canada and the United Republic of Tanzania, an agreement be-

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tween Canada and the Republic of India and a convention between Canada and Ukraine, for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income.

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

* * *

[English]

FARM DEBT MEDIATION ACT

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-38, an act to provide for mediation between insolvent farmers and their creditors, to amend the Agriculture and Agri-Food Administrative Monetary Penalties Act and to repeal the Farm Debt Review Act.

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

Mr. Goodale: Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House that in accordance with Standing Order 73(1), it is the intention of the government that this bill be referred to a committee before second reading.

* * *

YORK FACTORY FIRST NATION FLOODED LAND ACT

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-39, an act respecting the York Factory First Nation and the settlement of matters arising from an agreement relating to the flooding of land.

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

* * *

[Translation]

NELSON HOUSE FIRST NATION FLOODED LAND ACT

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) asked for leave to table Bill C-40, an act respecting the Nelson House First Nation and the settlement of matters arising from an agreement relating to the flooding of land.

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

• (1225)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mrs. Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mrs. Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move:

That the following change be made to the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs: the hon. member for Fraser Valley East for the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week my colleagues and I presented 15,000 petitions from every Canadian province on the illness ME/FM. Unfortunately, Saskatchewan was missed. Today I present petitions with 279 signatures from the province of Saskatchewan.

The petitioners call on Parliament to establish national policies to control and contain instances of myalgic encephalomyelitis, fibromyalgia and multiple chemical sensitivities in Canada and to ensure care, treatment, comfort and dignity for persons afflicted with these diseases.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, it is my honour to present a petition bearing 290 signatures mostly from residents of my riding.

The petitioners state that everyone who counsels a person to commit suicide or who aids or abets a person to commit suicide is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 14 years.

They ask Parliament not to repeal or amend section 241 of the Criminal Code in any way and to uphold the Supreme Court of Canada decision of September 30, 1993 to disallow assisted suicide or euthanasia.

EDUCATION

Mr. John Maloney (Erie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition from the residents of the township of West Lincoln in my riding of Erie.

The petitioners request that Parliament not amend the Canadian Constitution to remove the rights of denomination classes of persons to operate their own schools and to refer the problem of educational reform back to the Government of Newfoundland.

BILL C-33

Mr. Bernie Collins (Souris—Moose Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the pleasure to present two petitions. The first is with regard to Bill C-33.

GASOLINE TAXES

Mr. Bernie Collins (Souris—Moose Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the pleasure to present a second petition with regard to the tax on gasoline.

SRI LANKA

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition bearing 371 signatures, mainly from Canadians of Sri Lankan origin.

• (1230)

The petitioners call on Parliament to prohibit the raising of funds within Canada for supporting the war against the democratically elected government of Sri Lanka by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, already declared a terrorist organization; to ensure adequate surveillance and prosecution of members of the LTTE front organization and other supporters in Canada who are engaged in fund raising, extortion, passport racketeering, smuggling of narcotics and all other forms of criminal activity.

Also, to investigate LTTE front organizations and support groups in order to bar them from operating in Canada; to fully live up to the international legal obligations imposed on states in combating international terrorism; to fully co-operate with the legally elected government of Sri Lanka, which maintains the most cordial relations with Canada, in eradicating the Tamil Tigers terrorist network in Canada.

I am pleased on their behalf to present this petition to Parliament in the hope Parliament will do something to assist them.

MERCHANT NAVY

Hon. Roger Simmons (Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of 50 or so of

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my constituents from communities including Grand Beach, Grand Bank, Fortune and Salt Pond. The petition has to do with the merchant navy.

The petitioners call on Parliament to consider the advisability of extending benefits or compensation to veterans of the wartime merchant navy equal to that enjoyed by veterans of Canada's World War II armed services.

I have much pleasure in presenting this petition and ask that it be referred to the appropriate department.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to present on behalf of British Columbians in the lower mainland two petitions.

In the first the petitioners pray that the government proceed immediately with amendments to the Criminal Code that will ensure the punishment given to anyone convicted of causing death by driving while impaired carries a minimum sentence of seven years and a maximum of fourteen years as outlined in private member's Bill C-201 sponsored by the member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

This issue is of such consequence in the country today that we all must take it seriously.

FOOD LABELLING

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on behalf of my own riding and a neighbouring one in the Vancouver area. It asks the government to consider seriously that Parliament ensure that all transgenic foods and food products be clearly labelled that they are transgenic foods so that the public is aware of what it is purchasing and all food products are thereby safe to consume.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Stan Keyes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 32, standing in the name of the member for Lisgar—Marquette, will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 32—**Mr. Hoepfner:**

Regarding the 1992 Deloitte & Touche special examination and subsequent report on the Canadian Wheat Board, how exactly has the Canadian Wheat Board addressed the criticisms contained in that report alleging that: (a) there is no evidence of an ongoing formal Corporate strategic plan or process; (b) departmental planning resulting in annual operational plans generally does not exist; (c) senior management job descriptions are out of date, incomplete or non-existent; (d) no formal budgeting process does not exist for the Finance and Accounting expenditures department; (e) no formal strategic marketing plan exists; (f) the marketing function lacks focus and coordination; and (g) agents

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emphasize that their relationship with the Canadian Wheat Board are not sound/positive business relationships?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): In 1991 the Canadian Wheat Board initiated a formal process to ensure it is properly structured and staffed to meet future challenges, demands, opportunities and threats. It engaged Deloitte & Touche Management Consultants to conduct a comprehensive operational review, the findings of which suggested there were considerable areas of strength in the CWB at that time. The report also recommended that management undertake and implement a number of initiatives to address the identified deficiencies and concerns.

The CWB has initiated a formal strategic planning process with a view to provide a greater focus on its long term activities and to ensure the organization is equipped to respond to change and opportunities. An external consulting firm has facilitated this annual planning process since that time.

The CWB has also developed an extensive quarterly planning and reporting process by the management of the organization's four directorates. This process is proving invaluable from both a management and performance measurement perspective.

To complement this planning process, the CWB in 1993 conducted a detailed environmental scan, which included a survey of employees, customers and producers. These activities have placed the CWB in a position to define areas needing change, particularly those pertaining to the CWB's interface with its employees, its customers, and with farmers. It has also since developed an action plan of strategic initiatives in three key areas.

The first is relationship with farmers. The pool return outlooks, estimated pool returns, farmer delivery contracts, farmer focus sessions, toll free telephone access to the CWB, and proposed flexible pricing options have all emanated from the strategic planning process.

The second is relationship with customers. The CWB has developed a number of value added, market service and market development initiatives. For example, the introduction of basis contracts for customers, for example in Japan, the U.S., the United Kingdom and Canada, resulted from the CWB strategy of increasing its focus on the customer. Information and findings from a comprehensive customer survey findings assisted the CWB in other customer services initiatives.

The third is relationship with employees. The CWB has established a formal human resources department and has introduced several related initiatives which focus on the employee, including a review of job descriptions at all levels.

Along with these strategic undertakings the CWB has undertaken to develop and implement a number of key corporate gover-

nance procedures and policy guidelines, some of which relented from the Deloitte & Touche recommendations.

Since 1992 the CWB has established a formal audit committee. The audit committee's primary responsibilities are to oversee internal financial reporting and to review the objectivity of the annual external audit. The committee also determines whether management and auditors are responding appropriately to current business risks and allocating their efforts optimally. Special comprehensive auditing examinations are critical in ensuring that business practices are benchmarked against best practices of other corporations. The CWB audit committee performs a central role in strengthening communications between external auditors and CWB management responsible for the organizations's financial reporting.

The CWB has also implemented a comprehensive department by department audit process, which assesses department structure and procedures in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Deloitte & Touche, which has previous experience with the federal auditor general's department and with government audit procedures, has assisted the CWB's internal audit department in this area. The integrity and effectiveness of the CWB audit committee is enhanced by the inclusion of the chairman of the CWB advisory committee as a member.

The CWB also developed a formal budgeting process, which is continually improved when and as necessary. This is proving to be a valuable management tool.

The CWB has historically developed an annual marketing plan which is updated throughout the crop year. In recent years this planning process has been enhanced by an expanded sales and market development division, which has an increased focus on the strategic planning aspects of grain sales. CWB sales plans, which include extensive detail pertaining to grain classes, grades, protein levels, projected selling prices and sales volume by destination, are updated on a continual basis in response to changing market conditions.

The CWB market development department has been expanded since 1992 and works closely with farmers, the CWB sales department, customers and other organizations such as the Canadian Grain Commission and the Canadian International Grains Institute. In addition to the co-ordination afforded by the above linkages, CWB market development efforts are increasingly guided by the development internally of long term grain import projections. These projections provide an indication of country specific and aggregate import requirements in terms of volume and quality, as well as the prospective Canadian share in each market. All this has enhanced the overall effectiveness of the CWB marketing effort.

In 1993 the CWB conducted a comprehensive review of its relationship with accredited exporters, which included individual exporters and the Shippers and Exporters Association. This review generated a number of recommendations and action items to improve the CWB's relationship with exporters, all of which have

Government Orders

been subsequently implemented. The CWB meets annually with the Shippers and Exporters Association to discuss a wide variety of subjects, including any concerns. The CWB also meets annually with each accredited exporter for the same purpose.

[*English*]

Mr. Stan Keyes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: I want to inform the House that, due to the ministerial statement and the response from other parties, government orders will be extended by 14 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

CIVIL AIR NAVIGATION SERVICES COMMERCIALIZATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-20, an act respecting the commercialization of civil air navigation services, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of motions in Group No. 2.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 4. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour 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: The recorded division on the motion stands deferred. The division will also apply to Motions Nos. 5 to 12 and 16 to 24.

