



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, February 27, 2001**

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 27, 2001

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1000)  
[English]

## AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I have the honour to lay upon the table the supplementary report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons entitled "Reflections on a Decade of Serving Parliament".

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(e), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### MAIN ESTIMATES, 2001-02

A message from Her Excellency the Governor General transmitting estimates for the financial year ending March 31, 2002 was presented by the President of the Treasury Board and read by the Speaker to the House.

\* \* \*

• (1005)

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the associate membership of some standing committees.

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

## CRIMINAL CODE

**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Canadian Alliance)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-285, an act to amend the Criminal Code (no parole when imprisoned for life).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to reintroduce this private member's bill. It amends certain provisions of the criminal code relating to life imprisonment. It will eliminate any provision for early parole, early release or parole eligibility for a criminal who is sentenced to life.

The bill is about justice for the families of victims, for those who have suffered an irreplaceable loss at the hands of killers. For them, knowing that the offender will never walk the streets again as a free person will bring a sense of relief and an element of closure to a sad chapter in their lives.

My bill sends a clear message to murderers that if they take the life of another, they will be locked away for the remainder of their natural lives. Life will mean just that, life.

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

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### MAIN ESTIMATES, 2001-02

#### REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEES

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 81(4) and 81(6), I wish to introduce a motion concerning referral of the Main Estimates, 2001-02, to the standing committees of the House.

Since the list is rather lengthy, I would ask that it be printed in *Hansard* at this point without being read.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I move:

*Routine Proceedings*

That the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2002, laid upon the table on February 27, 2001, be referred to the several standing committees of the House in accordance with the detailed allocation as follows.

[*Editors Note: The list is as follows:*]

To the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources

Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Votes 1, 5, 10, 15, L20, L25, L30, 35, 40, 45 and 50

Natural Resources, Votes 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30

To the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Agriculture and Agri-Food, Votes 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35

To the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Canadian Heritage, Votes 1, 5, L10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 100, 105, 110, 115, 125 and 130

Privy Council, Votes 30 and 35

To the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Citizenship and Immigration, Votes 1, 5, 10 and 15

To the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Environment, Votes 1, 5, 10 and 15

Privy Council, Vote 40

To the Standing Committee on Finance

Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Votes 1, 5 and 10

Finance, Votes 1, 5, L10, 15, 25, 30 and 35

To the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

Fisheries and Oceans, Votes 1, 5 and 10

To the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Foreign Affairs, Votes 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, L30, L35, 40, 45, 50 and 55

To the Standing Committee on Health

Health, Votes 1, 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25

To the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Human Resources Development, Votes 1, 5, 10, 15 and 20

To the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology

Industry, Votes 1, 5, L10, L15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 100, 105, 110, 115, 120 and 125

To the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

Justice, Votes 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50 and 55

Privy Council, Vote 50

Solicitor General, Votes 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45 and 50

To the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs

National Defence, Votes 1, 5, 10, 15 and 20

Veterans Affairs, Votes 1, 5 and 10

To the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Parliament, Vote 5

Privy Council, Vote 20

To the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Finance, Vote 20

To the Standing Committee on Transport and Government Operations

Canadian Heritage, Vote 120

Governor General, Vote 1

Parliament, Vote 1

Privy Council, Votes 1, 5, 10, 15, 45 and 55

Public Works and Government Services, Votes 1, 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25

Transport, Votes 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35

Treasury Board, Votes 1, 2, 5, 10 and 20

To the Standing Joint Committee on Library of Parliament

Parliament, Vote 10

To the Standing Joint Committee on Official Languages

Privy Council, Vote 25

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier this day be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

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**PETITIONS**

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of the citizens of Peterborough area who are concerned about conditions in Iraq.

● (1010)

The petitioners point out that Canadian churches have been asking for the cessation of the sanctions. They call upon parliament to accept the recommendations of the standing committee for the lifting of sanctions and the establishment of a diplomatic presence in Baghdad and the immediate cessation of bombing.

In particular, the petitioners ask that Canada urge the UN committee to quickly approve funds for the rebuilding of water, electric power and oil production, and ask that the compensation fund taken from the so-called oil for food program be suspended.

## KIDNEY DISEASE

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition from citizens who are concerned about kidney disease, a growing problem in Canada, and the various ways of preventing it.

The petitioners call upon parliament to encourage the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to explicitly include kidney research as one of the institutes in its system to be named the institute of kidney and urinary tract diseases.

[*Translation*]

## PETROLEUM PRODUCT PRICES

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am today tabling a petition from some one thousand of my fellow citizens of Saint-Jean, who object to exorbitant fuel prices.

The petitioners are of the opinion that consumers are being impoverished by this and companies may be forced to slow down activities, thus creating a danger of recession. They are calling upon the government to take all possible steps to control these exorbitant fuel prices.

As I said, they feel there is a danger of economic slowdown. They are also fed up with seeing so much money go out of their

pockets every week. They clearly have the impression that the House of Commons is doing nothing to control these prices.

I am pleased to table this petition on their behalf.

[*English*]

#### NUCLEAR WEAPONS

**Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma—Manitoulin, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by hundreds of my constituents who express their continued concern over the great number of nuclear weapons on our planet.

Having acknowledged that Canada and other states have signed the nuclear nonproliferation treaty about five years ago, they ask that we reaffirm our commitment and ask that parliament support a binding timetable for the abolition of all nuclear weapons.

\* \* \*

#### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

#### IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

The House resumed from February 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, an act respecting immigration to Canada and the granting of refugee protection to persons who are displaced, persecuted or in danger, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand before you in the first sitting of the 37th parliament. I take this opportunity to congratulate you on the esteemed position to which you have been elected by your peers and colleagues here in the House of Commons.

At this time I respectfully acknowledge my late parents, John and Olga Zdunich, and my husband's parents, George and Katherine Yelich. I also acknowledge my husband Matt and our daughters Elaina and Ivana.

I thank all whose support and encouragement has brought me here today: my campaign team, the hardworking volunteers, my friends and family members, and especially the people of Blackstrap for the vote of confidence that they have given me. It is an honour and a privilege to represent them in the House of Commons.

#### *Government Orders*

The riding I represent is called Blackstrap. The name itself has been a constant conversation piece and a point of interest. People continually ask me where the name Blackstrap came from. Local legend is that during the years of prohibition a rum runner was not aware that one of his kegs had sprung a leak and he travelled the valley leaving a trail of blackstrap molasses behind him. The legend is so popular that some people actually believe it. The real story behind the name is not quite so colourful.

• (1015)

Until filled with Diefenbaker lake water in 1967, making it into a reservoir, Blackstrap Lake was a long, narrow slough filled with black reeds. From atop its steep banks it resembled nothing so much as a long black strap.

Today the area of Blackstrap is a 540 hectare provincial park with a manmade lake at the centre. The provincial park is a resort area that provides year round activities. In the winter the manmade mountain is the centre of a winter activity sports park. In the summer it provides a place for swimming, camping and fishing.

Geographically situated near the centre of the province of Saskatchewan, the riding of Blackstrap is bordered on the west by the South Saskatchewan River and on the north by the Yellowhead highway. It encompasses over 11,000 square miles, is home to approximately 72,000 people and is a riding unique in its broad diversity. This is the riding I call home.

My roots in this riding are almost as old as the province of Saskatchewan. My grandparents immigrated to Canada from the tiny village of Lovinac in Croatia as part of the massive land settlement program of the early 1900s when Sir Clifford Sifton, then minister of the interior, offered land to new immigrants for settling the prairies.

Their move to Canada took a huge leap of faith. They left all that was familiar because they believed a better life could be found in Canada for themselves and the generations to come. I will always be grateful for the courage they showed and what it has meant to me to be raised a Canadian. Living and working in this riding, which was developed almost solely on immigration, I know how important it is that we aim to improve our system, which I will speak to.

Much has changed since the turn of the century when a bright new future could be found with the turning of soil on 160 acres of raw prairie land. At one time the riding of Blackstrap was almost totally dependent upon agriculture. However, as we embark on a new century, the face of the prairie economy has changed drastically, perhaps no more so than in the area I call home.

Throughout the riding are examples of how the people of Blackstrap have shown their resourcefulness in the face of crisis. There is no other word to describe what has happened to the agricultural industry in the past two decades. One such example is the Pound-Maker feedlot in Lanigan, where it decided to integrate its existing feedlot into an ethanol plant.

In Canada as a whole, approximately 55 million litres of ethanol are produced each year; 17 million are used in fuel and the rest go

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to industrial uses such as toiletries, cosmetics and medications for external use. The Pound-Maker facility has the capacity to produce 13 million litres each year, or one-quarter of Canada's total, in addition to being a 28,500 head cattle feedlot.

Only a few miles away, Drake Meat Processors is a huge successful meat processing plant where over 50 people are employed in what was at one time a co-operative locker plant. They have now developed product lines sold exclusively in Saskatchewan.

Across the riding the pork industry is aggressively expanding with the continual construction of new facilities producing thousands of pork each year for the Canadian marketplace. Much of this started with innovations by three individual pork producers who decided to combine their energies and embark on a new direction. Their start-up barn in Outlook has grown to include 17 community based pork operations with a current capacity of 500,000 pigs a year.

Farmers surrounding Lake Diefenbaker have dedicated thousands of acres to irrigated potato production. In Outlook a mint-herb processing plant is currently under construction. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool in Watrous has initiated a crop development farm where new breeds of canola are bred and tested.

In almost every community, market gardens have become commonplace as the people fight to keep their rural communities alive in spite of negative farm incomes. To their credit, hundreds of people in this riding have risen above the challenge of the agricultural crisis and successfully built a diverse economic base. I applaud them.

Obviously the agricultural industry is an important part of what makes up Blackstrap, historically and in today's economy, but it is not the only industry.

• (1020)

The magnitude of the different industries that survive and thrive are what make this area an anomaly in the prairie economy. We are home to five potash mines, the IMC Kalium Mine and the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Mines, PCS.

PCS in itself is an interesting study in the opportunities that arise through diversification. At one time, PCS was a money losing crown corporation that cost the taxpayers of the province hundreds of millions of dollars. It was privatized in the late 1980s and sold to employees and other investors. Today, PCS is the world's leading producer of potash and has 20 plants in North America, Chile, Trinidad and another underway in Brazil.

We have six automotive retail businesses in the riding. When the auto mall currently being constructed on the south side of Saskatoon is completed, our riding will be home to the largest automobile sales group in Saskatchewan.

Through the use of community development bonds, the people of Manitou Beach and area invested in their own community. The area brought the Manitou mineral spa back to its glory days, not seen since the early twenties and thirties.

Building on its natural therapeutic qualities unique to North America and found only in two other places in the world, Karlovy Vary in the Czech Republic and the Dead Sea of Israel, the committee initiated what has grown into a multimillion dollar facility. Today at Manitou Beach there is a convention centre, mineral spa and entire resort village that is a tourist destination for visitors from around the world.

Blackstrap is home to a national defence base in Dundurn which has the largest ammunition depot in the country. The Whitecap Dakota/Sioux First Nation dates back to the eighteenth century and inhabits the northwest corner of the riding. I should mention that it was the Dakota/Sioux Indians who immigrated to Blackstrap from the United States.

In Canada as a whole, we are all too aware of the problems our aboriginal communities are dealing with, yet this particular reserve is a powerful example of innovation, prosperity and economic stability.

We are forward thinking, inventive, innovative and courageous Canadians. I believe these qualities came with the early settlers to this part of the country and live on in our generation. These are the people of Blackstrap. The people gave me a mandate to come to Ottawa and represent their interests. They have a message that I brought here with me today. I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to articulate to all my colleagues in the House of Commons, in all the political parties, what the people of Blackstrap riding have to say.

There has been a lot of attention recently focused on what has been coined western alienation and talk of separation by the west. It would be easy to get sidetracked. However, I know how important Confederation is to the people of my riding. I know how passionately they love the country. In fact, my esteemed colleagues, I believe the focus on separation is backward. What I hear in my riding is not so much that people want out, they want in.

The people I represent want the message brought here to Ottawa that their voices are a part of Canada. When there is talk about equality, there is an intrinsic emphasis put on rights, which is not necessarily the message that needs to be heard. As westerners, we believe in balance and the responsibilities that come with being a balanced partner in Confederation.

The people of Blackstrap want it known that while they willingly and lawfully hand over their hard earned tax dollars, they are frustrated by continual reminders that the federal government does not manage the country's economic situation with the same diligence it manages its personal finances. They want balance brought back to the taxation system.

The people of Blackstrap are frustrated by a legal system that has taken the place of what should be a justice system. They want balance in the laws that govern us as citizens.



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The people of Blackstrap are frustrated by regional differences that are treated as divisions by the federal government instead of opportunities for co-operation. They want to see a balance in the regional interests within a federal system that provides the opportunity to work together to overcome those challenges.

When my grandparents immigrated to Canada, they knew nothing of eastern, or western or central Canada. French speaking and English speaking Canada was not an issue.

• (1025)

They came to Canada because they believed in Canada and what it represented, hope for a new future, opportunity, room to grow and contribute. Thousands of people just like them took what Canada had to offer and built a country that has a distinctive label of being the greatest country on this planet.

I have personally sponsored refugees and worked with many immigrant families. The Canada they see is the same Canada that beckoned my ancestors.

I hope and pray that those of us in the House will never lose sight of that vision of the gift it is to be a Canadian and that they will work co-operatively to build on the initial framework that our country's forefathers put together.

As we speak to Bill C-11, the citizenship and immigration bill, we will address how to improve our existing system. We will work on answers to my constituents' questions, such as why does it take so long for people with skills to immigrate to Canada? How can we clear these backlogs? I have spoken to dozens of people with stories of how long it took to get their spouses to Canada. Why is the department cutting staff? How can we stop illegal human smuggling?

My constituents in Blackstrap certainly appreciate the value of immigration, as does my party, as a positive and dynamic force, one that is vital to the economic and cultural growth and diversity of our country. We must continue Canada's longstanding humanitarian tradition of resettling genuine refugees. Canadians have concerns about our present immigration system. We need to restore public confidence.

There is a saying that holds particular significance for me and my family. It sums up what I feel is the essence of what immigration should and can be. The saying is coined as follows: "Croatia gave the strength, Canada the opportunity". That statement reflects the importance immigration has had for my constituents. I will endeavour to work very hard on their behalf.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the privilege of addressing the House today. I look forward to the years ahead as we work together for the people who have put their trust and faith in us.

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Blackstrap on her

maiden speech. There is no doubt that she brought a very clear and concise message from her constituents in Blackstrap. We now know in the House and across the country how Blackstrap received its name.

I was moved to hear that her roots originated in Croatia. There is no doubt that Croatians, like other immigrants who came to this country, believed in it. They came here at the turn of the century and have made a valuable contribution.

The member for Blackstrap comes from Saskatchewan and I am from Manitoba. These two provinces have tended to lose their population base. This fact is common knowledge.

The question I have for the member for Blackstrap is, how can increasing immigration to Saskatchewan help the province in its future?

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** Mr. Speaker, it would help a great deal. Immigrants who have come in have been a valuable asset. We have well educated people coming in as refugees. They are genuine refugees who were in Croatia during the war in Bosnia. They have contributed so much. We need to increase the number of immigrants because they come with such strong values and principles and are a real asset to our province.

**Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Blackstrap on her excellent speech. The House expects many more such excellent speeches from her in the years ahead.

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I too want to congratulate my colleague for Blackstrap. We had a representative from Blackstrap in years gone by and I never found out just exactly how Blackstrap got its name. I thank her for the illumination on exactly what Blackstrap is all about and how it got its name.

• (1030)

It is very interesting that the constituents of Blackstrap chose the hon. member to represent them. Not only does she look good in this place but she actually has a very strong voice. I was particularly taken by the comparison she made between Croatia, her ancestral home from way back, and Canada.

I think she said something to the effect that Croatia gave them the strength and Canada gave them the opportunity. That is an absolutely fantastic statement. I wish she could explore it a little further.

Canada is a multicultural nation made up of people from all kinds of countries of the world. Could it really be that Canada has become as strong as it is and has become the peacemaker it is because of these various nations? The nations gave the individual strength and Canada gave them the opportunity to demonstrate to

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the world what multiculturalism can mean to Canada and the rest of the world. Would the hon. member like to comment on that?

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say where that originated from. Some people immigrated here from Croatia with my in-laws at the turn of the century. They worked very hard. Living in Saskatchewan at the turn of the century was pretty tough. It was very lonely and very cold. However they endured. They had a very large family. They had 12 kids. They will be very proud that I have mentioned this in the House. All those children have become very successful and many live abroad.

When their parents passed away that was their tribute to them. Their parents never really had a lot of material things but they appreciated Canada, how good Canada was to them, and the opportunity Canada gave to them because they had nothing in the old country but rock. They came here for opportunity and Canada gave it to them. As I mentioned in my speech, there were no special interests, not because of their colour, race or background. They were given an opportunity because they had the will and a good work ethic.

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-11 for the NDP. First, I thank my colleagues who spoke earlier, our current critic of immigration and refugee policies, the member for Winnipeg North Centre, and the member for Winnipeg Centre. Both members did an outstanding job in presenting the concerns and position in the NDP about not only the former Bill C-31 but the current piece of legislation before the House. They have done a very good job in working with local and national organizations to understand what some of the fundamental concerns about the proposed legislation.

Coming from Vancouver East I have to begin by saying that I represent a riding, like other members of the House, which is symbolic and reflective of the cultural and ethnic diversity of Canada. Vancouver East is a community that has been built on immigration, something of which we are very proud. It has been a community that has welcomed working people from around the globe, people who have sought to come to Canada to provide a better opportunity, to look for a better quality of life and to provide a good future for their kids.

Every day in my riding of Vancouver East, whether it is in Strathcona, Mount Pleasant, the downtown east side, Grandview-Woodlands or Hastings-Sunrise, I meet families who are first generation, sometimes second or third generation, who have established their new roots and homes in this community. I am very proud to represent a riding where that kind of diversity is actually valued. It is an enrichment of our community that people of many different backgrounds, languages and classes have come to Vancouver East to make it their home.

There are probably few countries in the world where immigration and refugee policy is as significant and as fundamental as it is in Canada.

• (1035)

I am an immigrant myself. Like other members of the House, we came to Canada because we knew it was a very great land. We came because our parents brought us as children and we established ourselves here.

The policies and legislation enacted by the government and debated in the House go to the core of what we believe as Canadians. One of the concerns that we have expressed in the NDP is that the legislation the minister has now reintroduced is a reflection of the public mood that has become more negative about immigration and refugee policies.

I want to highlight one issue in particular because it is something that is very pertinent to Vancouver and to East Vancouver. More than a year and a half ago we saw the arrival of what has been commonly referred to as the boat people, economic migrants who are becoming involved in human smuggling out of desperation. They put themselves at grave risk and danger. They travel huge distances in very dangerous conditions, seeking a way to escape the environment they are in.

The experience we had on Canada's west coast has been reported widely in the media: the arrival of about 600 so-called boat people from the Fujian province of the People's Republic of China. It was very interesting to see the reaction in the media and the general public mood around the issue.

There are concerns about human smuggling. We have to prevent these kinds of situations from taking place. In working with local organizations I visited some women who were detained in the Burnaby women's correctional facility. At that time about 33 women were detained in jail. They had not committed a crime. They had not been charged with anything. They were incarcerated because they were considered to be at risk for flight if they were released.

In visiting those women in jail I was very taken by the situation they were in. They had inadequate access to legal representation, to appropriate cultural language interpretation, to phone calls and to any connection or visits with their children who had been taken away and placed in care. It may surprise some people to know that more than 18 months later there are still about 25 individuals incarcerated in British Columbia as a result of arriving on Canada's shores.

It is easy for us to look back historically at events that happened 40 or 50 years ago when people arrived and were not allowed entry. We can look back and say it was racist or xenophobic, that we had a fear of others arriving, but when it happens in contemporary society today it is something that is very worth debating in terms of how we react to it.

One of the concerns of my colleagues in the NDP and I is that we feel much of the response from the government is based on a very strong reaction to the arrival of the boat people. I find it unacceptable that 18 months after they arrived individuals are still incarcerated.



ated and trying legitimately and legally to file their applications for refugee status. We have a concern that this is an underlying pinning of the bill. It is a bill that seems to be based more on keeping people out rather than acknowledging the incredible role immigration has played in the country.

I have been very concerned over the last few years that the government's own targets for levels of immigration are not being met. It is very easy to play to fears in the community. It is easy to dramatize and highlight individual cases of refugees where there have been illegalities and where people needed to be deported rather than focus on the incredible positive contribution of not just new immigrants but of refugees to the country.

• (1040)

Although the bill does have some measures that provide for family reunification, the NDP believes there should be a much greater emphasis on family reunification and expanding the family class. We should be saying that Canada welcomes people from around the world, and that we should not be so suspicious.

I deal with hundreds of cases in my riding every year of families who are desperately seeking assistance in order to get through the system as it exists today. I am sure we have all had cases where we really feel the frustration and the anxiety that people have gone through in trying to deal with the system. Officials have incredible discretion in denying people and in deciding whether a family member can come to Canada.

I had a campaign in my riding called once in a lifetime. It was actually an idea that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration floated around about a year or so ago. She suggested that there might be a special provision, a once in a lifetime provision, whereby any Canadian would be able to sponsor someone who would not normally qualify in a family class. Unfortunately the idea was just dropped.

Local organizations in my riding, such as Success, collected more than 15,000 signatures in support of the idea of once in a lifetime. Then it was dropped like a hot potato by the minister. However, I decided to keep the idea going. We actually had a petition and a campaign on once in a lifetime, which received tremendous support. The reason we received support is that the current definitions are so narrow and restrictive that it becomes very difficult to undertake family reunification under the present policies.

Some of the other concerns we have, which have not been addressed in the bill and which we will be following up on when it reaches committee stage, are the problems around the live in caregiver program. I have had cases in my own community where women who have come into Canada through the live in caregiver program have basically been exploited. They have had their rights violated and have been placed in very vulnerable and precarious positions because of this special provision by which they gained entry to Canada.

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We believe that the current legislation fails to address the gender issues that are involved in the live in care program. It bears a thorough examination to ensure that women who are coming here under the live in caregiver program are not being exploited by the system or by the situations in which they find themselves.

We have also expressed concerns about some of the provisions in the bill that, albeit an improvement over the status quo, need to go much further. I have met with organizations in my riding that have done a lot of work and analysis on the provisions for same sex relationships.

Although the minister and the government are finally recognizing, along with other changes in legislation that have come before the House, that we need to treat same sex relationships with the same kind of legal provision and equality that we treat any other conjugal relationship, unfortunately in the current bill these provisions are contained in the regulations and not the bill itself. I have had this expressed to me as a concern in terms of it leaving the community still vulnerable to any future changes in regulations.

The other matter I want to speak to involves refugees. It was very timely that yesterday the Caledon Institute and the Maytree Foundation, under the sponsorship of a human rights committee of the Senate, brought a very notable and prestigious speaker, Professor Goodwin-Gill from Oxford University, to Parliament Hill. He came to speak to a number of people who were assembled yesterday about Canada's practice of violating a UN convention as it relates to the status of refugees in this country.

• (1045)

Professor Goodwin-Gill, an internationally renowned expert on refugee law, has taught at Carleton University, so he is very familiar with Canada's legislation and how we process and treat convention refugees.

He expressed grave concern about the practices that have taken place in Canada which deny people access to travel or deny them other resources and programs within Canadian society based on their refugee status. He zeroed in on the fact that Canada does not meet its international obligations under the UN convention, in particular articles 25, 27 and 28 having to do with refugee ID documentation.

I feel this is a very serious situation. For those members of the House and of the Senate who were present yesterday at the speech by Professor Goodwin-Gill, I hope very much that what he said to us will be reflected in our debate and will be reflected in the amendments once the bill reaches committee and there is an opportunity to receive amendments.

To dramatize the real experience of convention refugees in Canada, present at the meeting yesterday was a young woman who is a convention refugee. I believe she was originally from northern

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Somalia. She is the mother of four children. She described to us with a great deal of candour and honesty the feeling that she had of being in prison because she could not access the things she needed to provide for her family.

She cannot put her teenage children through post-secondary education because she cannot afford to pay for it. She works but earns a low income, so neither she nor her children are able to access the Canada student loans program. She is established as a convention refugee, but because of the way we treat convention refugees she and her kids cannot access post-secondary education.

Those are illustrations and examples of what it means to live with the kinds of policies and procedures we have had in place. Having the bill before the House is an opportunity to redress some of those situations and to look at the real experience of what happens to refugees in the country and to say that we will not put up more barriers.

I think the real tragedy of the situation is that there is abuse in the system, as we heard yesterday. There is abuse in every system in the country, but in this area the abuse becomes the reason for setting up very punitive barriers and rules that then deny the vast majority of convention refugees full status in Canada.

That is the wrong way to do business and to approach the issue. We should recognize that the vast majority of convention refugees are here as positive contributors to the local communities in terms of work, in terms of enrichment, in terms of volunteerism, and in terms of all the things we would characterize as being a part of society. To place barriers before people and make it more difficult for them to become fully participating members of the community seems a very negative attitude and something that definitely should be changed.

We in the NDP have very strong concerns about the bill. We want to be constructive in the way we approach the bill. It is a very significant piece of legislation. It was long overdue for changes, but those changes and how they impact on Canadian residents who are here now in terms of bringing over family members from another country, or on people who wish to immigrate to Canada, are obviously of great significance.

• (1050)

We should take the time to be thoughtful about the bill. We should make sure it is not just a response to what is being fuelled in the media in a very negative way in terms of characterizing refugee claimants and to some extent immigration generally.

As members of the House we should have the courage to stand and say that we want Canada to be a place that welcomes people. We want the system to work fairly. We want to be able to find ways to provide family reunification. More than that, we want to look at some of the historical wrongs that have been done.

One of the flashpoints of our history in immigration has been the head tax. There has been an ongoing campaign. People in my riding of Vancouver East have been very involved in trying to eliminate the head tax. They also want recognition of the historical wrong that was done and to seek redress for it in terms of community contribution and compensation.

Unless we can do that I have grave concerns about what the new bill will be and whether we will be repeating the kinds of policies we have had in the past. Our history is based on racism and fear of others. Somehow we must change that.

The bill is very important. We have very serious concerns about it. We want the bill to be a positive instrument that will support and strengthen Canada's immigration policies in a way that is fair and equitable and does not further stigmatize or set up barriers against refugee claimants. We want it to send a message that Canada is a welcoming place that truly works for diversity and cross cultural understanding.

[Translation]

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if you will permit, I would like to make a few remarks in order to correct the comments my NDP colleague has just made on the immigration and refugee status bill.

Canada, it is true, has a long tradition of immigration, which built our country, which also built the riding I represent in the House, Laval West, where a large proportion of the people came to Canada as immigrants and then brought their families here.

The Government of Canada has for generations recognized the importance of family reunification here in Canada. This bill the government has introduced in the House continues this tradition. We have inherited a responsibility toward those who have come here to help them to reunite their family, to build a family unit here in Canada.

The bill provides that children 22 years of age will now be permitted to be included in the family and therefore to be reunited with their parents here in Canada. It also provides that persons who are the last members of this family and remain in their country of origin may come to Canada as well. This often means that an older mother or father living elsewhere, alone in an apartment, in a house or in a village, may now join the family.

I wanted to make this correction, because we are maintaining a very strong Canadian tradition, which is to continue, in a humanitarian and family spirit, to rebuild families here.

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I would also like to make another correction about the hon. member's comment to the effect that Canada has not been meeting its own immigration levels.

• (1055)

This was indeed the case for several years. However, this year, much to the satisfaction of everyone, the government has met its immigration levels.

Under our new approach to immigration, which includes the new bill before the House and the regulations that will follow, we are now opening the door wider, so that an increasing number of immigrants can come to Canada and settle here.

Finally, I want to point out that this bill perpetuates a great Canadian tradition, which is to maintain a society governed by the rule of law. For this reason, those who want to come here as either refugees or immigrants must meet certain criteria.

As a government, our role is to open the door to those who want to settle here, but also to protect Canadian citizens, including against certain immigrants who break the law.

[*English*]

**Ms. Libby Davies:** Mr. Speaker, I certainly welcome the comments of the hon. member across the way.

I acknowledge that some provisions of the legislation before us, Bill C-11, are an improvement over the existing legislation. The provision that allows for family reunification for children based on a wider age limit is certainly an improvement.

The point I was making and the concern we have in the NDP is one that has been expressed to me by many organizations that deal with immigration rules and policies on a day to day basis. People in such organizations really see the system as it is. They are concerned that the overall definition of family class is still very restrictive in terms of the kinds of family members who can be sponsored.

The whole idea of once in a lifetime was generated because we had restrictions on how we define family class. There was and still is a great momentum within the community to see a broader definition that would allow for family reunification.

Some say that we must have some definition, that we must be able to define the family in some way. That is very true. However, in western society we tend to make such definitions very narrow and very linear, whereas in many cultures where immigrants come from the definition of family is much broader. We really need to look at that.

I will respond to the other point very briefly in terms of the quotas. It is true, because I saw the announcement and the press

release and so on, that this year, for the first time in many years, Canada met its target in terms of applications that came to Canada. If one looks at it in a longer term, overall we have done a very poor job.

I hope there is a real commitment from the government to not only meet the targets but to look at the targets. If we read any study about immigration we will see that it contributes to our economic activity, to our economic strength and to the strength of the community. When we say that we should open the doors wider, I hope the member would agree that we should look at the target and say that it should be increased. However, if we look at it over a number of years we have not been meeting the target, even though we might have last year.

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Vancouver East for her comments and her warnings to Canadians in terms of how the media reports issues dealing with immigrants and refugees. I agree with her wholeheartedly, because one thing we do not want to do in this country is reignite any kind of anti-immigrant fervour.

• (1100)

The member began her speech by saying that there are possibly 25 Chinese boat people—I guess that is the term we use—still being detained. The fact of the matter is, as indicated in the debate yesterday on this bill, that only about 600 out of a total population of about 24,000 immigrate to Canada. There is no doubt that the media does not send out the facts to the Canadian public so that Canadians could understand how many people we are talking about. Also sometimes there tends to be a loss of balanced reporting.

I will ask the hon. member for Vancouver East what solutions we should put in place to help the media so they become more informed as to how they report these instances.

**Ms. Libby Davies:** Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we as members monitor what happens in the media. I would agree with what the member has outlined in terms of particular situations such as the arrival of the boat people. The amount of media scrutiny and sensationalism it received was quite incredible to behold.

When we as members comment on these issues we have to be very aware of that and take the time to look beyond the headlines and make sure we are communicating the real situation. Some of these people are in very desperate circumstances and get set up as targets. They get set up as scapegoats. This is an example of the idea some have that, the whole system is failing and we have to get tough.

I hope the hon. member, along with other members of the House, will consider this the next time we have a flashpoint and a situation where we are asked to comment on. I hope we will be thoughtful in our responses and not contribute to a backlash which can easily take place when the media gets hold of the situation.

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**Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the government is bringing Bill C-11 before us for debate. Its title states that it is “an act respecting immigration to Canada and the granting of refugee protection to persons who are displaced, persecuted or in danger”. This bill would replace the existing immigration act. The minister claims that the bill would provide clearer legislation to ensure that Canada’s immigration and refugee protection system is able to respond to international challenges.

The government’s handling of immigration has not developed a lot of confidence in our country. If we listen to talk in the local coffee shop or on open line radio, the national mood is clear: the government does not have a great administrative reputation. It seems the Liberals cannot administer a system that has the confidence of average Canadians, especially when we think of fairness, adequate protections or a system that is well run. Nevertheless, I am pleased that the government seems to be trying to improve things with this bill.

The government claims some rather lofty things in regard to the bill. The minister says that the bill provides for objectives that reflect the values of Canadian society. That is a big one to swallow.

The next claim is that there will be effective reporting to parliament through a complete consolidated annual report. There will also be agreements that facilitate co-operation with the provinces and foreign states.

The bill outlines a description of the major classes of foreign nationals: economic class, family class, convention refugees and persons in similar circumstances. There is a recognition of Canada’s commitment to the principle of the best interests of the child.

There is an attempt at a clear, objective residency requirement for permanent residents.

There is the objective of a strong refugee protection program that incorporates the protection grounds of the Geneva convention, the convention against torture and the grounds of risk to life or of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

There is talk of a more efficient refugee determination process through greater use of single member panels. Additionally, a refugee appeal division within the immigration and refugee board is described, to enhance fairness and consistency in decision making.

There are supposed to be tightened ineligibility provisions for serious criminals, security threats and repeat claimants who seek access to the refugee protection process of the immigration and refugee board.

• (1105)

There is a formalization of a pre-removal risk assessment to review changed circumstances related to risk of return.

The bill also outlines inadmissibility provisions for criminals, persons who constitute security threats, violators of human rights, and persons who should not be allowed into Canada because of fraud, misrepresentation, financial reasons or health concerns. The bill attempts a clear detention criterion with authority to further clarify detention grounds in regulations. There are also enhanced procedures for dealing with security threats through admissibility hearings and the security certificate process.

There are offences for human smuggling and trafficking, with a maximum penalty of life in prison. There are penalties for assisting in obtaining immigration status by fraud or misrepresentation. There is also an immigration appeal system that is supposed to enhance effectiveness while maintaining fairness and legal safeguards.

These are all big claims. Unfortunately, the House has heard those things before from the government and in past parliaments. However, here we are again, trying to improve the legislative base for a system that has a poor reputation across the country.

Indeed, we must try to do better as a nation. We have some suggestions for how the bill can be improved, for we come at this problem from a principled base. The Canadian Alliance affirms that it supports genuine refugees and immigration where it is a positive source for economic growth. We in the Canadian Alliance see Canada as a land built by immigrants and we will continue to welcome new immigrants.

We support sponsorship for immediate family members. Our immigration policy takes into account Canada’s economic needs. We have promised to introduce greater fairness and security into the system, including enforcement of sponsorship obligations.

We are on record to work co-operatively with the provinces on the settlement of immigrants. We also want to protect the integrity of the valuable contribution made to the fabric of Canada by millions of law abiding immigrants.

Therefore, greater attention must be paid to realistic, enforceable processes so the average immigrant’s good reputation will not be jeopardized by non-citizens who engage in criminal activity. We are committed to solving the legal and logistical problems to speedily deport offenders and perpetrators of fraud.

We affirm Canada’s humanitarian obligation to welcome genuine refugees and are proud that our country has offered a safe haven



for distressed people from across the world. However, to ensure fairness and end queue jumping, we have been saying for a long time that Canada must do better at deporting bogus refugees and other illegal entrants and there must be enhanced deterrent penalties for those who organize abuse of the system.

We would also ensure that refugee status is arbitrated expeditiously, consistently and professionally. That requires an improved legal base and sufficient resources. We are committed to ending the abuse of refugee claims as a fast track to gaining the benefits of landed immigrant status.

Canada needs a system in which we can all have confidence. That will only happen when there is a good legislative base for wise administration, one that is thoroughly professional rather than political.

Bill C-11 claims to make these things more efficient, reduce lineups and provide more security, both for residents of Canada and for immigrants. However, without a more accountable system and a far more communicative department, none of this will ever be a reality.

For example, there are no real measurable and accountable standards for the operation of our overseas offices. The standard health tests need to be updated and the credibility of reports needs to be thoroughly background checked. Visa officers need better training in order to be equipped to spot fraudulent applications and criminals and also themselves in regard to being beyond local corruption.

The overwhelming fact of the department is the lack of staff to operate at a functional level. Perhaps a full departmental audit is needed for classification structure, employee supervision and promotion and the appropriateness of overall staffing levels.

The Canadian Alliance is supportive of current immigration levels, but we would like to see immigrants more fully in the careers they were trained to do in their countries of origin. Medical doctors should not be driving taxicabs to make a living in Canada.

We would like to see Canada attract the best and the brightest, not just those who show up at Canada's door. Can we not change general operations from being reactive to becoming more proactive?

• (1110)

We support the expedient reunification of family members. We support and reaffirm our policy of taking in our fair share of genuine refugees. We would work with the provinces for policies on the settlement of immigrants, whereby settlement money should follow the person rather than government.

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The Canadian Alliance supports deportation of undesirable individuals without delay in the cases of criminal activity and non-compliance with the Immigration Act. Bill C-11 purports to do this, but the recent supreme court decision complicates Canada's immigration defences. There is no indication in this legislation to deal with the supreme court ruling.

No matter what the Liberal government tries to sell about the new legislation, the lofty goals are an impossibility without better enforcement, accountability and management. Staffing levels needed to fulfil mandates seem completely inadequate. As well, there are problems operationally. We have seen a stream of people coming into our constituency office because of immigration. The immigration hotline does not work, as it is overloaded. My office has to communicate to our embassies around the world since the department is not doing its job on basic information requests. Local immigration offices are not responsive and they are not giving the service needed in community relationships.

An MP's office should be involved in only very special circumstances and should not be an extension of the immigration department. I also suspect the department is heavy with Ottawa mandarins who do not spend sufficient time in the field throughout Canada or abroad to fully appreciate the operational problems.