[*English*]

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Transport, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 13

That Bill C-20, in Clause 23, be amended in the French version by replacing lines 17 to 21, on page 14, with the following:

“par écrit qu’une majorité des usagers qui seront touchés de façon significative par la fourniture de services supplémentaires est favorable à ce projet.”

Motion No. 14

That Bill C-20, in Clause 23, be amended in the English version by replacing line 23, on page 14, with the following:

“(6) For the purpose of subsection (5), a”.

• (1235)

Mr. Stan Keyes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this group of motions has within it two motions.

Motion No. 13 is necessary to correct two differences between the French and English language versions of Bill C-20. The French version in the reprinted Bill C-20 of May 8 contains the requirement that a person requesting additional services from Nav Canada must agree in writing to pay all incremental costs associated with the provision of the additional services, and the standing committee agree to eliminate this requirement, and the English language version of the legislation reflects this agreement.

The French version of Bill C-20 does not include the requirement which is contained in the English version that the person demonstrate, through written evidence, that a majority of affected users agree to the provision of the additional services.

Motion No. 14 is a consequential amendment to a motion that carried at the Standing Committee on Transport. At this time I call for the question on the third group of motions.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 13. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 13 and therefore Motion No. 14 agreed to.

[*Translation*]

We now move on to Group No. 4.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 15

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That Bill C-20, in Clause 32, be amended by replacing lines 25 to 37, on page 16, with the following

“(2) A charge authorized by the Minister of National Defence may be imposed under subsection (1)

(a) on a user; or

(b) on a user in respect of a state aircraft of a foreign country.”

He said: Mr. Speaker, in this bill that will commercialize air navigation services, the motions in Group No. 4 are aimed at ensuring that the Department of National Defence will do its part in funding and running Nav Canada.

This bill currently provides that the Department of National Defence will not be subject to the charges that other carriers will have to pay. In our opinion, this distorts the real assessment of DND's operating costs, of the budget funds allocated to national defence, and may have a negative impact on some airports when services are shared by DND and all private air service users.

Why should DND be exempt? The easing of international tensions in recent years has led to perhaps insufficient but still significant cuts to DND. Further cuts are needed, but DND should still be held accountable for all its spending.

If DND is exempted from paying air service charges, its annual estimates will give the impression that it costs less than it really does.

Military flights still mean something in Canada. Our training bases are used by Canadian soldiers, but some of our flight training areas, notably in Labrador, are also used by other countries. Why should DND not pay its share? This would also help us determine what parts of the country benefit from this kind of spending.

If DND generated significant revenues for a special purpose airport, this would allow us to consider the economic impact of this bill on air navigation activities.

• (1240)

Ultimately, what we would like to see prevail, and this is the principle found everywhere else in the bill, that is why we are somewhat surprised at the government's position and we think it would be a good idea to correct the situation, is the user pay principle.

Would there not be a benefit today in ensuring that the real expenses incurred by a department are paid by that department? There are other sectors of government activity that will have to defray these costs directly or indirectly. For example, if we take the health sector, ambulance airplanes are used in Canada to reach remote areas. These people will have to cover the planned charges. Why would this kind of charge be picked up by the health sector and not by the national defence sector? It applies in the health sector, but it could also apply in the tourist sector.

The tourist industry in Canada is very important. It has grown considerably and is expected to grow even more in future. With the new charges, many small carriers may see their economic activities jeopardized. They will have to change their method of operating accordingly. This is not required of a huge department like defence, which spends enormous amounts on protection, but, at the same time, it would not be charged the portion of air navigation costs that apply in its case.

It strikes us as most surprising that, in sectors like health, tourism, businesses, they are trying to justify fee scales for private sector flights but there none for defence flights. Is that not a double standard? Is that not a mistake, in fact?

This seems to be perpetuating, in relation to the defence sector, practices which existed in the government some 15, 20, 25 or 30 years ago. People became aware that these practices were having devastating effects, a loss of control over the cost of operations. If defence does not have to bear its part of the costs, does this not lead to a tendency to use available services more, and to put increased pressure on the system? Finally, there can be no real assessment of what the costs of air navigation for the defence sector are. Are there not facilities in certain parts of Canada which will need to be put into place specifically for defence purposes, without there being any corresponding charges levied?

All of these questions lead us to wish to see an amendment to the bill, one ensuring that this department assumes its share, as other departments must, and as the private sector is required to do, paying its way in the reconfiguration resulting from the creation of Nav Canada and the commercialization of air navigation services.

Reference is also made to foreign government aircraft, which would also be made to pay. I think it is important, from the safety and security points of view, to know what is going on with these flights, what costs they will generate, what sort of protection we can provide them.

Just imagine something which I certainly do not wish to ever see happen: a collision between a defence or military aircraft and one belonging to a private carrier. This would create a somewhat artificial situation in which one of the parties involved in the accident had never been required to contribute to the quality of safety services. This would surely contribute to a poor opinion of the defence sector. These days I do not think there is anything to be gained by adding to the negative image of a department described yesterday by its minister as in a “painful situation”, when serious questions are already being asked about its efficiency and transparency.

The purpose of our amendments is to ensure greater transparency, to make sure that the exact air navigation costs of department of defence activities will be known. This will, I believe, be worthwhile both to the House and to those concerned with costs, in these

times when people are questioning whether money is being used properly. It will be one way of knowing what the real costs are.

• (1245)

Also, private air carriers and Canadian taxpayers should not necessarily be the ones paying for national defence. Why should they have to foot the bill in this case? This is tantamount to giving additional importance to the defence sector. As I said earlier, if I could favour certain sectors by granting them such an exemption, flying ambulances would definitely take precedence over military flights. Let military aviation officials know exactly how much it really costs to fly their aircraft. This is important and it should be taken into account. This is the purpose of our amendment, and we hope the government will support it.

Small carriers really wonder about the additional pressure put on their activities through the new tariff structure. They are justified in saying there should not be a double standard in Canada but, rather, a level playing field. Whether it is the military or the private sector, everyone must bear the overall costs. Under the user pay principle, everyone must make an adequate contribution, so that when the time comes to determine the real costs of defence activities, these costs will be based on actual figures, not incomplete data that does not allow us to know the overall government costs in this sector.

I hope the government will seriously consider our proposal. It is based on sound arguments and it is fully justified. In the middle term, the government's decision to exempt DND from having to pay these costs would certainly not prove efficient from an administrative point of view, or in terms of the follow up of air navigation costs, which is the very basis of the legislation.

[English]

Mr. Stan Keyes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the argument being put forward by the Bloc member were as simple as he stated, I might even support this motion when it came to a vote.

We discussed this at the Standing Committee on Transport. It was made very clear why the government would reject this motion. Motion No. 15, the only motion within this grouping, demonstrates again a total lack of understanding of the charging aspects of Bill C-20, in particular the charging aspect as it relates to DND services.

The Bloc motion tries to eliminate the exemption for Nav Canada's charges for aircraft operated under the authority of the Minister of Transport and for aircraft of a foreign state. Let us deal with the foreign state issue first. The exemption for foreign state aircraft is the least significant of the two. Bill C-20 reflects the fact that many states do not levy charges on state aircraft and in the interests of reciprocity, in the interests of symmetry the state aircraft of such countries should not be charged for Canadian air navigation services.

Government Orders

The Bloc should take great comfort in the fact that the bill leaves the door open for the governor in council to authorize charges on state aircraft of countries coming into Canada that charge Canadian state aircraft at the present time or in the future when they fly to those countries. I hope that would satisfy members opposite.

The more significant exemption being asked for is the one in respect of aircraft operated by the Minister of National Defence. Rather than an outright exemption, this is just an element of an arrangement between Nav Canada and the Minister of National Defence.

The arrangement recognizes that the minister is both a user and a provider of air navigation services. As a provider of services, the minister operates the air navigation services in designated military air space which includes the air space around military bases such as Comox, Cold Lake, Moose Jaw, Trenton, Bagotville, Goose Bay and others. At present the Minister of National Defence does not charge for any of these services.

• (1250)

The arrangement is for Nav Canada not to charge the Minister of National Defence's aircraft for the use of Nav Canada's services. In return, as compensation, the Minister of National Defence would allow Nav Canada to charge civilian users for air navigation services provided by the military. That means Nav Canada gives up some of its revenue in respect of services it provides and it gains some revenue from services provided by the Minister of National Defence.

Because the two amounts for all intents and purposes are just about the same, it is a good arrangement for both parties. In addition, the Department of National Defence avoids having to establish a whole separate billing and collection system for charges it would otherwise likely have to introduce for air navigation services provided by the military.

Because the two amounts are roughly equal, it is not correct to say that the exemption burdens civilian users with costs that should be borne by the Minister of National Defence, as outlined by members opposite. Users will also benefit from this arrangement by receiving only one invoice from Nav Canada, even when they use services provided by both the Minister of National Defence and Nav Canada.

This motion would completely destroy this arrangement. For the same reasons that we stated last week at the Standing Committee on Transport, we would reject this suggestion.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, like my hon. colleagues, I am pleased to participate in this debate today on Bill C-20, an act respecting the commercialization of civil air navigation services. Among other things, this bill establishes a business corporation called Nav Canada, or NAVCAN.

Government Orders

We are now at report stage, at Group No. 4, to be more precise, Motion No. 15 put forward by the Bloc Québécois. This motion is to amend clause 32 of the bill to ensure that DND and state aircraft of a foreign country are not exempt from paying charges.

To listen to the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Transport, you would think that the Bloc Québécois never understands a thing and always introduces useless motions. He claims this is a good arrangement between the Department of National Defence and Nav Canada, which will apparently split the costs about 50-50. I would be curious to see the parliamentary secretary's figures in this.

At any rate, I should point out that a proposal has already been tabled by small air carriers, suggesting that DND should have to pay for its use of services at airports in Quebec and Canada.

The problem, then, comes from the need not to make taxpayers, passengers and air carriers pay for military aircraft, and there is no guarantee whatsoever that it will not be the case.

The Bloc Québécois feels it is unfair to have private users pay for services required by national defence. If clause 32(2) is not amended, defence expenditures will once again be hidden. We have always demanded a reduction in military spending. For this to happen, we first have to know the actual costs. However, in its present form, clause 32(2) will not enable us to know these costs.

Again, it is not up to private air carriers and Canadian taxpayers to pay for DND's flying activities until the minister tables the figures relating to such activities.

• (1255)

Our motion is based on the notion of transparency. It seeks to avoid an artificial reduction of the national defence budget, so as to ensure that actual costs and expenditures relating to such activities are accounted for.

Taxpayers living in remote regions—including those represented by the hon. members for Abitibi, Lac-Saint-Jean, Gaspé and others—must sometimes pay two or three times more per kilometre to go to Montreal or Quebec City than people who travel between Montreal and Toronto. Therefore, I do not see why national defence should be exempted from having to pay the costs associated with its flying activities.

Since the Liberal government is cutting social programs, programs helping the handicapped, old age pensions and women's support programs, I wonder what could possibly justify keeping clause 32(2).

If there is such a thing as natural justice, the Liberal government has definitely missed the boat in this case and forgotten about the principles of fairness which underlie our laws.

I ask all members of this House to support Motion No. 15 moved by the Bloc Québécois, so that national defence, for the reasons I mentioned, will not be exempt from paying fees to Nav Canada.

[English]

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I will raise a few points at report stage of Bill C-20, which is to privatize NavCan, and on the group of motions we are currently speaking on.

I listened to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport just a few minutes ago. He explained the tradeoffs between the Minister of National Defence and NavCan: I will not charge you for your services if you do not charge me for the services I provide to you. This is a wonderful way to do business.

Perhaps that is why NavCan is being created to be one of these not for profit organizations. Perhaps profit and efficiency are not the operative points which are trying to be achieved with this exercise. It is only an exercise to move the civil servants who work in the air navigation industry off the government payroll into some other organization which is far enough removed that there is no accountability. It will not be part of the normal operation of government and therefore will be removed from the scrutiny of the House. That is the point I will speak to.

If NavCan is to be a privatized organization, why would it provide services for free and expect services for free when there seems to be no real relationship between the services being provided, other than to have a gentleman's agreement to ignore them? Is that privatization? Does that seem to be the way the private sector does business? The Income Tax Act calls that barter and it is taxable.

The government is saying again that the rules that operate in the private sector do not apply to the government because the government makes the rules. The fundamental problem with much that comes out of the government is that it creates its own little environment by saying it makes the rules and it will say how the game is played.

The government is going to call this privatization. NavCan is a not for profit organization. It is not designed to make a profit. It is a cost plus organization. It is going to remove 6,500 people from the civil service and put them into this organization which will be removed from parliamentary scrutiny.

As well there will be no scrutiny by the Auditor General of Canada. It is not a crown corporation as defined in the Financial Administration Act. The government has come up with a new

hybrid. Therefore the auditor general has not been given the mandate to scrutinize NavCan, as he has with other crown corporations.

• (1300)

What is the government trying to achieve? When it set up Nav Canada, it had all these assets, computer equipment, buildings and goodness knows what else paid for by the taxpayer. What did it say? It told NavCan to go out into the money markets and borrow \$1.5 billion. It is going to sell the assets to NavCan for cash. That is fine for the Minister of Finance because it helps him to meet his deficit reduction targets this year.

I come back to the very point that the parliamentary secretary made. These trade-offs and these gentlemen's agreements which are made are totally and absolutely banned by the Income Tax Act and not allowed in the private sector, yet he openly admits that it is the trade-off made. The government does not want to figure out how these services are to be valued. The parliamentary secretary thinks it is a good deal for Canadian taxpayers. I doubt it.

This organization, Nav Canada, is far removed from public scrutiny yet it has been given a monopoly. It has been given virtual taxing powers. There is absolutely no constraint on the way it spends its money. There is no constraint on what it says it needs and is going to pass on to the consumer, the airlines and so on. It will pass on costs through tickets to the Canadian consumer.

The government tells us that this is good for Canadians. The President of the Treasury Board admitted in committee the other day that the 6,500 civil servants did not lose their jobs but just got a new name on their pay cheques. This is part of his civil service reduction package. That way Canadians think the government is being downsized. Not one of these 6,500 people lost his or her job. On Friday night, they were working for the government and on Monday morning they were working for Nav Canada. We gave them \$200 million cash because they got laid off.

These are the types of things that should be debated in the House. The government should be telling Canadians how it is spending their money. It should also be forthright with Canadians that this organization is far enough removed from public scrutiny that it does not have to worry about its financial statements.

I have already said that the Minister of Finance will take a \$1.5 billion credit on deficit reduction courtesy of Nav Canada because Nav Canada will borrow the money from the private sector.

This organization is not going to be accountable according to the normal rules of the private sector. The parliamentary secretary has already admitted that the normal rules of the Income Tax Act and barter do not apply in this situation. How can he call it a private sector organization?

Government Orders

Everything the government is doing is obfuscation and deceit as far as this deal is concerned. If it wants to have a true private sector type of organization, it should have said so. If that is not what it wanted, it should at least have given the Auditor General of Canada the power of scrutiny over Nav Canada. That is why we have these problems.

In 5, 10, 15 years from now, people will find out that this organization has runaway costs. Canadian consumers are finally going to rebel and say it is too much. The government is not doing its job today.

Accountability is the number one issue in the private sector. If the government builds in competitiveness and if it expects and demands that Nav Canada work according to the same rules as the private sector, it may have something.

The government has removed NavCan far enough away that it has been swept under the carpet. The government is taking credit. There are 6,500 fewer civil servants. These people are still paid by the Canadian consumer: \$1.5 billion deficit reduction claimed by the Minister of Finance courtesy of this equipment that is being used by Nav Canada, but there is no accountability.

Mark my words. If an organization has no accountability, it leads down a very difficult path that usually is the wrong path. I ask the government to think very seriously about that.

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 15. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour 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: The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

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[English]

We will now go to Group No. 5, Motions Nos. 25 and 26.

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Transport, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 25

That Bill C-20 be amended by deleting Clause 96.1.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 26

That Bill C-20 be amended by adding after line 21, on page 50, the following new Clause:

“Privacy Act

106.1 The Schedule to the Privacy Act is amended by adding the following in alphabetical order under the heading “Other Government Institutions”:

NAV CANADA CORPORATION

Société NAV CANADA”.

Mr. Stan Keyes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot let the remarks of the hon. member for St. Albert go without reminding him that he did not spend a single moment in the transport committee when we dealt with this bill.

We addressed concerns between NavCan and ANS. He did not spend a second in committee, but he made a speech saying things that completely contradict the critic of his party. Can anyone imagine? The critic of his party is charged with the responsibility to go to committee to put forward the position of the Reform Party.

Yet the member for St. Albert made his statement. Yesterday the member for Kootenay West—Revelstoke, the Reform Party critic, made the position of the Reform Party very clear. Then his colleague from St. Albert got up and talked about something he obviously knows nothing about and contradicts the critic in his party. You have to wonder where these guys are coming from.

However, let us move on to the last group of motions. We are talking about the Privacy Act.

The hon. member for Kootenay West—Revelstoke yesterday made some remarks with regard to the Privacy Act. He said he called NavCan, the not for profit corporation which we would like to move this to. He said he had talked to NavCan and it has no problem with the Privacy Act being brought forward to this bill.

NavCan wrote a letter to the government on May 9 and also appeared before the Standing Committee on Transport. It is clear in the letter to the Minister of Transport and I quote:

First, the Privacy Act currently applies only to certain federal government institutions, including federal government departments and certain agencies and Crown Corporations. It does not apply to all Crown Corporations. It does not apply

to corporations that have been privatized such as CN or Air Canada. It does not apply to any private sector corporations or organizations whatsoever.

The extension of the Privacy Act to any part of the private sector would represent a significant change in policy of the Government of Canada. It would bring with it to the private sector not only the necessity to substantively guarantee the protection of personal information (which is not in itself objectionable) but also the processes designed to apply to the federal government for correcting and amending records containing personal information and the requirement that a private sector corporation be subject to a complaint and investigative procedure by a Federal government officer, namely the Privacy Commissioner with, ultimately, decisions on the collection, retention and administration of records containing personal information being subject to review in the Federal Court of Canada. This degree of bureaucracy and administration would be inconsistent with the imperatives of the private sector and, certainly, with the rationale for the commercialization of the ANS.

• (1310)

Government could not agree more. We had discussions in the Standing Committee on Transport. In the government's reassessment of whether the Privacy Act should apply to Nav Canada, it became increasingly clear that the application of the Privacy Act to Nav Canada is completely unnecessary and inappropriate. The Privacy Act deals with the protection of personal information held by government and the rights of an individual to access that information.

As I said at the outset, it was interesting to hear the member for Kootenay West—Revelstoke yesterday saying that Nav Canada did not have a problem with this. Mr. Speaker, I must put this diplomatically because I do not want you to intercede. The hon. member was incorrect in that statement. The proof of the pudding is the letter dated May 9. If the Reform critic for transport wants more evidence of that he is invited to phone the officials at Nav Canada any time for a very clear explanation of why Nav Canada does not agree that the Privacy Act should apply in this not for profit corporation. I hope he does that.

We are wrapping up discussions at report stage and second reading of the bill. When we come back after working hard in our ridings next week, we will be discussing third reading of the bill. I hope the hon. member will retract his remarks.