We engaged this immigration debate to be constructive because Canadians have asked us to do so. It must be noted that when we as a party began to seriously reflect the national mood in the House years ago, specifically about the incredulity and apparent ineptness of the government in managing the immigration system, we were attacked as being racist. However, despite the lies about us, we persisted and now it is socially acceptable in the House to point out the administrative foul-ups by the department. Formerly it was a taboo subject.

The problems were so grave and monumental that we took the abuse and kept raising the issues we were being asked to raise. Now it is acceptable to require the minister and the department to justify to Canadians their mandate and performance, without being called racist, at least by those who are honourable. The auditor general certainly has been critical of the immigration department. Consequently we have continued to bring the voice of the community to this Chamber. The government has slowly recognized that legislative improvements are needed, and the voice of the community is at least recognized.

Nevertheless we must be very careful to assess the motives and the honour of anyone who would dare to say about the Alliance that there is any whiff or nuance of xenophobia in our party policy or from our members of parliament. Sadly the pejorative term xenophobic hysteria was directly ascribed to us by a member of the NDP yesterday in the House. That term means having a morbid dislike of foreigners. It reminds me of the outrageous meanspi-

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ritedness of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration directed at my party during the last election.

However, beyond the finger pointing, we can observe, with our counterparts from the U.S., Australia, China and Europe, that there is indeed a real desire to move together toward solutions such as a United Nations agreement to fight against human smuggling. We cannot allow those who traffic in human beings to succeed by misusing our refugee protection programs. Under law, legitimate refugees, those at risk if returned, should be allowed to stay permanently albeit through due process. Those who are not refugees should be removed quickly. That was not the experience that the minister gave to British Columbia in the last few years.

We say that it is possible to uphold the charter of rights and freedoms, not just for some people some of the time but for everyone in Canada all of the time, and yet still be able to control our borders. For sadly, in the international people trade we must admit that capacity creates its own demand. Consequently we need streamlined procedures that are fast but still fair.

Immigration has been a positive force in the life of the country for centuries. It has made us who we are and it will make us who we will be. Canada has historical accomplishments with immigration, as we have and continue to be mostly a land of destination rather than a land of departure for the disadvantaged. Yet in our society, as personal accomplishment is achieved Canada suffers a brain drain to the United States because of the mediocrity of governance under which we suffer.

• (1115)

Citizenship and Immigration Canada's mission is to build a stronger Canada by deriving maximum social and economic benefit from the global movement of people, maintaining Canada's humanitarian tradition by protecting refugees and others in need of humanitarian protection, defining membership in Canadian society and supporting the settlement and integration of newcomers.

As a result, the department must evaluate the international and domestic events that could affect the benefits of immigration. For example, changes in the push and pull factors for immigration, source countries, the qualifications of prospective immigrants and domestic labour market circumstances all have an impact on the level and mix of immigrants seeking to enter Canada, as well as their settlement needs.

In addition, the social and economic conditions that newcomers encounter upon arrival can have a major effect on whether newcomers successfully integrate into the Canadian way of life.

International migration is related in many complex ways to basic environmental stability. The scarcity of resources such as famine and energy sources, environmental degradation such as pollution

and deforestation natural disasters such as earthquakes and epidemic diseases and severe climate changes such as drought and flooding can displace large numbers of people and be important push factors for international migration.

The perceptions of Canada's abundant natural resources, wide open spaces and clean environment have also played a role in attracting newcomers, in addition to the broader consideration of a somewhat democratic society and an economy that offers a measure of opportunity.

Globalization means that international travel and migration are likely to increase. From an environmental perspective, increased mobility increases the potential risk of new foods, plants and organisms being introduced into sensitive ecosystems. There is also the risk of new strains of disease spreading more quickly between populations. Although these issues are of serious concern and are subject to various domestic and international screening processes, the risks must be balanced against the benefits of globalization and the freer international movement of goods, services and people.

For example, the recruitment of highly skilled workers means that Canada should benefit from skills and technologies. Similarly, international students can be agents of technology and knowledge transfer. Immigrants also bring with them different values and practices that offer positive and new social perspectives.

Attaining a sustainable future requires a commitment to a healthier environment and an economy that can enhance the social well-being of Canadians. Only through the recognition and consistent consideration of the web of issues that I mentioned can we develop a beneficial legal context for immigration and make the informed choices necessary to build Canada's future.

The Canadian Alliance is pro-immigration. We hope the government will accept our amendments for improvement in operational accountability and transparency so that there develops greater political legitimacy for the operations year in and year out.

The government's lofty goals for the bill are rather great. Let us hope that there will be more than sound and fury from the government and that resources and professionalism will be greatly enhanced so we have a system of which we all can be proud.

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his address. There is one issue that keeps coming up, which I think he mentioned in his remarks: What do we do with these smugglers of humans in the world?

I question whether some of the things that have been put in this bill to address smuggling of humans will be effective. In order to define a person, the person has to come into our country and we have to be able to detain that person.



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Also, what do we do with bogus refugees? How long will that take to come to an end before we can get them out of the country?

Would the hon. member expand on some of his comments concerning people, such as the snakeheads, as they are sometimes called, and the leaders of people smuggling rings? Could he also comment on what we can do to address the issue of bogus refugees and how we can handle them more quickly to get them out of Canada?

**Mr. Paul Forseth:** Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with an international problem. Certainly Canada must step up to the plate and be part of that international solution. We also must have a proper legal base at home to be able to use due process and still maintain our sovereignty, protect our borders and send the appropriate message around the world that Canada will no longer be the soft touch for human smugglers, the principle of that being that capacity creates its own demand. If there is a loophole it will certainly be pursued by someone who has a malevolent agenda. That has been somewhat our history.

• (1120)

The government is struggling with it. I compliment the government for making an effort to recognize the international context that we need to pursue these issues with our neighbours, but also to provide a more appropriate legal base for processing at home.

The other side of it is simply resourcing. We need the ability to hold various hearings and to follow our legal base. We must not only say that we have a great system with rhetoric and political headlines, we must also provide the people to fulfil the mandate that we expect. It is the same as when we say that we will do peacekeeping abroad but we do not give our soldiers the equipment. Those defending world peace around the world and those defending our borders here must also be given the appropriate resources to carry out the mandate that has been given to them.

I talked with some of the senior officials out in the regions who were frustrated by trying to get the Ottawa mandarins to actually come out and live and breathe the life of the immigration world in their local offices or in the foreign missions. There is still, very much, an old bureaucratic, top down, executive management approach in Ottawa. The minister can do a lot to set the tone of having a much more modern, accountable, responsive department. Those using modern management science, as well as properly resourcing, can then respond to the issue and end the problem that capacity creates its own demand.

**Mr. Mark Assad (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was listening to my colleague and I agree fully with his comments concerning a legal base. That is very important and I believe this bill will

accomplish that. The bill will never be perfect but it will certainly be a great advancement compared to what we have had.

The other point he brought out is true because I have experienced the same thing. The department is overwhelmed with work and does have staffing problems. I hope that in the near future the kinds of resources needed will be brought to the department. We all agree that our immigration policy will probably be one of the most important achievements of this parliament. It will ensure that we have the legal base to get things completed as fast and as soon as possible.

It is true that no matter what organization, be it government or private enterprise, there is always an element of bureaucracy. I am sure that as clear as we can make this bill and improve upon it maybe we can eradicate some of these irritants.

I basically agree with what you have brought forward. I hope in our parliamentary committee we will be able to iron out the irritants as we go along.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before I invite the hon. member to respond, I would remind members on all sides of the House to please make their interventions through the Chair, not directly across the floor to one another.

**Mr. Paul Forseth:** Mr. Speaker, yes, my comments are about trying to develop a more collegial approach, a cross party approach to make a good bill that will serve Canada's needs.

I must compliment the minister for being in the House yesterday throughout most of the debate. There were indications of a sense of co-operativeness and a willingness to listen to suggestions from all parties. We have many stakeholders on this issue. Believe it or not, we even have what we call the immigration industry. There is a whole set of hangers on, a professionalism of people who make their living from the immigration industry. They all have a lot to say about the bill.

Once we pass the bill at second reading it would be pretty well unchangeable because of that second reading vote. The ability of the committee to actually make any amendments is very limited. I would hope that opposition amendments would be accepted and that the minister, perhaps based on further testimony, would be prepared to bring in his own departmental amendments that recognize some of the deficiencies that the various stakeholders will bring in.

• (1125)

The other issue is the local constituency office. My office should not be an extension of the immigration department, but I have a heart for my constituents when they come in very upset that they cannot seem to communicate at all with the immigration depart-

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ment. We try to discourage unnecessary intervention by our office. We try to outline the timeline of 18 months or more before they will even hear an answer on certain things. We are able to help some constituents in that regard but there is a tremendous demand from the community.

The greatest workload that I have is on behalf of constituents who come into my office with various frustrations or complaints about the immigration department, and that should not be so. The immigration department should be fully resourced so that it would be only on the rare occasion that the ombudsman role of the member of parliament in the local community would be necessary.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the hon. member talk about immigration and our ability to protect our borders.

A lot of these people leave these third world countries because of desperation and economic needs. There is a root to this problem, and that is with international trade. We must ensure that trade agreements in other countries contain proper environmental, labour and health standards so we can build up those standards and these people will not have to become illegal immigrants to escape the poverty that they are facing.

Would the hon. member not agree that part of the problem should be in our trade deals, that we should ensure that those people have their basic human rights adhered to, as we do in this country?

**Mr. Paul Forseth:** Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that the tone that is being suggested is a negative one. I think that really does not work.

The problem for the third world is to provide a trade and economic highway for them to earn their way out of poverty rather than continuing to prescribe, give a loan or say that they have to conform to certain standards. As they are able to earn and raise their standard of living, then we are gradually able to address those other issues. It has to be more of an open face rather than a prescriptive, top down, negative one.

**Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on Bill C-11.

I want to preface my remarks by saying that I, like many people in the House, am an immigrant. Back in 1968 my parents moved my brothers and me to Canada. At that time, they had a choice of moving to a number of countries. At great personal sacrifice to them, they chose to move to Canada. They had the option to move to the United States, Australia and a few other countries but they chose Canada because they wanted to give their boys a better future. Indeed, it is a debt that I could never repay. Canada has

given myself, my family and my brothers a future that could never be surpassed anywhere in the world. It is a debt that I could never repay to this country.

In 1993 I joined the then Reform Party with a view to doing a number of things. One of the things that attracted me to this party was the pragmatic view to improving our immigration system. I think the fact that this caucus has the most ethnically diverse caucus in the House reflects the fact that the now Canadian Alliance strongly supports a strong, effective immigration policy. That is something that perhaps is not widely known because we have been accused of doing something very different.

My party believes very strongly that immigration is one of the pillars of Canada. Waves of immigrants over the years have ensured that Canada is a leader in so many areas. These immigrants have contributed to Canadian society in ways that are countless and too long to articulate in any one speech. It is something from which we all benefit.

• (1130 )

Unfortunately over the years our immigration system has declined so that it does not enable Canadians to have the best immigration system they deserve. Indeed it does not enable people who wish to come to the country to have the best opportunities to immigrate to Canada.

We believe in an immigration system that is fair and effective; that enables true refugees to come to the country; that believes in true and rapid family reunification; and that believes in an onus and emphasis upon the independent class of immigrant, the ones that built the country.

That is what I will address in this speech, as my colleagues have done. The member for Dauphin—Swan River has given the government constructive and effective solutions to ensure that Bill C-11 will do all that we ask and what the Canadian public demands.

The first issue I want to deal with is the issue of refugees. The riding of Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca had the refugees who came over from Fujian province a summer ago. It was a big issue for all of us.

Here are some ways that we could improve the system. The first one is to try to differentiate between true and false refugees at source. Individuals who come to the country, and indeed most of the people who are false refugees, actually come by plane and through our airports.

It is estimated that we have about 30,000 false refugees. They are economic refugees, and frankly who would blame them? Many of us would do the same if we were in their shoes. However, it is our responsibility to differentiate between true and false refugees.

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One thing we could do is to ensure that it is up to the people who are claiming refugee status to produce their identification. Rapid identification at entrance to Canada is important.

The bill provides for a 90 day hearing in the IRB. That is too long. People deserve a rapid hearing and a rapid identification and determination to assess whether or not they are true or false refugees.

Another issue is the independent class of refugees. We need to put a greater emphasis on it. A little while ago I was looking at the list of professions required by Canada. It was shocking that it has not been updated in a long time. One profession that is glaringly absent is nursing. Nurses are not on the list, yet our country is faced with a crisis in nursing. We need to update that list of professions and skills required to build what the minister wants and what we all want: an effective skills set within our economy.

Refugees should be assessed for that in an effective way and those people should be expedited to come to the country. Let us update the skills set to make sure it is equal to the needs of our country. It has not been done for a very long time. I hope the parliamentary secretary takes that back to the minister. It is wanted on the ground. It is wanted in the country. It should be done as soon as possible so that we will have a better immigration system.

On the issue of charter of rights, when people come to the country they are protected by our charter of rights. They have the same protection as Canadian citizens. No other country in the world allows that to happen. We should protect all individuals who come to the country under the same basic norms that protect all citizens of the world, the norms of human rights guaranteed under the UN charter. Those basic norms of human rights should be provided for everyone in the country, particularly so for individuals who are immigrating to Canada.

Human smuggling is an international problem. It is linked with international crime gangs. These people are criminals and we are very happy that the minister put extra penalties in the bill. There are \$1 million in penalties to individuals who are profiting from the human misery that goes with human smuggling. The people who are engaged in this activity are organized criminals. They are profiting from human misery. We need to work with our partners on this matter.

I have a suggestion for the government. The summit of the Americas is taking place from April 20 to April 22 in Quebec City. Since this problem is an international problem, it should be placed on the floor of the summit. Let us have a transhemispheric approach to the trafficking of human refugees. Let us work with our partners, work with international legal offices such as Interpol, and use the CSIS and the RCMP. Let us work with other nations so we can block this at source. It will require a multinational approach to deal with these individuals. It should be raised at the summit of the Americas. It is a good start to expand into other countries.

• (1135)

My colleague from the NDP asked a very good question on the issue of dealing with a lot of the economic refugees. Economic refugees would not be coming to our country if they had strong, stable economies where they live.

I just returned from Colombia with the secretary of state, who did an excellent job there representing Canada on the issue of tariffs and the issue of freer trade. It is extraordinary that we claim we want to improve the situation in many of these countries abroad, and yet we engage in tariffs and blocks to the ability of those countries to provide for themselves. We block their ability to have a strong economy, and yet we claim we want one.

If we were honest about trying to improve the situation in impoverished developing countries, we would eliminate barriers to trade for them as well as for us. We would eliminate the tariffs. We would provide for freer trade. We would eliminate double taxation laws which say that if a company wants to invest in another country it is not only taxed in its country of origin but also taxed in the country it works in.

That is absurd. That should not be allowed. If we removed these obstacles to economic trade we would have fewer economic refugees. Then developing countries would be able to improve their lot at home and require less trade and less emigration from their countries. They would be able to provide for themselves and develop a strong economy, which would provide for regional and international security, if they are allowed to do it.

At the summit of the Americas from April 20 to April 22 let us show some leadership. Let Canada bring this issue to the floor of the summit. Let us talk about freer trade. Let us talk about a transhemispheric free trade zone. Let us remove those barriers to trade and let us enable these countries to stand on their own feet. That is the best thing we could do for decreasing economic refugees that wish to come to our country.

Governance and corruption are issues of an international nature. We have to work with our partners in dealing with issues of corruption. My colleague from Alberta is doing innovative ground-work on dealing with corruption. He is working internationally, as well as with members of the government and other parties, on putting together an integrated plan on dealing with international corruption. We could be leaders in governance and anti-corruption laws, which would help to improve economic security and global security for everybody.

On the issue of CIDA and development, we should be focusing on primary health and education in developing countries as well as placing a greater emphasis on microcredit, small loans that enable individual people and small groups to get up on their own feet to

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provide the commerce which provides security in impoverished areas.

My colleagues have raised the issue of criminals time and time again. Why should criminals be allowed into the country? Recently we have heard repeatedly of criminals who have come through our borders because of our complete and utter lack of ability to secure our borders and to differentiate and identify them from those who are true refugees. We are not working with Interpol. There is a lack of communication among CSIS, the RCMP and Interpol. As a result individuals who are criminals are allowed to come into our country.

The United States has legitimately criticized Canada for not being able to secure its borders in this fashion. As a result many of those people have gone to the U.S. It is telling Canada to get its act in order, to secure its borders, and we will all benefit.

When individuals who are wanted by Interpol are found at our border we should arrest them, put them in jail and send them back to their country of origin where they can engage in a fair trial. Canada must not and cannot become a haven for criminals, which is what has been happening.

On the issue of health testing, the list of diseases that we test for is 40 years old. It is the responsibility of the department to secure the health and welfare of all Canadians and people who wish to come to Canada.

• (1140)

Immigrants and Canadian citizens do not want diseases to run through our country. Let us make sure that people who wish to come to our country are tested at their country of origin and that we upgrade the list of diseases.

I also bring to the attention of the government another issue which was raised before, the issue of listening to the hard working people in the department. They are a wealth of information. They are the ones in the trenches who bear the brunt and interface with the people who want to come into Canada. They deal with the wishes, desires and the laws of Canada. They are getting it from both sides. They are finding it very difficult. The good side is that they are a wealth of constructive information.

This issue has been raised in the House before, but I ask the secretary of state and the minister to listen to those employees. They should not listen only to the many qualified ambassadors but should listen in an unthreatening environment to embassy staff who have to deal with these problems.

They have great ideas on simplifying the system. They can provide information in a secure fashion to individuals who want to know how they can immigrate to Canada. This is basic information. I know there are some very good reasons it is not provided,

but by not providing it a great deal of work is created for many MP offices across the country.

This is avoidable by simplifying the system to ensure that we are listening to our people on the ground. The minister could have an anonymous suggestion box. It could be sent directly to the minister's office through normal diplomatic channels. In that way effective simple solutions could be put forth that would enable us to have a more effective immigration system. This would certainly make our lives easier as MPs and make the work of hard working staff a lot easier.

Canada is a land of opportunity. We have an obligation to work with our partners to ensure that we have an effective immigration system which puts a greater emphasis on the independent class of immigrants so that we have a true refugee system. This would also enable us to have a system that is fair to all.

One issue we are continually confronted with that I think is grossly unfair to people who immigrate to Canada is the period of time they cannot work. Why do we not allow people who are immigrating to Canada to work when they get on our shores? The best social program we could ever have for anyone is a job. These people want to work. They want to work hard. They want to contribute to the country they wish to be a part of. Let them apply. Let them work.

If we were keen on dealing with true refugees we would seek them out through sources such as Amnesty International and others that provide effective and accurate information on people who are truly persecuted and are in danger and wish to live their countries of origin. We could do the humanitarian thing by providing a safe haven for them in Canada. We could seek out those individuals and provide them a home under our refugee banner. If we do that, we will be saving lives.

We could also become an effective tool in improving the lot of countries. I address issues such as tariffs and free trade. We also need to deal with the World Trade Organization. Many individuals and groups complain and vehemently oppose the WTO. It is interesting to listen to what they are saying. Many individuals who are opposed to the talks in Seattle, the Davos talks that occurred and many others, are the ones who are complaining about the people who are trying to do exactly what they want. They are the ones who are talking about environmental protection. They are talking about safe standards for workers. They are talking about labour codes. They are talking about improving the lot of individuals in developing countries. However part of the reason we are seeing a lot of individuals complaining is that there is a lack of communication and transparency.

• (1145)

Just a few days ago in committee we spoke about this with a group from the Bundestag, the German elected house. It asked us why people were complaining about the WTO and other organiza-



tions. It wanted to know if free trade was that bad. No, free trade and fair trade is good. The problem is that we do not have a transparent process.

My party supported a movement by the Bloc that would have ensured that free trade agreements would come to the House for a transparent and public analysis of what was in these agreements. I will go further than that. I suggest that the government could do a lot to dispel and decrease opposition to its efforts to improve free trade, which the Canadian Alliance supports. It could ensure that discussions, which have taken place behind closed doors, become publicly known. It could bring those people who are complaining about the free trade agreement into the decision making process. It could listen to what they were saying and act on it. The government could make its position in these talks public.

If we make what we do public and transparent we will have far fewer complaints. At the end of the day many of the people who are complaining will know that the people who are meeting behind closed doors at the WTO, the MAI and in the Davos talks are actually trying to pursue a common agenda.

In closing, I hope that the government listens to the constructive suggestions that have been put forth by members across political parties, that it listens to its own members and acts. The bill is not good enough. There have been constructive solutions put forward to build a strong, effective immigration policy for all Canadians.

**Mr. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, after listening to that intervention I am reminded of the questions at hand. Do we really believe in immigration? Do we think it is an integral part of domestic and foreign policy for our country? Do we have the proper approaches to address immigration as an issue?

The member opposite talked in generic, general and wide conceptual terms about the importance of immigration and how countries can deal with it. Essentially it is divided into two. Either we think of it as a problem on an international basis and invest a lot of resources domestically and in foreign development, or we receive people here out of generosity and other good, valuable and altruistic reasons.

I do not think that is what the bill is addressing. That is a debate for another time, perhaps in this place or another place. The issue in this bill is how we make the procedures once a decision has been made to open our doors to others. Presumably we have done that. Statistically, we have been relatively generous in keeping our doors open.

In part it is a self-serving generosity. Today's headlines in some of the newspapers indicate that we are approaching a shortage of one million skilled workers. Where do we go? Where do we get them? We will raid other countries that have such skilled labourers because domestically we have not been able to address that. However, when we do that raiding, when we invite people to come

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to make a contribution and play a role in our country, then we have a particular procedure and a process whereby these people are qualified.

The intent of the bill is designed to address that. I have not heard that from members of the opposition. I want to ask a very specific question of my colleague opposite. Will he address the issue of criminality? Nobody but nobody that I know of wants to deal with criminals in the country. We do not want them here. No one wants them anywhere.

One of the definitions of criminality and illegality is that people try to evade and avoid supervision and the vigilance of authorities that are legitimate. In other words, they are underground all the time and look for ways to circumvent the system.

• (1150)

One of the things that we do in this country, which I am a little embarrassed by and maybe the member can address it, is invite families to come to Canada. They bring their very young children and their newborns. If we think in terms of what we define as children and how we address them, most of these children are between the ages of seven to fourteen.

These children grow up in our environment. They do not become citizens for one reason or another. However, when they get into their late teens or early twenties and fall afoul of the law, they find themselves in jail. As soon as they have served their time and paid their dues, the first people they meet when they come out jail are the enforcement officials for the RCMP. Then they are shipped off to wherever they came from.

The member opposite has been so eloquent in his concept of global justice, human rights and rights of individuals anywhere and everywhere. How he would address that particular problem? It is a lot more common in Canada than we would care to admit. We are exporting criminals that we have trained. Could the member address that in a very specific way?

**Mr. Keith Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I thought I was specific for the last 20 minutes on a number of issues. The hon. member asked a whole litany of questions and addressed a number of issues.

When he began, he spoke about allowing independent class immigrants. We are firmly supportive of that. We need more of them because with the demographic changes in our country, we cannot hope to have the number of skilled workers in our workforce that our economy requires.

I would also like to say that we are not raiding other countries. People come in from other countries and people leave to go to other countries.

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What we need is an effective way of ensuring that these people are allowed to come to the country. Right now, a lot of skilled people who want to come into Canada are not allowed to, which is shocking. I mentioned one specific example and that was nurses. They are not even on our list of required professions and skills. As I said to the government in my speech, it needs to update that list of skills because it does not reflect the needs of our economy.

On the issue of criminality, individuals who have committed crimes in this country should be sent back to their country of origin.

Canada, through the RCMP and CSIS, needs to work with Interpol at the entrance to our country to ensure that people who are wanted by Interpol are apprehended and sent back to the country where they are wanted. We do not do that enough and we should.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I came to Canada in 1956 from Holland with my family, as did the hon. member. We left for purely economic reasons. This country gave our family, like his, a tremendous uplift and a wonderful life. I too would like to thank Canada for the opportunity it has given us, as did the hon. member from Vancouver Island.

He talked about the aspect of trade with the third world countries and with other countries in order to lift their standards. He is right; trade is the way to do that. However, when we discuss trade deals should the environment, human rights and labour standards not be negotiated prior to any commercial agreements on the trade deals?

He mentioned that he was in Colombia. He must know the standards of the third world countries, especially like Colombia. In the last 16 months 192 trade unionists have been slaughtered there. He knows that is happening.

These are the things that the NDP has mentioned time and time again. If we are going to have trade deals in a hemispheric kind of way, union and labour rights must be protected and environmental standards must be met. The people can then build themselves up so they can stay and live in their countries and become part of the global economic system.

Would he not agree that would be a way to go?

**Mr. Keith Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely invite the hon. member to cross the floor and join the Canadian Alliance. He has eloquently spoken about what my party stands for. He spoke about free trade, fair trade, environmental standards, labour laws and labour protection. Indeed, I know the hon. member would work shoulder to shoulder with us to ensure that free trade agreements that come to the floor of the House will involve all of that. That is what free trade and fair trade must be about.

• (1155)

The failure is that a lot of these agreements are not communicated to the public. As mentioned in my speech, the government is not drawn into the discussion and debates individuals who have the same kind of commitment that the hon. member does, and indeed members from across party lines.

**Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was impressed with my hon. colleague from the Canadian Alliance. I came on my own to Canada in 1968 when I was 19. I chose this country because of what it was and what it would be.

The hon. member made some comments about Canada taking a leadership role among American countries meeting in Quebec. He proposed that we should reinforce our borders. At the same time he proposed freer and fairer trade. I agree with him but something is bothering me.

We invited 225,000 new immigrants to Canada last year. Could the member expand a little on what percentage of those were smuggled into Canada? I want to remind him that in European countries, especially within the European Union, there is freer movement. More people are leaving countries and settling within western Europe than in Canada.

**Mr. Keith Martin:** Mr. Speaker, the current estimates are about 30,000 individuals who come into the country as false refugees. More than 95% are travelling through our airports, many of whom have destroyed their identification papers at origin and arrive here without them. That is why I said that one of the challenges the department needs to address is that people who come to this country claiming refugee status, the onus should be on them to identify themselves. There are, of course, extraneous situations that would not allow that, but that is what needs to happen.

[Translation]

**Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-11, which deals with immigration. This is an extremely important topic for the various parties, although differences can be seen in the speeches made so far.

I wish to add my voice to that of our immigration critic, the member for Laval Centre. I will not make the same points she did because, in my view, she gave an excellent speech.

I wish to speak as a member of the subcommittee on human rights. This subcommittee has not yet begun its work, but we are interested in the problem. The House will understand my sensitivity to the issue, particularly the situation faced by refugees.

Refugees are people who have involuntarily left their country because they had no other choice in the circumstances. Often, they



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do so under rather dramatic conditions. Having read on the topic and followed the newspapers, at least since I became an MP, I am aware of certain problems.

I wish to respond to the comments made by the member who preceded me to the effect that some people are not even able to produce identity papers. In some situations, when refugees leave their country, they do so in a panic.

• (1200)

When they are being pursued, or feel they are being pursued, they are not always in a position to prove their identity or to provide some document or other. Such situations must be given careful consideration. When the person coming after you is armed, you do not always have the time to go home looking for the documents you need.

I am pointing this out because yesterday I was in a meeting where people were describing the difficulties experienced by people currently in Canada who had come as refugees and did not have documentation they needed from their old country in proving their identity.

This is a fairly exceptional situation which should be brought to the attention of the House. Some people have been here for a dozen years or so. They have refugee status, but not the documents to prove it. This means they cannot return to their own country obviously, because they left it after they were persecuted or felt they were. So they cannot go back. They obviously cannot visit family who remained there. Neither can they have members of their family coming from their old country visiting them here. In certain cases, they can simply not travel abroad, even to a country that has no link with their home country.

There is also the loss of the usual entitlements of a citizen of Canada or of Quebec. For instance, they have greater difficulty finding work or obtaining a work permit, as it is very complicated, and they are not entitled to university bursaries and scholarships. The person I referred to and with whom I spoke yesterday was a woman whose children were of university age but, lacking documents and unable to obtain them, did not qualify for student loans or bursaries under the same conditions as any Canadian or Quebecer could.

This is the situation despite the fact that, under the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees, countries accepting refugees under these particular conditions must issue documents entitling them to certain rights, restoring their rights, but such is not the case here.

The Prime Minister of Canada often tells us we are living in the best country in the world. I beg to differ, in this connection at least, when this government is not capable of respecting the international

convention of the United Nations relating to immigration that has been in place since 1951.

In this House, I have often questioned what point there was to having laws or regulations if they are not applied. In this case, however, what is involved is a treaty, but an international convention. Canada is not applying the rules the convention requires.

I would invite the committee members, including my colleague from Laval Centre, who assured me she would bring up this kind of case, to make sure that Canada respects international treaties. Before passing any new legislation, or while doing so, like this bill, which makes considerable changes to the system, this is something we must take into consideration.

There is a second aspect. I would point out that sometimes, and not this morning, not today, certain people speak of Quebec sovereignists as somewhat xenophobic. I am not saying that I have heard such a thing today. I would, however, like to testify to the fact that Quebecers are very welcoming to refugees. Throughout our history, we have always given a very proper welcome to refugees, including the latest waves.

• (1205)

As proof, yesterday I just happened to read Pierre Bourgault in the *Journal de Montréal*. He is a staunch and very persuasive separatist and makes no effort to hide the fact. He offered the following thought. If the rules on refugees are too tough, if a closed door attitude is adopted, will western countries such as Canada not in fact see an increase in the numbers of illegal immigrants crossing their borders? People wishing to flee their country would have no choice but to use the services of professionals and professionals means criminal organizations and so forth. The result achieved would be the opposite of the one sought.

As we know, and this is true with any piece of legislation, we must always be on the lookout for the down side. Mr. Bourgault quite rightly pointed out this risk. Furthermore, when we read the backgrounders provided when the minister introduced the bill, we can only be amazed at the hard line she takes. She talks of closing the doors, of making this bill tougher in response to the public perception in certain quarters that Canada is a preferred point of entry for criminals.

I am not questioning whether in fact criminals manage to slip past the IRB and are perhaps already here. In connection with this problem, I think that what are needed are removal provisions in the bill for the cases when this comes to our attention. Clearly, we must not encourage this sort of activity. At the same time, if we put too much emphasis on this aspect of the problem and if we shut the door too much by tightening the rules, we may get the opposite effect and prevent genuine refugees whose lives are threatened because of their political or religious convictions from entering Canada. Or we may prevent people whose rights, as recognized by

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the Canadian Charter of Human Rights, the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, are violated from entering Canada.

I wish to add my comments to those made by my colleague yesterday. I am concerned about another aspect of the bill. Many people come to my office, to all members' offices, to bring up immigration matters. Perhaps we see only one aspect of the issue, namely the most problematic cases. After close to eight years, I have come to realize that, depending on the cases reviewed by a board member or by any other person, interpretations may differ. I am not saying it is necessarily the case with all those who currently hold these positions, but if one looks at past appointments, one wonders about the need to continue to make such political appointments.

In my view, this is one area that requires a great deal of skill, impartiality and training, because it involves highly judicial and legal issues. In the future, we should make sure that, above all, such appointments are not political ones. I add these remarks to those of my colleague and I am sure that she shares them with me.

The bill should deal with the appointment process. We need a tighter process that would at least give the impression that the system is very impartial, very fair and more effective, particularly in light of the number of claims pending.

• (1210)

For example, I am told that there are 400,000 people in the world who are awaiting a response on whether they will be accepted into Canada. Obviously, this is not just refugees, but the whole spectrum of immigration.

There are extensive delays in obtaining a response. I wonder why Canada—and the bill is still not clear enough in this regard—despite the warning from the UNHCR about imprisoning minors, continues to imprison large numbers of children and teenagers automatically when they are refugees without documents.

We know that there is child labour in a number of countries. Then, when they arrive in Canada, the best country in the world according to the Prime Minister and certain hon. members over there, they face the possible imprisonment as refugees, just because they are minors and because it would appear that we are not fully prepared to take them in, because they lack documents and we lack the staff to examine their files promptly.

Those are the points I wanted to raise. I do not want to extend my speech needlessly. I would like to remind hon. members in conclusion that we are amazed at the hard line attitude taken when this bill was introduced, when it is so important for both Canada and Quebec.

Although the Bloc Québécois members agree with the principle behind the bill, we feel that Quebec's authority with respect to

immigration is not clearly enough defined. This is where we have a problem.

As the House knows, Quebec signed an agreement with the federal government allowing it to select its own immigrants, so-called economic immigrants. At the present time, however, authority for refugees is left entirely to the federal government.

Once again, I repeat, we are very open to cases of this sort, if only out of a sense of humanity. Quebec is very aware of what is going on in certain countries and in certain circumstances. However, the Bloc Québécois feels that it would be a good idea to spell out Quebec's authority under the immigration agreement.

[English]

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière for his very helpful comments. The issues he raised are challenging to both the standing committee and all Canadians.

The member for Vancouver East pointed out this morning that there are apparently about 25 so-called migrants that have no status and are therefore detained on the west coast. Canadians do not agree that we should be detaining migrants for long lengths of time because of lack of identification on the person. We know that people who hop on airplanes that come to Canada must show identification. In fact, that is the responsibility of the carriers.

I will read the mission statement of the Immigration Refugee Board: on behalf of all Canadians it is "to make well reasoned decisions on immigration and refugee matters efficiently, fairly and in accordance with the law". Perhaps the role of the board has to be enhanced.

• (1215)

Does the hon. member think that the vehicles currently in place need to be changed so that they address the issue of trying to figure out where migrants come from and who they are?

[Translation]

**Mr. Antoine Dubé:** Madam Speaker, I am not an immigration expert. My comments are influenced by what I see as an MP. I have been here for eight years and this is not my first mandate, as I think it is for most members of the House. As MPs, we are obviously exposed to those having problems.

Most of the time, the people who come to see us are not criminals. They have already settled in Canada and want to bring in members of their family. Their concern is to reunite their family. Often, as MPs, we are in a position to learn, through their neighbours or others in the community, how they are behaving. The majority of cases are entirely legitimate.

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I am not telling the member that I am an expert in the rules of immigration and I have no aspirations to become an immigration commissioner. I trust the members of the committee from all the parties, especially my colleague from Laval Centre, to bring up these matters in committee.

I thank the member for giving me the opportunity to address a point I had overlooked in my remarks, the opportunity to hear witnesses. This is an important bill, and there are all sorts of groups in society with opinions. There are experts in this area. They do not come just from the world of government but from civil society as well. They live in Canada and run into this sort of case daily.

I would suggest the time needed be taken and no attempt be taken to upset the various stages, since these are delicate cases. The Immigration Act is not changed every year. We should take the time necessary now in committee to ensure we have the best possible legislation.

**Mr. Mark Assad (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière said that a part of the bill was tough. He is right. There is a part that is very tough.

It is the part that seeks to prevent people from illegally entering Canada, including those who use forged documents and criminals who want to come here. We must obviously be very vigilant and these provisions of the act are tough, but this is necessary, because if we truly want to ensure an immigration process that will serve our country well, we must ensure that those who arrive here go through the legal channels and are properly checked and identified. The act is tough in this regard.

There is something else which we must not forget. The hon. member was right when he said that there are over 400,000 unprocessed claims. This is why we introduced a new bill. It is precisely so that we can have a system that is much more effective and efficient, a system that will reduce delays. Indeed, the main objective is to have a system that will adequately meet our needs and also reduce these delays.

**Mr. Antoine Dubé:** Madam Speaker, when I began addressing this bill, I said that I was adding to what my colleague for Laval Centre had said, focusing on one point that had attracted my attention, that is, undocumented refugees.

• (1220)

I believe it is worth focusing particular attention on those who come undocumented. The hon. member across the floor spoke of those with forged papers. He is right about that: checks must be made. I will not name any particular countries, but in certain countries that are experiencing war or other crises—the circumstances vary from place to place and from situation to situation—sometimes it is pointless to ask for documents, especially if the

person belongs to a group feeling oppressed by a rival group seen as the opposition, because no documents will be forthcoming.

I would like to voice a caution. The lack of documents should not make an application inadmissible. Some humanity ought to come into it. Take the case of guerrillas; it is not always governments that oppress their citizens, sometimes it is parallel groups, militias. As hon. members are aware, there are all manner of situations.

As a member of the subcommittee on human rights, I am concerned about people in terrible situations. When groups arrive, families with young children, they need to be treated with some humanity. I have pointed out in particular that they must not be detained an unnecessarily long time, the children in particular. This is contrary to the international rules of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

For example, if the legitimacy of certain individuals' situations is accepted, if the fact that they are undocumented is accepted, they must not be left for ten years without any new documents from the Government of Canada. I have even heard someone describe feeling imprisoned, unable to travel abroad, unable to bring other family members, who had managed to get out of their country, here because of a status that was in some ways that of a citizen without any rights.

I deplore such situations. No one here will be surprised at my point of view, as a member of the subcommittee on human rights.

**Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I wish to ask a brief but important question.

My colleague has barely touched on the fact that the government has not used the great opportunity the introduction of this immigration bill gives us all to allow the agreement to be amended, to at least allow Quebec to have a say and decide to have refugees instead of leaving this entirely up to the federal government.