As outlined by its letter to the minister, Nav Canada would be the only private sector entity subject to the Privacy Act. The act does not apply to previous government commercializations like CN and Air Canada. It does not apply to other regulated monopolies, not even those in key economic sectors like telecommunications.

When the privacy commissioner, Mr. Phillips, came before the Standing Committee on Transport, I suggested that if there was a need to extend the application of the Privacy Act to private sector

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entities, it should be considered in the context of a comprehensive review of the fundamentals of the Privacy Act, not Bill C-20.

Why decide to pick on one area, one bill, one of the four major modes of transportation to apply an act against a not for profit corporation? That kind of review should provide an opportunity, if Mr. Phillips were to examine his own backyard on the Privacy Act in which all interested parties could express their views.

When all is said and done it must be remembered that the privacy commissioner can at any time investigate complaints and initiate investigations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Mercier (Blainville—Deux-Montagnes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is an amusing story behind clause 96.1 of the bill we are considering. As amusing stories are rare in this House, I will relate it briefly. Clause 96.1 does not appear in the text of the bill we passed at first reading. It appears now, because the bill before us was amended by the Standing Committee on Transport. It added this clause under the amendment proposed by our party.

• (1315)

No need to remind the House that the majority of members sitting on the Standing Committee on Transport are Liberal and therefore, with the government's motion to delete this clause, which was added by the Standing Committee on Transport, we have the minister rejecting a proposal from his own committee with a majority of its members from his own party. At the very least, we can say this is a different approach.

And what does clause 96.1 say? It says:

96.1 The Privacy Act applies to the Corporation as if it were a federal institution.

The purpose of the amendment we proposed, which the committee accepted, was to ensure that Nav Canada would protect personal information on personnel and clients, just as if the government were still responsible for all air navigation services.

My colleague on the other side says there are other corporations, such as the CN, that are not subject to the Privacy Act; but by saying this, he is giving me other arguments. He says there are entities created by the government which no longer have the same obligations as before privatization. These government creations are now private sector corporations. Yes, but they took on responsibilities for public services and, as such, they should give the public the same services the government was providing before. It is clear, it is only logical. But they have forgotten all about that on the other side.

The fundamental principle is this: it is unacceptable for a government creation to reduce services to the public when this creation is a private corporation serving the public. It is inappropriate to create such screens.

My colleague, the member for Argenteuil—Papineau, said it again this morning, there is a stunning parallel between ADM, another government creation which manages the Montreal airports, and this corporation which is being created so that the public will not have access to information concerning the studies on which ADM based its decision. You can be for or against the decision, that is not the point. The point is that the public has the right to know about the studies used by ADM. Our offices requested those studies, but the request was turned down because this organization is under no obligation to provide them.

What we have here is a deliberate attempt, on the part of the government, to hide behind corporations which act as screens, allowing it to dodge responsibilities it had before they were created.

I now come to the argument that, as Mr. Philips is reported to have said, what should be changed is the Privacy Act. If this argument was logical, Liberals would have applied it in the bill we are discussing today. Yet, in that bill, what do we see? We see a section that we agree with, but that contradicts the principle just mentioned.

Section 96 says:

96. The Official Languages Act applies to the Corporation as if it were a federal institution.

This is excellent but, if it is valid for the Official Languages Act, why is not valid for the Privacy Act? Why do we not say: "The Official Languages Act will not apply to Nav Canada, so we are going to amend the Official Languages Act". That is not what the bill says.

All of the sudden, we are told: "As for the protection of privacy, it is not the same, it is the Privacy Act that has to be amended". This does not make any sense.

• (1320)

The result of all this, and I will conclude here, is that we understand perfectly what the federal government is up to. It is transferring public property currently under the management of the federal Minister of Transport to Nav Canada, and then will hide behind Nav Canada in order to withhold important information from the public.

Such an approach goes against the transparency the government as a whole is bragging about, and its effort to defeat our amendment, which was accepted by the committee and rejected by the minister, shows I am not making a case based on assumptions, but on facts.

The Liberals want to use their majority in the House to defeat an amendment that was passed in committee, because they know a majority of Liberal members will vote as the government tells them to, without even knowing what this is about. And they call that democracy.

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thought my colleague opposite was getting ready to speak, but he was getting ready to leave.

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Since this is both the report and second reading stage, I would like to broaden the debate and deal with a point which seems to be well covered in a clause, but which is nevertheless a cause for great concern. That point is whether the Official Languages Act will apply to the new air navigation services corporation, Nav Canada.

Air navigation services have been under the jurisdiction—actually, they still are, as long as Nav Canada is not operational—of Transport Canada, a government department. Despite this direct link between air navigation services and the government, Quebecers working in the air transportation industry had to put up a great big fight to be able to use French in planes, control towers, and air control services.

This is a cause for great concern. If they had to fight so hard when air navigation services were under the government, how can we be sure Nav Canada will abide by the Official Languages Act? The former minister told us Nav Canada would be covered by the act, and that the bill says so, but how can we trust him?

Even after the Official Languages Act was put in force, we had to wage a great fight. I remember the part the late Roger Demers played in this fight for the right to work in French in the air transportation industry in Quebec. It took years, even if the Official Languages Act was in force and if we were dealing with the government.

Those opposed claimed that disasters would result if French was used in air navigation services. As if as soon as they entered Quebec air space, all the planes would have crashed simply because French could be used to communicate.

Roger Demers and the Association des gens de l'air fought some very important battles over this issue and the use of French in the air, and that battle is far from over.

• (1325)

This was such a major event in the history of Quebec that the Association des gens de l'air has created two awards to commemorate the battle French speaking Canadians had to fight. Every year, the Association des gens de l'air presents to an individual who has distinguished himself or herself in the air industry the Roger Demers Award and the BILCOM, which is short for "bilingualism communication".

These people remember perfectly the battle they had to fight and that is still going on.

At this point in my speech, I would like to read part of a letter my colleague from Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans and I wrote to the Minister of Transport in April, 1994. Part of this letter concerned the issue of services in French, and I quote: "After Canadian air control is centralized, only one of the nine air control centres, the Montreal regional air control centre, will be French, that is, one centre for 7 million people, while the ratio for English

speaking persons will be one for 2.6 million". How can Quebecers accept these figures?

The letter goes on: "It is not surprising, then, that the Îles-de-la-Madeleine are served by the Moncton regional control centre, usually in English unless a pilot demands to be served in French, in which case the control tower leaves him on standby at the end of the runway. He will sometimes have to wait up to ten minutes to get his instructions in French.

"It is in this context also that we should look into why Transport Canada is so offensively slow to bilingualize the Ottawa terminal control unit". We are, of course, talking about the Ottawa airport here.

"Indeed, for the last five years—this letter was written in 1994—Transport Canada has been trying to make this terminal control unit bilingual, but in vain. For the umpteenth time, it has been announced that this service will be available as of May 1, 1994". It was still not to be on that day, since it was postponed to May 26, 1994, that is, more than five years after it was promised.

I will continue with the letter, and I am talking here about the use of French: "It also relevant that, in this part of our discussion on French services, we take a look at the airports that you, Transport Canada, have decided to exempt from centralization, namely Ottawa and Calgary". These two airports have kept their terminal control units, whereas many cities lost theirs, including Quebec City.

"Until now, in justifying these two exceptions, you always referred to the traffic density and complexity of the Ottawa and Calgary airports".

Traffic density and complexity are just excuses. We believe the real reason is totally different. Ottawa being the capital of Canada, Transport Canada knew that, some day, air traffic control in Ottawa would have to become bilingual. However, to think that the Toronto area control centre could become bilingual was an aberration. And to think that air traffic control for the Ottawa airport could be done from Montreal was hardly more acceptable for Transport Canada officials.

So Transport Canada used another kind of logic to solve the problem. It was determined that the Calgary airport was busy enough and complex enough to warrant the maintenance of its terminal control unit. Then, Transport Canada concluded that Ottawa was similar to Calgary in this sense. Therefore, it had just found a way to justify its decision. But, in reality, it is the old battle of French in the air that justified the maintenance of the terminal control units in Ottawa and Calgary.

If you look at—and this is something that is even more insulting to francophones—Order No. 4 from Transport Canada and read section 3 of that document, you will see that the title of section 3 is "Interdiction". Not tolerance, but "Interdiction".

• (1330)

The section reads as follows: "Unless otherwise provided in section 4, 5 or 6, anyone operating an aeronautical radio station in Canada shall not exchange advisory services or air traffic control services in a language other than English".

This order was issued on May 29, 1980, therefore after the battle fought by the Association des gens de l'air, after nearly 10 years of applying the Official Languages Act, and it is still not allowed. Obviously, the exceptions in section 4 apply to airports located in Quebec. This means that, outside Quebec, francophones wishing to speak French with other francophones, a francophone pilot wishing to speak with a francophone air traffic controller in Toronto, Moncton or Halifax, is not entitled to do so. And that was by authority of Transport Canada, in other words the government.

Just because Bill C-20 says that the Official Languages Act will be applied, how can we be sure that French will be protected in the air? That seems to me to be an extremely important point. I have the impression that workers in the aviation sector in Quebec will have to remain extremely vigilant. However, as the responsibilities are being transferred to a non-profit agency, I think that future battles will be all the more difficult. They will require even greater effort.

I will conclude on this note. There was one nice thing in Order No. 4. It said that, in the event of an emergency, two francophone pilots could perhaps speak to each other in French in Canada's air space, but only in an emergency.

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as several of my colleagues have said, the Bloc Quebecois subscribes to the principles of Bill C-20 concerning the commercialization of civil air navigation services. Its objectives of efficiency, cost effectiveness, lowered operating costs, are praiseworthy ones, and we acknowledge them as such.

The reason we have reached the report stage, which is moreover the purpose of the exercise, is that we want to improve this bill. If we listen to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, however, it would appear that all of the amendments proposed by the Bloc Quebecois are useless. He has said that ten times or more since the beginning of the debate. I hope he has not reached the stage of considering the official opposition useless. My purpose in speaking will, therefore, be to convince him that Group No. 5 of our amendments is not useless.

Motion No. 25 introduced by the Liberal government aims at removing section 96.1 of the bill as amended by the transport committee. This provision was added on the recommendation of the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party. Members will recall that

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members from the three political parties, The Bloc, the Reform Party and the Liberal Party voted for this amendment in committee.

I find the Liberals' about-face at the report stage rather astounding, because they are trying to exclude Nav Canada from the application of the Privacy Act. The Liberal government may claim that the Privacy Act has to be amended so that it can apply to Nav Canada.

Yet, Liberals thought it was important to include the following provision in section 96 of Bill C-20:

The Official Languages Act applies to the Corporation as if it were a federal institution.

Then why, in that case, did the government not consider it necessary to amend the Official Languages Act instead? This is a double standard.

This government is acting contrary to the spirit of openness it so often brags about.

• (1335)

It is transferring to Nav Canada public assets under the responsibility of the federal Department of Transports, in order to escape its obligation to inform the public, claiming that this corporation is a private service. This government is not acting properly by using an agency as a screen to avoid providing information that the public has a right to expect from a public agency.

The attitude of the Liberal government on this issue is disappointing, disconcerting and even demoralizing. As I said earlier, members of all parties supported this provision in committee. Today, the Liberals intend to use their majority in the House to defeat an amendment carried in committee. It is a pity that a majority of Liberal members will vote with the government, without being aware of the whys and therefores of Motion No. 25. One has to wonder why committee members bother.

Simply put, with Motion No. 25, the federal government is shirking its responsibilities with regard to openness, integrity and respect for the public it must inform. Needless to say, the Bloc Quebecois is firmly opposed to this motion.

In conclusion, I would like to say a couple of words regarding the comments made a little while ago by the parliamentary secretary, who would like to avoid putting the privatization process on hold because other corporations such as the CN and the CBC are not subject to the Privacy Act, so Nav Canada should not be subject to it either. This is the same as saying that it is important for this government to repeat past errors. This is a strange way to govern.

Finally, Motion No. 26, in Group 5, is presented by the Bloc Quebecois for the sake of consistency with clause 96.1. It amends the Schedule to the Privacy Act so that Nav Canada is added to the list of institutions covered by the act.

*Government Orders**[English]*

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 25. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: A recorded division on Motion No. 25 stands deferred.

Normally at this point the House would proceed to the taking of the deferred divisions of the report stage of the bill. However, the recorded divisions stand deferred until Monday, May 27 at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

* * *

*[Translation]***STANDARDS COUNCIL OF CANADA ACT**

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.) moved that Bill C-4, an act to amend the Standards Council of Canada Act, be now read the second time and referred to a committee.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the main motion.

• (1340)

Mr. Laurin: Mr. Speaker, you are calling Bill C-4 at second reading stage, when there is only five minutes left to debate this issue. I think that, with the unanimous consent of the House to recognize that the time for consideration of government orders has

expired, we could move on to private members' business. We would not want to vote on this matter today.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Private Members' Business begins in five minutes, as the hon. member pointed out.

[Translation]

I asked if anyone wanted to participate in this debate and no one stood up.

Mr. Laurin: Mr. Speaker, we would like to rise on debate but, since there is only five minutes left to start a speech to be completed in 10 days, do you not think this would make for a lack of continuity between the two parts of the speech?

That is why I request the consent of the House to postpone this debate until our return.

The Deputy Speaker: I did put the question. I asked if anyone wished to speak and no one stood up. The question has been put and it is too late for debate now, unless the government side gives consent. I therefore refer to the government whip.

[English]

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not want to challenge, nor could I, the Chair in its ruling. I understand you have made a decision. Let me confer with my colleague across the way. If on the day we come back we decide something on our own we can always, by unanimous consent, change that which is already decided by Mr. Speaker today. However, Mr. Speaker has made a ruling and I do not think it is appropriate for us to change it at this point. If anything different is to occur we certainly can confer among ourselves as members of Parliament and seek that unanimous consent if it is in order.

Mr. Harris: Mr. Speaker, I was and am prepared to speak on this bill. However, when you were asking for speakers I was fumbling for my ear piece to get the translation and I did not understand what you were saying. By the time I got it in you had acknowledged there was no speakers.

I apologize for that and I ask if you might seek unanimous consent of the House for me to speak on this bill.

[Translation]

Mr. Crête: Mr. Speaker, we do not dispute the fact that the debate on Bill C-20 has been concluded. Unlike my friend from the Reform Party, I think that you have called the vote and that the matter is closed. What we are seeking is the unanimous consent of this House to debate the next bill on the agenda upon our return from the parliamentary break.

Private Members' Business

[English]

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I think upon brief consultations you will realize that those were occurring while others were speaking and also as the Chair was deliberating.

However, I think you would find unanimous consent that the second bill be deemed not to have been dealt with at all today. We will revert to it. We hope at that point our colleagues across will give us the usual co-operation perhaps not to have a very lengthy debate, recognizing that we have provided this gesture.

Mr. Speaker, I think you will find that there is consent for it.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Does the House agree to give unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: I thank all hon. members for their co-operation on this issue. It was a delicate one. I am grateful to everyone for being helpful.

It being 1.44 p.m., the House will now proceed to consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT

The House resumed from March 21 consideration of the motion.

Hon. Roger Simmons (Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the motion of my friend from St. Albert would have us introduce amendments to the Financial Administration Act to require all departments and agencies to table in the House a specific response to the auditor general's report.

Mr. Forseth: That is a good idea.

Mr. Simmons: It is a good idea. My friend from New Westminster—Burnaby says that it is a good idea and he is right again.

I had a marvellous speech here, somewhere. It was beautifully typed, marvellously prepared but I cannot seem to find it. Let me see what I can do. I know the essence of what the member has in mind.

I am a great believer in the dictum that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. We should first look at what is behind the motion. Knowing the member for St. Albert as I do, I am not suggesting there is anything nefarious or suspicious behind it. He must have had a reason. He is

a member of the public accounts committee and has been for a couple of years. For most of that time he has been his party's spokesman on these matters. Before coming here my good friend was an accountant. He has a specific interest in and knowledge of these matters.

Accountants are people who, when they are sent a Christmas card, before they check the signature, they flip to the back of the card to see how much it cost. Accountants are particular people. They are very meticulous. They watch the buck. We need some accountant parliamentarians. We have one such person in the member for St. Albert, a good accountant-parliamentarian.

One would expect that there would be a good motion from him and we were not disappointed. He says that departments ought to be required to table their responses to the auditor general's report. As I said, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. The corollary to that is if something is broken, only fix the broken part.

I am not an accountant. I must apologize for that. The fact that I am not an accountant has gotten me into all kinds of problems over the years. I am a parliamentarian. I used to wear another hat too. In the Newfoundland House of Assembly from 1975 to 1979, I had the honour of being the chairman of the public accounts committee. After coming here, I was briefly the chairman of the public accounts committee of this House as well. I want to talk about an incident during my experience with the public accounts committee in Newfoundland.

I have to apologize to all concerned because the dentist got at me and said he wanted to stitch up the inside of both sides of my face. If I am mumbling more than usual today, it is partly because I—

Ms. Meredith: You are on Novocain.

Mr. Simmons: Exactly. Novocain can do some wonderful things to you.

• (1350)

There was a situation in the Newfoundland house in which the auditor was reporting every year. He reported on a particular set of events in the Department of Public Works. We on the committee kept asking enough questions, kept probing enough that we found the smoking gun. A job which the fire commissioner after a fire at the fisheries college estimated to cost \$35,000 to fix wound up costing \$576,000.

The interesting coincidence was that despite the fact the Tory government at the time had made much of its new public tender legislation in which no amount over \$10,000 would be awarded without tender, the government had found a way to give out \$576,000 without tender. It was simple the way the government did it. There were some accountants on staff. They always awarded an amount less than \$10,000. They got around the act with over 60

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work orders. What was even more interesting was that all the work orders had gone to the same firm.

The public accounts committee and I as the chairman did enough probing that we got to the root of that one. The result was the following: a public inquiry into the spending practices of the Department of Public Works in Newfoundland; the resignation of the two ministers who had been in the portfolio during the period under investigation; and criminal charges laid in which an individual was convicted of fraud and sentenced to a prison term of three years as I remember.

I cite this example to show that if we are going to have accountability in this Chamber, it is not enough to dicker, to change, to amend, to perfect the rules. We have to fix the part that is broken. We have to see to it that the public accounts committee and the members on that committee, including my friend from St. Albert, do the necessary probing.

Before we get to that, before we begin to point fingers, we have to ask ourselves whether the public accounts committee and the House have the tools to do the job. In other words, is there something else that is broken that needs fixing. That is the allegation, the premise in the motion of my friend from St. Albert.

The hon. member wants the agencies and departments of government to bring specific responses to this House. Let us look at what the case is right now and has been the case under the Financial Administration Act for many years. The case is that when the auditor general reports, each department, each agency of government or as the act says, the government itself, is required within 150 days to give a specific response on the criticism in the auditor general's report and what that department or agency is doing about it.

There is another point. In 1994 we amended the Financial Administration Act to allow the auditor general to make more than one report to Parliament a year. Before that he made only one report a year. Since the auditor general has had the legislative authority or permission to report more often than once a year he has done so. In 1995, the year after the change in the act came in, he reported three times. In 1996 he can be expected to do likewise.

My point is that the tools are there. The auditor general reports quite frequently but his report, and I gave the example of the Newfoundland House of Assembly, in itself is not enough. We can swamp this place with paper and reports and we do.