**Mr. Antoine Dubé:** Madam Speaker, I think this would be warranted, since where do one third of refugees to Canada go? They go to Quebec. The numbers warrant it.

[English]

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-11. Earlier in the debate one of the members from the government side asked for specifics. I am here to provide some. My riding is one of the areas with the highest rates of immigration. I have helped many individuals get into the country

I will not speak to that aspect today. I will speak to how the refugee system has failed us and how criminals take advantage of it. I will also talk about what can be done in legislation to fix the situation.

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● (1225)

I have already heard from members opposite that these kinds of things have to get fixed, but in all fairness I do not think the government is headed toward fixing this problem. I also do not think it has the desire to do so. I will point out several specific cases with regard to that.

I wish to congratulate you on your appointment to the chair, Madam Speaker. I will go back a ways on immigration and talk about how criminals abuse the system. I choose to talk about criminals because I spent a lot of time as justice critic and now as solicitor general critic on these kinds of issues. I seem to be one of the few who is fighting them. I have spent many hundreds of hours fighting these kinds of cases on behalf of victims. Each and every time I have been involved in them, I have been asked to intervene on behalf of the victims.

I refer to an article that appeared in a trade magazine printed in Central America, the United States and Mexico. I raise this because it emphasizes in my mind how other countries think of us. The following paid ad appeared in the magazine: "Guaranteed immigration to Canada with the purchase of a Fleet Rent-a-Car franchise. Total investment of \$50,000 Canadian, approximately \$30,000 U.S. You are guaranteed", and the word guaranteed is underlined, "immigration to Canada even with a criminal record".

I pursued the particular ad because it gave an address on Bathurst Street in Toronto and a phone number. I had an organization interview these people under the auspices of being from another country and having criminal records. Sure enough, they validated exactly what they said in the ad. They essentially said that they could fix it up for those with a criminal record who wanted to get into Canada. Then they were asked questions about how such people could get into Russia, England, Canada and so on. The most outstanding point was: "Just get your foot on their soil and you are in". In fact that is true.

I recently spent some time with police in an area well known for its drugs. We stopped and picked up three Hondurans. They were asked for their papers. All three individuals came to Canada illegally. One had been here for 10 months. He had two criminal convictions and one outstanding charge for trafficking. One was here for something like six months. He had an outstanding charge for trafficking. One had just arrived in Canada, I believe under a train car from the United States.

We have a situation where these young men are selling drugs to our kids, sending the money back home and not being deported. Therein lies part of the problem with our refugee system. I will go through the reasons it has to be fixed. I have no illusions about it. I have spoken to these issues time and time again in the House and they do not get fixed. I am putting on the record today that the problem still exists and I do not think the propensity is on the other side to deal with it.

A fellow from Cuba came into our country a very short time ago. I was asked by parents to look into the situation because they had an underage child. I should say that the child used to be underage but both the Conservative and Liberal governments took it upon themselves at one time to change the age of consensual sex from 16 years to 14 years. This child, who is now legally able to have consensual sex is 15 years old and the fellow who is dealing is 32. The parents asked me to intervene, so I did.

● (1230)

We are not sure how he got into the country. Nobody was ever really sure. Once he found out that I was on the job on this particular issue, I knew what would happen. He was advised to apply for refugee status. Word gets out pretty fast to apply for refugee status and get into this morass that lasts forever and keeps a person in this country, so first of all I applied as an intervener at the refugee hearing.

He, at his discretion, tried to keep me out of the refugee hearing. I had to apply to the refugee board to get into the refugee hearing. I had to fight that battle. I won that. It is preposterous that a Canadian citizen cannot sit in a refugee hearing at his or her own discretion and that an individual applying for refugee status in Canada, regardless of whether he or she is a criminal or not, has the option to kick out a Canadian citizen. That is just preposterous.

I won the right to be in the hearing. In the refugee hearing, since I was allowed to be there, I was my own intervener. I am not a lawyer. I have only picked up the basics of this through self-teaching. In the hearing I was passed a document—from the right source—that identified this fellow as being wanted by the FBI in the United States for trafficking. He was wanted in Nevada and California.

There he had a 15 year old child from Canada, the parents did not want him, we did not want him, he was trafficking and the Americans were after him. We found out that he had been living in the United States for four years, but at his own discretion when the heat was on in the United States he skipped across the border to Canada to say that he was applying for refugee status, solely to avoid the law in the United States, not as an applicant from Cuba, although that is what his application said.

I fought this in the refugee hearing. I asked what we were doing to ourselves and why did we not ship this fellow the next morning over to the States and let him pay his dues, but no. We had more than one refugee hearing. We were to have numerous refugee hearings on this guy. The parents were beside themselves, not quite understanding why it was that Canada was even entertaining a refugee hearing in the first place, much less a refugee hearing on an individual who had been living in the United States for four years.

As time went on we actually won the battle and the refugee board declared that he was not a genuine refugee. After the board did so, I said to the refugee board that the guy had better be put in holding



because he was going to jump. No, the board did not want to do that because then his rights would have been violated. So the board told him he was not a refugee and what did he do? We do not know where he is today because he skipped, exactly as I told them he would and exactly the way it has happened countless times when I have fought these issues.

A person has to wonder what bright light comes on at the immigration and refugee hearings such that people will not listen to reason. I recently found out as late as last week that this person has absconded with the young girl. The parents are wondering why we even entertained the refugee hearing in the first place, much less not holding the guy once he was declared deportable.

What is wrong with that philosophy?

Let us turn to more examples. There is a fellow by the name of Chander in my riding. He arrived in 1996 as a visitor from India and quickly got married. He beat up his wife several weeks later, but he was married and figured he was going to stay in Canada. I was asked by his wife to intervene. The moment I intervened, this individual, charged with assault and in Canada basically under false pretences, applied for refugee status.

It is just the common thing to do. I have even heard immigration adjudicators say that if a deportation fails the person can always apply for refugee status. It is used for the wrong reasons by some people.

• (1235)

This individual started to fight. He tried to kick me out of the hearing. I had to fight to make sure I stayed in the hearing. I did that. It was the same thing. It was the same advice they get from all their legal aid lawyers. It was identical.

We fought the case all the way to the refugee board and the board found that no credible or trustworthy evidence was available on which to base a convention refugee claim. I said he had better be kept behind bars because I could tell the board where he was going and that he would not be around on the day he was to be deported. He has gone. We are not sure where he went.

However, there is a little law that says if everything fails on the application and if a person returns to his or her country and comes back here after 90 days, he or she can re-apply.

About six months later I got a call, from Calgary this time, not Abbotsford, British Columbia. Guess who re-applied for refugee status? By luck I found out. Had I not found out, it would have been clear sailing.

So we went through it again. He applied to kick me out of the hearing. He did not want the public involved. He had the right. I

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fought that and won. We went to the refugee hearing in Calgary, fought there and won a second time. For the second time I advised that if the person was to be deported he should be locked up because he would disappear and he would claim again somewhere maybe in Halifax next time, who knew? That could not be done because that was against his rights. Today we again do not know where he is. Very likely he has already had another refugee claim that I have not heard about, or he is about to and I may not hear about it.

The system is used and abused.

Get the logic he used. This fellow even claimed that he was a refugee from India—a democratic country yet—because he was being persecuted. He failed in his refugee application, then came back and had the audacity to lie at the second refugee hearing. He said he went to India, stayed a while and came back in. He was asked if he was persecuted there. He was asked why he would go back if he would be persecuted. He did not have an answer.

This is going on every single day, time and time again every day in our country. I cannot believe how preposterous this system is getting. Yet when we stand up here and talk about an immigration act, there is no mention of these difficulties.

In our sorrowful areas where we see a lot of drug use and abuse, on the downtown east side of Vancouver, we have many individuals trafficking in drugs who are non-Canadians. Some of them have not 2 or 3 charges and convictions but 20, 30 and 40. I have the records. They are not deported. They are selling drugs to our children and they are not deported. If we try to deport them they claim refugee status, and the deportation and refugee boards do not talk to each other. One will say that is their business, not ours. Then when they jump over from deportation to refugee board application, the refugee board says yes, that is our business and not theirs. However, it is the business and concern of all of us.

While there are many genuine people coming into the country as immigrants and as refugees, and we are happy for that, there are those who are blatantly abusing the system. It must be dealt with. It cannot be dealt with by tabling legislation and not talking about it. It cannot be dealt with by someone like myself standing up and trying to defend the rights of victims who have been abused while someone else over there is saying I must be a racist because I am talking about the immigration system not working.

• (1240)

I have been asked to speak about these issues on behalf of victims, some who have been raped by some of these individuals. One individual, a friend of mine now, was raped by a man from El Salvador. He was ordered deported. We shipped him out to El Salvador on the condition that she drop the charges. She agreed in order to get him out of the country.

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After he was escorted out—we flew him to El Salvador—she was getting gas for her car in my community six months later and guess who was gassing up beside her? The very guy who raped her, who we shipped out. Do members know what he did? To avoid being deported again, he stood up with his legal aid lawyers, two of them this time, and said he was a refugee. We went through the whole process for two years. For two long years this girl went through this. He was one of those individuals, by the way, who refuse to take a test for HIV; that is her problem.

If the House wants specifics from the other side, I have them and dozens more stories like this. I am not trying to paint a picture of a terrible, chaotic system. I am telling the government for the umpteenth time in the House of Commons that there are problems that need to be fixed.

Victims are hoping that we in the House of Commons do something about it rather than standing up and saying that all is well, that we want everything to continue on the way it has been with a couple of changes. There are people who need our help.

Criminals in our country and in all other countries see us as a haven. That is not made up. All we have to do is pick up the FBI directory or the CIA documents in the United States. They will tell us that criminals see Canada as a haven, because once they get here they are entitled to the charter of rights and freedoms and they get legal aid if they get into trouble. What is the worst that can happen in Canada? Conditional sentence, suspended sentence, stay of proceedings, charges dropped? Even if they do a couple of years in prison they are seldom deported. We can look at the disgusting track record on that.

A Czechoslovakian sexually assaulted a very good friend of mine in my riding, Joan. Joan is 63 years old. The man served time in prison. It was only after spending three long years with government officials and Corrections Canada that we basically forced them to ship him back to Czechoslovakia. That should not happen.

A person who is a non-citizen and comes into the country has to obey the laws. For goodness' sake, that is all we ask.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mark Assad (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member has presented the very negative down side. Undoubtedly there were difficulties in the past. I am not denying it, but these are extreme cases.

Last year, more than 8,600 people who entered the country illegally were deported. The system is not perfect, but it is working. Since 1995, not that long ago, 45,000 people have been deported.

• (1245)

[*English*]

What our colleague has brought before us, unfortunately, does happen. They are extreme cases. Nobody in the House wants to see people abuse the system like that. We know it can happen, and I am sure it has happened in other countries, but we are coming in with new legislation. We will be much more efficient and we will try to eliminate the extreme cases, but we cannot think that it will be done overnight and that we will have a completely flawless system. No one in the world has a flawless system.

**Mr. Randy White:** Mr. Speaker, there is the answer. They should write that down because that is all those members say. This is not about extremes. It is about law abiding Canadian citizens becoming victims of individuals who come into our country. In my area it is not an extreme. I cannot dream up those cases. Is the member saying that this case and dozens of other cases in my immediate area are extremes or isolated incidents? They are not.

The difficulty I have is that when legislation comes into the House that we do not like we are called extremists, bigots or whatever. Those kinds of comments filter out the reality of legislation. The reality of legislation to a victim is much different. What happens in the House of Commons is a lot different from what happens on the street. I know because I spend a fair amount of time on the street, and I would suggest that perhaps the member should as well.

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague from Langley—Abbotsford for his heartfelt and passionate work on the issue and his advocacy of victims' rights and reform of this system, which continues to grind away with the Liberal government being utterly indifferent to the impact it has on people's real lives. The government says extremes, but I say that they are real people, not extremes.

The most frequent comment we hear in the debate from members opposite and from members of other parties on the problems in the system and the enormous holes that exist, for instance, in the refugee system, is to discredit all immigration and therefore to create, they suggest, a kind of hysterical anti-immigration attitude.

Would my colleague not agree that is a completely irresponsible argument and that, if anything, what diminishes Canadians' attitude of generosity and openness toward new immigrants is precisely the abuses of the system to which he has referred? Would he not agree that it is by correcting such injustices and inequities in the system that we can best create an attitude of openness and tolerance toward the many hundreds of thousands of new Canadians who come to this place lawfully and contribute to our prosperity?



**Mr. Randy White:** Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely correct. The other side of the House believes that if we do not address the issues precisely the way they do then there is something irresponsible in the way we talk to issues.

I am reminded of the last election and the comments by the immigration minister who basically said that people associated with the Canadian Alliance were holocaust deniers, racists and bigots. That would include my mother who lost her first husband in Italy during the war.

• (1250)

The perpetuation of that kind of thought leads to mistrust on the part of all Canadians, not just some Canadians. I think those words coming from the immigration minister were perhaps even more noticeable since the individual who said them is a minister of our country.

**Mr. Jason Kenney:** She should be fired.

**Mr. Randy White:** My colleague from Calgary states it quite plainly. Most people in the country thought she should have been fired or at least when cabinet was reorganized she should not have been given the job. She represents a thought process that should not exist but which is perpetuated by the other side.

When we talk about real life gut issues that affect people on the street and victims in the country, we are treated with a wall, a barrage, like Holocaust deniers. Where the heck did that ever come from other than from the mouth of the immigration minister? I thought it was really disgusting.

My colleague is absolutely correct when he says that the promotion of those kinds of words leads only to degrade our nation not just a political party. When we talk about words like extreme, there is nothing extreme in anything I said here today. I guarantee my colleagues in the House that if the victims I talked about today were in the House we would hear one heck of a lot more from them than from me about how badly the system is operating.

Sometimes the reflection, as my colleague says, of a whole system gets tainted by smaller problems within the whole. I was suggesting that to make the whole system work well, look well and operate well, we have to fix all parts of it not just some of it.

**Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I just cannot resist the observation that it really does not further the tone of this debate to have the member opposite preach to the converted, the member who questioned him, and repeat all these things about the unfortunate remarks that were attributed to the minister of immigration. We

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should leave that behind. Whoever brings it up, we should leave it behind.

I would like to take the debate on to a point for the member that perhaps puts us back on track.

Does the member see any merit in perhaps revisiting some of the charter decisions that had such a profound effect on Canadian immigration policy? I am thinking specifically of the Singh decision of 1984 which, as members may not be aware, was a split decision. Only three justices ruled that a person who lands in this country should be entitled to all due process, ruled in terms of the charter, and the other three justices ruled in terms of the Human Rights Act.

So in fact there was no majority under any single legislation, much less the charter, that supported the supreme court's decision that was later interpreted as a fundamental charter decision.

I wonder what the member's thoughts are on that. Is this something that perhaps we should encourage the government to revisit and to test before the supreme court once again?

**Mr. Randy White:** Madam Speaker, I am glad my colleague brought that up because the Singh decision in 1984 was the benchmark for immigration. To a large extent, I think it tends to discredit the whole immigration system because of that one aspect of it.

Individuals coming into the country should have certain rights and privileges but not the same rights, privileges and freedoms as Canadians. I do not think it applies.

For instance, I was sitting in an immigration office one day when some individuals jumped ship. Without regard to their background, and because of the Singh decision on all their rights and privileges, a medical person was there, two lawyers jumped on it as fast as they could, and three or four other people were there saying that they would help them. There was an individual there from the welfare office promising to pay right away. I thought wait a minute, slow down a bit.

• (1255)

The charter of rights and privileges must be revisited. I agree with the member. I would be open to a long discussion on that subject. It is very timely and necessary. Society has taken the charter of rights much too far today.

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I will start by congratulating you on your appointment to the chair. It is a real honour for me to be able to speak to this piece of legislation, Bill C-11.

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I will first talk about what Canadians want from an immigration system. Second, I will address what they do not want. Then I will go through the legislation and point out 28 different areas that must be focused on and seriously looked at, at committee level. Those areas must be examined and in many cases modified through amendments to make the legislation something which serves what Canadians want and helps prevent what they do not want.

What do Canadians want? They want a system that works first for economic and independent immigrants. The current system clearly does not work well. Any one of us as members of parliament could point to individual cases and lots of them. In each constituency across the country there are hundreds of cases where the system has failed people and where it has taken them too long to work their way through it. The result has not made sense. These are not isolated cases. They are very common.

Our system in the past worked extremely well. I think about my constituency. I think about the immigrants who developed the area of Lakeland constituency. In the latter part of the 19th century immigration to Canada began with immigrants from Britain and then expanded to include Germany and almost every country in western Europe.

In the late part of the 19th century we had a Lebanese settlement which is still prominent in Lac La Biche and in parts of our constituency. They are a well established part of the community. They have helped build the community. In the late 19th century and in two other instances, after the first world war and the second world war, we had Ukrainian immigration from eastern Europe.

These immigrants have built our country. I think we all recognize this point. Every member of parliament could point to his or her constituency and to how immigration has worked in the past.

Why do we not learn from what has happened and what has worked in the past so that we can build a system that will work better in the future? That is what Canadians want in terms of independent categories.

Canadians also want a system which will reunite families quickly. When families are separated, either because family members have come as refugee claimants or have come under the independent categories, Canadians want a system which will reunite families quickly.

Again, every member of parliament in his or her constituency can point to dozens of situations where a member of a family came to the country and where a spouse or dependent children have not been allowed to come. The process has taken months and even years in many cases.

I can point to situations in my own constituency where husbands and wives have been waiting to be reunited for more than three years. Canadians want a system which will allow that to happen

much more quickly and in a fashion that is expected from a well developed country like Canada.

Canadians also want a system which will accept genuine refugees. There is no doubt that Canadians support accepting genuine refugees. I have heard nothing but support for that from people from across the country. They want it right now. They know our system is failing genuine refugees.

• (1300)

For example, fewer than 5,000 of the 23,000 refugees that we accept each year are actually chosen from camps overseas where they have been designated as refugees by the United Nations. We bring in fewer than 5,000 of those people a year, and most of the people we bring in are not actually from camps. They are brought in from overseas, but they have been rejected by the system in another country. Very few actually come in from camps each year. Canadians want the system to focus on genuine refugees, and it is not doing that.

Canadians do not want a system which would allow abuse of our immigration system. Canadians do not want that. They do not want queue jumpers abusing the goodwill of our country and pushing aside others who would go through the system properly. That happens all too often. We all know that and I do not think there is any real doubt about it.

Canadians do not want people who are not genuine refugees and who have been rejected by the system to be allowed to stay in our country. Yet that happens. While our official acceptance rate for refugees is something like 50%, which is many times higher than the rate of most other countries, only 15% of all people who come to Canada claiming to be refugees are ever known to leave the country. That is what makes Canadians angry about our system and about the way the government allowed our system to fail. That is what Canadians do not want.

I want to read into the record the Canadian Alliance policy on immigration. The Canadian Alliance is a new political party. We are only slightly over a year old, so we do not have policy that is completely fleshed out in a lot of areas. There is a lot of work to be done. We are looking forward to our convention about a year from now where we will have a lot of policy fleshed out in a lot more detail.

Here is exactly what the Canadian Alliance policy book says about immigration. I am proud of it and I want Canadians to know about it. I do not want the misinterpretations and the false statements made by members of other political parties, by the media or anyone else to be allowed to stand, because they should not stand. Here is our policy:

We see Canada as a land built by immigrants and will continue to welcome new immigrants. We support sponsorship for immediate family members. Our immigration policy will take into account Canada's economic needs and we will introduce greater

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fairness and security into the system, including enforcement of sponsorship obligations. We will work co-operatively with the provinces on the settlement of immigrants.

We want to protect the integrity of the valuable contribution made to the fabric of Canada by millions of law abiding immigrants. We will not allow their good reputation to be jeopardized by non-citizens who engage in criminal activity and will speedily deport such individuals once their sentence has been served.

We affirm Canada's humanitarian obligation to welcome genuine refugees and are proud that our country has provided a safe haven for distressed people from across the world. To ensure fairness and end queue jumping, we will immediately deport bogus refugees and other illegal entrants, and will severely penalize those who organize abuse of the system.

That refers to people smugglers, people traffickers and that kind of thing. It continues:

We will ensure that refugee status is arbitrated expeditiously, consistently and professionally. We will end the abuse of refugee claims as a fast track to gain the benefits of landed immigrant status.

That is the Canadian Alliance policy on immigration, and I am proud of it. This policy came from the membership and all our members support it. I think we had the support of roughly three million Canadians in the last election. I am not sure of the numbers but 25% of all Canadians supported us in the last election. I think every one of them would be proud of our immigration policy. It is something we should all be proud of and I do take pride in it.

• (1305)

I will now get a little more specific. There are 28 areas of the bill that I believe require careful scrutiny by the committee. Now 28 is a large number, and every one of them is important, but I have only targeted the ones that I feel are important. As my time allows, I will quickly go through and point out the areas that must be carefully scrutinized by the committee. The committee must also have expert witnesses come in to present their views. This information will be valuable to make the legislation better.

First, the objective section of the bill, which is at the very beginning, says, in general terms, that what the immigration act is based on is new. That is one of the things that is new about the legislation. It is important that it is carefully discussed and scrutinized by the committee.

Some of the aspects of the new bill concern some very specific areas while other areas are very general and cover many different clauses of the bill. I wanted people to understand that as they are listening to these comments.

Second, I will deal with charter considerations. Clause 33(d), without much doubt, seems to be offering Canadian charter protection to non-citizens. No other country in the world does that. People who are not Canadian citizens and who do not even live in our country would be granted protection under our charter. How could a country do that? That protection is in the bill and it needs

to be carefully scrutinized and changed as required. I encourage the committee to look at that.

A third very broad aspect of the legislation deals with what is actually in the legislation and what is left to regulation. A regulation can be changed by a minister or by department officials who tell the minister to change it. It can also be changed through order in council at any time without ever passing through the House.

This piece of legislation is very general and leaves far too much to regulation. There would be a void of accountability resulting from the legislation. That will become very obvious as I move ahead in my comments.

The fourth general area is the federal-provincial agreements and the consultations with the provinces. The agreements are referred to in the bill but there are no assurances that the provinces will have to go along with what the federal government proposes and what is put forth in regulation. The government only says that it will listen to the provinces on these issues. It will not necessarily demand the approval of the provinces. I think that is a concern. When we have an issue such as this, which has such a profound and direct impact on each province, the provinces should have a real say in what is in the immigration law.

The fifth point is the whole area of economic immigration which is the backbone of our immigration system. The independent categories of immigration consist of people who can very quickly add to our economy and make our country a stronger and better place to live. It is the guiding principle in the selection process that I will refer to first.

I find it of great concern that the single most important and a valuable component of Canadian immigration, the economic category, is only dealt with by a single sentence in the bill. It is hard to believe that there is only one sentence.

The single sentence in clause 12(1) would be the guiding principle on which countless regulations would be developed. The law in fact would be created through regulation. It is not in the bill. This is a real concern to me. How can we hold departmental officials, the minister and the cabinet accountable if there is no assurance that changes will be made by passing them through parliament?

I fully understand and accept that certain aspects of any legislation have to be left to regulation, but the balance in this legislation is way out of line.

The sixth area deals with the attempts made to streamline the immigration process. I have listened to new immigrants from one end of the country to the other, particularly from the greater Toronto area. Half of all immigrants settle in the greater Toronto area.

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• (1310)

I actually set up a task force there over the past few years and had input from hundreds of new immigrants. Having listened to them, I found there was a recurring theme. People said that immigrating to Canada takes a painfully long time; the system does not work well; it is bureaucratic; and the people they deal with just do not seem to care. These were common sentiments. I am sure every member has heard these sentiments from people they have met or helped who had gone through the system.

The bill does not address in any way the effectiveness of the immigration department. It places no legislative requirement for setting or meeting stated immigration goals. How do we know whether we are succeeding if we do not have the goals clearly laid out in the legislation? It is not here and I think that certainly creates a real problem.

Guiding principles on family class immigration is the seventh point. The bill is excessively vague on who could be considered family. Only clause 12 actually defines family. The details are left to regulation through clause 14. That is the fact of the bill. As with the economic class, there are a few guiding principles regarding the family, which are laid out pretty much in one sentence in the legislation. Subsequently everything else would be left to the interpretation of the bureaucrats, the minister and the cabinet of the day.

Relying on regulation to guide Canada's immigration policy has failed thus far. It has failed Canadians and the people applying to come to our country alike. We must change the system so that we have clear principles laid out in the legislation which define the family, and I would encourage the committee to ensure that happens.

The eighth point is family class immigration reunification. It is important and goes along with defining a family and family reunification. It is important to determine whether a situation is actually a case of family reunification. If grandparents are brought to Canada, for example, when the majority of the family still lives in the country of origin or in another country, is it family reunification to bring the grandparents over to live with one child in Canada? That question has to be examined very carefully. It will be important for the committee to look at it and determine that.

The ninth point is a more narrow one. It is the issue of the common law spouse provision. In keeping with the first draft of the bill, Bill C-23, and this is the third draft, the minister has included a provision to define a family member as a common law spouse. This raises more questions than it answers.

Presently the immigration department has a very difficult time verifying a legitimate marriage. The department cannot deal with

the huge problem of verifying whether a marriage is a marriage of convenience to accommodate immigration or whether it is a genuine marriage. How on earth would we deal with that when we allow a common law marriage to be used under the bill? It is an administrative impossibility and an administrative nightmare.

The tenth point is the authorization to enter and remain in Canada, the dual intent as it is laid out in the bill or the in Canada landing class. The legislation outlines a provision which would allow for that depending on the regulation. We do not know how wide or narrow it might be. It would allow a foreign national to enter Canada with the dual intent of visiting and then immigrating later.

Furthermore, the same section of the bill would create an in Canada landing class. This was taken out several years back because when it was in place it created a nightmare. It is exactly the same as it was 15 or 20 years ago in the old Immigration Act. The last major situation was created about 11 years ago in 1990. This exact situation led to a mass amnesty for anyone who came into the country illegally by the immigration department. These amnesties have not served us well. We are letting everyone in those situations, no matter what their background and without scrutiny, come into the country. This change would lead to the need for another amnesty.

• (1315)

I have only dealt with 10 out of 23, but I know I will have a chance to deal with the legislation in the future. I will close with a 30 second comment which has to do with the suitability of the current immigration minister to remain as minister.

She made comments about three million or more Canadians who supported the Canadian Alliance. She referred to Canadian Alliance members as racists, bigots and Holocaust deniers. I question whether that person has any right to remain as a minister of the crown, particularly the minister of immigration. I want her fired. I expect nothing less.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member. In his speech he mentioned immigration based on economic requirements. I believe those were his words. Years ago his former leader raised that issue and it caused a lot of concern throughout the country about what it basically meant.

Could the hon. member clarify again exactly what it means when he stands and says that immigration should be based on either economic levels or economic requirements? I just wanted to give him the chance to clarify. Is he saying, and I do not think he is, that we should base immigration levels on our economic requirements or a wider parameter?



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**Mr. Leon Benoit:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member asking this question. It gives me a chance to clarify a large misunderstanding that I left in place.

I am talking about having a system which targets people who can add very quickly to our system and to our economy. This is one of the stated goals of the current immigration system. It is a stated goal in the new bill. There is nothing there to indicate that anything would be improved.

In answering the question I refer to the ninth recommendation of the immigration task force report. The information came from people who came to Canada over the last 20 or 30 years and some who came in the last year or less. They are the people who have dealt with the system in a way that leads them to understand what some of the problems are.

They put forth a specific recommendation which I think would be of huge benefit. I see nothing innovative in the legislation that reflects what these people put forth. They described the following common problem.

Immigration consultants, be they lawyers or non-lawyer consultants, go to Pakistan or India, two major countries from which we accept immigrants, and put on a seminar for maybe 300 or 400 people. They tell people that Canada is a great country, which is true, and they also say some things that are not quite as true. They say, for example, that engineers in Pakistan or in India can just come over to Canada and immediately become engineers. That is simply not true.

I will never forget as long as I live an experience I had. Three or four people told me that if they could find the consultant who told them that, they would do serious damage to the individual because it had made their lives hell.

It would improve the system if people coming to Canada knew what they were coming to. They should understand the workplace in Canada and what is expected there. The task force recommended that as part of the immigration act there should be a requirement that people immigrating to Canada in economic categories, not as refugees, which is another issue, be tested on their knowledge of the Canadian workplace. I suggest this would save a lot of heartache and would actually increase the economic benefits that we receive from immigrants. This is one of the recommendations that would have a huge impact. We would not have people coming here expecting to be engineers and finding out that they have to work at Future Shop and, in many cases, never becoming engineers.

• (1320)

Many of us who have made a point of talking to cab drivers in Ottawa and in the greater Toronto area have heard a lot of stories about people who came to Canada expecting to take a top end job but ended up driving cabs. There is nothing wrong with driving a

cab but when one expects to be an engineer or in another profession and one is forced to drive a cab to make a living, it is very painful. It often tears the family apart.

Once people have immigrated to Canada or to any other country, there is no going home. They have cut their ties and often have sold their properties. They have told the people around them, their family and friends, that what they have is not good enough and that they want better.

If we ensure that people have a clear understanding and can accept what they are coming to then I think we will have a much better immigration system and one which will lead to maximum economic benefits for the country, but we need to make that one change. There are many other innovative changes that could have been made but none are in the legislation.

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I commend my hon. colleague for his comments and the passion with which he addressed the question. It was excellent. He has obviously done some very serious study of the bill. He has 28 or 30 different items that should be addressed by the committee.

Understanding that he has such a complete knowledge and an intimate recognition of what is involved in the legislation, I wonder if he could address three issues. He has touched on all of them but I do not think he has gone far enough and I would like to give him the opportunity to expand further.

One of the issues has to do with the abuse of the system by people who immigrate to Canada. Another issue has to do with the abuse of the loopholes in the legislation by people in our embassies, in foreign countries or perhaps in Canada who are abusing the consulting services they provide and the good faith people place in them. They are supposed to have superior knowledge and they sort of mislead people.

The final issue, which really gets to the heart of the issue, is the question of where the accountability is in the legislation when the minister of immigration can make the kinds of statements that were made in the last election campaign. I would like the member to address those three issues.

**Mr. Leon Benoit:** Madam Speaker, the member is too kind in his comments but, believe me, I always appreciate that.

In terms of accountability, when the minister referred to the three or four million people who supported the Canadian Alliance as racists, bigots and Holocaust deniers, she lost her credibility, and it is clear that she should not be in this position.

In terms of the system, the auditor general made some interesting comments less than a year ago in his report on the immigration system. He made a lot of statements that were profound, but I will quote from one. He said:

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On the whole, we are very concerned about the Department's ability to ensure compliance with legislative requirements in this area. We noted serious deficiencies in the way it applies admissibility criteria related to health, criminality and security. It is somewhat disappointing to note the limited progress it has made since our 1990 Report.

The auditor general made almost an identical report in many areas back in 1990 and he noted in his 2000 report that many of the same problems are still there.

The accountability is not there in legislation, it is not there in practice and it is not there in the way the department administers it. It is one my biggest concerns. Even if it were a good piece of legislation, if the administration does not improve and if the accountability does not improve then our immigration system will not be any better. That answers the first question.

• (1325)

In terms of abuse of the system, it was interesting to hear an NDP member refer earlier to the roughly 6,000 people who came from China by boat the summer before last. She said they were economic refugees, that they had come here to better their situation. If they wanted to come as economic immigrants they should have come through our immigration system, but she seemed to think it was fine that they came claiming to be refugees when they clearly were not.

The UN convention definition of a refugee says clearly that someone coming to improve his or her economic situation is not a refugee. I was shocked to hear the member's statement. If a person comes here claiming to be a refugee he or she should be a refugee as laid out in the UN convention. Canada has expanded that quite broadly.

These people did not fall under any definition and the member seemed to think that was fine. I have a huge problem with that. I call that abuse of the system.

To the third question on the loopholes in our foreign offices and so on, there was a document leaked to me about a year ago when I was immigration critic that made it very clear that there were many problems in our foreign offices that have to be dealt with, and the auditor general agreed.

**Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I will begin my speech at the point where my colleague from Lakeland left off, and that is the comments made by the immigration minister during the election. I do not think they are worth repeating, but I think it is worth repeating that the minister has done the House, the level of political discourse and herself a disservice. I hope that not only members on this side disavow themselves of such comments but that government members would say publicly the things they are saying in private about their colleague's comments.

I had the opportunity to work for approximately two years on the citizenship and immigration committee. It was a very rewarding

experience. We did a lot of things together, had a lot of heated debates and challenges about different things. Madam Speaker was a part of those debates for some of that period of time. My colleague from Lakeland was our immigration critic for a great deal of that time and brought a lot of salient points to the table in discussing immigration matters.

I will focus on the bill and some of the shortcomings I have noticed in my examination of it, some of which will be expanded upon by my colleagues and some of which have already been noted in debate today.

Of course there are some things in the bill with which we do agree. I give credit where credit is due. There are very few things in any piece of legislation on which we would have wholehearted agreement among all members in the House. In looking at clause 3 in the overall objectives of the bill, we support immigration and the purposes that are set out in terms of enhancing our country and allowing individuals to come from other countries. Canada is built upon the framework and foundation of people coming from other countries and other jurisdictions to make their homes here. We acknowledge that and we want to continue in that vein.

We do notice there are some shortcomings in the bill. We are hoping that the minister would acknowledge those shortcomings in committee. Those of us who have been around the House for a great deal of time are somewhat disheartened when we know from past experience that the suggestions we bring forward have been dismissed out of hand. In some ways we are a little discouraged that the positive changes being presented by members of the Alliance, by other members and perhaps even by members of the government might simply be dismissed. That is a bad thing. Rather than look at things through a partisan lens, we should work together wherever we can in a non-partisan way to find solutions to problems that are obvious to all of us.

• (1330)

The minister has acknowledged in subclause 3(2)(a) of her bill that the act recognizes the refugee program is in the first instance about saving lives and offering protection to the displaced and persecuted. We would agree with that. We would submit to the minister and to members on the government side that so many individuals have misused the process within the immigration system that it desperately needs to be fixed.

Millions of refugees around the world are in need of our protection. They are refugees and therefore do not need to go through any kind of process. The government needs to recognize that individuals in refugee camps are already refugees due to something that has happened in their home nation and would therefore be candidates for protection in Canada. I do not see that acknowledged in the legislation. There needs to be a proper screening process in place. We have been calling for that for a long time.

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In committee a couple of years ago I raised the idea of eliminating the tax on refugees when they came to Canada. It is referred to as the right of landing fee. An interesting process occurred with respect to the idea I brought forward. We had a debate in committee on the idea. It was generally supported by committee members on both sides of the House until it came time for the recorded vote. It was like somebody had taken a hatchet and driven it directly into members of the committee on the government side, severing the good working relationship some of us had for up to two years.

All of a sudden accusations and disparaging remarks were being made toward me and my colleagues for bringing the motion forward to which they had agreed previously in committee and privately announced their support for the elimination of the head tax for refugees. However government members came in and voted the motion down by a vote of eight to seven.

It was an awakening process for me to learn that is how things work around here. A good idea, if it is proposed by members of the opposition or even by a government backbencher, will be trounced and never see the light of day.

Almost a year later the minister made the same change. I am thankful she did. That is why I suggested it in committee and brought it forward. I watched the government vote it down and then watched the minister implement it.

We must get beyond that kind of working relationship in this place if we are to do the people's business. We need to get past the idea that a good idea cannot come from the opposition side or, in the minds of opposition members, that a good idea cannot come from the government side.

**An hon. member:** It rarely does.

**Mr. Grant McNally:** We need to find ways to work together. My colleague says "It rarely does". In many ways that is true because we have had many years of dysfunctional relationship in terms of how we do business around here. That needs to change.

The Alliance is the advocate of that change. The Alliance is the advocate of positive change in all areas including how we govern ourselves in relation to this bill and other bills, and how we change the way we do business in parliament. We invite others to join us along that journey because we are committed to it and will continue to work hard for it.

The people of Canada are telling us it is time for change. It is time for a change in the way the business of the nation is done. Canadians want to see that reflected in the House of Commons, the place where 301 representatives are sent to debate pieces of legislation and to make the rules and guidelines that will be set in place not only for now but for our future.

• (1335)

There are some very serious difficulties with the bill. Another problem I see with it is one of the principles it is built upon: voluntary compliance.

The minister's bill is framed within the philosophy that we will set a framework in place and encourage people to comply with it. If they do not comply with it there are some outs for people that are not good for the safety of our country or the well-being of those who come here to be new citizens. There needs to be a look at the use of discretion within the Immigration Act and at which individuals and departments are able to use that discretion.

I will talk about discretion in a case I know about personally regarding a man I met from Afghanistan who came to Canada. His name is Sharif Karimzada. The secretary of state has knowledge of the case as well. The individual came here as a refugee. He was deemed to be part of a regime under subsection 19.1 of the old act. There was no right of appeal for him to be able to explain his situation. He was categorically put in that box and determined to be inadmissible to Canada regardless of anything he did.

The minister has attempted to address that in section 25 of the Immigration Act. That is what I am reading between the lines. I would like to find that out from her.