Mr. Williams: Do you listen to them?

Mr. Simmons: My friend from St. Albert asks if we listen to them. I am going to pass the buck right back to him. He, together with others—and I do not see any of them in the House—including his friend from Calgary Centre, are on the public accounts committee. The gentleman from Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans is

the chairman, my friend from London West is on the committee and my friend from Kent is a member of the public accounts committee. I believe those are the only members of the public accounts committee in the Chamber right now. These are the people who must take the pieces of paper that come here and follow them up, as we did in the Newfoundland house.

• (1355)

If there is a smoking gun, if there is some lack of accountability they are the people who, having a good relationship with the auditor general, will see that these matters are ferreted out.

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to listen to the arguments from the other side. I find it confusing that somebody could even question accountability to the House of Commons and Parliament.

My colleague's motion merely asks that government departments be accountable for the money they spend, particularly when the auditor general's report indicates instances in which there might be some question of whether it could have been spent in a better way. My hon. colleague's motion is only suggesting that all departments be required to table responses to the auditor general's report when it brings into question some of the activities within the departments.

The reason my hon. colleague suggests that the departments should table responses is that the public accounts committee cannot handle all the issues raised by the auditor general. If it were only the public accounts committee that would deal with these issues in an effort to bring resolution to the concerns in the auditor general's report, it would have no opportunity to do the necessary follow-up.

We spend \$50 million a year for the auditor general to audit some government department accounts. All my hon. colleague is suggesting is that if we are going to invest that kind of capital for the auditor general's department to do checks on government spending, then the government departments that are found to be somewhat in question as to whether they are operating with the best value for the dollar for Canadian taxpayers should be accountable. This is something that should have the support of every single member in the House of Commons.

The House of Commons is accountable to the Canadian taxpayer and to the Canadian public. Members of the House of Commons are voted in by the Canadian taxpayers to make sure their interests are being looked after, considered and protected.

What Canadians feel, rightly or wrongly, is that government bureaucracies, the departments, tend to remove themselves from accountability to the House of Commons. Canadians think the bureaucracy is running the show. If Parliament wants to regain some control and some accountability of government departments

that administer the policies established in the House of Commons, then something like this is needed.

What is needed is a report which gives the department's explanation and what it will do about the auditor general's concerns and the time frame within which it will address the issues brought up by the auditor general. We are only asking that these departments table a report acknowledging the auditor general's comments, giving an explanation of why it occurred and giving some indication of how much time it will take the department to rectify the concerns of the auditor general.

It is almost impossible to understand how an hon. member across the way could find fault with this request. The hon. member for St. Albert is asking for the government bureaucracies and departments to be accountable and to answer to the House of Commons.

• (1400)

The auditor general is an officer of the House of Commons. He is acting on our behalf to investigate, to audit public accounts and to make sure Parliament is aware of where the government is spending money. It makes sense to me and hopefully to everybody else here that Parliament should be holding the departments accountable for responding to the auditor general's report; not just a parliamentary committee which has not the personnel, the members, to address all of these concerns.

If I remember correctly, in 1994 the report had 34 chapters of detailed information on selected government programs in a dozen departments and agencies. Only four of these chapters received a response from the government in last year's budget. That does not indicate to me and to Canadians that government departments take seriously the concerns raised in the auditor general's report. If we are to invest the kind of money we do, if we are to invest the opportunity for somebody to audit government accounts, we should also make sure their suggestions and concerns are given serious consideration.

This year, of 27 chapters in the auditor general's report only 1 was addressed in the budget plan, annex I. One has to ask how seriously the government takes the concerns raised by the auditor general. How seriously does the government take those situations in which the auditor general is pointing out taxpayer money is not being well spent, or that the return on that investment of taxpayer dollars is not just justified and not enough?

I suggest all members in the House of Commons, if they believe it is the House of Commons that is in control of the country and not the government departments and not the bureaucracy, should fully support Motion No. 166 to see that control and accountability are returned through the House of Commons and not through the government departments.

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Mr. John Maloney (Erie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for St. Albert for his motion to introduce amendments to the Financial Administration Act, a motion that will require all departments and agencies to table in the House responses to the recommendations of the auditor general. I am honoured to have the opportunity to express my views as we resume debate on this motion.

In March, when we last debated this motion, many interesting points were raised. Several comments were made about the lack of adequate government response to both the auditor general and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. As these comments have become part of the public record, I feel it is my duty to provide some defence.

The role of the auditor general is to call attention to anything he considers to be of significance and of a nature that should be brought to the attention of the House of Commons. The auditor general is an officer appointed by Parliament. He tells parliamentarians and all Canadians what he has found as he investigates the workings of government. He has tabled three reports on government in the past year.

Each report is automatically referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. This committee is chaired by a member of the official opposition and investigates in depth many of the issues the auditor general has identified. The committee also contacts each and every department mentioned in the reports and requests a response outlining actions taken.

It was suggested on March 21 that unless the Standing Committee on Public Accounts calls witnesses and tables a report the government ignores the recommendations of the auditor general. This is not true.

The government is continually making improvements to its programs and policies based not only on the recommendations of the auditor general and the public accounts committee but on recommendations from program managers, from its own internal review groups and from its clients.

To take the second of these, I cannot think why any department would continue to employ and pay these internal audit evaluation and review shops if it were not interested in learning how effectively and efficiently it does business and how it can improve. It is part of being a good manager.

It was suggested that in cases where the Standing Committee on Public Accounts did investigate there was a lackadaisical attitude on behalf of the government in addressing these issues. I do not think I would consider, for example, that the President of the Treasury Board tabled the first annual report to Parliament on review an indication of a lackadaisical attitude

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• (1405)

Allow me to elaborate a little to show the government's dedication to improvement. This report tabled in Parliament in November 1995 was titled "Strengthening Government Review". It was a snapshot of the state of review in the federal government and the kind of performance information available. It also included an action plan to address the opportunities for improvements identified.

This report was produced in response to concerns raised in the 1993 auditor general's government-wide audit of program evaluation and internal audit and to follow up a report by the public accounts committee. It was and continues to be by no means a small or lackadaisical effort.

In response to the 1993 auditor general's call for strengthening government evaluation and internal audit, the Treasury Board issued a new review policy. The policy encourages departments and agencies to develop better information. It asked that they use performance information in business planning processes and that they make this performance information accessible to the public. In short, the Treasury Board asked for greater accountability for the use of public funds.

In 1995 Treasury Board developed a revised expenditure management system. This system requires departments to articulate goals, targets and measures in key expenditure areas.

Over the years the auditor general has been asking government to become more accountable by providing better information on results and costs. The government has responded in no small way. Departments and agencies must demonstrate to parliament and to all Canadians whether goals set have been met and if not, why not. What better example of accountability is there?

It was also suggested the government sometimes appears to be not interested in being accountable. Sometimes in our busy day in the whirlwind of issues we forget the amount of progress that has been made. We are so busy focusing on the trees we sometimes miss the forest. It is important we consider what has been happening in the widest sense before we focus on specifics.

The auditor general notes that for over 65 per cent of his recommendations there has been full implementation or else satisfactory progress has been demonstrated.

Specific examples cited by the auditor general include significant improvements in the layout and presentation of the government's annual financial statements that have been made in response to recommendations by the auditor general.

Another example is the significant improvements in the quality of information in crown corporation corporate plan summaries and annual reports provided to Parliament.

These responses illustrate the dedication of government to continuous improvement and reflect its emphasis on accountability.

That these criticisms were uttered suggests a disturbing misperception that government does not listen to the auditor general. Even more disturbing is the misperception that the government does not care to listen. It is important to hear these comments. It seems the government has been too quiet about its success stories. In our drive to improve we sometimes forget to celebrate our accomplishments.

Believing these misperception might very well lead one to suggest departments and agencies should table in the House of Commons action plans in response to the auditor general's findings.

If it were true that nothing happened in response to the auditor general's reports, it would make sense. However, this is clearly not true. As we have seen and heard both today and on March 21, quite a lot happens to remedy shortcomings noted by the auditor general.

Not only does the government address the specific items noted by the auditor general, it has been working diligently government-wide to address the underlying themes present in the auditor general's reports. This diligence is visible in a concerted effort to improve the quality of its programs and services to make them effective, efficient, affordable, accessible and fair.

How has the government been achieving this? On March 7 we all saw the progress report on getting government right. Perhaps we should remind ourselves of the efforts in using information technology better, being more responsive and flexible, changing the way government makes decisions, and focusing on results based management to achieve our goals.

For example, the government has been harnessing information technology innovatively to make services more accessible and affordable for Canadians. Canadians can now receive at a single location a range of government services from several departments and levels of government. Some of this is possible from home or through an automated kiosk.

New approaches provide new solutions to old problems. The government is exploring new ways to deliver programs and services that offer the best value for taxpayer dollars. Some of these ideas include partnerships, integration of departmental responsibilities and employee takeovers.

I think these changes reflect a fundamental shift in the way government manages itself. For example, the move to accrual

accounting allows government to report more accurately the cost of its activities on an annual basis. This increases public and parliamentary accountability. Better information means better decisions.

• (1410)

This shift is also reflected in the government emphasis on results. The quality service initiative is designed to provide accessible, affordable, relevant and responsive services to Canadians. Most departments have published performance objectives for the delivery of government products and services. These standards act as benchmarks against which Canadians can measure the timeliness, accessibility, reliability and accuracy of services to which they are entitled.

I could go on at length. However, I think these examples more than adequately show the dedication of the government to getting government right by improving and becoming more accountable.

I certainly hope I have begun to remedy the misperceptions that government does not want to change. The government is committed to improvement. The government has recognized a deep and enduring public demand for better governance. In response, the government launched major reviews of its overall policy frameworks, co-operated with the provinces and territories to make all levels of government work better, initiated program review which examined all federal programs and activities to rethink not only what the federal government does but how it does it. This includes reducing areas where costly overlap and duplication had previously occurred.

I call it progress. It is undeniable. Progress in reducing spending levels is also progress in restoring financial health. Progress in making government work better is progress in restoring public faith in government.

If the government were not listening to the auditor general, to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, to the citizens of Canada, this motion would be a welcome initiative to get us back on track. However, we must consider the facts. When the auditor general thinks change is occurring to a large extent in a timely and satisfactory manner, we must stop and think. I do not think members can disagree. It is becoming increasingly clear that if we were to implement the motion suggested by my fellow member we would be to a large extent duplicating much of the effort that currently exists.

I am sure none of us would want to ask the citizens of Canada to pay more for something that is already provided. I am sure fellow members would not want to show the Canadian public an attempt to create a larger and more expensive bureaucracy, flying in the face of all we have been trying to accomplish.

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I sit here in utter amazement listening to the hon. member,

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particular his last statement that he would not expect that anyone would want the government to spend money for something that is already provided.

This party would because the extra money this may cost, which has not been verified yet, would save the government untold millions of dollars by increasing the efficiency of its departments. We would be prepared to see this motion passed.

I am pleased to support the motion put forward by my colleague from St. Albert. The member for Burin—St. George's mentioned a couple of times in his speech that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Let me assure the House it is broke, contrary to his opinion.

Let me give an example of how broke it is. It is interesting that no Bloc members are in the House today speaking on this bill. After all, why would they? They could only speak in opposition to this bill because they have not demonstrated in one instance since they have been in the House that they have any intention of bringing the government to accountability. They have no desire to see accountability in any of the spending departments because it does not work with their agenda.

The motion our member has brought forward would strengthen the role of the auditor general and provide much more accountability with respect to taxpayer dollars by the government. Where have we heard that phrase before? Have we ever heard it by the government? No. Have we ever heard it by the Bloc? No. Have we heard it from Reformers over here? Yes. We have heard it for years from Reformers that governments have to become accountable to the taxpayers. Governments must begin to regard taxpayer money as a sacred trust. That is what we are trying to get to.

It would also ensure all departments and agencies would table a response to the auditor general's report. That is not rocket science. That means reporting to the House of Commons, to Parliament, on what someone is doing since the last report which said they were doing a pretty lousy job. When going through the auditor general's reports, at least the ones I have seen since I have been in the House, he has not exactly given a glowing report to any government department.

• (1415)

This motion would ensure that timeframes would be laid out by departments with respect to taking corrective actions as a result of the findings of the auditor general. Timeframes is a foreign word to this Liberal government. This word is used in private business all the time. There is a timeframe for getting this done and there is a timeframe for getting that done. That is why business operates so efficiently. Businesses operate on their own money. The government is operating on taxpayers' money. The money does not belong to the government, so why be efficient?

Last, it would ensure that the public accounts committee and any other relevant standing committee would be involved in the

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process. That is not rocket science. Why not? Why would the government be opposed to that?

As the House knows, the auditor general and his department provide an invaluable service. The department is charged with the responsibility of overseeing how government operates. It makes criticisms and gives praise where it is due, although praise has been absent in the last number of years.

The auditor general reports annually to the House on improper money management, improper records maintenance, non-approved expenditures and program efficiency. These are matters with which all of us should be concerned. All Canadians are concerned. The government should be concerned.

The auditor general receives about \$50 million annually to fulfil his mandate but many of his findings and recommendations go unanswered. That goes right to the heart of accountability within government and contributes to the cynicism with which the public views how the government is using their money. If we asked the average taxpayer what is the one thing government could do to make him or her happy, I bet that nine times out of ten the answer would be: Spend my money a little more wisely. That is what we are talking about here. We are talking about implementing a mechanism which will force departments to spend the taxpayers' money more wisely.

The attitude within departments appears to be that it is taxpayers' money and there is a lot more where that came from. The auditor general's follow-up findings to past recommendations would seem to confirm this type of attitude within the departments.

If we watch the Letterman show on late night television, every night he has a top 10 list of something or other. The auditor general has a top four list. I would like to read them to the House. Here is today's top four list. As a matter of fact, these items have probably been the top four for as long as the auditor general has been reporting.

Number four: varied, though mostly limited response to our recommendations.

Number three: lack of action on many recommendations.

Number two: measures undertaken are not sufficient.

Number one: progress is slow.

These types of statements are common in the follow-up findings of the auditor general. We can find them year after year. Why? Because there is no demand for the departments to become accountable.

These are the complaints which the auditor general has of the corrective actions which are supposed to have been taking place. Obviously many of the departments are not concerned with re-

sponding quickly and effectively to the concerns of the auditor general.

On March 21 the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board stated that Motion No. 166 was not necessary since the government is highly motivated to respond to the concerns raised in each of the reports.

• (1420)

While the government may be highly motivated to respond, this does not mean that it is actually responding or going to respond, but only that it is highly motivated. As an example, I might be highly motivated to go swimming in the Rideau Canal but I do not think I will be diving in just yet because I might be a bit afraid of what I am going to find. By comparison the government departments, although they may be highly motivated into digging into the auditor general's recommendations, are not responding. They are not quite ready to go in there. They may be afraid themselves of what they will find in their own departments. Being highly motivated does not automatically translate into taking action.

Motion 166 goes a long way to addressing this concern. Quite frankly, any member of the House who is concerned about how the government spends taxpayers' money should be supporting this motion. By comparison I would imagine that any member who is not concerned with the way the government spends the money is going to oppose this motion. That is very clear. We have had two Liberal members today oppose the motion. Obviously they do not have any concern about how the taxpayers' money is spent. They are not concerned about accountability.

Two speakers from the Reform Party today spoke in favour of this motion. Obviously they are concerned about how the government spends taxpayers' money. It is as simple as that.

The red ink book, the document of promises, promises, promises which have been broken, broken, broken states that committees are to be given greater influence over government expenditures. That is what the red book says. The infamous red book of the Liberal Party promises openness, transparency, accountability and every other nice thing that one could ever imagine which has never come true actually says that government has to be more accountable.

Here is the opportunity for the government. Instead of breaking red book promises, it could live up to one of them: accountability.

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to address the House as we resume debate on Motion 166.

This motion was introduced by the member for St. Albert. As the House will recall the proposed motion calls for an amendment to the Financial Administration Act. This amendment would require all departments and agencies to present to the House action plans.

These action plans would set out planned activities and timeframes for acting on corrective actions required by the auditor general's reports.

We have had time since the debate began in March to consider what was said. Today it is important that we recognize that the member for St. Albert, the mover of this motion, put it forward in the pursuit of good governance. It is the spirit of this motion which I applaud. It is something on which we all agree.

The pursuit of good governance and accountability were substantive themes. They are the reasons why we have to make certain that all dollars are spent properly. I say substantively because it is easy to sidetrack certain things, look at debates in the House, finger point and so on. However, when I see an honest and open debate on issues as important as getting government right it makes me proud as a Canadian to serve this House, proud to serve people.

Today we have the opportunity to continue the debate and refocus our thoughts on this motion. I would like to pick up on some of the points that were raised on March 21 when it was last discussed and refocus the discussion on what we are really talking about: accountability and good government.

Sometimes it is easy to forget all of the key checkpoints in our loop as we currently have it existing. I will try to revisit some of the elements of this circle while we consider this motion.

• (1425)

The auditor general is an officer of Parliament. He is not a civil servant. He does not work for the government. The auditor general's job is to call attention to anything that he considers to be of significance about the workings of the government. He provides us with an independent assessment of how things are working. He takes his job very seriously. The auditor general is committed to making a difference for the Canadian people by promoting in all his work for Parliament, answerable, honest and productive government.

As members will recall, the auditor general has tabled three reports this year. In total, he audits about 200 organizations each year. In his part III of the estimates, he points out that he audits departments and agencies, crown corporations and other organizations from large ones such as the Governments of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories to small organizations such as the Army Benevolent Fund. Canadian taxpayers collectively pay about \$50 million each year for this service.

With each report, members of this House, the media and citizens alike focus their attention on the performance of the government. They listen to the auditor general. They question the government

and, as a consequence, the government is highly motivated to respond to the concerns raised in each of the reports. There exists, as a fellow member aptly described it, a circle of accountability.

Each department and agency has the opportunity to respond to the comments made by the auditor general directly in the published report. This is the first opportunity the government has to indicate what it will do to respond to the auditor general's concerns and findings.

Daily question period provides an opportunity for members to question ministers further about the operations of government. As members will have noted from May 7 when the auditor general tabled his latest report, question period can become an important forum for challenging the government on the points raised through the auditor general's reports. Canadians, through their representatives, call government to account for its activities and can and do ask what will be done to remedy any shortcomings.

The auditor general follows up every two years on his recommendations. He measures the progress that the government has made in responding to his concerns. He reports his findings in his annual report. This reflects the diligence of his office.

During our debate of March 21, one of the members suggested that Motion 166 would legitimize the auditor general's work. The work of the auditor general is valuable in every respect and is very much respected in this House. I cannot imagine why a member felt that the reports of the auditor general somehow needed to be legitimized. I am sure that the member was not suggesting that we collectively pay \$50 million for something that requires a motion like this to legitimize its existence. The auditor general has the full confidence of Canadians. His reports do not need to be legitimized.

In his part III of the estimates, the auditor general noted that he had followed up 572 of his 786 recommendations made between 1989 and 1993. His review indicated that 23 per cent of his recommendations had been fully implemented, and that satisfactory progress was being made on an additional 41 per cent of the cases. Keeping in mind that a number of recommendations were rendered no longer relevant, these findings mean that a significant percentage of the auditor general's work is acted on in a significant, timely, satisfactory manner.