There needs to be some discretion in terms of inadmissibility because this person demonstrates that the system is broken. We allow people into the country who, we find out later, should not have been allowed in and we exclude others. That is why we need to take a close look at the bill. That is why the Alliance will point out options for the minister, hope that she implements them and will continue to be the voice for change not only with this bill but throughout this parliament and for the future of our country.

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I had not intended to speak to the bill until I had a chance to look at the estimates for this department that just came out today. It is quite interesting that a department with as many problems as this one has had in the past few years has \$61 million less in its budget this year than last year. What really scares me is the section that talks about managing access to Canada. I will read that section:

The managing access to Canada business line:

develops policies and programs to prevent abuse of Canada's citizenship, immigration and refugee programs and to protect the safety of Canadians and the security of Canada;

contributes to the management of international migration and travel by combating illegal migration, including trafficking in people, while facilitating the movement of legitimate travellers;

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admits to Canada persons who comply with the Immigration Act and regulations; denies admission to those who do not comply, including criminals and terrorists;

detects abuse of the citizenship, immigration and refugee programs;

manages CIC cases before the IRB, Federal Court and other tribunals;

detains persons who pose a serious risk to Canadians or who would not appear for immigration proceedings; and

removes persons not legally entitled to remain in Canada.

The minister and the government have taken heat in the last few days for a mobster who got into Canada and whom we did not find out about for months and months. Now we have him in a jail and we are looking after his welfare and his dental programs and all the other things the average Canadian cannot afford. He got into the country improperly, obviously. We should have caught him at the border. He is one of the most wanted people in the country.

We have the number one Chinese criminal in the world sitting in a jail in Vancouver. He was living here for quite a while and taking the airplane regularly down to Windsor to play in the casino and gamble his money away. He is the number one crook in all of China. Seven of his buddies were executed just the other day. We know he will never leave this country because we now have a law that says we will not deport anybody who will be put to death. There is not much question that he will not last 24 hours if he goes back to China, nor probably should he based on what he has done there.

• (1340)

Now we have an 11 year old girl, somebody's daughter, smuggled across the border in British Columbia with two men and a woman who we knew were crooks. The police knew who they were. What do we have in the budget? We have \$61 million for defence, but that is not the important part. The important part is going to the managing access to Canada section of the estimates.

Last year the budget was \$171,953,000. This year it is \$142,187,000, just about \$30 million less for a program that is already a failure. We will have lots of time over the next little while to look at the estimates to see where the government is spending more money but in a country that has a serious problem with people getting into it illegally, the government is spending \$30 million less next year on a program that could prevent it.

Members on this side and on the other side have sat on an immigration committee that said we should have scanners at different places around the world. Immigration critics on this side have been saying that since 1993. We even got the Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc to agree a few years ago that we should have scanners in some countries. I think, Madam Speaker, you might have been on that committee when we were looking at the issue.

We ran a program in Malaysia at one point with scanners and RCMP and immigration officers. It stopped many people from coming in. We saved millions of dollars because we stopped

people at the source instead of waiting until they got to Canada and giving them all these rights.

It is an absolute scandal to hear the story about that 11 year old girl. Prostitution is the most terrible thing that could happen to any of our children. That young girl and those three crooks should have been stopped at the border where she should have been taken aside and handed to the proper authorities to make sure she did not get into that life.

The Chinese Mafia hit man who was in Vancouver would never have got into the country if we had proper checks and balances. The hit man in Quebec City that the minister is getting into so much trouble over would not have got into Canada if we had a proper system of checks and balances in that area. What is the government's solution? It wants to cut \$30 million out of the program. Canadians will be outraged.

We do not usually help that minister too much with anything but we will try to help her now to get some money back in her department and get the program fixed. Canadians should not have to put up with this program. They should not have to put up with crooks and criminals coming into the country on a daily basis. Canadians are sick and tired of it. When they hear the news today they will be outraged, and so they should be.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The division on the motion is deferred.



• (1345)

### SPECIES AT RISK ACT

The House resumed from February 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, an act respecting the protection of wildlife species at risk in Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP):** Madam Speaker, although I have addressed the House on a few occasions and have asked some questions, this is the first opportunity I feel I have had to recognize the results of the November election: the support and confidence that was placed in me by the constituents of Windsor—St. Clair.

I acknowledge their support and all of the work my supporters did for me, the canvassing and phone calling. It is difficult to put that into words. There are certain specific groups I would like to acknowledge as well. I will start with my family, my wife of 31 years and my three children who were very active in my campaign and have been strong supporters of mine both in this past election and in the two previous times that I ran. I acknowledge that publicly.

A couple of other groups were of particular support to me. The labour movement in the city of Windsor is very strong and a great deal of those members came out and supported me, both on election day and in the campaign leading up to the vote.

There is another group I specifically want to mention. I promised that I would give it credit as one of the significant groups that made the difference in the outcome in my winning or losing since the results were very close in my riding. That group is the citizens who at one time worked in the United States but then came back to live in Canada in their retirement years. They were faced with a significant change in the tax regime put in place by the government. They feel very keenly about this travesty of justice and intend to pursue it. I will also pursue it on their behalf until that travesty of justice is remedied. I wish to acknowledge those people who supported me throughout the campaign and voted for me on election day.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-5, which in common parlance has become known as the endangered species legislation. This is not the first time the legislation has been before the House. In fact the original bill was put before the House in 1994. The government in both its red books and throne speeches has constantly promised the legislation. Here we are seven years down the road, in fact eight years from the time it was first elected, and we still do not have the legislation.

This procrastination and inaction unfortunately is all too typical of the government's record on the environment. It is not a good record whatsoever. We have not seen any new environmental legislation since 1993. There have been some amendments but no

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dramatic changes in the regime governing and protecting our environment.

We have absolutely no legislation right now that in any meaningful way protects our endangered species. That is interesting. If we look at the polling the government has done, there is extremely strong support in Canada for legislation to protect our endangered species. A recent poll conducted by Pollara, which was commissioned by the federal government, found that 94% of Canadians in all regions support federal endangered species legislation. More important, one should note that 74% of people living in rural communities support mandatory, not discretionary, habitat protection legislation.

In spite of the fact that we have broadly based support from environmental groups, labour unions, scientists and industry spokespeople calling for strong and effective endangered species legislation, we still have none as of right now.

• (1350)

The bill before us in the form of Bill C-5 is basically, with minor changes, the same bill that was before the last parliament as Bill C-33. Interestingly both Bill C-5 and Bill C-33 are substantially weaker than Bill C-65 which was introduced by the government back in 1996.

Based on good, solid scientific evidence at the present time we have 354 endangered species. It is a stark reminder that our natural heritage is under threat. The rate at which species disappear is historically at an all time high.

Worldwide we are experiencing more extinctions of natural species at any time in our history since the disappearance of dinosaurs. The current extinction rate is over 10,000 times the natural rate. To put it another way, historically an average of two to three species per year became extinct due to natural causes. Currently this year and in the previous few years about two to three species disappear every hour, all because of human causes. At the present rate scientists are telling us that we could lose 25% of the earth's species in the next 30 years.

Let us take a look at Canada. We have our own problems. In the past 150 years 27 species have become extinct. Let us compare that to the figure I gave earlier. At present 354 endangered species or at risk of extinction are on our list. The list is growing every year. An additional 40 species have been added in the last two years, since 1999.

As a country we have been waiting for almost a decade for the legislation. In 1992 at the earth summit, Canada committed to establishing legislation that was specifically aimed at protecting our vulnerable species. Canada was one of the first signatories to that accord. Yet here we are in 2001 and we are still reviewing the legislation.

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In addition, the bill before the House is fundamentally weak. Let me turn to one of the major weaknesses of the legislation. We were promised by the Liberal Party and by the government that the legislation would protect the species at risk. What we have now is not a shall bill, that is we shall protect, but a maybe bill, that is we may protect them.

The bill contains rampant discretion in favour of the minister and the cabinet. All that it requires the government to do is to consult and report. It does not require it to protect when push comes to shove even one species. They could take these consultations from the scientific community, from the rest of the country, and could ignore them. Given their history, that is likely what they will do.

Bill C-5 is much weaker than the legislation of our partners in the United States and even in Mexico.

• (1355)

I will go back again to some of the public surveys on what the country is prepared to accept in the legislation. Most Canadians have told us that they are prepared to accept economic consequences in order to protect our natural species. Eight out of ten Canadians advocated placing restrictions on industries that pose a threat to endangered species and they are willing to accept the limitation of activities, such as forestry, mining and even tourism.

I will digress for a moment and talk about my own region. In the riding beside mine we have the smallest national park. About 10 years ago it became obvious that we had to limit the number of people allowed into that park. We had to cut the number in half because of the danger it posed to some of the fauna in the park. The public accepted that. There was an educational process and the general community understood the risk the park was at and they accepted the fact that they would have to curtail their activities in the park and the number of times they could go there. It was not easy for them to do but they did accept it. I suggest that is true for the rest of the country. We are prepared to take those losses.

I will now go to the three points that I wish to cover in terms of the weakness of the legislation. The first and foremost weakness is the lack of habitat protection. It is estimated that humans are responsible for almost all the species extinctions that occur, but that within that framework habitat loss is responsible for over 80% of the species' decline in Canada.

If this legislation is passed it will not protect habitat at all. I will compare that situation to the United States and Mexico. In both cases they have passed legislation that not only protects the species but also protects their habitat. Our legislation is simply proposing to make that protection discretionary in the hands of the minister and the government. If species are deemed worthy of protection then we should be protecting them.

**The Speaker:** When consideration of the bill is resumed the hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair will have approximately seven minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks.

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

[English]

**ORDER OF CANADA**

**Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize two distinguished people from my community who will be receiving the Order of Canada tomorrow. They are Mr. Howard Dyck and Professor John English.

Howard Dyck is the conductor and artistic director of the Kitchener-Waterloo philharmonic choir. He is in demand as a clinician, lecturer and adjudicator. As host of CBC Radio's *Saturday afternoon at the opera* and *Choral concerts*, he ignites in his fellow Canadians enthusiasm and curiosity about the broad spectrum of vocal music.

John English is a professor of history and political science and director of the Centre on Foreign Policy and Federalism at the University of Waterloo. He has, through his writings, contributed to the knowledge and understanding of our rich cultural heritage.

Besides reporting on history, Professor English was an excellent member of parliament for Kitchener from 1993 to 1997. His contributions and collegiality are greatly missed by his former constituents and those of us who worked with him.

On behalf of this House, I congratulate Howard Dyck and John English on their induction into the Order of Canada.

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**REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES**

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, later this year Dr. Severino Antinori and his team of American and Japanese surgeons will proceed with the first human cloning experiment, the first of a planned batch of 200.

• (1400)

These experiments and the results will have serious, far-reaching implications for humanity. The question of human cloning raises some fundamental scientific and ethical questions for us as human beings in general and as citizens of Canada in particular.

Canada simply does not have the necessary regulatory framework to establish parameters for this type of research. It has been eight years since the royal commission on reproductive and genetic

technologies recommended the establishment of a national framework for the support and regulation of these technologies. It has been five years since the Liberal government attempted to introduce poorly drafted legislation on this subject and was obliged to withdraw it.

I call upon the government to introduce legislation immediately to deal with issues of human cloning and other reproductive and genetic technologies.

\* \* \*

### BIBI ZAMAN

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House to recognize an outstanding Canadian and a constituent of mine, Ms. Bibi Zaman. Ms. Zaman founded the Canadian Centre for Women's Education and Development. With the help of 10 volunteers, the centre offers a range of services that assist women in getting back on their feet, including helping them escape abusive relationships.

Bibi says "I want to empower women to take their lives into their own hands for the benefit of their children. This is my life". Bibi has run this organization on a volunteer basis since 1990 and has spent thousands of dollars over the years to cover the expenses of this organization, which also offers a medical clinic. The clinic is also staffed by volunteer doctors.

She also hopes to set up a free legal clinic in March. Bibi has been chosen, along with 59 other Canadians, to be recognized by the Governor General with the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award. As Bibi's member of parliament, and more important her friend, I wish to congratulate her.

\* \* \*

### AQUATIC HALL OF FAME

**Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to invite all members of the House and indeed all Canadians to the Aquatic Hall of Fame and Museum of aquatics in Canada and around the world. The collection includes items ranging from the celebrated Cutty Sark collection of sailing ships and nautical memorabilia to the swim trunks of Olympic gold medalist Mark Tewkesbury and even those of the late Right Hon. Pierre Elliot Trudeau.

Vaughan Baird, the chairman of the museum, recently reintroduced me to the facility. Over the years he has thoughtfully acquired a variety of objects depicting the art and history of aquatics in Canada and around the world. The collection includes items ranging from the celebrated Cutty Sark collection of sailing ships and nautical memorabilia to the swim trunks of Olympic gold medalist Mark Tewkesbury and even those of the late Right Hon. Pierre Elliot Trudeau.

Items of interest from all aquatic sports can be found there: swimming, water polo, synchronized swimming, and of course Mr.

*S. O. 31*

Trudeau's favourite, diving. The total of all exhibits is valued at nearly \$4 million.

I congratulate Mr. Baird and his team at the Aquatic Hall of Fame on assembling and maintaining such a singular collection.

\* \* \*

### URBAN TRANSIT

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the number of automobiles and trucks on Canadian roads has doubled in the past two decades. The Canadian public is becoming increasingly alarmed at the deterioration of air quality and the quality of water and the relentless urban sprawl that is causing higher levels of congestion and road rage and is seriously eroding the quality of environmental and economic life.

Public transit not only provides a cost effective means of transportation but also plays a crucial role in sustainable development for all communities, urban and rural.

The Canadian Urban Transit Association serves as a representative of urban transit service providers, industry suppliers, government agencies and related Canadian transportation organizations. Its endeavour is to promote the pivotal role that urban transit plays in enhancing mobility and contributing to a more sustainable environment for all Canadians.

Members of the Canadian Urban Transit Association have come to Ottawa today to meet with members of parliament to address the issues of the public transit crisis and to facilitate discussions on potential solutions. I rise in the House to commend and congratulate CUTA.

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### TRADE

**Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister was in Washington to talk about trade issues with one month to go until the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber agreement expires.

Naturally the rhetoric is turned up and the American lumber coalition is acting aggressively in opposition to Canadian lumber exports. The Americans are threatening countervail and anti-dumping measures.

The Canadian industry has worked diligently to develop a solidified position in favour of a return to free trade in lumber.

• (1405)

Lumber producers in the signatory provinces of B.C., Quebec, Ontario and Alberta have largely learned to accommodate each other's significant differences. This consensus has benefited Canada.

Everyone's resolve will be tested in the difficult days ahead. I appeal to all political parties and all provinces to pursue what is best for Canada: free trade for all.

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## IMMIGRATION

**Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every MP in the House knows or should know how often people walk into a member's constituency office and ask for assistance on immigration matters. It happens every day. It is part of an MP's job.

Riding offices in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver easily receive 2,000 to 3,000 requests per year. It is a well known fact that constituency offices of ministers of the crown receive even more requests than ordinary MPs, often from neighbouring ridings.

It is also well known that inquiries with a MP's constituency office on the status of an immigrant file are processed as a routine matter and hardly ever brought to the attention of the MP, who is usually busy in Ottawa.

It is therefore most unfortunate that some opposition members' lack of familiarity with this aspect of a MP's regular constituency function has led to a smear campaign against the Minister of Public Works and Government Services who, as we all know, is a hard working parliamentarian, deeply committed to his constituents.

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[Translation]

## BAY OF BEAUPORT

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, recently, we were delighted to discover that three Liberal MPs from the Quebec City region supported the position of the Bloc Québécois in the matter of Beauport Bay.

No doubt, rather embarrassed at failing to block the municipal amalgamations, an important plank in their election platform, they are supporting the position of the Bloc Québécois. Big deal, welcome to the side of common sense.

The Quebec City port authority has for the past 20 years blocked the development of an exceptional site for recreational and tourism purposes, one of the rare places Quebecers still have access to the St. Lawrence, Beauport Bay.

Worse yet, in December, this agency stated quite seriously that it wanted to turn the existing beach into a terminal for bulk carriers and recreate the beach a little further along by encroaching on the river. This announcement caused a public outcry and mobilized public opinion.

The port authority will reveal its final plan for the use of the land soon. Let us hope that it will note the regional consensus over the future of Beauport Bay.

[English]

## AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Murray Calder (Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the national Liberal rural caucus is meeting with farmers and farm organizations from across the country to discuss the serious challenges facing family farmers today.

As chair of rural caucus I would like to express my appreciation of, support for and commitment to Canada's agricultural producers.

As a government we need to focus our attention on agriculture, particularly now that our producers are experiencing difficult times. Canada's future food security depends on the action that we take today.

\* \* \*

## ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear from the evidence that the problems of inadequate housing, poor water supply, crumbling infrastructure, economic underdevelopment and substandard education are causing aboriginal people across Canada unneeded pain and suffering.

Now the auditor general confirms what band members and the official opposition have been saying for years. I quote:

Regardless of program devolution, the department remains accountable for the way federal funds are used and for ensuring the results are acceptable.

He goes on to say that this minister and his department have a wide variety of problems including poor accountability and unacceptable results.

Why does the Sagkeeng Band not have a decent school for its children? Why cannot members of the Sturgeon Lake Cree have their education and health needs met? Why do the Kanesatake Mohawks question the validity of recent votes on the reserve? All of these issues are without adequate responses from the department.

I call upon the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to listen to these band members and be accountable. The auditor general has made it clear that these issues need to be resolved. I join with the auditor general and call for the government to clean up this mess.

\* \* \*

## AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am on my feet again today to remind each member of the House that we are less than three months from this spring's planting and our



farmers are in trouble. In many cases, without immediate and substantial help there will be no seeds planted in the soil this year.

At the risk of sounding repetitive, I would again point out that years of unfair subsidies from the United States and Europe have placed Canada's agricultural sector at a severe economic disadvantage. When we couple that reality with an increasingly high cost of production and ever shrinking commodity prices, our once flourishing industry is failing fast.

• (1410)

Canada is a nation that was and is built firmly upon our rural and agricultural sectors. Farming is our foundation and that foundation is crumbling around us.

A temporary fix is no longer an option. We need to act immediately to repair the existing damage and to take the steps necessary to ensure a prosperous tomorrow for our farmers. Support delayed is support denied.

\* \* \*

#### VERSATILE TRACTORS

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in solidarity with the 250 Canadian auto workers at Versatile manufacturing in Winnipeg, who have been on strike for almost four months, in support of their efforts to keep open Canada's last agricultural tractor facility.

Since Versatile Tractors was taken over by John Buhler, 350 workers have been laid off and the remaining 250 employees have been on a bitter strike over basic job security issues. Worse than that, Buhler now threatens to relocate the plant to Fargo, North Dakota, taking with it a \$32 million loan from the federal government.

Why would the government allow a company to assume such a loan without requiring repayment if the company leaves the country? Are we to stand idly by and allow \$32 million of Canadian taxpayer money to create jobs for Americans in Fargo, North Dakota?

I call it economic treason to abandon Canadian workers in this way. I demand that the government recall the loan before John Buhler steps across the border to Fargo, North Dakota, and save those jobs at Versatile Tractors for Canadians.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### WOMEN

**Ms. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, International women's day will be celebrated on March 8 under the banner, in Quebec, of "Clicking on our powers". On this

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occasion, we must all recognize the very dynamic contribution women make to the economic development of Quebec and Canada.

Women have always worked, regardless of their origin, their age, their culture or their status. In Quebec, like everywhere else, they have headed schools and hospitals, when they were not heading very large families. They have worked in the fields, cared for the animals, taken over in factories during wartime and done a thousand jobs, well.

To all these women, who still today, are fighting for equality and social justice, the Bloc Québécois promises its unconditional support.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### TRADE

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the cavalier attitude of the department of international trade is causing great concern and grief to Canadian businesses.

The softwood lumber issue is drifting like a barrel heading for Niagara Falls. The government has not even established consensus across this country, much less made a deal with the Americans. Instead, we will be in crisis on April 1 when the Americans will surely apply countervail and anti-dumping charges to Canadian softwood lumber.

P.E.I.'s potatoes are being banned from the U.S., its major market. The government has failed to even begin to address this issue, and coming soon will be negotiations regarding energy issues, dairy and wheat.

Going back to softwood lumber, I ask the trade minister to start gaining consensus now across the country and to especially consider the request of the four Atlantic premiers to renew the maritime accord.

\* \* \*

#### HEPATITIS C

**Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the victims of tainted blood continue to get tainted justice. After a three year investigation into the destruction of government records, the RCMP has decided there is not enough evidence to lay charges. It is the latest sad chapter in this story.

Government negligence mortally harmed tens of thousands of innocent Canadians, and how those Canadians have struggled tirelessly to get justice. Despite the obvious moral obligation, the government still refuses to do what is right and follow Ontario Premier Mike Harris' compensation of all those victims who were infected.

The Liberal government should not count those victims out yet. I have been able to work closely with them for five years. I know

*Oral Questions*

they will continue to fight for what they and all Canadians know is right: full compensation for their plight and justice for their cause so that such a tragedy can never happen again.

the future economic hope of Atlantic Canada will just be based on the whim of federal Liberals?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yes, I have done that with the other provinces. Again, as the hon. member knows from his previous incarnation as treasurer of Alberta, I did it at a federal-provincial finance ministers meeting when he was there. He knows I have done it and I am certainly open to doing it.

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, is he saying that he has polled each one of the provinces and they have said, no, that they do not want to reopen discussions? Is that what he is saying?

Let us hear clearly today what the result was when he asked each and every one of the provinces, as he has said he did. Which provinces said no to discussions, absolutely ruled them out, and which ones said yes?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have raised with the other provinces the absolute necessity of giving Atlantic Canada the kind of headstart that it requires, and indeed the other regions of the country that have sought it.

I have discussed this with the provinces over a number of federal-provincial meetings. It is in that context that the federal government, following the concept developed by the Atlantic caucus of this government, put \$700 million last year into the Atlantic strategy. We are not just talking about it, we have done it.

\* \* \*

**ORGANIZED CRIME**

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, Alfonso Caruana is a senior member of organized crime. He is serving an 18 year sentence for shipping massive amounts of cocaine into Canada.

After one year he is living in comfort at the condo style Fenbrook prison dubbed club fed. His two brothers have also been cascaded to the low level Bath prison only a year after their sentences. In fact the nephew is out on parole after one year of his four year sentence.

Would the solicitor general mind telling the House how moving these inmates to lower levels so fast is achieving his goal of getting tough on organized crime?

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague has stated quite clearly, the government has got strong on organized crime.

When offenders commit crimes they are evaluated. They could serve time in a maximum security institution and then a medium or a minimum security institution.

What happens in this country is that those who commit a crime must pay for the crime but must also be rehabilitated.

**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday Atlantic Canada took another slap in the face from the federal government in a response from the finance minister.

Atlantic Canadians want to advance their provinces from have not to have status, but the finance minister is intent on holding Atlantic Canadians back by not allowing them to go ahead, and by continuing to claw back the natural resource revenues at close to 100% rates. Yesterday he told the three Atlantic ministers that there would not be any changes to this transfer payment until 2004.

• (1415)

Why is the finance minister making Atlantic Canada wait almost four more years for economic growth?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is mixing apples and oranges. I suspect he probably does not realize it so rather than go into the details I would be delighted if he would speak to the government of Alberta and ask it if it is prepared to treat natural resources in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland differently than in Alberta. I would appreciate it very much if he would speak to the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and indeed the province of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, and ask them if they are prepared to do the same thing.

We are very open regarding this but it requires provincial consensus. I can tell the member that consensus does not exist and did not exist when he was the provincial treasurer of Alberta.

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, he needs to talk with his own Minister of Industry who, when he was premier of Newfoundland, wanted the discussion opened on this. That is who he should be talking to.

Has the minister asked these other provinces individually if they are willing to have a discussion about economic hope and opportunity for Atlantic Canada? He may be surprised with the response. Has he done that, will he do that or has he decided on his own that

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know what to say to this. I guess it is how fast they go down.

The Caruana family has been given no reason to discontinue its extensive operations in Canada. As a matter of fact, a hit man from this same crime family was let into Canada while his wife's immigration file was given the special attention of the public works minister. Now several family members are being cascaded down as fast as it can possibly be done.

Why did the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration insist on open borders for these criminals in the first place, allowing them to come into Canada?

**Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure all Canadians that our borders in fact are well secure and our frontline officers are doing their jobs. Over 100 million people came into Canada last year. In fact there were over 200 million border crossings.

• (1420)

I would say to the member opposite, and to all Canadians, that over 100 million people entered Canada. What we attempt to do is ensure that those who have legitimate business enter as hassle free as possible. We also want Canadians to have access to the world because this is a trading country.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### LUMBER

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister for International Trade seemed exasperated by the answers of his American counterpart on the lumber issue.

The situation is serious, because in Quebec there are 30,000 jobs that depend on the softwood lumber industry.

Can the Minister of Industry confirm that Canada's position has not changed, will not change and will continue to exclude any transitional measure?

[English]

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister was quite clear yesterday following his meeting in Washington. He stated very clearly to the Americans that Canada's ultimate goal in softwood lumber is free trade.

The government understands and appreciates that this is a very complex and sensitive issue. Discussions are ongoing now with senior officials. The ultimate goal of the government is clear: free trade in softwood lumber.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, just this morning, the president of the B.C. lumber manufacturers' association said that producers in that province, just like those in Quebec, are prepared to fight to have the free trade rules apply immediately, not as the ultimate or long term goal along with transitional measures, but immediately.

Would the government not be better advised to develop a strategy to support the lumber industry, instead of a strategy to negotiate transitional measures and possibly quotas? We are not talking about a long term or ultimate goal, we are talking about now, about the end of March.

[English]

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I think my colleague muddies the water when he talks about a quota based system. The government has absolutely no interest in a quota based system. The minister has said that repeatedly.

Discussions are ongoing throughout the country with the people and the different sectors involved in softwood lumber. The federal-provincial ministers have been meeting on this in the past, as my colleague knows, and senior officials will be meeting in the very near future on this. This is a very high priority for the government.

May I remind the leader of the Bloc Quebecois that the agreement does not expire until March 31.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, recent statements made by the Minister for International Trade are not at all reassuring, particularly since the parliamentary secretary told the House, yesterday and Friday, about a long term goal regarding free trade.

Will the government confirm today that a return to free trade in the short term, that is when the current agreement expires, is the only objective being sought in the negotiations with the Americans?

[English]

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, the agreement is in force until the end of March.

The minister has made his position and the government's position very clear on what our ultimate goal is. There are serious high level discussions going on right now. The minister was in Washington yesterday. He made the government's position perfectly clear, and there is no intention to change it. The ultimate goal is: free trade in softwood lumber.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, based on the statements made by the minister and the parliamentary secretary, can we be assured that Quebec will not be used as a bargaining chip in the upcoming negotiations?

[English]

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has made it very clear that the government governs for the whole country and that the concerns of the whole country and all regions of the country have been considered and will be considered in the ongoing negotiations.

My colleague knows that the Minister for International Trade and the provincial trade minister of Quebec met on this subject very recently. There is every intention to come up with a regime in trade that serves the entire country, which is free trade in softwood lumber.

\* \* \*

● (1425)

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Secretary of State for Latin America has just returned from Colombia. He must now realize that paramilitary death squads in Colombia backed by \$1 billion worth of U.S. military aid are committing political killings and kidnappings with impunity. The U.S. Plan Colombia, far from being a solution, will aggravate the conflict and the violence.

Will the Secretary of State for Latin America make it clear that Canada, together with the European Union and many others, does not support the total war strategy of Plan Colombia? Will he do that today?

**Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was not listening. Please repeat the question.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the problem, the government is not listening.

Fundamental human rights are being trampled in Colombia. Human lives are being trampled. In the interest of trade, the government seems absolutely indifferent to the human rights atrocities and the cold blooded assassinations occurring within Colombia's borders. At least 20,000 civilians have been murdered since 1996. Thirty-five trade unionists alone have been murdered since I raised this issue in the House last June.

Again I ask the minister: Why is Canada not condemning Plan Colombia's military approach—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa.

**Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. leader of the New

Democratic Party would ask me questions more often, I would listen very carefully.

She is absolutely right. There have been catastrophic losses of life in Colombia. On average, 71 people die violently in Colombia each day. Canada has not supported Plan Colombia. We are providing aid separate and apart from Plan Colombia.

As the hon. member from B.C., who went to Colombia with me last week, knows, there is 20% to 30% unemployment in Colombia. People there desperately want access to Canadian markets. There are 40 million people in Colombia—

**The Speaker:** The right hon. member for Calgary Centre.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK OF CANADA**

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

We know that Yvon Duhaime sent this very peremptory letter to the Prime Minister just prior to the 1997 election. We know that the regional branch manager of the BDC said in July of 1997 that the auberge loan did not meet the normal policies and criteria of the bank. We know the Prime Minister intervened at least three times on behalf of Mr. Duhaime.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister tell us what happened between July 1997 and September 1997 to cause the bank to ignore its own—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

**Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the bank did agree to provide a loan in a certain amount. I would like to ask the hon. member what happened to cause the local *caisse populaire* and the Quebec solidarity fund to join in that loan. Who talked to them? Why is he not alleging that there is something wrong with them? If he cannot allege and prove that, then there is nothing wrong with the interventions of the Prime Minister as local MP for the area.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the bank changed its position and we want to know why it changed in those two months.

Since the Deputy Prime Minister talks about documents, we have here the document in which the regional manager of the bank said that the auberge loan did not meet the bank's criteria.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister table in the House the documents and the arguments that caused the bank to ignore the advice of its own regional manager and accede to the directives of Yvon Duhaime and the Prime Minister to approve a loan that did not meet the bank's own criteria?



*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the leader of the Conservative Party is making representations either as a result of direct dialogue with the former president of the bank or indirect dialogue with the former president of the bank.

• (1430)

This president is now before the courts with BDC sorting out a dispute involving millions of dollars. Is it appropriate for the leader of the Conservative Party to stand there and attempt to take that case before parliament when it ought to be adjudicated before the courts?

\* \* \*

**GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

**Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, today the Prime Minister's spin doctor wrote a lengthy letter giving her version of the Prime Minister's sorry record of interference in government programs in his riding. Her story contradicts or ignores the facts given by her own boss, the auditor general and the ethics counsellor.

With four different versions of the same story, who is right: the Prime Minister, the auditor general, the ethics counsellor or the government spin doctor?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I read the letter carefully just before coming into the House. It supports completely in a clear and factual way the position of the Prime Minister.

The hon. member better get her eyes checked and read the letter again because there is no contradiction. It clearly supports the position of the Prime Minister, which in turn has been supported by the ethics counsellor.

**Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister was able to work at lightning speed to get Yvon Duhaime his business development loan, it was nothing compared to speed of getting him the TJF loan.

The TJF grant was announced at a press conference on May 28, more than two months before it was even approved. Why did the Prime Minister override the department's approval process?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is incorrect in her assertion. Let me just review the facts.

The facts are that the project met the terms and conditions of the program. The facts are that \$164,000 were invested in the project. The facts are that 19 jobs were created. There were other partners, the caisse populaire and the FDQ solidarity fund, and the project was fully supported by the provincial PQ government.

[Translation]

**SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS**

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, 34 heads of state will soon be gathering in Quebec City at the summit of the Americas and, as is only fitting, the premier of Quebec would like to be able to welcome them to his province.

Will the federal government, which is perfectly aware of this legitimate request by the Premier of Quebec, finally authorize the premier to address the heads of state, as all Quebecers would like him to?

**Mr. Denis Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada and the government of Quebec are in frequent communication in connection with the summit of the Americas. I am confident that together we will find a modus operandi with respect to the role of the government of Quebec at the summit.

The Prime Minister's personal representative, Marc Lortie, meets regularly with the representatives of the government of Quebec. These meetings, I am told, are very cordial and productive.

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is true that if Quebec were sovereign, we would not have to beg for a place at the Summit of the Americas.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** It would go without saying, as it does for the states which will be represented by their prime ministers around the table.

Since the right of the premier of Quebec to address the 34 heads of state is subject to the agreement of the federal government, would it not show a minimum of respect for the people of Quebec—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** —to allow the political leader of Quebecers to welcome the 34 heads of state to our province?

**Mr. Denis Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is the same old broken record.

Discussions are being held with the government of Quebec on a wide range of topics to do with the summit. I think that the dialogue at this point is very constructive. We on the government side expect this dialogue to continue.

\* \* \*

[English]

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK OF CANADA**

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the facts are that on April 21, 1997, Yvon Duhaime wrote a letter to the Prime Minister asking for help in getting a

*Oral Questions*

Business Development Bank loan. HRD found out just two weeks later. It was amazing that funding was assured.

• (1435)

Shortly thereafter, just four days before the 1997 election was called, HRD funding was publicly announced. The fact is that was two months before it was even approved by the minister.

What was it: vote buying, protecting financial interest or both?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this was about assisting an area of extraordinarily high unemployment. This was a program that was put in place to recognize the importance of tourism in an area of Quebec that needed help.

This was an undertaking that has been discussed many times in the House, an undertaking that has provided employment for citizens in a very high area of unemployment in Quebec. It is a project that we continue to support.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, in fact it was extraordinary; that is for sure. On July 15, just a short while later, the Business Development Bank branch at Trois-Rivières wrote a letter to senior bank executives saying that the auberge was a “high global risk outside the normal policy and criteria of the bank”.

The loan had been approved and announced two months earlier, strangely enough during the 1997 election. How did grants and loans in the Prime Minister’s riding get political approval prior to departmental approval?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a couple of very important things. First, in his report last fall the auditor general concluded “In our view the project met the TJF criteria”.

Second, and perhaps most important, it may have been a risky project but today 74 people are working who would not have been working otherwise.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence is treating the military personnel who served in the Balkans and may be victims of depleted uranium munitions with unimaginable insensitivity.

As countries such as Portugal, Norway and Greece have done, does the government intend to have all soldiers—and I mean all soldiers—who served in the Balkans undergo a complete medical?

[English]

**Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are co-operating with NATO in studies that are being done. We have been involved in our own studies and we have certainly received studies from other countries. There has been no link, scientifically proven, between depleted uranium and any of the illnesses that Canadian soldiers have. Nor is there any indication that any rubble would cause disease.

However, to help our forces personnel with peace of mind, we have given them the opportunity to have testing done by independent laboratories, and we intend to continue on that course.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, some of the more courageous countries have called for a moratorium on the use of depleted uranium. Others are even threatening not to participate in peacekeeping missions. Once again, Canada is silent.

When does the minister intend to announce a clear position on depleted uranium?

[English]

**Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are not silent at all. It would be premature at best to agree to a ban on depleted uranium, given that there is no scientific evidence that links it.

We will certainly make sure that we continue to study this matter. We will continue to work with our allies to get to the bottom of what is causing the problems, the diseases that are being experienced by our forces personnel.

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**GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, earlier today the government announced that it would spend \$165 billion this coming year. The auditor general testified this morning that financial management has not been a priority for the government. He suggested that average Canadians run their budgets better than the Government of Canada.

Canadians have to put up with a \$1 billion boondoggle, a shakedown at Shawinigan, Caribbean cruises and so on. Now we find that \$26 million will be spent on the millennium bureau. The millennium is long gone.

Will the Minister of Finance tell us if there is a competition over there on who can waste the money the most?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member ought to read the documents carefully. What he is

talking about is funding carried over to complete projects under way during the millennium year or that had to be postponed past the millennium year because it was necessary to finish federal environmental evaluations.

• (1440)

If the hon. member is not interested in having the environmental rules followed, if he is not interested in the facts of this matter, he ought to go back to the drawing board.

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in the facts. One of the other facts is that there is a crisis on our farms today and while every other department gets a raise—HRDC is getting another \$2.5 billion—grants and contributions to the farmers are going down by \$470 million.

There is a crisis on the farm. Why do they have to put up with less when everyone else gets more?

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member understood the numbers that he looked at as well as he claims he does, he would realize and see that the liability was created in the same year as other payments were made.

It shows up on the books as being double in one year, but the liability was created then. That is where the liability has to be booked. That is the proper bookkeeping method of doing it. I am sure that is what the hon. member wants us to do and we will do it.

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## HEALTH

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians living in rural or remote areas face many challenges, including access to health care. Could the Secretary of State for Rural Development tell the House what the federal government is doing to support health care in rural communities?

**Hon. Andy Mitchell (Secretary of State (Rural Development)(Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the delivery of health care in rural Canada is a priority for the government. We recognize that the challenges that rural Canadians face are unique and that the solutions that we come up with must be unique as well.

This is why I was pleased to announce yesterday, on behalf of the Minister of Health, \$1.5 million to help nurse practitioners have the tools to deliver health care in rural and remote Ontario. This is part of the government's 1999 budget commitment of \$50 million being committed to rural and community health. The government cares about rural Canada and rural Canadians.

## Oral Questions

[Translation]

## FISHERIES

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, following the Marshall decision in 1999, the government bought back fishing licences in order to distribute them within the reserves, and it continues to buy them.

The licence buybacks mean lost jobs for dockhands working on the boats and, in addition, move the resource out of the region, thus causing job losses in the local fish plants.

I would like the Liberal government to tell us how it plans to remedy this situation, which it created itself.

[English]

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am troubled by the hon. member's misunderstanding of the situation. The situation is very clearly a voluntary program where people have the right to sell something that they own to the government for the purposes that he described.

I think it would be most unfortunate if he wishes to give the impression that his party would prevent a voluntary sale by a willing seller to a willing buyer.

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## ENERGY

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister of natural resources was in Washington discussing a confidential energy policy with the U.S. and eagerly promoting the massive expansion of oil and gas production in Canada to help the U.S. meet its energy needs.

Instead of encouraging policies that promote renewable energy resources and energy efficiency, the government is on a course to greatly increase the burning of fossil fuels and production of harmful emissions.

Why is the government putting the energy demands of the U.S. ahead of our environmental and our international commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman has totally misunderstood the discussions yesterday in Washington.

I am happy to tell him that in the time I spent with Secretary Abraham, the United States secretary of energy, at least equal time in that conversation was devoted to topics about energy conservation, energy efficiency, renewables, alternative sources of energy and new technology, as compared to the conventional sources of fuels.

*Oral Questions*

I would also remind him that in our budgetary plans from last year we have booked a total of \$1.1 billion for the advancement of Canada's climate change objectives.

\* \* \*

• (1445)

**IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration boasted that a criminal on Interpol's 500 most wanted list was arrested three weeks after the government learned it had let him in the country.

The minister referred to the 100 million people who entered Canada last year. Does she or her colleague, the solicitor general, have any idea how many more of those let into the country by her department were criminals?

**Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the overwhelming majority of the people who come to Canada come here for legitimate reasons. I want to inform the House that last year frontline officers at our ports of entry actually questioned 65,000 people. Of that estimate, 7,300 people were stopped because of concerns of criminality.

Canada is a world leader in removals. We removed 8,600 people last year and of those 1,700 were criminals. Criminal removals are a priority of the government.

\* \* \*

**LUMBER INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. On February 7 four Atlantic premiers signed a letter to the Prime Minister entitled "Softwood Lumber—Atlantic Canada Premiers' Request for renewal of the Maritime Accord". In that letter they said that failure to continue the current agreement would have a devastating impact on the region's softwood lumber industry.

On February 22 the Minister for International Trade said in the House that no one in the country wanted the sort of agreement we had in the last five years.

Would the Deputy Prime Minister acknowledge the request of the four Atlantic premiers to renew the agreement? Would he also acknowledge that by failing to get consensus they have now pitted the east against—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Trade.

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may be interested in pitting one region of the country against another but the government is clearly not interested in that.

As I said in response to this question yesterday, the concerns of all regions of Canada will be taken into consideration in developing the Canadian position.

Our ultimate goal is very clear. The minister was in Washington yesterday. He made the position of the Canadian government very clear. For the third time today, the ultimate goal is free trade in softwood lumber. The views of all Canadians will be considered in that regard.

\* \* \*

**MULTICULTURALISM**

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, February is Black History Month. The multiculturalism minister has published a list of outstanding Canadians of African descent and it looks like a Liberal Party roll call.

The Hon. Lincoln Alexander did not make the cut. He was Canada's first black MP, our first black cabinet minister and our first black lieutenant governor of a province. Even a major highway is named after him in the heritage minister's riding.

Why does the minister stereotype them? If they are not Liberals they are struck off the list.

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)(Status of Women), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we got the list which we set up to recognize Black History Month and to pay tribute to all of the things that black Canadians have contributed to this nation from a book printed by the black community on the who's who of the black community.

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, that is what is called stereotyping. Five years ago the Prime Minister asked Lincoln Alexander to chair the Canadian Race Relations Foundation. He reports directly to the minister of multiculturalism.

Mr. Alexander is the most outstanding Canadian of African descent in our political history. Why would she make a mockery of this list by playing politics with it and ignoring him?

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)(Status of Women), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find the line of questioning from that political party really interesting. It does not believe in special interest recognition at all.

We are recognizing in Black History Month black Canadians and the contribution they made. This is a fitting thing to do. This is part of removing the systemic barriers to racism in Canada.

I would also like to say that it was this government that appointed Lincoln Alexander as chair of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation.



• (1450)

[Translation]

### SHRIMPING INDUSTRY

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la-Mitis, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, by rushing to the rescue of Newfoundland, and its then premier, Captain Canada, and allocating to it in one fell swoop 50,351 tonnes of Northern shrimp, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans ought to have realized he would be creating a problem for the entire shrimping industry.

Predictably, the Newfoundland mega-industry has completely unbalanced the market.

Can the minister tell us whether he is now prepared to re-establish a degree of fairness by giving Quebec a new quota of 6,000 tonnes?

[English]

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the process of assigning quotas is a difficult one because obviously there are many more fishermen than available quotas. I recognize there are many people could be disappointed when quotas are assigned.

That said, the problem does not warrant the solution being proposed by the hon. member. It will have no impact on the market per se.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la-Mitis, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and his provincial counterparts will be meeting at St. Andrews on March 30, can the minister tell us whether he is prepared to respond to the note written to him by his Quebec counterpart requesting 6,000 tonnes of shrimp for Quebec?

[English]

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has many requests from many areas for many tonnes of shrimp.

I must confess that I do not have this voluminous correspondence in front of me. I do not know which particular letters he has responded to at any one time. However I will say that he will be making a decision on shrimp quotas appropriately in accordance with the criteria that were established. When that is done, the people who have requested quotas will be informed.

### Oral Questions

### EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, last week the minister for multiculturalism tried to justify a Correctional Service Canada job advertisement that accepted applications from Indians only. Other races were not even eligible to apply.

I have an advertisement here from the human resources development department that also uses discriminatory policies which exclude certain races.

What does the minister say to people who are denied the right to even apply for a job because they have the wrong skin colour?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, time and again members of that party talk about racism. They talk about reverse discrimination.

We believe special measures are necessary. It is not about reverse discrimination. It is about reversing discrimination. We want to ensure that all Canadians can see themselves in the public sector because that is good for the country.

**Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the minister does not understand that it is not possible to discriminate in favour of someone on the basis of race without discriminating against someone else on the basis of his or her race.

I have the ad right here. It specifically says that people who are aboriginal are excluded, as are non-Caucasian people or people who are non-white.

Since Indians are prohibited from applying for the job, what does the minister say to qualified Indians who were denied the opportunity to even apply for the job because they were—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Resources Development.

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member seems to think that it is acceptable for Canadians not to be fully represented in the Government of Canada and its public service.

On this side of the House we categorically reject it. We will not rest until all Canadians, as I said, see themselves as part of this government and its public service.

\* \* \*

### LATIN AMERICA

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, earlier this afternoon the Secretary of State for Latin America, once we got his attention, indicated that Canada does not support Plan Colombia. It is not the unequivocal, clear condemnation that Colombians

### Oral Questions

deserve, given the horrendous human rights violations occurring there, but at least it is progress beyond Canada's silence.

My question is for the hon. secretary of state. Could he give absolute assurances that Canada is not and will not sell any equipment to the Colombian military in view of the atrocious human rights violations, the killings and kidnappings going on there today?

**Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Plan Colombia has a very large social assistance program and a number of features to it which are not military.

• (1455)

Canada is not participating in any of the military side of Plan Colombia, as the Minister of National Defence knows. Canada will not be providing any military equipment as we would be violating our non-involvement in the war in Colombia.

\* \* \*

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned about foreign and domestic hazardous and toxic waste.

Could the Minister of the Environment tell us what actions his department is taking to ensure that there is no illegal dumping of hazardous and toxic waste in Canada?

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has ratified the United Nations Basel convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous waste, and we take it seriously.

The new Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, which came into force on April 1 last year, provides my department's enforcement officers, who incidentally have been substantially increased in numbers, with new tools to combat the illegal disposition of hazardous waste, such as new regulations to control certain waste, requirements for disposal plans by exporters and new criteria for permits.

\* \* \*

### HEATING FUEL REBATE

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, when the finance minister was asked why students, renters, prisoners and even the deceased received heating fuel rebates he told the House "The purpose of the program was to help the needy with a cheque of \$125".

In the last election the NDP leader told Canadians that people earning more than \$60,000 a year were rich. As an MP, I earn more than \$60,000. To my great surprise, this weekend when I went back to my constituency a cheque from the finance minister was sitting in my mailbox for the home heating fuel rebate.

Will the finance minister admit to the House that his program of handing out cash is fatally flawed and wrong?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that over 99% of the cheques which have gone out have gone to the needy and to those who actually need it. We said there would be flaws. I did not realize the flaw would be quite this big.

The only reason I can give for the hon. member having received a cheque is that it was given to him before he was a member of parliament and he has obviously got a heck of a raise.

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve a better answer than that. In British Columbia the government is crediting home heating rebates but not handing out flawed cheques like this finance minister. There are better ways to do this. The finance minister is ignoring the truth.

The inefficiency in this is astonishing. The cheque sent to me is dated January 31, 2001, more than two months after I was elected to the House of Commons. This kind of inefficiency drives Canadians insane because it is totally unjust.

Will the finance minister commit today to creating a better system that gives the appropriate money to the appropriate Canadians who truly deserve it?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we adopted a procedure, the same procedure that was adopted by the government of Alberta and a number of other provinces.

What the hon. member ought to know is that it was based on his 1999 tax return, which I have not seen. If the hon. member would show it to me, I would be delighted to go through it with him.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### SOCIAL HOUSING

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, during the World March of Women, women asked that the portion of the global budget earmarked for social housing be increased by 1%.

The commitments made by the government in the election campaign, including affordable housing, are far from meeting the demands made by women and the need for social housing.

Will the federal government take action to change the commitment made during the election campaign, so as to truly do its share regarding social housing, as requested by women?

**Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, we announced in our red book a program to build affordable rental housing units.

We are currently negotiating with the provinces to reach an agreement on a joint initiative to build or assist in building a number of units for the needy.

We are co-operating with the provinces. As soon as the consultations are completed, and the discussions with my cabinet colleagues as well, I will be in a position to announce a new program.

\* \* \*

• (1500)

[English]

### DISASTER ASSISTANCE

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, today a delegation is in Ottawa from southwest Manitoba. The delegation includes bipartisan representation from the Manitoba legislature through MLAs John Gerrard and Larry Maguire, as well as various reeves, businessmen and farmers. They are here because they have still not received any help from Ottawa for disastrous flooding in the spring of 1999.

In Manitoba alone it is estimated that uncompensated losses are as high as \$85 million. Reeve Moior put it bluntly when he stated that “we are in a state of quiet desperation”. Will the Prime Minister acknowledge the validity of this delegation’s concerns and finally initiate a disaster relief program?

**Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have the disaster financial assistance program. It contributed to the restoration in 1999 as a result of the floods that occurred. Some \$12 million of federal money went into that.

I indicated to the delegation yesterday that we would be reviewing the DFAA. I agreed with them wholeheartedly when they said we needed a mitigation strategy. That is something the government is presently looking into.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### MUNICIPALITIES

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport indicated that the federal government might consider giving large municipalities in Canada increased powers through a constitutional reform.

Does the government share the view of the Minister of Transport, considering that municipalities are created by provincial governments and that their powers have nothing to do with federal responsibilities?

### Government Orders

[English]

**Hon. David Collette (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the article was somewhat misleading. I correctly stated that the federal government had pledged \$2 billion in the infrastructure fund for municipalities to identify projects in transportation and elsewhere. That is a major commitment of the government.

I also said that with growing urbanization in the country, governments will have to work together to try to assist those people living in cities and that I hoped the constitution would be flexible to allow those kinds of programs to be developed.

\* \* \*

### POINTS OF ORDER

#### ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The opposition parties rarely make it clear which projects they are referring to when they ask questions in the House.

Just for the clarity of the House I would like to confirm that when I am speaking about a grant that went to the Auberge Grand-Mère I am talking about 19 jobs that are sustained there and for the Auberge des Gouverneurs it is 74 jobs.

**Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During question period I referred to an ad that specifically excludes Indians from applying for a job in the human resources development department.

For what I think will become historical reasons I would like to table this ad in the House of Commons.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of the House to table the document?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1505)

[English]

### STANDING ORDERS

#### MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

**Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to Government Business No. 2, I move:

*Government Orders*

That the debate be not further adjourned.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Speaker:** Call in the members.

• (1540 )

*Before the taking of the vote:*

**Mr. John Williams:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I just received information on what we are voting on. Is this the 70th time we will have closure in the House?

**The Speaker:** I am afraid the Speaker does not keep count so I cannot answer the hon. member. I think this is the first time when I have been in the chair as Speaker that this has happened, if that helps the hon. member.

• (1550 )

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

*(Division No. 12)***YEAS**

## Members

Adams	Alcock
Allard	Anderson (Victoria)
Assad	Assadourian
Augustine	Bagnell
Baker	Beaumier
Bélair	Bélangier
Bellemare	Bennett
Bertrand	Bevilacqua
Binet	Blondin-Andrew

Bonin	Bonwick
Boudria	Bradshaw
Brown	Bryden
Bulte	Byrne
Caccia	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carroll	Castonguay
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Charbonneau
Coderre	Collenette
Comuzzi	Copps
Cotler	Cullen
Cuzner	DeVillers
Dion	Dromisky
Duhamel	Easter
Eggleton	Eyking
Finlay	Folco
Fontana	Fry
Gagliano	Galloway
Godfrey	Goodale
Graham	Gray (Windsor West)
Grose	Guarnieri
Harb	Harvard
Harvey	Hubbard
Jackson	Jennings
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Keyes	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
Lastewka	LeBlanc
Lee	Leung
Lincoln	Longfield
MacAulay	Macklin
Mahoney	Malhi
Maloney	Marcil
Marleau	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Matthews	McCallum
McCormick	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough East)	Minna
Mitchell	Murphy
Myers	Neville
Normand	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly	Owen
Pagtakhan	Paradis
Parrish	Patry
Peric	Peterson
Phinney	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pillitteri	Pratt
Price	Proulx
Provenzano	Redman
Regan	Richardson
Robillard	Savoy
Scott	Serré
Sgro	Shepherd
St. Denis	St-Jacques
St-Julien	Steckle
Stewart	Szabo
Telegdi	Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tirabassi	Tobin
Tonks	Torsney
Ur	Vanclief
Volpe	Whelan —140

**NAYS**

## Members

Ablonczy
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Bellehumeur
Bergeron
Blaikie
Bourgeois
Brien
Burton
Cardin
Casson
Comartin
Cummins
Davies
Desrochers
Duceppe
Elley
Forseth
Gallant
Godin
Gouk



*Government Orders*

Grewal	Grey (Edmonton North)
Guay	Guimond
Hanger	Harris
Hearn	Hill (Macleod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hilstrom
Hinton	Johnston
Keddy (South Shore)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lancôt	Lebel
Lill	Loubier
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)	MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Manning	Marceau
Mark	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	McDonough
McNally	Ménard
Meredith	Merrifield
Mills (Red Deer)	Moore
Obhrai	Pankiw
Paquette	Penson
Peschisolido	Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon	Proctor
Rajotte	Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Reynolds	Ritz
Robinson	Roy
Sauvageau	Schmidt
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	Spencer
St-Hilaire	Stinson
Stoffer	Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis)	Vellacott
Venne	Wasylycia-Leis
Wayne	White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams	Yelich —106

## PAIRED MEMBERS

Discepola	Fournier
Gagnon (Québec)	Girard-Bujold
McLellan	Reed (Halton)
Rocheleau	Rock

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

● (1555)

[*Translation*]

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As discussed at the parliamentary leaders' meeting, I would like to request the unanimous consent of this House to move the following motion:

That Bill C-209, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (Public Transportation Costs), be referred after second reading to the Standing Committee on Finance as opposed to the Standing Committee on Transport and Government Operations.

An error occurred when the bill was added to the order paper, and I believe I would have the consent of the House to correct it.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

**Ms. Marlene Catterall:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent that the vote on Bill C-11, deferred earlier this day until the end of government orders tomorrow, instead be considered at the end of government orders today.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to change the time as indicated by the chief government whip?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

## STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed from February 26 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is my intention in the three minutes that I have to prove the odiousness of the situation this government is forcing upon us in the House of Commons.

It has just forced us into something unacceptable, closure on closure. Here we are debating a motion whose aim is essentially to reduce the role of the opposition in this House and to prevent us from tabling amendments to bills under consideration, as we have done in the past.

And so, after three hours of debate on this important issue—the amendment of the standing orders, a change in the balance of the parliamentary powers of the two sides of this House—the government invokes closure. Three hours of debate on a matter of such importance, a change to the standing orders, and the government decides we have talked too much.

How else should we understand this approach other than to assume that the government is now on a very slippery slope? Not only are we seeing the government's arrogance following the election, an election no one could justify holding in any case, in a sort of mandate the government has drawn for itself from the public to support all of its initiatives, not only have we had over the past few days meaningless responses during oral question period, but now we do not even have any ministers present in the House to answer questions.

I have only one minute left, but how can I say in the space of one minute how awful a situation the government has put us in?

*Government Orders*

The government does not want to debate any more. It is refusing to debate with the opposition. It sees itself as the calm centre of truth. It refuses to remove its blinders to see what the people we represent want. It has decided to impose closure in the most awful way possible, that is, by forcing us to play a partisan role and rule on the merits of the amendments we put forward.

• (1600)

I would invite you, Mr. Speaker, to turn your attention first and foremost to the 200 amendments the government itself has put forward in respect of its own bill on young offenders. Perhaps you will find some of them useless.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be able to finally get a few words in edgewise on this particular motion, although I understand the passion of the hon. member for Elk Island when it comes to these things and the fact that he had at his disposal what I have never had in the House, that is, the temptation of unlimited time. He used it well in going after the government for the perfidy of this motion.

I was particularly struck myself by the way in which the government House leader attempted to use, or misuse shall we say, the McGrath committee report of 1985 to justify what he was doing yesterday when he moved Motion No. 2.

For the benefit of those who do not know what we are debating and do not know what we just imposed closure on, and because I actually had some Liberal members ask me prior to the vote what it was they were voting on, let me just say that this is a motion that would enable the Speaker to select amendments which would come to a vote at report stage rather than having, as is the practice that has developed, all the amendments that are submitted by members put to a vote.

Motion No. 2, which would have the effect of eliminating the strategy used both by the Bloc and the Reform in the last parliament, is a motion which comes forward by itself without any other parliamentary reform and is a measure that is designed to address only the government's concerns in this regard. It is one of the reasons why I find it so offensive. It is not parliamentary reform when only the concerns of the government are addressed.

Motion No. 2 would correct a problem that the government sees as a problem, and a problem that I think we all see as a problem. However, the problem is that this is not the only problem and it cannot be solved all by itself without creating a whole lot of other problems.

Let me just quote from the McGrath committee. The government House leader referenced the fact that I am the only surviving member in the House of that special committee on reform of the House of Commons, the only one left on the parliamentary reform island. It says this on page 38 of the McGrath report:

We believe that the report stage is not used constructively. The report stage was introduced into the legislative process as part of the procedural reforms implemented in 1968. One of the results of those reforms was the reference of the majority of bills to standing committees following second reading. The report stage was designed to provide opportunities to members not involved in the committee stage of a bill to propose amendments when the committee reported the bill back to the House. Thus, an MP that was not a member of the committee dealing with the bill would not be deprived of the right to propose amendments. It was also designed to enable the government to introduce last-minute technical amendments. It was not envisioned, however, that the report stage should provide a means of reopening the entire committee proceedings.

So far so good. I would say the government and the opposition are literally and metaphorically on the same page here when it comes to report stage, but then the committee report goes on to say:

The practice of using the report stage as an obstructive tactic—

This is something which the government objects to and has now moved to address as a result of the report stage becoming an even more obstructive tactic than it was when the McGrath committee reported, because when the McGrath committee reported we had not had the experience of hundreds and hundreds, or indeed thousands, of amendments being moved. Rather, we had only experienced report stage with perhaps 150 to 200 amendments.

• (1605)

Going back to the report:

—has developed because of the frustration of the opposition parties with the manner in which controversial bills are frequently dealt with at the committee stage. The report stage has become, in the words of one member, a vehicle for vengeance, a method of retaliation against what is seen as a stubborn refusal by government to make any concessions to opposition views when amendments are proposed in committee.

The recommendations we propose regarding the report stage should be seen in the overall context of reform of the legislative process.

There are the key words: the recommendations we propose. They went on to propose something like what the government House leader has put before the House, saying that the recommendations should be seen in the overall context of reform of the legislative process.

However, what we have here is one recommendation, isolated from the overall legislative context the McGrath committee talked about, and proposed as a measure adequate in and of itself.

My argument today with the government is that this is totally out of keeping with the recommendations of the McGrath report, because what was the overall context of reform of the legislative process that we find in this report and in the context of which the McGrath committee said it would be okay for the Speaker to resume the power of selecting amendments for voting at report stage? The context was part of an overall package of parliamentary reform in which the committee process, particularly that process having to do with dealing with legislation, was to be de-partisanized as much as possible.

In fact, legislation would not go to standing committees at all. Legislation would go to special legislative committees which were to be chaired by chairpersons who were selected from a panel of chairpersons selected from all parties. We actually tried that for a

while. That system was in place here for a number of years and a number of opposition members developed good reputations as good and fair chairs of committees.

It was that context of sending legislation off to committees that would be chaired in some cases by opposition members, but in all cases by people selected because of their known reputation for fairness. That is why they were selected to be chairs of these special legislative committees, instead of having been selected as standing committee chairs often are now, that is, because of their loyalty to the government.

These would be committees on which we would not have parliamentary secretaries acting as coaches to the government members, telling them what to do and playing the role of thought police and reporting back to the minister in case anyone had an independent thought. These were to be entirely different sorts of committees. They were to be committees that were seen as a departure from the very kind of system we now have and which we returned to at a certain point in the eighties as a result of the fact that the Mulroney government got tired of parliamentary reform and took back some of the reforms that it had been willing to try in the early years of its mandate.

The current prime minister suffers no such idealism, either early or late in his mandate. He is not even willing to give things a try. What we have here is an attempt by the government House leader to do exactly the wrong thing when it comes to parliamentary reform, to address only those things that are of concern to the government and to dress it up as if it is a concern of all parliamentarians.

Of course it is a concern of all parliamentarians that we should be reduced to the spectacle of voting throughout 24 hours or 48 hours. I do not think any of us felt good about that, either physically or in terms of how we thought the Canadian public viewed that particular exercise.

● (1610)

However, it remains the case that this does arise out of legitimate frustration on the part of the opposition, even though I did not agree with the Reform Party's position on Nisga'a and I did not agree with the Bloc Quebecois when it came to Bill C-20, the clarity bill. That is beside the point as far as I am concerned. The fact is that the government was not willing to permit the kind of debate that both these parties thought was appropriate to the significance of those particular issues.

I recall that when it came to Bill C-20, the clarity bill, the way in which the government conducted itself on that particular issue was particularly abhorrent. We not only suffered closure here in the House, but we suffered closure in committee. We were given only a couple of weeks to consider a tremendously significant piece of legislation with respect to how our country might some day be negotiated away, God forbid. Yet this was all supposed to happen within a very short time framework. Witnesses who should have been heard were not. Members of committee from the government side were openly lamenting the fact that they could not do their job properly.

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It is in response to all this that from time to time the opposition decides it is going to use whatever procedural loopholes exist to wreak a certain kind of parliamentary and political vengeance on the government. It is not that effective. It is not something that yielded the Bloc a whole lot more votes in Quebec, as far as I can make out, in the election on November 27. Nor did it lead to a breakthrough on the part of the reform-alliance party. These things do not have any great political virtue in the big picture.

However, here we are talking about parliamentary reform. We are talking about parliamentary culture. It is wrong for the government to insist that only its problems, only its frustrations with the current set-up, are the ones that must receive immediate attention. I am disappointed that the government House leader did not try to craft even a small package. It would not have had to cover the whole gamut of parliamentary reform and all the things that we could properly be considering if we were trying to put together the package on parliamentary reform. However, it could have addressed some of the concerns members of the opposition have, for instance, with respect to time allocation.

In the dying days of the last parliament there were discussions about creating some kind of mechanism whereby if the government wanted to move time allocation on a particular motion, at least the minister responsible for that piece of legislation would be answerable to the House for a couple of hours as to why it was so important that this legislation had to go through right away. That might have been one thing the government could have done. There are others.

One of the things we find is that in some respects not much has changed, because I am using the language of the McGrath committee of 16 years ago all over again. Significant legislation is not dealt with properly in the House. In fact, there seems to be a kind of inverse relationship. The more significant the legislation is, the less properly it is dealt with.

If legislation dealing with dog licences were in our jurisdiction, we would take all kinds of time with that. The legislation would be given to a committee which would take its time, call witnesses, hear from dogs, whatever. The committee would travel around the country. However, if it is something like the clarity bill or the Nisga'a agreement or the Canada pension plan reform, and the list goes on, if we have two days of debate, wow. Imagine two days of debate in parliament. We would have two days of debate on something significant, but four days of debate on something insignificant.

That is the record of the government. The more significant it is, the more the government wants to whisk it off, get it off the floor of the House of Commons, get it into committee and turn it over to the trained seals. The government will not be open and will not listen to amendments. Then it will bring back the legislation and expect the opposition to be in a good mood when we get to report stage.

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• (1615)

We are not in a good mood by the time we get to report stage, if we have had time allocation on second reading and if we have had a committee process that has been time allocated itself, as it was with Bill C-20. We are not in a good mood by the time we get to report stage and we should not be. We have a right not to be because we do not feel that things have been dealt with properly. Sometimes we see the kind of tactics the government is moving now to address.

I am not against, in principle, the Chair having the power to select amendments. I never have been. I signed the McGrath report. I have cited other instances. On other occasions I have argued that the Speaker should have this power. I have also argued, Mr. Speaker, that you, the Chair, should have the power to do something about the abuses against parliament committed by the government, not just by the opposition. The Chair should have the power to refuse time allocations, if that time allocation comes at a time when there has not been sufficient debate.

If the motion had some balance to it, if it had given the Speaker discretion over government abuse, government tactics, government misuse of procedural loopholes, at the same time as it did the same for the opposition, then maybe members might have heard a different speech from me today. Instead we have this lopsided thing.

This along with electronic voting is supposed to be parliamentary reform. Close a major loophole for the opposition, bring in electronic voting as pursuant to what was promised in the throne speech and the government has its package. I hope that is not all there is to it. I have some feeling from the government House leader that that is not all there is to it. However, it would be hard to come to any other conclusion on the evidence at this point.

That is why the NDP is very much opposed to this particular motion and we hope others members of parliament are as well. Perhaps somewhere on the government side somebody will decide that he or she wants to make a speech in favour of balanced parliamentary reform instead of just defending this one-sided, unilateral, dictatorial, measure which has been introduced by the government House leader.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I would very much like to attach my own remarks to those of the previous speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona, as a dean of the House and as a member of the McGrath committee which he referred to in his remarks. He certainly has the moral authority to speak on this particular issue and does so with great insight.

The leader of the government in the House is seeking to alter the standing orders of the House, and do so with an instrumental note to the House and to the Speaker, by banning what he calls repetitive and vexatious amendments at the report stage. As was alluded to,

this is but one approach and one attempt to deal with an issue that arose in the last parliament over flooding the order paper with amendments, amendments that the government House leader has chosen to describe as frivolous and vexatious.

However, when I reviewed the remarks of the hon. government House leader, I noted that in the text he referred to consultation. We in the opposition have become somewhat accustomed, unfortunately, to token consultation, wherein we are advised after the fact that the government has taken a certain position on an issue and then receive a perfunctory phone call simply to inform us that this has happened. This is the type of consultation that occurred in this particular instance. This is why, as is certainly evident from the tone of most speakers on this side of the House, there has been particular offence taken to the manner in which the government has chosen to proceed on this.

There are obviously other avenues the government could have pursued, not the least of which was real consultation. I find it passing strange and the worst type of irony when we talk about the use of closure on this issue. I point out with great emphasis that time allocation was brought in on the very first piece of legislation which came before the House upon the resumption of this the 37th parliament. That in and of itself puts a very clear shot over the bow of the opposition about the government's intentions on parliamentary reform, let alone co-operation.

• (1620)

The remarks by the previous speaker on this issue as they pertain to the government's future goodwill is very much in jeopardy, particularly with respect to what remaining powers there are for members of opposition and members of the government side to express their concern, let alone their opposition to what the government has chosen to do.

I will briefly review what took place that led to the point where we are now at. As a new member of the House of Commons, it certainly was not one of my proudest moments to stand here and vote repetitively for hours on end. To draw the broader analogy, it is fair to say that it was not a proud moment for parliament at all. However, it is what led to that point that is very much at the heart of the debate.

It is the sheer and utter frustration that members of the Chamber feel in their ability to not only express their concern and their opposition but to even interact with members of the government, particularly cabinet. The government has chosen to go about this in a fashion that essentially cherry-picks from the Westminster tradition; that is to borrow a single example that suits its cause. I am talking about the specific motion that is before us which is very much borrowed from the British tradition.



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Reviewing it in its broader context, it ignores, and the government House leader certainly ignores, the fact that there are other powers that exist in the parliament of Great Britain that allow the Speaker of the House to deny the government's use of closure or a motion for time allocation. Similarly, the Speaker has within his powers the ability to order cabinet ministers to come before the parliament, to be accountable not only to the House and the members but also to the country. We have rarely, if ever, seen that particular exercise.

Sadly, what we have become accustomed to is important government announcements being made across the street in the press gallery. We hear about them again after the fact. Yet the press and the Canadian people wonder aloud why it is that parliament's role is being diminished and its relevance questioned. It is very much attributable to the actions of this administration, the government, by choking and cutting off the ability of the opposition to question what it does. Even members in its own party do not have the ability to question its policy decisions and its legislative initiatives. The government has cut that off.

At the risk of being repetitive, we saw in the Speech from the Throne the government's vague reference to modernizing parliament through the use of electronic voting. We know the result of that. There will be less interaction with government, less direct accountability and certainly less direct democracy. There will be no ability to give and take on the floor of the House. Further evidence of modernization is to take away one of the last remaining instruments that the opposition had to hold up the government and at least slow down its rapid move to bring in new legislation.

I will interrupt my own remarks to indicate that I will be splitting my time with the right hon. member for Calgary Centre.

The practices of government are extremely bizarre when looked at in terms of the encodified manner in which it has presented the motion. The government is unable to put this motion before the House in both official languages. It is not possible for a committee of this House to draft a report and have it brought back to the floor of the House of Commons to declare what this House wants to do and what the rules will be when it is borrowed from the Westminster practice. As we know, those particular rules of practice are not available in both official languages to this Chamber. It also troubles us greatly to think that the government appears to be foisting upon the Parliament of Canada unstated and foreign guidelines that come from another chamber. That is to say, are we to take our direction from Great Britain now, as in the past?

● (1625)

It is certainly ironic that the oldest parliamentary democracy in the free world will dictate how we modernize our particular rules of procedure. This is something surely, as a sovereign country, we should be pursuing on our own. Does the Minister of Justice rely

upon the criminal code of Ireland? Does the Minister of National Defence look favourably upon other countries to decide upon his own?

It is fair to say that the government did have other options available to it. It could have pursued this in a different fashion. It chose not to. The minister in bringing forward the motion speaks for cabinet. Did the cabinet agree to surrender our entire independence on this? If it did, it should resign.

This is a matter that should be decided by all members of the House, not the executive branch alone. To suggest otherwise, runs contrary to the basic tenets of democracy. To suggest that the cabinet alone decides how this place should function is offensive.

The government has a problem. The House leader has a problem. The House itself has a problem. If there is to be a repetition of the destruction of our report stage process, as this motion could potentially do, we have to deal with it in unity. We have to deal with it collectively. This is not the solution, to bring it in and to impose closure. It is certainly not the language that the House should understand or tolerate.

The House has already given its Speaker full power to select the amendments at report stage. That power currently exists. Restating it is a way to skirt around the real issue. If there is any doubt that this is the accepted way to alter the jurisprudence and preserve our national self-respect, then we should be engaging in a far more involved process than that which we have seen. The House can do better than say that we just do it because Great Britain does it. We need a made in Canada solution. The standing committee should get on with the work necessary to bring that about.

I suggest again that the reason behind this has very much to do with the government's desire to avoid any kind of delay in the reintroduction of the youth criminal justice bill. It is doing this because it feels that it might be embarrassed again by not being able to introduce one of its top ten priorities.

I will turn the floor over to my hon. colleague, the right hon. member for Calgary Centre, to conclude our remarks and our position on the motion.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to express my appreciation to the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough for sharing his time with me.

He talked about a made in Canada solution. This should also be a made in parliament solution and it is not. It is one that is made by the government and imposed upon the House of Commons. That is not the way we will achieve change in this institution that bears the stamp of legitimacy.

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I am taking part in the debate because there is an extraordinary opportunity now for us in the House to make changes that will make this a much more effective parliament. It requires some leadership on the part of the government. Unfortunately, these early actions indicate that it is not prepared to undertake the kinds of changes that are necessary.

The government House leader characterizes this as a single, very confined issue. It is not. It is part of a pattern of driving democracy out of the House of Commons and of turning this parliament and, I regret to say, turning the Speaker into a simple servant of the government. It reverses the whole history and the whole idea of parliament. It reduces the accountability of the government. More seriously perhaps, it reduces the independence of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

There is no doubt that some means must be found to ensure that parliament can act. However, there is also no doubt that the opposition must be able to delay actions which it thinks is wrong. That is what parliament is about. There ought to be limits on the power of government. That is why we established the rules of parliament.

Obviously, the tactics of the Alliance Party on the Nisga'a bill and the tactics of the Bloc Quebecois on the clarity bill have caused legitimate concern on the part of the government. They do to all parliamentarians. It is not the first time these issues have arisen.

• (1630)

In the last parliament the Speaker was never asked for a ruling on the correctness of the tactics that were followed. I suspect that the government was fearful of an unfavourable ruling by the Speaker and therefore remained silent.

Now there is no risk of an unfavourable ruling by the Speaker because the government, by this motion, is telling the Speaker what it is that he is supposed to decide.

Instead of discussing the issue as a whole parliament, as we should be, the government is moving now to instruct the Speaker not to accept amendments that the government considers to be frivolous. It does that, just so it is clear, without the support of any other party in the House.

*[Translation]*

When parliaments change their rules, the problem is to ensure that the changes are perceived as legitimate.

The traditional way of reaching a consensus is through committees made up of representatives from all parties. This is definitely not what happened here.

This is a change imposed by closure. There was no consultation, no attempt to arrive at an agreement. The result is that the House now finds itself with a rule that will not be perceived as legitimate,

for decades to come. This change to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons is all the more difficult to accept because it concerns directions given to the Speaker of the House, in spite of the objections raised by minority parties here, and because it imposes restrictions on these minority parties.

There is no longer anything to prevent the Prime Minister's office from asking the Liberals to muzzle the bothersome House of Commons.

The House has just elected its Speaker, a Speaker in whom we have put all our hopes that he would honour this House. But the first thing that the Prime Minister of Canada does is to tell the Speaker how to perform his duties. The Prime Minister's action grossly undermines the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

*[English]*

There are better solutions than rule changes by closure. The Chair could be asked for a ruling or rulings on the basis of existing procedure. If necessary, a committee could be asked to devise new guidelines written for the House and known to the membership of the House. Members who are not part of the leadership struggle and not part of the everyday battles in the House could be asked, as parliament has asked them before, to address the situation.

None of these options have been examined, nor was there an attempt to find a solution by consensus. Instead, change is imposed by closure on the House.

As my colleague said, the government is cherry-picking U.K. procedures. I, by the way, find it very ironic that a government that made such a to-do about repatriating the constitution should now be down on its knees bowing and genuflecting to the house at Westminster.

Are we not an independent nation able to establish our own rules? The government in the U.K., in its rules, is much more balanced than this government is proposing to be here. What the government is doing is choosing U.K. rules that suppress members of parliament without having any of the counterbalances, such as the power of the speaker in the United Kingdom to refuse a motion for closure or time allocation.

It is fairly certain that a British speaker would have refused to put the present closure motion on a change to the rules after just two hours of debate.

The speaker in the U.K. also has the opportunity to insist that ministers attend the house and make statements there and not run off to the press gallery. The speaker can extend or restrict debates.

Those are the rules of the house of commons in Britain, if we want to look at the whole picture rather than simply cherry-pick the rules that limit the powers of the opposition.

What is most serious about this is the government's attack on the Speaker. By adopting this course of action, it is giving the impression that the Speaker is to be a tool of the government. It treats the Speaker as though he is still a backbench Liberal member of parliament. It tells the Speaker what to do.

Let us be realistic. It is not the whole House that is denying the Speaker's right to exercise his own judgment, it is the cabinet that is issuing the order and using its power of discipline and fear to bring its backbench members into line.

There was, Mr. Speaker, as you would know, to the great regret of all of us, an infamous speaker in the House 40 years ago, René Beaudoin, during the pipeline debate. He lost the confidence of the opposition and of the Canadian public because he seemed to be taking direction from the government.