As a member said, it is important that we have some production out of criticism. I think the numbers more than adequately speak for themselves. The numbers are a testament to the legitimacy of the auditor general. They are also a testament to the effort that the department and agencies put into ensuring problems pointed out by the auditor general are properly addressed.

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• (1430)

The number of recommendations implemented is not a sufficient indicator of the success of this office. One must look at the individual success stories. The auditor general can and does in part III of the estimates offer plenty of examples to show how government has successfully acted to follow up on opportunities he has identified for improvement.

One of the auditor general's priority areas in recent years has been revenue collection. In his 1996-97 part III of the estimates, he outlines several areas where Revenue Canada was responsible and responded well to his suggestions. This is one of many examples.

As the member for St. Albert, the mover of this motion, can attest, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts also plays a key role in the circle of accountability. The committee is chaired by a member of the official opposition. One of its more important jobs is to review the findings of the auditor general's report with departmental officials. I would like to publicly commend the efforts of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

As the mover of this motion can attest, it is a very busy team. As a result of the hearings, I believe the committee presented to the House 15 reports in 1995. Each report, based on the findings of the auditor general, called for and received a formal response from the government. Follow-up as careful and extensive as this should not be underestimated.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts does not have the time to call all departments and agencies mentioned in the auditor general's reports. This does not mean we let the departments off the hook. Each summer the committee contacts each and every department that was not called to testify and requests an update on actions taken. If it not satisfied with the progress achieved, the committee may call the department at a later date.

I hope I have provided an adequate snapshot of the explicit points in the current circle of accountability as it relates to auditor general's reports. The circle exists. It is well defined and working well.

We must ask ourselves how much value this motion is to the circle. Will the proposed legislation simply be adding further process, which is something we must avoid? This is where I would like to pick up on the other theme that ran through our last debate on this motion, the pursuit of good government.

On March 7 the government released its progress report—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member's time has expired.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak to the motion put forward by the hon. member

for St. Albert, a member of the public accounts committee. He has gone to some considerable work since his election to bring forth a series of bills and motions to improve the process of accountability with respect to money in government, specifically accountability of government departments and agencies to the House of Commons. This is one example.

Last year I had the pleasure to debate another rejected idea he put out, to have a more established system of program evaluation. I will read the motion before the House today:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should introduce amendments to the Financial Administration Act requiring all departments and agencies to table in the House of Commons a specific response to the auditor general's report on their activities, including time frames within which corrective action will be taken regarding any shortcomings or failures of administration identified by the auditor general; and such reports should be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and to any other relevant standing committees.

This sounds like something we would want to endorse. The auditor general is an officer of the House of Commons. He must report annually to the House on improper money management, improper records maintenance, non-approved expenditure and program inefficiency.

• (1435)

Every year we spend \$50 million so the auditor general can fulfil this mandate. However, when the report of the auditor general is tabled in the House, every chapter is automatically referred to the public accounts committee. If the public accounts committee cannot pursue the matter specifically the chapter is often overlooked.

As has already been pointed out, in the 1994 report of the auditor general there were 34 chapters, but only 4 received a response from the government in last year's budget. This year, of 27 chapters in the auditor general's report, only 1 was addressed in annex 1 of the budget plan. It would seem there is some reasonable need to assure this process is being followed and followed up.

We all suffer our various purgatories here. The hon. member for St. Albert's is to be a Scotsman and an accountant, a deadly combination at the best of times but particularly deadly when dealing with issues of Canadian politics and government spending. Obviously that combination goes in an entirely different direction.

When I listened to the debate today it is one of those days where I wonder why we are here, specifically what I am doing here. Before I spoke today I looked at the comments of the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board on this motion, who is normally a very competent and genial member of Parliament representing the constituency of Bruce—Grey where most of my maternal relatives reside.

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He made the following observations. I quote selectively from his speech because I think it summarizes the position of various government members:

I do not need to remind my fellow members that the auditor general himself follows up every two years on the progress and recommendations. I am positive that all members would agree the office of the auditor general must be diligent in reporting on the efficiency of the Canadian government operations. Do we want to undermine the efforts of his office by attempting to duplicate this work?

During this time of fiscal restraint, while we are trying to achieve maximum efficiency with a modicum of resources, we should consider as we debate this motion whether it will be cost effective.

It does not matter whether it is the government, a business, a municipal government or any organization that handles funds, it is the way in which one does business. It is the efficient way in which one does business and not the amount of paper and the reporting that makes the business function or makes it efficient.

In other words, we have this process, we know what it is, we have heard some descriptions today. The auditor general makes a report on inefficiency. The public accounts committee can study it and return its report to the auditor general or to the House. The auditor general will follow his own recommendations.

We can bring it up in question period when we get these erudite explanations of government management and administration. We are to believe that all this is getting directly to the government department itself, which is the one thing left out of all this process I am describing. It was called by the previous Liberal speaker the circle of accountability, whether we want to put more elements in the circle.

Is it a circle of accountability or is it the run around? Is it the non-circle or is it the circle of non-accountability and never getting any answers?

I know hon. members come in and read canned speeches the government provides them, all with the same lines but with some different quotes to justify non-action.

One hon. member said the auditor general's report must be fully followed and must be given all the legitimacy it requires because after all we do spend \$50 million; the very fact we spend money must mean we are spending right.

• (1440)

In going on with these canned speeches, the hon. member said that worrying about these kinds of details and worrying about whether or not the departments actually have a report and have taken action themselves that they can demonstrate, we are really unable to see the forest for the trees.

Since we are all in the habit of making silly quotes for the sake of making a point, let me make one which brings together the whole issue of the forest and the trees: "It looks more like a sycamore to me". That is a quote about the forests and the trees. It comes from Yogi Berra who said that as the sycamore fell on his head. The reason I raise that is if we want to talk about losing the forests for

the trees and we want to talk about too much paper, maybe there is too much paper in some of these canned speeches.

More important, there is too much paper out there as we float \$450 billion in federal government bonds in international and national bond markets. That is the too much paper we should be worrying about around here; \$450 billion which we are now only increasing at the rate of \$25 billion to \$30 billion a year in paper, enough to cut down several of Yogi's forests without any doubt. That is \$25 billion to \$30 billion a year plus, I will add just so nobody thinks that I am understating the problem, the other \$100 billion in various specified purpose account liabilities, plus another \$500 billion in the unfunded liability of the Canada pension plan, which the hon. member for St. Albert has tried unsuccessfully to get the government to account for in its formal document.

I hear comments that they are trying to get a specific answer to a specific problem; that they are trying to get a report; that the agency affected is to report directly on what it did wrong; and that they are trying to add that element of accountability. I hear the comment that it is adding too much bureaucracy. This reminds me of several instances in life.

It is the same as taking my car into the mechanic because it is not running properly. The mechanic gives me a report stating what is wrong. I ask him exactly what it is he will do to fix it and how much it will cost and he tells me not to bother him with all that bureaucracy.

It is the same as if I were to tell a doctor that I think I have some terrible illness. My arm, my leg or whatever hurts. I ask him to tell me what is wrong. The doctor runs all kinds of tests. I ask him what he is going to do and he tells me not to bother him with all that bureaucracy.

We are suggesting that there is a purpose here. We are not suggesting that there be reports for the sake of having reports. We have already spent \$50 million to find out what is wrong, now let us find out if anything was done about it. That is the point we are trying to make. I will add a couple of topical illustrations where this would help.

Various changes are needed in Revenue Canada to capital gains legislation relating to family trusts. In the last few days in this House there have been discussions that some prominent Canadians have managed to shift billions of dollars out of the country in their family trusts. In other words they have avoided taxes and specifically capital gains taxes. There were lots of questions on whether that was fair in the way it was done.

We were told by the minister of revenue, who seems terribly flustered by all this, that the government will act quickly on the auditor general's recommendations but it really all occurred under the previous government. The problems were known for years but the government was never actually sure whether anything was done about them. That is precisely why the member for St. Albert is proposing this motion.

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Another example is that in the past the auditor general has specifically called for discussions not just on deficit targets, as the government has no long term deficit targets, but that there be discussions on debt levels and appropriate debt to GDP ratios and what can be sustained in the medium and long term. This happens to be one of the few areas where I do have some expertise. This is a very important question. It is the critical question in terms of the long term financial health of the country. However, the last budget contained virtually no mention whatsoever of our enormous debt levels, let alone long term and medium term debt targets.

I say all these things to point out that there is a need for it. There is a need to add this additional reporting requirement to ensure that the \$50 million we spend on the auditor general office is followed up and that we know specifically what has happened.

I would also point out, in spite of my frustration and sarcasm today, that this is a non-partisan motion. It does not aim at any specific government department or agency. It is something every member should be supporting. I hope the government members will put away their canned speeches, send them back to Yogi in the forest, so that we can get on with having some accountability for government money.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate my colleague on a fine speech. I notice that the member for Calgary West wants to replace the member for Calgary Southwest as leader.

In terms of the motion before us, I am the vice-chair of the public accounts committee and I see merit in the motion. In many cases too many reports come before the public accounts committee. I believe this year there are some 35 chapters and we will be fortunate enough if we get to examine seven of them. Clearly it would be useful to make sure that issues raised by the auditor general got back to the relevant standing committees and then ultimately reported to the House.

There is no question we want the auditor general and the public accounts committee to be certain that the bureaucracy has taken the suggestions into account and has made the relevant changes to make government operations more efficient.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 2.45 p.m., the time provided for Private Members' Business has now expired. The order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

The House stands adjourned until Monday, May 27 at 11 a.m.
(The House adjourned at 2.47 p.m.)

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

Also available on the Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire at the following address:

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