• (1635)

This motion raises the risk that every subsequent Speaker of the House could become a René Beaudoin. It creates the possibility that every subsequent Speaker of the House could become a simple servant of the government of the day instead of a servant and defender of the whole House of Commons. It corrodes the impartiality which is at the heart of the authority and the legitimacy of the Speaker of the House of Commons. It makes the House of Commons of Canada a simple subcommittee of the Liberal Party of Canada. That is simply unacceptable.

The government asks us in this motion to accept its definition of what is frivolous. This request is from a government whose definition of propriety allows the Prime Minister to lobby a crown corporation to give money to one of his friends.

The St. Laurent government, let me make the point, could have dismissed as frivolous the objections that led to the historic pipeline debate in the House.

The Trudeau government could have dismissed as frivolous the amendments that ultimately forced its patriation package to the Supreme Court of Canada where the Supreme Court judged that the package broke the constitutional conventions of the country.

The Mulroney government could have dismissed as frivolous the amendments to the Patent Act.

The present government could dismiss as frivolous amendments that would make the ethics counsellor report to the whole House of Commons.

The government's definition of frivolous will naturally differ from that of the opposition. Who should decide in an unfettered

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way in a case like this? The Speaker of the House of Commons should decide, using the Speaker's discretion and the Speaker's judgment, but that will no longer be possible after this rule is changed by closure.

This weakens the whole House of Commons. It weakens the parliamentary system. It is a step backwards and it should be opposed.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Serge Marcil (Beauharnois—Salaberry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the debate on this motion is very specific, and that is what we must look at.

After everything that has been heard in the House recently, I think we have reached the point where the record really needs to be set straight. We must really dot the *i*'s and cross the *t*'s, because the impression is being given that the House, at some point, is being used by certain people not to improve the work of MPs in the House or in parliamentary committees, but to prevent debate.

I interpret this as the result of the fact that certain people often talk just to hear themselves speak, but no attempt is made to let others say how they think a bill could be improved. These people take advantage of a loophole in the standing orders to block debate.

I think that the House should allow all members to express their views in order to improve a bill.

The problem right now is that members keep accusing the government of wanting to gag the House, but there is no doubt in my mind that the House is run not by the government but by a Speaker elected by all members of the House.

The present government House leader, the leader of the government party and the leader of the MPs who are in the majority in this House, speaks on behalf of his members, as the leaders of all opposition parties in this House speak for theirs.

When the leader of the Liberal majority in this House rises and tables a motion, he does so on behalf of all members and not on behalf of the government, as there is a tendency to believe.

When ministers are in this House, they are answerable to the House. They are across the way from the members of the opposition, who can question them. It is not, however, the ministers of the government who run this House.

This House is, in fact, independent. It is run by a Speaker elected by all members of this House. There is, however, a standing order which establishes the framework of intervention for the entire deputation of this House.

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• (1640)

We must ask ourselves: Is the House leader of the majority bringing in a motion to amend the Standing Orders of the House of Commons? No sooner asked than answered, and the answer is no.

The purpose of the motion is not to amend the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. It is to enable the Speaker to use the power vested in him, specifically to make a choice of motion, which has not been done for some time, a number of years, nearly thirty in fact, in the name of tradition.

The motion we are debating today has a purpose. It is not to contest, not to speak of closure and not to say that the House leader of the party with the majority wants to amend the standing orders. There is a reason this motion was introduced. The role of an MP is to take part in a debate, to improve a bill. We have established a procedure in the House and in all legislative assemblies in the provinces and the different governments for the very purpose of enabling members to intervene, to debate a bill or a motion tabled in a House.

The procedure is as follows. A bill is introduced, sent to a committee, a standing committee or the appropriate committee considers the bills clause by clause, motions are made and then a vote is taken in committee. When the bill is brought back to the House at report stage, we should not try to do what is indirectly impossible, because the amendments are to be moved in committee. The amendments rejected in committee must not be introduced in the House as well at report stage. In other words, we cannot do indirectly what we are not entitled to do directly.

This is when the Speaker can intervene to choose to permit or reject motions, to group motions. When we see, because the House has been around for a number of decades, what is being done today with the legislation on young offenders, for instance, we get to the point where we say "Enough, already".

We can talk about the 3,133 motions in amendment that were brought in, 400 of which, namely Motions Nos. 2,646 to 3,029, were aimed at changing the date of the coming into effect of the act. These motions were moved by 44 MPs. At some point, given my age and my experience, I tell myself that I do not want to spend my time, and that is not what I was sent to this place to do, voting all night long, night after night, on trivialities.

We can talk about the motions moved by former MP Jean-Paul Marchand, Motions Nos. 2,657 and 2,658, proposing different dates for the coming into effect of the same provision of the act.

This is an abuse of time. I could go on. There are about 100 motions on the duration of a provision of the act. That is how things went during that whole debate. When we reach report stage and motions are brought in that have already been rejected in committee, someone must put his foot down.

That is when the Speaker must use the discretionary power that was vested in him upon the recommendation of a committee which reviewed the Standing Orders of the House of Commons back in 1968.

Since then—there had probably not been any abuse at that time—things have slipped. The sole purpose of today's motion is to reconfirm the power of the Speaker of the House to select the motions that will be debated at report stage. What we are asking today is that the Speaker proceed as he was expected to when the current parliamentary procedure was adopted, some 32 years ago.

The purpose of the motion is not to gag the opposition or to change the rules of the House. It only seeks to support the application, by the Speaker, of a custom, a tradition or at least an amendment to the rules intended at the time to allow the Speaker to keep things under control, to prevent debates from getting out of hand and to avoid having motions dealing only with punctuation symbols such as commas, semicolons, exclamation marks, question marks and periods.

• (1645)

This is what this motion is all about. In addition, motions must seek to improve the bill or to amend it to make it easier to implement, and not merely to interfere with procedure. For these reasons, I will support the motion of the government House leader.

[*English*]

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I want to explain some of the problems with the particular motion. It is interesting that the government suggests that the Speaker would not select for debate a motion or series of motions of a repetitive, frivolous or vexatious nature.

Seldom can one suggest in the House of Commons that an amendment or motion is not repetitive, frivolous or vexatious in nature. Much of what is said in the House of Commons is repetitive for a reason, that 301 members have a right to choose what they talk about. It is my right to talk about the same thing as any one of my colleagues here. It is the right of any one of my colleagues, regardless of party, to table an amendment that is similar to any amendment I table. After all, that is what they were elected for.

The government once again is showing that it wants to manage the affairs of the nation from the Liberal Party's point of view and not from any other party's point of view. I would be surprised if government members in the House, and backbenchers in particular, are even willing to go along with this issue.

The government talks about making changes to reform parliament. It suggests that this is maybe one of those reforms because the House of Commons in England does something similar. The



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government does not have its act right on parliamentary reform. It cannot pick and choose a cafeteria style selection of what would be in its favour and deem it to be parliamentary reform. That is just not the way it is done. It has to look at parliament as a whole and select all the things that need change, not just some of them.

By the way, I will be splitting my time with the member for Dewdney—Alouette. We should understand that we have made many attempts in the House to bring about parliamentary change. We have asked, for instance, about questions and comments after speeches. Rather than somebody standing and taking five to seven minutes to pose a question, why could it not be done like question period? Why could the allocations not be made like that? What is wrong with looking at that? The government says it is not necessarily in its favour so it will not do it.

Perhaps we should allocate total speaking time in the House of Commons based on the number of seats of each party. The government says it has not done that before. Why do we not have sanctions or penalties for those who leak reports from committees? The government says it has not thought about that. It is a problem but it does not want to do that. Why do we not have all committee business in public rather than hidden behind closed doors? The government says maybe we should talk about that.

Maybe the chairs of committees should be allocated on the size of the parties involved in the House of Commons rather than the awkward approach of having a majority of Liberal members on the committees. Of course they select their own chairs so committees are biased at the very least.

● (1650)

Government members say that it might negatively affect them as the government but that they will bring it in anyway because it is something that is done in England. They say that the Speaker should not select for debate a motion or series of motions of a repetitive, frivolous or vexatious nature.

We asked why we did not have people on committees for longer assignment periods. The government responded that it had not done that before. We said that maybe the committees should be televised so they would be open to the public. It said that even though the house of commons in London and other areas like the United States do that, it did not know if that could be done here.

What about papers and reports coming from committees? Maybe they should be debated in the House of Commons. The Liberals say that they do not want to do that because it may bother them a bit.

What about the parliamentary calendar? Perhaps we should change that. Everyone knows that Friday is a useless day in this place, but we are not supposed to say that. The government does

not want to make a change there. However, it says that it does one little change, it does not want this frivolous nature stuff that may modernize the House of Commons. It says that it will make that change today.

What about making all private members' motions and bills votable? If it is good enough to come to the House of Commons for debate then why is it not votable? It is in other jurisdictions, like the British house of commons. Why do we not bring that in here?

The reason these things are not brought to the House of Commons as changes is that it does not suit the government members. It does not allow them to commandeer the issues and to control debate. It does not work to be in the House of Commons and come from a region like mine and want changes in here unless one is a part of the government.

If the government wants something changed it can do it and it can say that it is doing it because it wants parliamentary reform. That is hogwash. The government does not want parliamentary reform at all. It wants what is good for government. That is what it is looking for.

The government says that all we are trying to do with our amendments is to hold up debate time because the time will be spent voting. That too is hogwash. Voting time is done after debate time. What this does is allow probably one of the best uses we could make of our time. Rather than voting time, standing for hour after hour, we would have debate time. However we cannot have debate time in the House of Commons any longer than the government sees fit, or it calls time allocation, which shortens debate time.

The House of Commons is largely dysfunctional. It is still way back in the 1950s and 1960s on some of these issues. The government is even whining about televised committees. It is whining about electronic voting that is all over the world. It says that with electronic voting, which means pushing a button, the whip will not be able to see who is voting for them and who is voting against them in their own caucus. That is hogwash.

The motion reconfirms in my mind that the government has no initiative and no desire whatsoever to reform parliament. This is all about government control in a House of Commons that is very largely dysfunctional and will not change until the government changes.

● (1655)

**Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing that we are having this debate today, so early into the new parliament. We are talking

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about a closure motion. We are talking about the government using its majority to change the standing orders so that it might have more power, more control over the way debate occurs in this place.

I will tell a quick story as a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The Alliance, with colleagues from other parties, suggested that we try having a secret ballot vote for committee chairmanships in this parliament. It is a fairly minor step toward changing the tone and inserting a bit of democracy into the committee structure where we spend so much time doing parliamentary work. The government voted that motion down and said that it could not proceed in this piecemeal approach, that it would not be right, and that we need to look at a parliamentary reform package.

There is no parliamentary reform package coming from the government side. It is using the argument it used to defeat our motion. It is proceeding in a piecemeal fashion today with this motion and it is truly disappointing. It shows the government's arrogance. It uses its large majority to stifle what it does not like to get what it wants, and that is unfortunate.

The motion is one that should be defeated by members. Unfortunately I do not think it will be. Over the last eight years the government has used its majority to reduce the opposition's role in debate and stifle debate on dissension in its own ranks among caucus members. It has everything to do with consolidating power and more power for the government.

The government is supposed to be the keepers of this place, the ones who would move forward in a way that would protect democracy and establish the framework for rules of debate in the House, not only for now but for the future. Yet the government is going down the opposite road. It is forgetting the lessons it learned in opposition when it spoke about such moves by a majority government. It is forgetting that one day it will no longer be the government, some day in the future, hopefully sooner rather than later.

I guarantee government members will look back on this day of debate and ask what they did. They took away an opportunity for opposition members to raise legitimate concerns and in effect they will be railing against the motion one day. It is unfortunate that they are not moving in a non-partisan way to make the House a better place, a place where debate is meaningful and individuals can bring forward ideas and suggestions.

Government backbenchers will be severely limited in the amendments they can bring forward to their own legislation. There are few tools available right now for government backbenchers. This is one more that is being removed from them in their ability to table amendments to government legislation. I expected government members would be bringing forward this point in debate today and not supporting the motion.

In the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs meeting today the member for Mississauga Centre, a respected member who does good work in the House, said that there should be a review of the entire workings of the House of Commons. She said that it was time for parliamentary reform. I agree with her, as do other members on this side.

We have put forward some positive proposals. I know my colleague from Langley—Abbotsford worked long and hard for many years on the topic of parliamentary reform. It is something we are continuing to work on.

● (1700)

When our House leader brought forward these proposals, the government's response was that they were half-baked and not even worth considering. What does that say about the government's real intention when it comes to parliamentary reform? Its actions speak louder than its words. The government's actions here today show that it is not interested in and not concerned about structuring a framework that would make this place work better so we could work together on issues we agree on.

Yes, we will disagree on some things, but there must be a way for us to signal to Canadians that we will move forward in a way which demonstrates we are more concerned about what happens in the country and in the framework we put in place for our citizens than we are about our own political careers. We want to structure the framework for today and for tomorrow in Canada and we have that opportunity. I believe Canadians are telling us that it is time for us to move on parliamentary reform. Much to our disappointment, the government's reluctance in this matter demonstrates to Canadians that it has no will to do that.

We in the Canadian Alliance have put forward 12 concrete proposals in our "Building Trust" document, some of which I would like to highlight briefly and some of which have been mentioned by my colleagues.

The first one would be to allow more free votes in the House of Commons. We have put in place this motion:

That the House shall not consider the vote on any motion to be a question of confidence in the government unless the motion is directly related to the government's budget or the motion is explicitly worded as a question of confidence.

We could put that in place. It is a concrete proposal that we are suggesting.

The second one is one which we have brought forward. We borrowed some phraseology from the Liberal red book having to do with the ethics counsellor. We brought that motion forward and it was defeated by the government. It was part of our proposals for parliamentary reform that the ethics counsellor report directly to the House. We know what happened. The Liberals voted down their own red book promise on that particular item.

The third item is to create a new standing committee on privacy, access and ethics:

To facilitate the work of the House and to increase the accountability process of government, an additional standing committee should be created and chaired by the opposition, whose mandate would be to review and report to the House on all aspect of the Acts and Reports of the Privacy and Access Commissioners and Ethics Counsellor.

That is something we could do. We could put that in place.

The fourth item is the introduction of candidates for the election of the Speaker. The rules should be amended to allow and require candidates to speak in an open forum before the election of the Speaker begins. That is something that actually did happen this time, but not as a convention of the House or as a change to the standing orders, which is what needs to happen. My colleague from Langley—Abbotsford was instrumental in putting that process in place.

The fifth point in our plan is the appointment of the Clerk of the House through a non-partisan committee. That appointment would be ratified and approved by all members of the House.

The sixth point in our plan is in regard to the appointment of officers of parliament. We think the standing orders should be changed to require the government to subject all candidates under consideration for these high offices to a committee review. The committee would also be free to recommend candidates of its own. As is the practice now, the ultimate decision would be made by the House and would be decided by the adoption of a motion.

The seventh point deals with the election of standing committee officers by secret ballot. As I mentioned, this was brought forward and voted down already. It is disappointing because this is a concrete proposal.

The eighth proposal in our plan is for less government control over standing committees. This would allow for a more independent standing committee process.

The ninth point deals with order in council appointments. We believe that a committee should have the authority to cause a vote to take place in the House ratifying or removing an appointment made by the government. A committee report recommending the removal of an appointment would cause the appointment to be withdrawn unless the government responded by introducing a motion reinstating the appointee.

The tenth point is one which we are discussing today and that is time allocation and closure. We are actually discussing closure and we think there need to be changes in that process, one of which would be to allow for a question period prior to a minister moving closure or time allocation. We think that is fair. The Speaker should only allow time allocation motions to be put forward if he or she is

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satisfied that the motion does not infringe on the rights of the minority.

● (1705)

As my time is growing short, I will briefly mention the eleventh and twelfth points. The eleventh point is about spending accountability. We need to make sure we have accountability in the way the government spends money. Lastly, we need to improve debate in this place.

We have put forward some concrete solutions in a concrete plan for change in this place. We hope there is a will among government members to do this, government members who are afraid that their actions are speaking louder than their words.

However, we will stand in this place and advocate for positive change time and again because we believe the will of the people in the country is for us to do so. We will do that.

**Mr. Randy White:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On such an important precedent setting motion such as this, is there no way under standing orders that I could get the Chair to acknowledge the lack of numbers of Liberals in the House when we are debating such an issue?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** I will take a moment to think about this one.

The hon. member knows that he cannot allude to the fact that some members are absent, therefore this is not a point of order.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, before making my comments and observations, I would simply like to reread the motion, because we have heard many things, particularly from members of the opposition parties. The motion introduced by the government House leader has been somewhat distorted. This motion reads as follows:

For greater clarity, the Speaker will not select for debate a motion or series of motions of a repetitive, frivolous or vexatious nature or of a nature that would serve merely to prolong unnecessarily proceedings at the report stage and, in exercising this power of selection, the Speaker shall be guided by the practice followed in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom.

Our job today is to limit your role but to increase your responsibilities, but the amendment moved should also considerably speed up the work of the House and thus improve its effectiveness for the general well-being of the public, which we are all here to serve.

It is a question of correcting a flaw in our parliamentary procedure which arose over the years in the course of daily practice, rather than through any rule. We are all familiar with the practice of delaying as long as possible the passage of a bill which,

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for various reasons, does not meet with the approval of our own constituents.

When I say our own constituents, I am speaking from the point of view of individual members and sometimes of a particular party. As I said, we are very familiar with this practice, the purpose of which is simply to delay passage of a bill as long as possible.

• (1710)

In all honesty, we have to acknowledge that there are many among us, on both sides of the House, I have to say, who use this practice and not simply to abuse procedure. We are not laying blame on anyone here. Our actions in this House are all motivated by the mission we have been given: to serve our electors.

Whatever the aims of a given political strategy, they are in accordance with the hopes of those who chose us to defend their interests to the best of our ability. Nevertheless, the end does not always justify the means, because in order to look after the interests of one, we sometimes, even often, neglect those of others. We necessarily impinge on precious time that should belong to the House as a whole in order to administer the affairs of the nation.

Certainly, the major parliamentary reform of 1968 provided for this eventuality and gave the Chair the authority to strike it. However, your predecessors, Mr. Speaker, have tended bit by bit to give way to the expression of democracy to the point that, over the years, this trend has become a parliamentary tradition and the practice has taken root. It is clear that in many cases it has been nothing more than an abuse of the practice. I repeat: it is clear that in many cases it has been nothing more than an abuse of the practice.

Earlier, the minister mentioned that the proposed amendment was not the result of a unilateral decision. After consulting with parliamentary leaders, we recognized the situation and the need to correct it. However, the way to correct it remains problematic. There were a number of options, but they did not allow for targeted solutions on other rules that had to be changed. Therefore, the minister simply chose to go back to the comprehensive reform of 1968, which offers the best solution in that it allows us to solve the problem without having to amend other rules that have proven their effectiveness.

Indeed, it is simply a matter of reaffirming the powers that the Chair already has, but that it no longer exercises to better protect freedom of expression. I really want to emphasize this point.

The opposition claims that, through this motion, the powers of the Chair will be restricted and even constricted. That is not so. In fact, the motion strengthens the powers and the authority of the Chair. This is at the core of the issue.

Under the standing orders, once a standing committee of the House has completed its review of a bill, a process that already includes amendments, the bill goes back to the House for what is called report stage. In other words, the standing committee submits a report on its review of the bill in question.

We all know that when a bill is reviewed in committee, public consultations take place and any committee member can propose amendments or changes which, in his or her opinion, will improve the bill.

• (1715)

This applies equally to a government bill and to a private member's bill that has succeeded in getting through the House for referral to a standing committee.

This is the appropriate time for members, particularly those who were not on the committee, to express their opinion on the bill and propose amendments they would like to see made, provided of course that they have given written notice of them. The only exception to this rule is bills relating to supply or ways and means motions.

Since the reform in 1968, there have been a variety of amendments in the standing orders relating to the report stage, on the length of speeches in particular. However, if the original intent of this report stage was mainly to broaden the debate, it was not in any way intended as reconsideration of what has already been considered by the committee. Yet that is exactly what is happening at present, and has been for some time.

As we are well aware, the present strategy consists precisely in repeating in the House the arguments that have already been raised in committee, and that have already been the subject of discussion, exchanges of views, debates and comments in the committee. It even happens that certain arguments are knowingly advanced before the standing committee responsible for considering the bill as a means of bringing them before the House as a whole.

The last major procedural reform had taken that into account. The standing orders conferred upon the Chair the power to group together the amendments proposed in order to avoid repetition and also to judge the merits of the amendments and thus their admissibility.

In practice, however, our Speaker's predecessors bowed to the benefit of the doubt and, gradually, out of concerns about limiting freedom of expression, they delegated their decision making power to the House as a whole, with the negative results we are today attempting to correct with this amendment.

This power comprises all the rights necessary for the solution we seek. The Speaker therefore has the right to reject a motion the



committee has already declared inadmissible, unless he personally believes that it merits attention. If he deems it appropriate he can call upon the motion's sponsor for sufficient explanations to facilitate his decision. He must retain only those amendments which, for a variety of reasons, could not be debated in committee.

Finally, to shorten debate, he may group together motions which concern the same topic or are in some way similar.

At this point, two criteria come into play: the content of the proposed amendment, and where it fits in the bill. It should be pointed out, however, that the Speaker is not required to voice an opinion on the purpose or substance of the proposed amendment, or even comment on whether it merits discussion. His sole task is to decide whether or not the amendment is in order according to the rules of procedure on admissibility.

In connection with this aspect of the rules of procedure, the British parliament has an imposing jurisprudence, built up over many long years of experience, which, I am sure, would serve as a very valuable guide to our Speaker. The responsibility is heavy, however, I agree. It presupposes what are sometimes some very difficult situations.

● (1720)

We must bear in mind the fundamental reason for the existence of this chamber: to serve, to the best of our abilities, the public, which has put its trust in us to improve its living conditions.

It is also a question of a responsibility we must all assume for the collective good of society. I think that this proposed amendment to our parliamentary procedure will make our job and the Speaker's easier and will enable us to exercise the responsibility falling to us with greater rigour.

Were we to do so, I think that the general effectiveness of this parliament would benefit and, ultimately, the esteem in which Canadian politicians are held.

[*English*]

We have heard many claims from members of opposition parties. One of them was that the amendment will actually restrict the ability of backbenchers and simple members of parliament to bring amendments to the legislation and that it will actually restrict the Speaker's authority. The authority is already there. What has happened is that through the years, from 1968 until quite recently, preceding speakers chose not to use that authority. We are talking over 30 years ago.

I would defy members of the opposition to name one court, whether it be judicial or administrative, where frivolous actions can be brought in and where the judge, whether a judicial judge or an administrative judge, does not have the authority to dismiss out

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of hand on the face of the evidence or the file, a frivolous or an abusive action.

One only has to look at some of our commissions, for instance, both at the federal and at the provincial level, whether it be governance or civilian oversight of law enforcement agencies, where there is that authority. It is a well established practice and concept that frivolous, abusive and repetitive actions have no place in proceedings.

It is already part of your authority, Mr. Speaker. This amendment simply re-establishes that it is within the Speaker's authority to deem motions, which been brought before the House and which are frivolous, abusive or vexatious, out of order. In many cases, the sole objective of these motions is simply to delay the proceedings of the House.

There are members on the opposite who claimed that this was somehow limiting democratic expression of members. I fail to see how being forced to vote for hours on end on frivolous or in some cases vexatious motions, or changing a comma from here to there, allows me as a member of parliament to express the views of my constituents. It does not.

● (1725)

In fact, it actually limits the amount of time that I or any other member of the House have to actually debate issues. It reduces the amount of time that the House has in order to deal with the substantive issues and to deal with them in a substantive way.

[*Translation*]

Returning to my point, this amendment does not in any way limit, constrain or lessen the powers of the Speaker of the House. On the contrary, it reinforces his powers which, while already in existence, have been affected by a practice which has set in and prevented him, in a way, from exercising them and putting them into application.

I believe that this amendment would provide not just the government but the House as a whole with more facility and more means for the democratic expression of the points of view of their constituents.

This would, I believe, also give more time. We are always hearing complaints about insufficient time for private members' business. If we are not tied up, if our time is not taken up, with votes about changing a comma we get more time. The sole objective of such motions, which often originate with the opposition, and let us hide nothing here, is merely to hold up, to block, the legitimate work of the House, the legitimate work of the members.

It is all very well to speak of the government, but there are members of parliament here. We too have work we want to get

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done, whether through bills or through motions. Procedures and amendments—which are, in my opinion and that of many others, frivolous or vexatious—ought to be declared inadmissible. The Speaker has the power. This amendment reinforces that power. It hearkens back to the source.

In closing, therefore, I call upon all colleagues on both sides of the House to support this motion by the government.

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the chance to speak on the motion which seeks to reaffirm the traditional power of the Speaker to select motions for debate and reject those which are repetitive, frivolous and designed solely to delay report stage proceedings.

This is a particular honour for me since it touches on issues at the very heart of Canadian democracy, namely the dignity of parliamentary debate.

Canadians believe in the country. They are committed to its values of fairness and compassion. They are dedicated to safeguarding those freedoms which are our birthright. It is because of this that they hold institutions such as the debating procedures in parliament in great esteem. They see them as living symbols of the values and freedoms we hold so dear.

Recognizing this, members of the House have traditionally sought to improve the debating procedure of the parliament in order to increase the dignity of the institution in the eyes of Canadians. That is, for instance, why we are involved in so many parliamentary co-operative institutions around the world to see how it is done in other places and how we might improve what we do.

Unfortunately, we have not always proved equal to the challenge. In recent years some believe there have been early and worrying signs that some Canadians do not always hold the institution of parliament in the high esteem they once did.

While some of this may be just a result of general suspicion in all institutions, some responsibility for this disillusionment may lie closer to home with us in the House. For example—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. We have to deal with private members' business. Once we are done with this, the hon. member will have 18 minutes left for his speech.

It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

● (1730)

[*English*]

**CANADA ELECTIONS ACT**

**Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP)** moved that Bill C-213, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to begin the debate on my private member's bill to enfranchise 16 and 17 year old Canadians. As many members of the House will know, the bill was originally introduced in the last parliament by our former colleague, Nelson Riis, who represented the people of Kamloops, Fraser and Highland Valleys and the surrounding area very well for the last 20 years.

Nelson Riis was an MP who was respected on all sides of the House for his insight, his strong grasp of the issues, his mastery of parliamentary procedures, his flair for the dramatic and, most of all, his unwavering commitment to serving both his own constituents and all Canadians. His legacy of service to the country through his work in the House is one that few parliamentarians can ever hope to match.

I am pleased to have been able to pick up the bill introduced in the last parliament by Mr. Riis and lead off the debate today in the House of Commons. I admit that when Nelson first talked about the bill and introduced it I was quite skeptical. I wondered whether 16 year olds were mature enough to vote. Therefore I understand if members taking part in the debate today are also skeptical.

After carefully looking into the matter and speaking with literally hundreds of young adults in my riding, I am convinced that enfranchising 16 and 17 year old Canadians would reinvigorate and strengthen democracy in Canada. Right now Canadian democracy needs a shot in the arm. Voter turnout in the last election was down to 58%. That is the lowest in the modern era. More than four out of ten Canadians stayed home rather than exercise their right to vote.

How would enfranchising 16 and 17 year olds improve voter turnout? Some people say it would actually lower voter turnout, which is already lowest among voters between the ages of 18 and 25. That argument only scratches the surface of the issue. If we look carefully at voting behaviour we see that exercising citizenship through voting, like many life values, is something most Canadians learn from their families at a young age.

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Statistically speaking, we are more likely to vote if our parents vote than if they do not. People who vote do so because they value their rights and responsibilities as citizens in a democracy. Values like this are most often learned in the home.

The problem with setting the voting age at 18 is that by the time young Canadians are old enough to vote, which may be 19 or 20 depending on the electoral cycle, they have already left home. By that age most young adults have either gone away to pursue post-secondary education or, if they are fortunate, they have found a job and moved out. We do not do this with most other things.

Most young adults get their first part time job while they still live at home. When young adults get their first job it is usually their parents who teach them about important life values such as the work ethic. Even if young adults do not get part time jobs, parents often teach them about the work ethic by making sure they do their homework or giving them chores to do around the house in exchange for an allowance.

The point is that most young adults learn their important life values before they leave home and begin living as independent adults. Parents are most often the ones who teach about the work ethic, the sense of right and wrong, and even things like how to drive or fold clothes. By the time young adults leave home we expect them to have all the tools they need to be able to live and function in society, with one exception: voting.

It does not make sense that we expect young adults to learn other life skills and values at home but not voting. We make them wait until an age when most have already left home before allowing them to exercise their right to vote. No wonder there is such a drop off in voting among young people. Even young adults whose parents do vote are less likely to vote than their parents.

The biggest tragedy of all is that if people do not vote when they are young they probably never will. They do not magically become interested in politics when they turn 30. Most remain non-voters their whole lives. That is why we have had a steady downward trend in voter turnout for decades.

• (1735)

There is no question that all of us as parliamentarians should seek a way to improve it. Canadian citizens do not appear to have faith in our system. One of the major factors, quite frankly, is that they do not trust politicians.

A few years back there was a study done. The most trusted professionals were nurses. The least trusted professionals were lawyers. The second least trusted were politicians. That should tell us there is a problem out there. We as parliamentarians must work very hard to improve that image whether or not it is justified. We must work and do whatever we can to restore people's faith in the democratic system. Otherwise we risk losing democracy, something we as Canadians have valued for a hundred years plus.

Enfranchising 16 and 17 year olds would go a long way toward stopping the downward trend. Most young adults would have their first opportunity to vote while they were still at home. It would give families a chance to talk about politics. Young adults would have a chance to learn from their parents about the values of citizenship and voting, just as they learned other life values from their parents. Instilling such values would make young adults voters for life.

This would encourage parents who at present do not vote to have an additional interest in it if their young adults are home with them and asking what is happening in an election. It would encourage that kind of discussion in the home. Maybe we could get some of those parents and older adults once again to be part of the electoral system. Extending the franchise to 16 and 17 year olds would also have positive side effects for parents.

With voter turnout in Canada down to 58%, many parents are obviously non-voters and therefore would not be teaching their sons and daughters the values of citizenship and voting. Many young adults could still learn about voting by talking to other mentors like teachers, or even their friends at school.

I have been increasingly surprised at the well informed discussions I hear from young adults in the schools in my riding. Seeing their sons and daughters become engaged in politics would, I truly believe, influence many parents who would otherwise not vote to get involved once again.

I have addressed how enfranchising 16 and 17 year olds would help invigorate democracy. That is the main positive outcome of the proposal. I will now turn my attention to the main criticism of the idea, namely the view that 16 and 17 year olds are not mature enough to vote. When I talk to older people about the issue that is the main criticism I hear. In my experience nothing could be further from the truth.

As a member of parliament I make a point of visiting schools throughout my riding. I always make myself available to go in and talk to school classes or assemblies about the job of an MP and about the Canadian parliamentary system in general. I work extremely hard within the school system to be non-partisan. There has been no criticism from teachers, parents, school trustees or anyone about it because it is a matter of getting young people involved in the political process.

I have talked to many classes since I was first elected in 1997. Most of those young adults are no less intelligent or mature than 18 or 19 year olds. Very often the political discussions I have had with high school classes I visit are just as intense as the ones on the doorsteps, on the main streets or in the chambers of commerce.

The issues we discuss may be different but they are no less important. Many young adults are interested in issues with which

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we deal as members of parliament that affect them directly. Young adults have a vested interest in the skyrocketing cost of post-secondary education or in the economy as they look for their first jobs and think about their future careers.

They are interested in what happens when they go into the workplace. It may not be a safe workplace. We hear year after year of the increase in the number of accidents and deaths of young people in the workplace. It is crucial that they be allowed the opportunity to be part of the legislative process in laws that affect them and in health and safety regulations which affect them.

● (1740)

One recent accident in particular still sits in my mind. A 14 year old construction worker in Alberta was killed on the job and charges have been laid against the employer. I can tell the House that the 14 year old did not have an opportunity to be involved in the discussion of workplace safety.

Young adults have been affected very negatively by the Liberal government's cuts to colleges and universities, by cuts to employment insurance and by the overall mismanagement of the economy. Every day the government makes decisions without the slightest consideration for young adults, even though many of them have jobs and contribute to society both as citizens and as taxpayers. It is as though they do not exist until they turn 18, and that is not right. They deserve to be heard.

Another issue that affects young adults directly is the Young Offenders Act. Right now the government is talking about changing the Young Offenders Act to make it easier to put 16 year olds in adult court. If parliamentarians and the government feel that 16 year olds should be treated like adults by the criminal justice system, then they should also be treated like adults in the electoral system.

I conclude my remarks by noting that I am glad the issue has finally made it to the floor of the House of Commons for debate. It is unfortunate that the bill was not deemed votable but at least we had the opportunity to debate the issue.

Changing the electoral system is not an easy thing to do. A hundred years ago women did not have the right to vote in Canada. It took many years of persistent effort for women to win that right. It took even longer for aboriginal people to win the right to vote. They were not enfranchised until just 40 years ago.

A few other democracies around the world have already enfranchised 16 and 17 year olds. Most are newer developing democracies like Nicaragua and some of the former Yugoslav republics. The newer democracies started off with a clean slate so it was easier for them to set the voting age at whatever seemed appropriate.

In Canada we have more historical baggage. People are used to the voting age being 18 and there is an understandable reluctance to change it. I believe in the saying "If it ain't broke, don't fix it", but the fact is that our electoral system is broken. It is obvious from the fact that 42% of Canadians do not vote any more. We need to fix it, and enfranchising 16 and 17 year olds is one of the ways we can do that.

**Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have the opportunity to speak on the private member's initiative just described by the hon. member. The bill would lower the federal voting age to 16.

This is a special pleasure since all of us in the House share the same commitment to making sure all Canadians can participate fully in our electoral system and express their views on issues of the day. This is particularly true of our young people who are, after all, the very future of our country.

For that reason, I want to commend the hon. member for her concern for Canadian young people and for her commitment to safeguarding their democratic rights, a commitment shared fully by the government and, I am sure, by every member in the House.

I must confess that there is something very appealing about the idea of expanding the franchise to allow more young people to vote. As we all know, our youth care passionately about Canada and are committed to making it even better. That is demonstrated by the number of young people who get involved in the political life of the country both during and between elections. Like other members, I have been very impressed by their hard work, commitment and dedication to our great country, and I agree that we need to look at how we can involve young Canadians more in our political system.

However, as the saying goes, the devil may be in the details. We need to take a closer look at this to see what problems there might be in lowering the voting age and whether or not it is the right time for such a move.

It is important to note that the bill, while a leading initiative, does not open new ground. Canadian parliamentarians have revisited this issue many times over the last two decades, and just recently, as the member mentioned, on a bill brought forward by a former parliamentarian, Mr. Riis. For example, parliament lowered the minimum voting age to 18 in 1970.

● (1745)

In 1991 the Lortie commission on electoral reform and party financing investigated at some length whether we should drop the minimum voting age to 16 or 17. While it heard from a number of witnesses who presented strong cases for lowering the minimum voting age, it was also given equally compelling reasons for



maintaining the status quo, such as the following: persons under the age of 18 were not considered adults for the purpose of criminal proceedings but were instead treated procedurally separately under the Young Offenders Act; minors required parental consent for many important decisions such as applying for citizenship, getting married and seeking some medical procedures; and all provinces had set the voting age at 18.

It was desirable to look to harmonization of the voting ages in all jurisdictions. Based on these findings, the commission decided not to recommend lowering the voting age but rather suggested that parliament might wish to revisit this issue from time to time. That is what we are doing now. If we do not make a move now, I am quite sure we will continue to study the issue.

An all party committee studied the issue in June 1998 and recommended retaining the current minimum voting age. There was also a re-examination of the issue last year as part of the parliamentary review of the Canada Elections Act, however cursory that may have been, which kept the voting age at 18. Finally, lowering the voting age has been the subject of a number of private members' motions, all of which have up to now been rejected.

The remarkable consistency of members in the House over time on this issue is not surprising, subject of course to the various initiatives such as the hon. member's bill at this time. There are a number of good reasons for retaining the current minimum voting age for the time being. To begin with, there is the experience of the vast majority of democratic societies around the world which have in most cases set 18 as their voting age and do not feel under pressure to change it.

Canadian experience suggests that retaining 18 as the voting age makes sense as well, given the important role played by the age of majority in most areas of law. For example, most provinces tie the voting age to the age of majority, the age of majority being a condition for all civil and legal activities and responsibilities.

The criminal code relies under certain circumstances on the age of 18 by providing specific rules where persons under that age are involved. Most social legislation takes into account the age of majority in terms of the granting of aid or social assistance. In most cases family allowances are paid for the support of young people up to age 18.

Many economic statutes make reference to the age of majority, as well, particularly those relating to business corporations which require persons to be 18 before they can be elected to boards of directors. Most legislation dealing with alcohol use is also tied in many but not all cases to the age of majority.

This being the case it makes a great deal of sense to maintain for consistency 18 years of age as the age when our federal electoral law might permit one to vote. This ensures harmonization and consistency across our very diverse country. Maintaining just one

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age of majority in all areas of law helps prevent overcategorization and segmentation of our civil rights by age and increases the certainty for Canadians on this issue as they move from one part of the country to another.

However this is not to suggest that the minimum voting age as it is now is set in stone for all time and can never be changed. Rather, because Canada is so dynamic, our system of governance of electoral laws must also change from time to time to correspond to the needs of all its citizens as they may reflect changing social, economic and cultural realities.

Should it become clear in the future by way of an emerging consensus that we need to reduce the minimum age due to changed circumstances, I for one would consider endorsing and supporting such an action.

● (1750)

I do look for an emerging consensus. It may be that members are on the edge of a wave here. We do not know, but barring such clear evidence we must continue to rely on the recommendations and insights of the previous royal and parliamentary commissions which have told us that the time for lowering the age has not yet arrived.

While I cannot support the bill, I nevertheless commend the hon. member for being the flag bearer for potentially a whole generation of young people, a rolling over, evolving generation of young people, all of whom are old enough to think, to reason, and to know right from wrong. Most people will accept that 16 year olds are capable of those things. All members see that our education system has helped us greatly in that regard.

The member's commitment and the commitment of other members of the House as reflected in this and other debates will show that. I urge all hon. members to continue to work together, not only in this envelope but in all of the envelopes involving our election rights and responsibilities, to ensure that our electoral system continues to do the best job we can possibly do of enabling representation of Canadians.

**Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-213. I compliment my friend from the NDP for putting it forward.

She addressed something that is extremely important, not only to the youth of the country but to adults: why we as a nation are disengaged from the political process in appalling numbers. We went through a federal election last November where we saw the lowest voter turnout in the last 60 years. Less than 60% of Canadians voted in the federal election.

Why is that so? Canadians are not only apathetic and disaffected but are utterly turned off by the political process in the House and

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in the country today for some very good reasons. The reason that is so is that we do not live in a democracy.

We live in a totalitarian regime. The system is controlled by a Prime Minister and a small cabal of individuals who are unelected, unaccountable and invisible. They tell members what to do, what to say and when to say it. Lo and behold the member who goes against them. It is a top down situation. Members vote as they are told to do, not what their conscience or their constituents tell them to do.

The committee structure is under tight government control and that is why they start pursuing efforts and initiatives that have very little to do with the large pressing problems of the nation today. They deal with irrelevancies because committees and most of the House are designed to be a make work project for MPs, not to address the big problems that exist in the country today.

To understand why members vote this way, it is interesting to look at an unwritten code of conduct in the House which explains to Canadians why they see members voting clearly against their conscience, clearly against what they want to do and in violation of what is the right thing to do.

It goes something like this: do what the leadership tells them to do. It is also known as the principle of blind loyalty. If information comes to them from outside sources that is adverse to what the leadership says, they must be ignored at all cost, even if it goes against what the leadership says and the external information is true. If their personal ethics and knowledge are against what the leadership tells them to do, they must ignore that. It creates an internal schizophrenic environment in the brain that prevents them from doing the right thing and is very difficult to live with.

Zealotry is rewarded; objectivity is penalized. The consequences for living up to what their constituents want them to do, what they feel is ethically responsible or intellectually responsible, where it runs adverse to what the leadership wants to do, is to be excommunicated from their party, have their democratic rights compromised, have their ability to represent their constituents severely restricted and be rendered politically impotent.

• (1755)

Indeed the landscape is littered with the political corpses of individuals who have run afoul of their leadership and have done the right thing. The system is weak. It lends to the political disaffection and the disconnectiveness that Canadians have for the House of Commons.

What should we do? Many members of the House have fought for constructive democratic solutions to make this place a responsible place for Canadians. We hear about free votes, but do we have them? Absolutely not. I am talking about true free votes for non-money bills. We need them for members of all political parties.

Why not have all bills go in draft form to committees? If bills went in draft form to committees then both the MPs and the public would have constructive input into forming bills. Right now committees basically rubber stamp the bills that come forward which are already constructed by the Prime Minister's Office and the department. They come from the department and go through the sham of engaging in an analysis.

It breaks my heart, as I am sure it does of every member of the House, to see well meaning, intelligent public individuals come before committees with bright and intelligent solutions to deal with problems they are studying. Yet that input is largely ignored. It is certainly ignored by the leaders of the country.

A committee report is put forward. It gets a day of press and then is tossed on a shelf to collect dust in some unknown hideaway. That is what happens to all the hard work of committee members.

Committees must be independent. Parliamentary secretaries should be removed from committees. They do not belong there. They are acting as mini whips of the government. They greatly impede the ability of committees to do their work. Committees should be independent in order to do effective work that benefits Canadians.

Private members' business should be expanded by three hours a week. We could have two more hours on Friday and one more hour on Monday. The system upon which private members' business is chosen should be changed. Right now it is a lottery. Every MP must have one votable private member's bill and one private member's motion at a minimum every parliament.

There is a need for more constructive debates and less destructive action on the part of the government. Presently the government rolls itself up in a carapace and the opposition parties hammer away at it, often on issues that the public does not care about.

Why are we not seeing any effective debate on how to save our health care system? Why are we not seeing a debate on the demographic impact on Canadian society, from pensions to social programs? We have unsustainable pensions, an unsustainable health care system and an unsustainable CPP. Our environment is being polluted. There are solutions out there to address it, yet we see no effective action to deal with these and many other problems.

Why is that so? The reason is that this place has nothing to do with being constructive in addressing the problems of the nation but has everything to do with the maintenance and acquisition of power. It is true that one has to get into power to implement what one wants to have done, but that does not preclude the ability of each and every member of the House to use their talents and their skills to represent their constituents for the betterment of Canada.

We need to create an environment in the House that will enable the big issues of the country to be addressed. We need to create

awareness to address the issue the member has raised in her bill. When we speak to the public and the young it is sad that they know very little about the big issues affecting our country.

The government could work with the provinces to introduce a civics course starting in grade school. It is easier to hardwire people when they are younger. They need to be hardwired about being involved and connected with their environment. A civics course in school would enable students to be aware of what is happening in their environment and to get involved in their environment. Then when they are older they would have a greater propensity and a greater desire to get involved in the processes, be they political or otherwise.

• (1800)

There is a massive dearth in the interactivity of our processes with the Canadian public. We have to regenerate that. The only way we can do that is to ensure that the House is democratic so that what people are saying will be listened to and acted on.

Second, we have to ensure that our youth today are aware of what is happening. One way we can do it, and indeed the government should do it, is to work with the provinces to introduce a civics course into the schools across this country, starting with children at a very early age. That way we will create generations of children who will become the adult leaders who will address the problems of our nation.

I have only a minute left, but I again thank the hon. member, and I issue a plea to the government. This is not an issue that affects only members in the opposition. This affects every single member in the House of Commons, across all party lines. If we fail to democratize the House and if we fail to enable the public to have adequate input through their MPs and through the systems of the House, we do not deserve to be here and the House does not deserve to have a higher reputation than it has.

Listen to what has been said in this place over the years and act on it, and we will be able to do our country proud.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased as well to intervene on this bill as introduced by our colleague from Churchill.

I take this opportunity to congratulate her. I think it is laudable to put this proposal before the House to enable our young people aged 16 and 17 to vote.

However, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has indicated that this is not the first time this matter has been debated here. We have to raise this question again periodically

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and debate it from time to time simply because there a number of rather conservative forces that are not particularly open to considering this reform, the effect of which would be to allow our 16 and 17 year olds to take part in the electoral process, but are also more or less open, I would say they are in fact totally opposed, to the in depth reform of the current electoral system, which, it may be said in passing, gives them considerable advantage.

Is it not odd when we had to tell our Liberal friends that they were being conservative in electoral terms, because the system in its current form benefits them? This is why they do not want to change it one iota, since there is no reason for them to change it in any way in the short term.

Members need only remember the remarks by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader to the effect that, when the House worked on the reform to the Elections Act in the last parliament, the committee, the House and the government chose to reject the idea of giving the vote to 16 and 17 year olds. He said they had had rejected it. He said that, given the wisdom of our predecessors in the previous parliament, we should not reopen this issue, since we have just discussed it and have made a decision.

That being said, I would like to set the record straight and explain what truly happened. I was a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs when it reviewed Bill C-2. The government used its majority in committee to reject the motion in amendment that had been proposed by the New Democratic Party to introduce an amendment to the Elections Act that would have allowed 16 and 17 year olds to vote.

It is inaccurate and somewhat dishonest to suggest to members of the House and to those 16 and 17 year olds who may be listening to us that, in the last parliament, this assembly decided, in its great wisdom, to close the matter, to not follow up on that suggestion. The government decided not to go ahead with that proposal. One wonders about what motivates this government.

• (1805)

To all intents and purposes, the government made cosmetic changes to the Elections Act. In fact, some changes were useful ones, but there was no in depth reform of the electoral system that governs democracy in Canada.

For example, given the recommendation of the Lortie commission and of the chief electoral officer, the government could have changed the appointment process for returning officers. The government always wants control over the appointment of returning officers. Why is that? Why choose them according to their political loyalties instead of their real and proven abilities? It seems that the government wants to be the one making the appointments in the hopes of gaining some advantage.

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The government has also refused to look at the entire issue of reviewing political party funding. We in the Bloc Québécois—and I know that the NDP is also looking at this at the present time—have proposed introduction of party funding by the public, based on two basic premises, the first one being a set upper limit for allowable contributions. The government said no to that.

The second addressed limiting contributions to only those who have a say in the political system, i.e. the voters, those who select the people who will represent the population in Parliament. The government also said no to that. We must conclude that the present funding system works in their favour and here too they do not want to see one iota of it changed.

Now I am getting to the heart of what concerns us at this time. I believe that the idea that we should give the right to vote to our fellow citizens aged 16 and 17 merits consideration. More than that, it merits adoption.

Unfortunately, as fate would have it, according to the decision by the subcommittee on private members' business, this bill was judged not to be a votable item. For now, we can hardly go any further, since the government obviously has no intention of introducing such a provision in its own legislation, but at least the debate is continuing. The debate is continuing and we think that we will eventually be able to get things to evolve to the point where such a measure could be contemplated.

It would be only normal, in a society in which a 16 year old can hold a driver's licence, work, and therefore pay taxes. Under the principle of no taxation without representation, we should be able to let 16 and 17 year olds decide who will spend their tax dollars, since they have the right to work and pay taxes at that age.

Under the criminal code as it now stands, 16 and 17 year olds are considered adults. What is more, the National Defence Act allows the Canadian forces to hire 17 year olds. A youth of 17, who has not reached the age of majority, could be called, if he wished, to serve under the flag and even fight to defend Canada, putting his life on the line, but we do not want to give this 17 year old the right to choose who will represent him here in the House, who will be called upon to direct the destiny of the country for which he is prepared to risk his life.

On the very face of it, this idea of not allowing 16 and 17-year-olds the right to vote is silly.

• (1810)

We were concerned here in the House. The chief electoral officer and civil society in general were concerned by the declining turnout in federal elections. Turnout in the last election was the lowest in Canada's electoral history.

Why? Why is this so? Perhaps it is simply because we are telling these young people in the flower of youth, who are interested in the public events, who have become independent thinkers and who would like to take part in the electoral process, that they must wait longer. They must wait another two years. They must wait another year.

What happens at the end of this year or two we have made them wait? We make them hang around at the door, telling them they still do not have what it takes, that they are not mature enough. We tell them that they have not developed sufficiently structured thought to enable them to choose judiciously on election day.

Clearly that makes no sense. This is the effect of deliberately keeping 16 and 17 year olds out of the electoral process.

As I am running out of time, I will conclude very quickly by saying that this question deserves further attention and that we should not, as the government has done for the past few years, silence this reform of the Elections Act, as with all the other proposed reforms of the Elections Act. If the government agreed to consider reforms, perhaps we could increase people's interest in public affairs.

[English]

**Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP):** Madam Speaker, this is actually the first opportunity I have to congratulate you on your appointment. I know that it took a number of years before the male dominated Parliament of Canada saw fit to put a female Speaker in the chair.

I want to thank all my colleagues who were involved in the debate today for the varying perspectives they brought to it. Just as it took a long time to have a woman in the Speaker's chair, it took a long time to give the vote to females and to aboriginal Canadians.

As my colleague from the Bloc mentioned, young men and women of 17 years old, young adults, can go off to war and possibly give their lives for our country, but they do not have the opportunity to vote.

Many Canadians do not know that this is exactly what aboriginal Canadians did for a number of years and through a number of wars. They gave their lives or lost their legs or arms and came back to our country disabled. They could not vote, they could not access some of the same establishments and they did not get the same rights as other veterans.

Canada is not apart from being an unjust society. We have a history there. I think we need to move beyond that history, open up the initiative and once again build a truly democratic, just society.

Canadians do not have faith in this parliamentary system any more. They do not have faith in our electoral process. We need to



work very hard as parliamentarians to again build that trust in our system. It cannot be a matter of saying one thing prior to an election and then coming to the House of Commons as government or opposition members and not being true to what we were saying out there during an election. We have to maintain a democratic system and we must build that faith in our system again.

Ideally the government should be bringing forth this legislation. Then we would not have to go through the whole process of private members' business, hoping for the luck of the draw and then hoping beyond hope that our legislation will be deemed votable. We should not have to be in that situation.

The legislation would be good, progressive legislative and electoral change, and it should be coming from the government, like so many pieces of legislation that the government should be bringing forth to improve our country. It will not do that, so we will.

As opposition members we will push, and I know there are some government members out there who will push. They will take the government kicking and screaming into the next century, and hopefully we will see some change and some improvement in people's faith in our democratic system.

• (1815)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. As the motion has not been designated a votable item, the order is dropped from the order paper.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

**Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, first, I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment. You have been doing a wonderful job.

Before private members' business, I was talking about the institution of parliament, the respect for the debating procedure and how legislation is debated and decisions are reached.

Members of the House have traditionally sought to improve the debating procedure of parliament and to increase the dignity of the institution in the eyes of Canadians. Sadly, we have not always proved equal to this challenge. In recent years, some believe there have been early and worrying signs that some Canadians do not

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always hold the institution of parliament in the same high esteem that they once did.

While some of that may be a result of general suspicion of all institutions, some responsibility for this disillusionment may lie closer to home. For example, from time to time some of the debating actions and statements of some members of the House can fuel the disillusionment and cynicism felt by Canadians. Sometimes this is a result of a misunderstanding by the public of how parliament, with its notion of loyal opposition, works.

I still do not understand all the procedures in that huge manual. I hope I will understand them better and make sense out of some of the things that I would see as a member of public watching television.

At other times some believe it is little more than a matter of high spirits and good natured bantering on the part of some members and perhaps a reflection of the collegiality which permeates the history of this and other similar institutions. However, on other occasions there are incidents which are less positive and which suggest that some procedures in the House may be dysfunctional and no longer work as had been originally intended. I have noted a special sensitivity to these incidents by new members such as myself.

In this regard we need to look further than the use in recent years of the report stage to put forward hundreds, and even thousands of motions, in the hopes of paralyzing the work of the House.

Just a brief review of recent history gives a number of glaring examples of the misuse of this stage in the legislative process.

For example, in December 1999, the House spent more than 42 consecutive hours voting on 469 report stage motions designed to delay to the work of the House on the Nisga'a legislation.

In March 2000 there was a similar exercise involving 36 consecutive hours of voting on 411 motions on the clarity bill

In September 2000, the House was faced with the prospect of having to deal with over 3,000 motions which would have required more than two weeks of non-stop sitting on the youth justice bill. Can anyone in opposition explain how this would have been useful? After all the years of study, suggestions, expert witnesses and procedures to come up with the best compromise and some improvements, how could 3,000 nuisance motions be beneficial? Clearly this would have been an abuse of parliamentary procedure that would damage the work of the House.

Perhaps worst of all, it damages the dignity of parliamentary debate in the eyes of Canadians.

It is a great pity, for it means we are squandering the respect and legitimacy that democracies like ours need in order to survive and thrive.

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• (1820)

That some Canadians should be turned off by these filibusters is hardly surprising. During the marathon voting sessions, Canadians are treated to images of MPs bobbing up and down like puppets, sleeping at their desks and reading books or newspapers. Reviewing such a spectacle, some Canadians may conclude that parliament is not a place that takes the nation's business seriously and that MPs are engaged in silly partisan games.

While this is clearly not the case, we nevertheless must face up to the fact that such tactics, while perhaps justified in the minds of those employing them, are hurting the dignity of parliament and the respect of Canadians for the institution. Clearly this can not continue.

The motion before us seeks to address this issue and repair some of the damage caused by the amounts of abuse to parliamentary procedure in the debating system. To do this, it proposes to restore to the Speaker his or her power to select motions for debate and filter out others which are frivolous, repetitious or clearly intended to obstruct the business of the House at report stage.

Returning the decision to eliminate frivolous motions to the honoured institution of the Speaker I do not think could be opposed by many. The Speaker we have in place has the respect of all members of the House, as I think we could see by the very strong acclamation achieved when he was selected in a vote by all members of the House. Of course the Deputy Speaker and Acting Speakers are very well received as well by the House.

To address the function, many parliamentarians have been involved over the years in studies with other parliaments and procedures. We can usually consider the experience of the U.K. house of commons. Therefore, the motion calls upon the Speaker to be guided by the practice followed in the parliament of the U.K., in effect allowing him to draw on experience of a parliament with the longest history in the world in determining whether to select motions for debate at report stage.

Once in place the change would allow members on all sides of the House to get on with the work of debating and studying legislation, which is after all why Canadians elected us in the first place. It would also restore the traditional functions of the House and reinforce the role of House committees in considering amendments to legislation.

As members are aware, many amendments which would normally be introduced at the committee stage are now being brought forward instead at report stage. This practice weakens the committee system by denying members from all parties the input provided by such amendments during their detailed study of legislation.

Finally and perhaps most important, it would remove a misuse of House procedures which has damaged the dignity of parliament and discredited the institution in the eyes of many Canadians. As a result, the change would facilitate the work of parliament and help

restore the confidence of Canadians in the debates of the House and its ability to address the issues that matter most to Canadians. Clearly this would be good for parliament and good for this nation as a whole.

There are a number of issues in my riding that I would like deal with. I receive dozens of phone calls and e-mails. There are groups that want to see me. If that time is taken up by frivolous motions to a bill, it would not help me in my work and I would be very frustrated by it.

As a new parliamentarian, I have been frustrated by the lack of time to do all the things we are allowed and expected to do and that I want to do in this role. I have the great honour to be in this role. There are a lot of things I would like to try to accomplish to help my constituents and groups forward their agendas and to look at improving legislation. However, the amount of responsibilities and possibilities are just immense. I am sure all speakers in the House find this.

• (1825)

Unlike some provincial and territorial legislatures, the House sits five days a week, most nights until 6.30 p.m. Tonight we are sitting until maybe 11 p.m. We have a long sitting until June 22. That is a lot of sitting time and just one function of members of the House.

As well, there are committee meetings for detailed discussions on bills, research and comments. If there is a lot of research, we have binders full of material. Input from people giving evidence before committees has to be reviewed. If we are doing a good job, we comprehensively study the bill to make sure it is an excellent bill. That takes a lot of time.

Just because those two items coincide in time, I find it very frustrating. We have to take time away from one or the other, either sitting in the House to try to understand the debate on all legislation or narrowing the time down to our committees. Already, without adding frivolous motions, we have limited time for our functions.

There are various caucus meetings on specific areas which I find very productive. For instance, I have been attending a children's caucus, foreign affairs caucuses and regional caucuses in different parts of the country. It is a very productive to get into some detail in areas we would not be able to otherwise. However, once again it has been very productive for me in moving forward things that my constituents are interested in. On the other hand, it is a third time constraint.

The next item is all the e-mails we get, either in our constituency offices or in our Ottawa offices. I am sure all members of parliament try to do their best to respond them and be sensitive to their constituents.

In the same manner we have written submissions. Sometimes the written submissions, at least the ones I get, have huge backgrounds of documentation which I take on the plane with me to try to get through them all. I still have not got through them. There is a vast quantity of material.

Then there are individual groups that are experts in their areas. We try to respect that. These groups can bring a tremendous amount of research material to us. In Yukon we have the mining association, the Yukon Tourism Association, the British Columbia and Yukon Chamber of Mines, the Klondike Placer Miners Association, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Yukon Grants, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre and the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre. There are all sorts of groups that have detailed perspective they can bring to us on issues that we have to also add to our workload.

I cannot believe I am the only one who feels that way. All members of the House must be slightly depressed at the amount of work they have to do and the time in which they have to do it.

Members will understand that being new, I do not always know how to prioritize. Some nights I am in this building until three in the morning. Members can rest assured that I would be very angry if I was here because I was voting on 3,000 frivolous amendments to something. Members of all parties have enough other things they could do with that time.

I hope that would be the intent of the motion and would be the result of its passing. I cannot believe that members on the other side would not feel the same way too, that they would like more time to do the things their constituents and the groups in their ridings ask them to do and to review more of the legislation. Obviously none of us can review all the legislation that comes before us in detail because of all our other duties. If we could free up some of the time from sitting here voting on frivolous amendments, I think all of us would be happy.

• (1830)

The bill does not give any more control to the government side, whichever it happens to be in a given year. It does give control to the respected institution of the Speaker to eliminate frivolous amendments and motions. I do not think there are many who could argue with that.

On a number of occasions opposition members have talked about different suggested improvements, as recently as the speaker before me. I cannot imagine not getting their support because the motion is in line with the type of intentions they are trying to promote.

There is a tremendous cost to operating parliament. Of course it is not only for the 301 members but for the whole parliamentary support that goes with it. Does anyone really think about the cost

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of that to Canadian taxpayers and the cost of taking our time away from serious debate?

**Mr. Gar Knutson:** Seventeen thousand bucks an hour.

**Mr. Larry Bagnell:** Someone said that it costs \$17,000 an hour, but I think there is a lot more in personal time as well that could be better used than on frivolous amendments.

Members opposite, and especially my friend from Elk Island, have years of experience and talents to bring to parliament, to their constituents, to legislation, to committee meetings, to doing research for committees and to Canadians in general. Do members opposite really think it is advantageous to squander those talents by sitting here while 3,000 frivolous amendments are proposed and voted on?

Members of the loyal opposition in their opening addresses to the motion used the term *parlez-vous*. They did not know any French, but they thought it meant something about talking and that the House was meant as a place for serious discussion and debate. That would be exactly the result of the motion. If we were to eliminate everyone standing 3,000 times on a frivolous amendment, would there not be more time for serious debate?

[*Translation*]

Should we not talk just about things that are important to us members of parliament?

[*English*]

In conclusion, hopefully a minor change that eliminates frivolous amendments will allow us to get on with some of the very important things that we do here. I personally have a great respect for this institution and will do my best to do productive things with my time.

• (1835)

**Mr. Ken Epp:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if we could have unanimous consent for five minutes of questions and comments with the member because I have some important things I would like to say.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** I am sorry, but that is not a point of order. I think the hon. member for Elk Island already had his question and comment.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ):** Madam Speaker, to say that it is a pleasure to take the floor is an understatement. It is a pleasure to discuss issues with my colleagues, but I am not so sure that it is a real pleasure to address a motion like this one.

Earlier, I was surprised to hear the hon. member for Yukon say that voting on 3,000 amendments takes a long time, that it does not

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make sense. I remind the hon. member for Yukon, who was just recently elected to the House of Commons, that this is an episode of parliamentary history that he has yet to experience. Therefore, he may not be in the best position to make a comment of that nature on the 3,000 amendments and on the incidents, if I may use that word, surrounding the bills on the Nisga'a and on the so-called clarity bill.

That being said, I want to make some kind of a connection with what I just said concerning a possible amendment to the Elections Act to allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote. It is a strange coincidence that I rose to speak just a few moments ago on the bill introduced by the member for Churchill, and that I must now speak to Motion No. 2. I see a certain relationship between the two and I will explain what it is.

A few moments ago, I was talking about the low voter turnout in the last federal election, and I had occasion to do so a little earlier in the session in connection with bills having to do with the Canada Elections Act. I think it is appropriate to repeat this, because it is fundamental to my point.

If the government wants to make itself feel good by saying that it obtained an even greater majority than in the 1997 election, and that it therefore has a mandate to govern, I might draw its attention to the fact that it received about 40% of 60% of the vote. That is really not much.

This points to a fundamental problem in our political system. When members of the public lose interest in public affairs, there is an urgent need for action. Democracy must be constantly treasured and nurtured like a flower. Obviously, in the present situation, democracy is ailing because, with each successive election, the interest of the public in public affairs, elections, and the management of the affairs of state, is slowly but surely dwindling away.

With each successive election, voter turnout drops a little lower. We need to give ourselves a wake-up call and take it in that something serious is going on. There are a number of possible explanations.

Perhaps the government's lack of ethics, which we have been pointing out in recent weeks, is one of the explanations for Canadians' continually declining interest in what goes on here in Ottawa.

• (1840)

There are two other factors I can identify, which I would like to bring up once again. First, there is the government's systematic refusal to consider any in depth reform of the existing electoral system. I referred to the appointment of returning officers a moment ago.

There is no hiding one's head in the sand. Each of us in the House faced organizational problems during the latest election. Perhaps we should ask ourselves a number of questions, about the competence or incompetence of certain returning officers in the last federal election, among other things. Obviously a number of major problems occurred, which should be analyzed. Perhaps, as I was saying, the competence of certain returning officers is at issue in some instances.

The government is refusing to contemplate any change to the system of funding political parties. The chief electoral officer said "In democracy, it is important to know where the money goes and where the money comes from". It is worrisome for people to feel or have the impression that those contributing to party coffers, including the major corporations, which contribute huge amounts to the coffers of the traditional parties, hold greater sway over and have greater access to elected officials than do they, the people who chose them.

It is no surprise that the Canadian public shows such cynicism and lack of confidence in institutions as it does today with respect to what is going on here in Ottawa.

There is one other factor that needs considering: parliamentary reform. This government was elected in 1993 on its stated desire to change things, to restore public confidence in parliamentary institutions. What has it done since? Nothing. Absolutely nothing, except to reinforce the power that was already concentrated in the hands of the Prime Minister and his cabinet. This power that was already too highly concentrated in the hands of so few people was concentrated still further. It is nevertheless surprising, as I pointed out to the House earlier, that with a scant 40% of the votes close to 100% of power could be concentrated in the hands of so few people.

Not only has the government failed in its duty and commitment relating to parliamentary reform, but it has also, and more importantly, gone so far as to sneak one reform past us. The government seeks to ensure that the few powers vested in parliament, the opposition parties and Liberal backbenchers are taken from them and handed over to the all-powerful clique that surrounds the Prime Minister.

It is nonetheless surprising that the cornerstones of democracy, that is, a country's electoral and parliamentary systems, could be modified unilaterally by the government. This is a source of worry. I believe this can indeed add to the cynicism, the lack of confidence Canadians, and Quebecers in particular, have in what is going on in Ottawa.

Last time, the government took a unilateral approach to electoral reform. It did not have the support of the opposition parties. It even went so far as to ensure that, at third reading, the electoral reform



bill was debated only between the government House leader and the official opposition critic.

• (1845)

It was therefore passed or debated at third reading by only two of the five political parties present in this parliament. That is what is happening now with this attempt at parliamentary reform, because that is indeed what this is about.

The government is attempting to impose on us the defunct Motions Nos. 8 and 9, which sought to deprive the opposition of a certain number of its powers. It is coming back to us with a reworded motion, Motion No. 2, whose purpose is exactly the same. But this time it does not want to be the bad guy. It wants to foist this role off on the Speaker of the House, which is even more unacceptable and shocking.

Once again, it is proceeding unilaterally, without the agreement of the opposition parties, and still attempting to concentrate all the powers in the hands of a few, making this Parliament even more—

**An hon. member:** Antidemocratic.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Antidemocratic is not really the word I was looking for, but it is still serious. Irrelevant is the word that comes to mind. There is an increasing trend to strip this democratic institution of its relevance by arranging things so that all the powers are concentrated in the hands of the government and the powers that used to belong to parliament are being progressively taken away.

The government has invoked monetary reasons to justify moving this motion by saying “Listen, when we vote late in the evening, it costs taxpayers an awful lot of money”. The government House leader indicated that it costs \$27,000 an hour in overtime to make this institution run.

I do not know where the government House leader got this figure, but just today senior House officials told us that it was very difficult to estimate the operating costs of the House outside regular hours. Therefore, it is surprising to hear the government mention the figure of \$27,000 an hour.

Another argument the government used is “This is terrible. Our members are stuck in the House where they have to vote for hours on end. To force parliamentarians to vote for such long periods is a real misuse of members’ time and taxpayers’ money”.

Is it not our job to vote? Is it not why each and every one of us was elected? Were we not elected to pass laws and to pass amendments to these laws? Of course that is why we were elected, but it seems that this process costs a lot of money an hour.

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Again, this government, which always tries to justify its premise that it costs a lot of money to have the House sit outside regular hours when there a whole slew of amendments, asked House officials, through the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and other government members of that committee, to tell us how much a member of parliament costs an hour. What is the hourly remuneration of a member of parliament here in the House of Commons?

By crunching the numbers and then using a lot of imagination, the government tells us that a member costs about \$30 an hour.

The negative effect of this type of figure juggling is that some people at home could find it practical to have members sit longer because their hourly rate would drop. They would be paid \$25 or \$26 an hour. Some would be delighted that their MPs earn less if they sit more often.

I think the logic, the reasoning, the argument, that the cost of a member and of parliament must be calculated when parliament sits outside regular hours is Byzantine. The debate is totally, as I said, irrelevant and serves no purpose because it is very harmful.

• (1850)

I come back to what I said earlier. Democracy is a flower to be cultivated. It is distressing to hear the government telling Canadians that democracy costs a lot. Democracy is priceless.

At the moment, the government is trying to sell the budget to our fellow Canadians, by saying “We must pass this motion, because at the moment the opposition members are so out of it they cost a lot by making the House sit outside regular hours”. No logic or reasoning supports such an argument. I repeat the text of the motion:

For greater clarity, the Speaker will not select for debate a motion or series of motions of a repetitive, frivolous or vexatious nature or of a nature that would serve merely to prolong unnecessarily proceedings at the report stage.

I would like to say two things on this. It is basically disgraceful and unacceptable for the government to be claiming that what members propose to enrich parliamentary debate may be considered repetitive, frivolous or vexatious or of a nature that would serve merely to prolong unnecessarily proceedings at the report stage.

The government has only itself to blame. It is primarily responsible for this practice of the opposition parties, which has developed over a number of years, of introducing amendments at report stage.

Today it wants to gain public sympathy for the misuse the opposition parties are making of the House rules. Yet it is the one responsible. Why so? Quite simply, because this government

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governs by gag orders, and as I have said, has gone so far as to impose a reform of the House Standing Orders, a change to the Standing Orders. It feels it is invested with the power to impose this change to the Standing Orders with a gag. Yesterday, the Bogey Man, the Muzzle Man was back, once more imposing a gag on us so that he can change the way things are done here in the House.

Comparing figures on the number of gag orders used by the last Conservative government in its nine years in power, and the record of the present Liberal government, which has logged seven years so far, we see that the present government has considerably raised the number of gags imposed on legislation. There has been a considerable increase since the Liberals have been in power.

Between 1984 and 1993, under the Conservative regime, the government imposed 49 gags, 9.4% of the total of 519 bills introduced in the House. In its seven years in power, the Liberal government has imposed more than 60, with a total of only 350 bills, almost twice that figure, or 17.4%.

And yet, when it was in opposition, the present government, especially the members of the rat pack, one of whom is now the Government House Leader, decried the dominating and dictatorial attitude of the Conservative government. Today they are trying to preach to us that "The opposition is not responsible". That argument does not hold water.

• (1855)

If the opposition is forced to resort to such practices, it is because this is the only way, the only means left to it in this parliament to exercise its rights to generate a debate and to oppose a bill. It is the only way left for us to express the opinions of those whom we represent and who do not necessarily share the government's point of view. It is the only way left for us under the rules of the House, because after each reading this government ends the debate, interrupts the proceedings and gags the opposition. And then it is surprised to see us having to resort to such practices.

I conclude by saying that, with this motion, the government wants to put pressure on the Chair.

Today, *Le Devoir* wrote this about the government House leader "Mr. Boudria clearly indicated that it would not be possible for the Speaker to ignore the motion".

The government wants to force the hand of the Speaker. I want to refer to a comment on pages 260 and 261 of Montpetit and Marleau. It says that the Chair has an obligation to protect opposition members against the tyranny of the majority. Unfortunately, I cannot read the quote, but that is the gist of it.

Even if that motion were to be passed by the government majority, the Chair must remember, because it is the Chair that is

being pressured, that whatever happens, it must always protect the rights of backbenchers and opposition members.

[English]

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I rise on behalf of the people of Surrey Central to participate in the debate on the government's proposed amendments to the standing orders of the House.

The government's motion reads as follows:

That section (5) of Standing Order 76 and section (5) of Standing Order 76.1 be amended by adding at the conclusion of the notes thereto the following:

For greater clarity, the Speaker will not select for debate a motion or series of motions of a repetitive, frivolous or vexatious nature or of a nature that would serve merely to prolong unnecessarily proceedings at the report stage and, in exercising this power of selection, the Speaker shall be guided by the practice followed in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom.

The official opposition is proposing that the government's motion be amended by adding the following:

and for even greater clarity, the Speaker may select for debate all motions, regardless of their nature, if in his or her opinion the rights of the minority have been infringed upon in any way.

It is unfortunate that at a time when members on all sides of the House agree that too much power is concentrated in the Prime Minister's office and exercised by the Prime Minister, the government proposes an amendment to the standing orders that strengthens the executive branch and weakens the role of duly elected members of the House.

The motion is an assault on the rights of Canadians' elected representatives in the House. The government is only interested in selectively borrowing those practices from the U.K. that increase its power over the House of Commons. There are other practices they could borrow from the U.K. that would strengthen our democracy. I will speak about some of them now and later I will speak about committees.

Let me talk about what happens in the House of Commons. Whenever the government feels a formidable challenge or feels that the opposition is embarrassing it, the government cuts off debate in the House and passes whatever piece of business it is working on.

• (1900)

Does the government entertain changes? No. Does it listen to what Canadians are saying? No. This brings us to the heart of some of the procedures in the House that make little or no sense at times.

Why will the government not allow scheduled votes to take place immediately following question period? All members of parliament are in the House for question period. Would it not make sense to vote when everyone is here?

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The government is not prepared to entertain good suggestions and ideas from members of parliament on all sides of the House, including its own backbenchers. The government is famous for its thin soup legislative agenda. When the opposition parties try to thicken the soup, the government refuses to allow it.

The country has not had a referendum since the one on the Charlottetown accord, except of course the one on tearing the country apart. The Liberals will not allow important questions to be decided directly by the people. The Liberals are control freaks.

Another issue is petitions. The government does not want to allow Canadians the freedom to speak out on issues. Petitions are good examples of that. Canadians spend a great deal of time and effort in preparing petitions for submission to the House. They spend gas money and go from door to door collecting signatures, in the cold of winter and the heat of summer. The MPs proudly present the work of their constituents in the form of petitions and the Liberals throw them onto a shelf to gather dust. Sometimes after a few months they issue a small token reply using politically correct phrases. The government takes no action on these petitions.

In regard to voting, the Liberal whip tells government MPs how to vote or else. Where is the democracy in that? Not everything has to be a vote of confidence in the House. There have even been assurances from opposition members that a certain vote would not be considered a vote of confidence. An example of this was the vote on hepatitis C.

The government must wake up to the needs of the people in this new millennium. The government is not expected to fall each and every time the 301 members of parliament tell the government what to do. If a vote goes against the government, that should start a process whereby members of parliament work with the government to reach a compromise or to modify the government's position or to do a great number of other things that would allow the will of the people to be done.

Another important aspect of this issue is how we work in committees. The government could allow opposition members to chair more standing committees as they do in other countries, including the U.K. Regarding the election of committee chairs, secret ballots are still not allowed even after insistence by the opposition.

The voting procedure in committees is a completely partisan exercise in which government members gang up on opposition MPs. Even the future business of the committee is decided in a partisan manner, with the government members taking orders from the higher-ups. Even the decisions concerning witnesses who will be permitted to appear before the committee are taken in a partisan manner.

The government prevents significant issues from being dealt with by committees. Through votes in committees where the

Liberal members hold the majority of votes, the government can ensure that its own agenda is pursued. Any business that it does not want to deal with never gets heard by the committees.

It is no secret that the government refuses to adopt most of the amendments to legislation that are submitted by opposition members from all parties. Often government members will hold press conferences without making the reports available to opposition members just to pre-empt them by not giving them enough time to prepare their responses, or to not give opposition members credit where credit is due most of the time.

• (1905 )

The government is also fighting to prevent committee hearings from being televised. It knows that the way it runs committees is a farce and it does not want Canadians to be able to watch the circus that the House committees have unfortunately become under the dictatorship of this government.

In regard to the various kinds of appointments, the power to appoint senators, the auditor general, the ethics counsellor, the privacy commissioner, the information commissioner and others should not reside exclusively with the Prime Minister's office. People in positions such as auditor general, ethics counsellor and information commissioner can possibly, after their intensive work, make excellent recommendations to government departments but they are not allowed to do that. People in these positions only report on their investigations and the government can then throw out those reports.

Some of these reports should be considered binding on the government. They are in fact supposed to give direction to the government so they should not be ignored, buried, shelved or ridiculed. The government not only covers up these things but also ridicules and tries to tear down the integrity of the person doing the criticizing.

In regard to parliamentary trips, many members of the House, from all parties, go on international trips from time to time. Whenever delegations from the Parliament of Canada travel abroad, they should be team efforts. Opposition MPs are often denied briefings. They are left out of some of the events and meetings held abroad. Often the government officials will prohibit the opposition members from talking to the media about findings or other issues relating to the trip. They restrict the opportunity for opposition members to express the opposition's views or perspectives. The procedures used by the government are partisan in nature. The Liberals cling to a mentality of exclusion that defeats the full representation of the people of Canada to the outside world.

In regard to special treatment, decisions on government grants, jobs, favours, appointments and a host of others are made by the

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government to benefit the governing party, the Liberals in this case. Sometimes ministerial permits or visitor's visas are issued to visitors to Canada upon request by government members, even though these same visitors have been refused permits or visas when they applied through opposition MPs.

Canadians are not being treated equally in many respects. The government engages in favouritism based on political support and perhaps sometimes on monetary donations. These are problems of procedure. The process should be fixed so that these kinds of things are not permitted.

In the House, the position of Clerk of the House is a responsible and respectable position. The Clerk of the House is appointed by the Prime Minister. The clerk advises the Speaker. With due respect to the Clerk of the House, our Speaker is elected by secret ballot and the Prime Minister's office continues to try to have a hold on the Speaker through the clerk's office. It defeats the purpose of the election of the Speaker of the House. Canadians do not think it is fair for the Prime Minister to give the clerk a job and then expect the clerk to be neutral and impartial. I say this with great respect for the Clerk of the House, who is a wonderful person, but I maintain that it is not fair. It is not even fair to the clerk.

Question period in the House is another area of procedure in which changes should be considered. Most of the time, the ministers do not provide real answers to important non-partisan questions.

**An hon. member:** That's why it's called question period.

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal:** Then they tell us that is why it is called question period. This is not how it should operate. Quite often ministers reject the facts and premises presented by opposition MPs. They often ridicule opposition members when they ask sincere questions. The media calls question period a farce, a circus, and it is no wonder.

● (1910)

In regard to debates in the House, take note debates are another farce. The procedure the government clings to is one whereby the cabinet or the Prime Minister's office makes the decision and then allows a debate in the House after the decision is made. They do not listen to the debate. Nothing in the contributions during the debate changes that already made decision. The ministers adopt none of the recommendations made by the MPs from any of the political parties during that debate.

Most government MPs read speeches prepared by bureaucrats. Often, less than 10% of MPs are even in the House during debates.

I myself once gave a speech in the House when the only people in the House were the Speaker and myself. Often there are more pages in the House than MPs, as we see today.

The procedure prevents anyone on the government side from attending the House with an open mind. Many of the bills we debate here are only a couple of pages in length, yet they sometimes have hundreds of pages of attached regulations, which are never debated in the House.

The procedures the government clings to are giving us government by regulation, not legislation. I call it governing through the back door.

I was the co-chair of the House and Senate Standing Joint Committee on the Scrutiny of Regulations. That committee has about 800 sets of regulations that are in the process or pipeline of being modified or struck down, but the cabinet refuses to take action on these 800 files. It stalls, it denies, it drags its feet and it stonewalls the committee. Some of these 800 files are 25 years old. Imagine that. Those regulations are not supposed to be there. They have been hanging on in the system for 25 years. It is a disgrace. It is so undemocratic that it is anti-democratic.

The government motion we are debating today is an insult and an assault on the rights of MPs. It is an attack on democracy. It is a vindictive exercise in response to the Nisga'a debate in the last parliament when the official opposition used a procedural tool to cause a voting marathon to alert Canadians to the anti-democratic way in which the government was running the House.

I am told that for the Nisga'a debate the hon. member for Elk Island, who is a very dedicated member of the House, more dedicated than many other members of the House, and who is always in the House listening to the debates and participating actively, asked for an incremental cost of the Nisga'a debate, but the reply he got was that the incremental cost was not available. Perhaps there was no incremental cost because many staff members traded off the hours they worked. Probably the closure motion we are debating today will keep us up to eleven o'clock or maybe later.

I strongly believe that the Liberals want to prevent that tool from ever being used again, that tool we attempted to use in order to exercise our democratic rights. Why does the government not simply behave in a manner that would not require the opposition to use the Nisga'a procedural tool ever again?

Be democratic and the opposition parties will not use that procedure any more.

Another important issue is private members' business. Again, it is another farce. Ideally, or in theory at least, private members'



business should give the elected representatives of Canadians an opportunity for an initiative to contribute to the formation of legislation in Canada. It should be an opportunity to raise the voice of their constituents in parliament.

• (1915)

A private member's bill or motion for the production of papers does not contribute much to the legislative process unless it is votable. A limited number of private members' bills and motions are made votable by the government. To make private members' business votable is a partisan exercise. It is not supposed to be like that, even though there are members from all parties on the committee. I am convinced from my practical experience that it is a partisan exercise.

It is supposed to be a non-political debate. Very few members come to the House with an open mind. Private members' business is like a pacifier. A pacifier is put in a baby's mouth but there is no milk coming out of it. It is given to a baby without telling the baby to shut up. It is so like telling someone diplomatically to go to hell that the person is looking forward to the trip. It is the same with private members' business. We can write bills and motions, but these things do not cause any change.

When was the last time a private member's bill was passed into law? How many have been passed in the last 20 years? There have been only a few, less than a half a dozen perhaps. Why do we even have private members' business? The government is not fooling us and it is not fooling Canadians.

In conclusion, the procedures the government clings to prevent the House from dealing properly with the expenditures of the government. The supplementary and interim supply budgets are hardly dealt with at all. Is the scrutiny of the money spent by the government not the real purpose for us to be here and to debate? Even that is not allowed to be debated.

I could talk a great deal about how there is no procedure in the House for bringing together the federal and provincial governments. There is little co-operation between these two levels of government and there are no changes being introduced.

The government resists change: electoral reform, Senate reform, parliamentary reform and democratic reform. No wonder the turnout in federal elections is decreasing and was at an all time low in the last federal election.

The credibility of politicians is way down among different professions in Canada. It is high time for reform when members from all sides of the House are complaining that too much power is exercised by the Prime Minister's Office. The government proposes an amendment to the standing orders that strengthens the executive branch and weakens the democracy by weakening and trivializing the role of elected members.

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**Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to speak to the motion tonight. For purposes of public edification I repeat what it is:

That section (5) of Standing Order 76 and section (5) of Standing Order 76.1 be amended by adding at the conclusion of the notes thereto the following: For greater clarity, the Speaker will not select for debate a motion or series of motions of a repetitive, frivolous or vexatious nature or of a nature that would serve merely to prolong unnecessarily proceedings at the report stage and, in exercising this power of selection, the Speaker shall be guided by the practice followed in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom.

I wish to say first and foremost that to listen to the member for Surrey Central is really outrageous. I will tell hon. members why. He raised every grievance, perceived or real, and tried to somehow work it into the example of how we will make parliament work better.

This institution, I can tell members from my time in this great House, came about as a result of the founding fathers getting together in 1867 and providing a framework, a template that works well along the lines of the British parliamentary democracy. It is a template that has evolved over the time we have been here. It has worked well in a democratic fashion, to the benefit of all Canadians as a result.

• (1920)

To hear members opposite, in particular the one prior to my speaking and others too for that matter, talking in terms of how this is tearing down the pillars of democracy in Canada and denigrating parliament is not only outrageous but pathetic in its intent. I will tell the House why.

What we have here is something we have honed over time. We have put in place the very pillars of democracy that we now see bearing fruit. I believe it is something to behold and should be something of great pride to all parliamentarians.

It hurts me to hear members, especially those of the reform alliance, tear away at this institution. That is what they are good at. They are good at being negative. They are good at always trying to rip at the very fabric of this great country. It is a shameful spectacle. It is not something we do not expect from them because, after all, that is who they are: people who would rather tear down than build up and people who would rather rip it apart than make sure it works properly.

The purpose of the motion is straightforward. It is to reconfirm the authority of the Speaker. That is you, Madam Speaker and your colleagues. It is to reassert your ability to select motions for debate at report stage in the manner in which they are intended when they are presented in a legislative process in the House.

We can follow the string all the way back to 1867. More important, I believe our parliamentary procedure and what we are capable of doing in the House go back 32 years as the direct result of a committee that looked at these kinds of things.

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For the benefit of the public, fearing that members would take advantage of report stage to move similar amendments of little importance or which were dilatory in nature, the special committee on procedure recommended in its report in 1968 that a rule be adopted to permit the Speaker "to select and combine the amendments of which notice had been given". Such a rule was then adopted.

Why was that done? It was done to enable the business of the House to get done in a democratically elected fashion to the benefit of Canadians. We have committees where we listen to witnesses. We take amendments. We massage the legislation in front of us. With the benefit of the experience of all the members present, at the end of the day we are able then to come out with a piece of legislation that is workable and to the benefit to all Canadians.

When it comes back at report stage we should not have to be hornswoiggled, that is a farmer's term I am used to saying from time to time, by the reform alliance or the Bloc. They should not be tying our hands and doing all kinds of outrageous things when it comes to amendments: frivolous, vexatious and downright terrible things to tie the hands of parliamentarians and to tie up the workings of this great House of Commons.

The Speaker has the power to select or group motions in amendment to be proposed at report stage. That is what we are trying to get back to. That is exactly what was adopted 32 years ago, and that is the way it should be. We would like the Speaker's decision on the grouping of these motions in amendment at report stage to be in a manner consistent with the values of parliament.

In doing that the Speaker would address two matters. The first would be the grouping for debate and the second would be the voting arrangement. These are very important. The motions are grouped according to two factors. The first is the content and the second is the place where they would be inserted in the bill.

• (1925)

Motions would be grouped according to content if they could form the subject of a simple debate. Once adopted, they would have the same effect in different places of the bill or if they relate to the same provision or similar provisions in the same bill.

That is straightforward. That is common sense. That is simply making parliament work effectively in the way it was intended to work. Motions in amendment are continued according to the place where they are to be inserted in the bill when they relate to the same line or lines. These motions in amendment would be part of a single scheme for voting patterns.

That seems to be something Speakers have had over time. It is certainly something that was developed and evolved in the 1970s and beyond. It is important that we reassert the Speaker's ability to make those kinds of rulings.

It is fair at this stage to point out that in recent years successive Speakers have felt less and less inclined to exercise their authority in this matter, with the consequence that report stage has been rendered vulnerable to unsatisfactory and unintended use.

For example, in December 1999 the House was obliged to spend more than 42 consecutive hours voting on 469 report stage motions, most of which were concocted at the last minute or in consultation with the reform alliance people and whatever shenanigans they had in mind to hijack the House in a way that was not only unprofessional and undemocratic but downright silly. At the end of the day we spent enormous amounts of time doing things that should not have been done. The reform alliance people proceeded in a very undemocratic way.

In March 2000 the Bloc followed a similar exercise. Having watched the reform alliance people act out their hijinks and their shenanigans, members of the Bloc decided to get in on the act. This was over another bill and it was an exercise that simply spun out of control. There is no other way of putting it.

We were faced in September 2000 with having to deal with 3,000 frivolous and vexatious motions of little intent, motions that were simply silly and downright ridiculous. The Bloc was trying to emulate the reform alliance. I thank the opposition for not doing its job. Its job is to oppose. It is to be constructive. It is to do things in a manner consistent with our great democratic principles. Those shenanigans are not in keeping with that. Rather, they are simply to be silly for the sake of being silly. If that was what they tried to accomplish, they succeeded.

In the last parliament we had to vote for days on report stage motions because of the abuse of the loophole in the standing orders at report stage. That is exactly and precisely the loophole we are looking to close tonight. It is one that should not be subject to the kind of abuse we saw in 1999.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not think there is a quorum in the House.

*And the count having been taken:*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** Call in the members.

• (1930)

[*English*]

*And the bells having rung:*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** I see a quorum and debate shall continue.

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**Mr. Lynn Myers:** Madam Speaker, as I was saying, this is precisely the kind of loophole we want to change to ensure that the business of this parliament works in an effective and efficient manner.

The cost of the kind of abuse that we saw in the case of the reform alliance people with Nisga'a and the case of the Bloc Quebecois with respect to the youth justice initiatives bill is totally unacceptable, not only to the House of Commons but to Canadians as a whole.

Canadians who elected us to debate and study legislation resent us wasting the kind of time that the reform alliance and the Bloc members had us do. Canadians simply do not want to see the people, who should be debating legislation and voting according to the will and the needs of their constituents, being hog tied by people who would rather abuse the system. It is an abuse to taxpayers who do not like to spend the hundreds of thousands of dollars that were spent as a result of precisely what the reform alliance people did on the Nisga'a bill and what the Bloc did on the youth justice initiative bill. People do not like to see the squandering of those kinds of tax dollars.

The reform alliance always talks the high ground when it comes to making sure that the—

**Mr. Ken Epp:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We had a ruling by the Speaker that our party is to be called the Canadian Alliance in the House of Commons. In respect to the Chair, the member should comply with that previous ruling.

**Mr. Lynn Myers:** The taxpayers resent that kind of frivolous frittering away of tax dollars. I suppose it is better to give \$800,000 to a law firm that would have settled for \$60,000.

**Mr. Ken Epp:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There does not appear to be a quorum in the House.

*And the count having been taken:*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The Chair recognizes quorum and debate shall continue.

**Mr. Lynn Myers:** Madam Speaker, it is not fair to the House of Commons staff who do a great deal of work on our behalf as parliamentarians. It is not fair to have the reform alliance people and the Bloc for example—

**Mr. Ken Epp:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The ruling of the Chair was that the party should be named the Canadian Alliance. The member is showing disrespect to the Chair to continue to defy the Chair in this way. Madam Speaker, you should enforce that.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The time for debate has elapsed. Will the hon. member for Waterloo—Wellington please conclude his remarks.

**Mr. Lynn Myers:** Madam Speaker, it is not fair to this great institution. This is an institution that has evolved, as I said at the outset, over time based on the great principles of the British model. I believe we have come to grips with a kind of democracy that is an example to the world.

• (1935)

It is unfair to use the kinds of abuse tactics that we have seen taking place over time. It is better that we close the loophole and allow you, Madam Speaker, and your colleagues to make the appropriate judgments based on report stage amendments as they should proceed coming from the committee to us.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, before beginning my speech, I would like to point out that I am going to be splitting my time with the member for Acadie—Bathurst.

[*English*]

It is an interesting position for me to be following the member for Waterloo—Wellington who regularly encounters considerable reaction from members of the House from all parties. He has been known to raise the ire of other members and tonight is no exception.

Needless to say, I disagree vehemently with the tone, tenor and substance of the member's speech. I do not believe he has accurately represented the true nature of the debate and the issues at hand. I hope, in the little time remaining for us to debate this very important issue, that we will be able to do just that.

I am looking forward to the rest of this evening, and I hope the member for Winnipeg South will participate in the debate. He is one member who in the past has talked a great deal about parliamentary reform and the need to make significant changes in this place to ensure greater democracy and greater participation by everyone here. I trust therefore that he, along with many other members, is inwardly disappointed and deeply disturbed in this initiative of the government House leader.

I cannot help but believe that some of the speeches that we have heard this evening are a result of members in the Liberal Party feeling that they must jump to it, listen to the direction of the House leader and, contrary to their best wishes, say "Yes, sir; no, sir; three bags full, sir".

What we are seeing today is nothing more than the typical behaviour of what we have all come to know as the model of trained seals. I see the member for Winnipeg South is responding appropriately.

**Mr. Dick Proctor:** He is practising.

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**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** He is practising, as my colleague from Palliser has just said, his part, which is very much at the heart of this debate tonight.

It is very ironic that we are here today debating a motion, which the government has put closure on, that would strip away the powers of elected members in this place. It is ironic because today is the day when the auditor general delivered his farewell report to this place. He made a very clear statement at the public accounts committee today about the importance of preserving the traditions of parliament and ensuring that members in this place are able to exercise their rights and responsibilities and are able to hold the government to account, not only in terms of financial matters but in all questions pertaining to legislation, programs and initiatives.

I think it would be very appropriate to remind members of what the auditor general actually said today. He said:

I also ask those who have become cynical about their government to reconsider. Our institutions are the best defence of ordinary citizens against adverse trends that require collective action. . . . It is our duty as citizens to strengthen the institutions of government. Those of us who are or who have been inside the system have a duty to ensure that we remain accountable for our actions and the vast resources and aspirations entrusted to us.

• (1940)

That is what we aim to do in the debate tonight. That is why we raised such concern about the action of the government today.

We began this session with great hope and aspiration that in fact the 37th Parliament of Canada would begin with a new attitude and a new approach to accountability, democracy and transparency. We held out hope because members from all sides and from all parties in this place were talking about the need to reform parliament. We held out great hope because there was a reference in the Speech from the Throne about the need to reform parliament. We held out hope because there was a tremendous debate going on in the media and with the public about the need to ensure that this place, the people's Chamber, was able to execute its responsibilities according to the wishes of the people.

Needless to say, we are off to a terrible start. This is a very rocky beginning to an agenda that was supposed to be about meaningful change here in parliament and in our electoral system. It was barely a couple of weeks into this session when the government decided to crack the whip and ensure that all members voted against the motion to require an independent ethics counsellor.

A day or two after that the government brought in closure on the very first bill it had introduced in this session, the employment insurance bill. We have tabulated it to be the 69th or 70th time that this government has brought in closure in the last few of years.

A couple of weeks after that the government brought in this motion that would in effect take away the ability of parliamentarians and opposition parties in the Chamber to amend bills at the

report stage. To top it all off, the government had the gall to bring in closure on that motion. What in effect we are dealing with today is closure on closure.

Members on the government side tonight are trying to defend their position by suggesting that what they are doing is in the best interests of parliament and of the people of Canada. They say that they want to keep vexatious and frivolous issues away from us. I think the arguments being used tonight by the Liberal members in the Chamber are vexatious and frivolous. They do not get at the heart of the matter, which is how to truly reform the House in a fair and reasonable way involving all parties and all players in the Chamber.

As some colleagues have said earlier in the debate, what the government chose to do was arbitrarily bring in reform to deal with what it considers to be an abuse of the parliamentary process without addressing its own abuse of the system, its own rampant use of closure, its own political manipulation of the committees and without addressing the way this whole place is controlled, used and abused by the executive of government.

Surely we should all be participating together in ways to reform this place, and this is not how to do it. We need to find a way to work together and make the necessary changes. This kind of dictatorial, arbitrary and heavy-handed move on the part of the government is a setback to that worthy goal, that important aspiration of making this place more representative and more democratic.

The auditor general's report came out today in which he stated:

For democracy to work and for government to be efficient and effective, Parliament must be able to play its part.

There is no question that parliament is not able to play its part now. Parliament is not able to play its part because of a series of actions taken by the government to strip parliament of its powers and to deny members of parliament the opportunity to play a meaningful role in the process.

I only have to refer to the standing committees as an example of the way in which the government has controlled that process by prohibiting members from dealing with the serious questions of the day, such as the future of health care in the country.

• (1945)

The government has denied members the opportunity to participate fully, has made decisions outside the Chamber, and has applied the heavy hand of closure motions such as the one we are dealing with today, to strip us of our powers and ability to represent people as we aimed to do at the outset of getting involved in politics.

I hope members on the Liberal side will reconsider and rethink this position, take it off the books, and stop this nonsense so we can



all get down to the important work of seriously dealing with parliamentary reform and ensuring this place preserves its proud tradition and example of democracy and citizen participation.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Madam Speaker, first I could say that I am pleased to rise in the House this evening to speak to this motion, but, at the same time, it is unfortunate that we are once again taking a step backwards with respect to democracy here in Canada. It is truly a step backwards; we have a lovely House of Commons here so that we can make the laws of the land, introduce bills and motions, and govern the country.

We have the Liberal government across the way, saying “There must be respect for the House of Commons, but we are going to silence the opposition. We are going to take the opposition’s privileges away”. It is sad to see a party which, if I recall correctly, around 1988-89, when it was in opposition, was glad to be able to rise in the House of Commons and debate bills. The Liberals were glad to be able to make amendments to bills. Back then they did not like it one bit when the Progressive Conservatives tried to stop them.

We all remember the GST bill. The Liberals turned up with a whole string of amendments. Did the government of the day tell them they were abusing the system, abusing parliament, because they wanted to do their job? It is a disgrace that in 2001, particularly after the 2000 election, the government says it is going to be open to parliamentary reform. It says it will sit down in parliament, and we are going to be able to discuss and look at parliamentary reform together.

This evening, they turn up here with a motion. They want to shut up the opposition again, but I believe we have a role to play in democracy. We too are capable of shouldering our responsibilities. If the government means to say that the opposition is not assuming its responsibilities because there supposedly were 100 or 200 amendments to a bill, is the government assuming its responsibilities when it closes down debate as it has been doing in recent years?

My colleague from Mississauga asks whether we did not want Bill C-2 on employment insurance reform, whether we were not anxious for it to get passed. Yes, I am anxious to see a bill on employment insurance reform passed. I want to see it passed, but as the member representing Acadie—Bathurst, I would like to be able to rise in the House of Commons and explain the problems and loopholes Bill C-2 contains.

That is why I was elected. I was elected to do that job and to assume those responsibilities. I was elected to be able to attend parliamentary committees, assume my responsibilities, and bring up the problems that Bill C-2 brings us. I was elected to be able to

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introduce motions in the House of Commons, to be able to make amendments to Bill C-2, which does not go far enough. I was elected to do all that in the House of Commons. This seat belongs to Acadie—Bathurst. It does not belong to the member, but to the people of Acadie—Bathurst. Because of that, I ought to be able to stand up and be heard in committee. I ought to be able to make amendments to government bills.

Canada does not belong to the Liberals alone. It belongs to all Canadians. Canadians chose to send members to the House to represent them.

● (1950)

It is unfortunate. When the Bill C-2 was introduced into the House, there was only one day of debate and that was it. It is shameful.

The Liberals have just told us we abuse the system on this side of the House. Yet, in the case of their bill on young offenders, the Liberals had over 100 amendments, and they hold the power. Shall we call them abusers because they drafted a bad bill and realized they had missed the boat?

I do not think it costs the government any more if I am here this evening debating one of its motions. That is why I was elected. I was not elected to go home, but to be here to debate the problems of concern to Canadians and the people of my riding.

I think the government’s attitude is unfortunate. It is an insult to watch the member for Waterloo—Wellington rise and try, if I can put it this way, to crucify the entire opposition. They say “You are wicked, you are not acting properly, you are abusers”.

Are we going to call them abusers because we had to call for quorum as the government members were not here? Each time opposition members rise and look for what they are entitled to, they are called abusers. Yet the Liberals did the same thing when they were in opposition; they tried to draw the government’s attention to the fact that it was headed in the wrong direction. That is what the opposition wanted to do; it was trying to convince the government that it was not going in the right direction.

With this motion, they are not acting properly. The Liberals will not wait to undertake parliamentary reform together with us, and debate it in committee.

I am the New Democratic Party whip. The whips and House leaders of all the parties thought that parliamentary reform would take place. All of sudden, the government House leader comes up with a motion that basically says “You are a bunch of abusers, we will pass a motion”. Whatever happened to democracy? Were we not supposed to work together?

When you were on this side of the House—

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[English]

**Mr. John Harvard:** You are going to have a heart attack.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I will say it again. He said that I am going to have a heart attack. If I have a heart attack because I am working for the people of Acadie—Bathurst, I might as well drop now and I will be proud of it. He should not worry about me. I will take care of myself.

[Translation]

It is important that the government stop playing these games. It must give an opportunity to the other parties to do their job.

It is a disgrace. The Liberals' excuse is that the opposition did not want to pass Bill C-2 on employment insurance. They came up with a measly 5% when people back home are in the gap from February to May. Yet they know we need to get rid of the intensity rule. As for us, in the opposition, we will act responsibly. We will represent our constituents.

The government has no business saying we are abusers. I will never accept that from members opposite. I will never accept this, because I was elected to represent the people of Acadie—Bathurst, and I am going to represent them to the best of my ability. I am not going to be swayed and intimidated by the people across the way, by the Liberals, I guarantee it.

This is a democracy. This is not the United Kingdom; this is Canada. We do not need to follow the example of the United Kingdom. We can build on our own experience and work together. I am sure that if we were to sit down at the same table and try to find solutions to certain problems, we would come up with results.

Maybe if the opposition turns up with a string of amendments, it is because the government's bill does not make any sense. What can the opposition do?

I recall one tactic that was used once: one opposition party refused to enter the House of Commons. They ignored three or four bells. Some will say that this was perhaps not right, but others will say that at least they made their point and that Canadians had a chance to hear it.

The Canadian Alliance introduced 471 amendments to the Nisga'a bill.

• (1955)

I was happy to be able to vote against it 471 times. I thought I had earned my paycheque. I think that, after that, the Canadian Alliance understood that Canadians did not want these amendments.

The thing is that we were able to put our democracy to work in the House of Commons, and we do not need the Liberals to shut us up. That is one thing that we will not stand for.

I appreciate whatever little time I was given by the Chair. Hopefully, the Liberals will change their minds by 11 p.m. this evening, restore democracy to the House of Commons, and stop being a gang of dictators.

[English]

**Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am particularly interested in this topic and I wonder if you would inquire of the House whether there is unanimous consent to give me unlimited time.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Reg Alcock:** Madam Speaker, I will try to squeeze my remarks into the 20 minutes that are available to me. Let me see if I have it straight. We are gathered here to debate the right of the opposition in this case to force the entire House of Commons of Canada to spend hundreds of hours voting on important motions like changing a period to a comma.

If I understand what I am listening to, that is what we are doing right now. I have some sympathy for that debate. Some members may not know that I was the opposition house leader in the legislature of Manitoba. Certainly the member for Winnipeg North Centre knows this. I have great sympathy for the opposition and its need to have tools that allow it to force accountability.

To that extent I listen to the debate with some sense of concern. In every place, whether it is the legislature of Manitoba or this great chamber, there are two conversations that go on. There is the conversation that goes on here with the TV cameras turned on, with the lights on and with *Hansard* turned on to record all of our remarks, and then there is the conversation that takes place in the corridors, behind the curtains and in the coffee shops.

I do not know a member of any party who thinks it is a good idea for us to spend hundreds of hours standing and sitting to vote on frivolous motions. When we get away from the hot atmosphere here and the attempts to embarrass each other and all that kind of silly debate, I have not heard anyone who feels it is a productive use of our limited time to spend the time we do on issues of this sort.

I want to put some of this in context. I too worry about excessive use of time allocation. I too worry about the tools the government

has available to drive legislation through without proper examination or proper debate. I too worry about a House where one side becomes so powerful that it need not take into consideration any other opinion.

There is legitimate concern that this parliament, like legislatures and parliaments around the world, has evolved into a tool that permits the government to do exactly that, to impose its will on parliament without having to give proper consideration of debate on the other side.

However to every action there is a reaction. Oppositions have resorted, in part because they have limited tools available, to these rather frivolous and extreme kinds of actions to make their case, to a point where it makes all of us look silly.

• (2000)

I heard one member earlier talk about the Nisga'a treaty tool in an attempt to give some dignity to the fact that we sat up here day and night for about 40 hours. I think that member's claim to fame was that he actually voted on every amendment because he could run in and out to the bathroom.

Before I get into some of the solutions that I think exist to this problem, let me try to provide a bit of a context and be quite serious about it. I spend a lot of time thinking about it, as I know other members of the House do. I have had very lengthy and, I think, fruitful conversations with the House leader for the New Democratic Party, who is one of the more experienced and distinguished members of the House. He has spent a lot of time here and is very thoughtful on these issues. I respect his advice.

The first question is how do we get here? I would argue that there are whole bunch of forces at play. One of them is that the speed of life, the speed of business, the speed of change, the need for decision, everything in the external world is moving faster.

Bill Gates, in his most recent book, describes the decade that we are now in as the decade of velocity, the decade in which the major challenge to everyone will be to manage rapidity, the speed at which things have to happen. This just did not occur at the millennium. This increasing speed has been going on throughout our lifetime. It has been going on throughout history and has accelerated to a pace where changes take place within the context of one generation. They are intergenerational. They are multiple changes within a single generation.

As a result, there has been enormous pressure on the institutions of government to respond quickly to changing circumstances in the external world and to changing circumstances in the communities within which our citizens to whom we are accountable live.

Over time, slowly but sequentially and invidiously, the governing side of the House has adopted a series of tools that allow it to move its agenda forward faster and allow it to clear it quickly. It is

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worthy of recognition that this has taken away some time for thought. It has taken away some tools that the opposition had to force more debate and to slow down the speed with which something could happen.

I believe the debate on reform of this chamber is an important one. It is a debate that needs to go on now. However, I do separate it from this motion. One of the reasons I feel comfortable doing this is that we have commitments now. To talk about reform is not idle chatter. It is not a hopeful thought. It is in the Speech from the Throne.

In the Speech from the Throne, the government said it recognized there was an issue. In fact let me read it because I think it is important to focus on this part of it.

One of the things I admire a great deal about our current Prime Minister is this workmanlike, piece by piece, step by step approach to solving problems. There is no fancy banner waving. There is the problem and how we are going to find a solution. That is what I see here.

The throne speech states:

The institutions of Government will continue to be strengthened. Since 1993, the Government has taken a range of measures to enable members of Parliament to more effectively represent the views of their constituents.

In this new session of Parliament, the Government will make further proposals to improve procedures in the House and Senate. Among other measures, voting procedures will be modernized in the House of Commons and, to assist parliamentarians in carrying out their duties, the Government intends to increase the resources of the Library of Parliament to better serve the research needs of standing committees of the House and Senate.

• (2005)

It did not stop there. The next day the Prime Minister stood in the House and in his speech, his personal commitment to the House, he said:

Like any human institution, the House of Commons is not perfect. It can be strengthened. Over the years many changes have been made to improve parliament and more will be made to bring parliament into the 21st century.

The House leader is working with his colleagues from all parties on reforms that will make the House work even better for the benefit of all Canadians—

That is a commitment. That is not idle backroom chatter. I am satisfied with that.

The member for Winnipeg North Centre mentioned some of my feelings about this in her speech. She wondered how I could be defending this motion today. I am very comfortable defending this motion. I am tired of being part of a process that looks so foolish, so stupid and has common Canadians scratching their heads saying "What are you guys doing?" This is a bogus procedure. It is one that destroys good work. It wastes important time of which we have too little. I have no qualms at all about getting rid of it.

What is the tool we have chosen to moderate it? We did not say it cannot be done because report stage motions are an important tool.

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What we do in this motion is reaffirm power and authority already held by the Speaker. We do not give it to the government or to the government House leader. We give it to a colleague who has been elected by all members of the House and who has a majority support in the House.

That colleague is not charged under the motion simply to dismiss opposition motions. The Speaker, as the speaker in Westminster has done, is empowered to examine those motions. If the Speaker feels the government is being too harsh and too forceful in driving things through, he or she can allow all sorts of motions, or if it is felt they are frivolous, he or she may dismiss them.

It empowers one of the modern day democratic reforms. It was not that long ago when the House finally got itself together enough to take an individual who used to be an appointment of the government's side and said "No, we are going to give this person power independent of the government". That is the position that the motion adds to.

I want to reflect a little on what may come now because I heard a couple of things. I could close my ears to the silliness which I thought was coming. Actually maybe that is a bad word to use. I will apologize for using that word. I do not mean to demean the comments of other members in that sense. Having been in opposition and having been forced to sometimes stand and criticize things I felt positively about, it is very hard at times to feel comfortable doing that. I realize members are trying to protect a principle of accountability. However, what they are trying to defend is something that is so frivolous. They have to be very hard in their hearts to do that.

I tried to pick that apart and hear some of the other things that were being said. There was a comment about the recent vote on the ethics counsellor. There is a saying that a friend of mine has on a poster on his office wall. It reads "For every complex problem there is a simple answer and it is wrong".

That is the problem which arises when we approach changes in the House lightly. We can all see one little thing that we think is important and needs to be changed. We can all come up with an answer on how to change that one little thing that bothers us at this moment in time. That is not how the House got where it is today. That is not how the rules, the procedures, the precedents and all the things that allow us to work in the chamber have evolved. It takes time. It takes thought. It takes reflection.

● (2010)

This is the place in our country that manages power and authority in the lives of all of our citizens. This is the Chamber in this country that gives citizens their rights. This is an important debate which should be approached carefully and thoughtfully. It needs to be approached with the full involvement of all members of the House. However it has to work both ways. We all have to

recognize the demands being imposed upon us externally. The House needs to modernize.

I would like to add another dimension to this issue. I will go back to Mr. Gates for a minute. Mr. Gates talks about the tremendous impact that new communication information technologies have had on the world. He calls it the 1980s, the decade of quality. As these new tools became more ubiquitous and more people used them and feedback loops were developed, people could begin to manage in real time the quality process that affected their business, or manufacturing, or service organization or whatever.

He calls the nineties the decade of re-engineering. As these tools got more robust and as the accumulation of data got stronger and the ability to strike knowledge from that data got stronger, suddenly we saw in very large organizations very similar changes. It was like a stepping down into flatter, faster organizations moving certain kinds of decisions out to the periphery of contact with customers and clients and drawing some kind of information into the centre to involve senior management more directly in decision making. These were radical but important changes. These were changes that increased service quality, product quality and lowered costs.

If I can take members back a step to that little paradigm I would ask them what the quality movement meant for government. It happened in the external community. Where are the quality circles, the service feedback and the client operation improvement systems in government? They do not exist.

What has re-engineering meant in government? God knows there have been enough consultants running around the country selling packages on re-engineering, usually trying to bolt crude private sector models, which continuously fail, onto public institutions. Government is a fundamentally more complex organization than the largest business.

What is the restructuring, the re-engineering, the change that has taken place in government? As the world has speeded up and as this tremendous change has taken place in the external environment that affects the lives of everybody we serve, how has this institution changed? The answer is, it has not.

Re-engineering in government since the late eighties and up until now has meant privatization. It has meant separating those things that government delivers from government.

I was an advocate of it when I first came here. I chaired the transport committee when the ports were privatized. I bought all the arguments. I thought we could put them out there so they could be fast and responsive. They could deal with the community, respond to local conditions and all those wonderful service things. What were we really saying? We were saying that government was too slow, too stupid, too inept to be useful in the lives of Canadians.



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That is the challenge to us. I am talking about every single person in the House. I am talking about this institution. I am talking about every single Canadian because this place affects every single Canadian. The challenge that confronts us is how we make the instruments of democracy more useful for everybody. That is the debate we are starting. I suspect it is a debate that is going to go on for a long time because it is a huge challenge in governments all around the world.

The problem I have is the attempt here to personalize this. This is the Prime Minister's issue. This is the House leader's issue. That is nonsense. This is an issue that every democratic government on this globe is struggling with and failing in right now.

There is a huge challenge, a much bigger challenge than anyone really fully comprehends yet. I am excited about it. Let us debate those changes.

• (2015 )

Let us debate the ways in which we get adequate examination, accountability and control over the important instruments that affect the lives of Canadians. We should stop debating the importance of this entire House standing and sitting for 400 hours to change a comma. That is silly. We all know it is silly, so let us stop it and get on with what I believe will be the most important piece of work the House does in this decade.

**Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I am very happy to speak to the motion because it bespeaks a continuation of what we were dealing with earlier today, the undemocratization of the House of Commons.

Members from across party lines have for years eloquently described the frustration of being an MP. There is the frustration of going home and speaking to the people who sent us to the House, listening to their concerns and feeling impotent in our ability to represent their concerns in the House.

We agree with the basic idea and principle of the motion put forth by the government that we do not want to have a situation where frivolous amendments are put forth merely to drag the House into a prolonged period of irrelevant action. On the other hand, as my colleague for Elk Island has said, we cannot allow the rights of the minorities to be compromised. That is what we are talking about today.

It is not only the rights of the minorities, but the rights of the majority. We have a situation today where the House is ruled by a Prime Minister who has an iron hammerlock upon the goings on of the House and of the country.

The public understands that and we understand that. That is why we saw voter turnout of less than 60% in the last federal election.

That is not something to be proud of. That is something that should be a red flag that says we need to do something to engage the public. We need to do something to bring back the confidence that people should have in this great institution.

Over decades this institution has whittled away. The democratic powers of elected members have been removed year after year. The late Prime Minister Trudeau said something to the effect that members of parliament are nobodies 100 feet off the Hill. I suggest that members of parliament are nobodies on the Hill and that is the problem.

The public understands that and we understand that if we are to be truthful about it. The fact of the matter is that there are good people across party lines who have great things to contribute for the betterment of Canadians from coast to coast, but they do not have the power to represent their people.

Certainly we are accountable. Every four years we are accountable. However during that intervening period of time do we really have the power to represent our constituents so that people can adequately judge us on the actions that we engage in? No, we do not because we do not have the power to represent our constituents.

We have seen over the years the corpses of members of parliament lying beside House because they have tried to do the right thing. They have tried to represent their constituents and to represent their conscience. When that falls afoul of the leaders of parties they are emasculated, rendered impotent, and at the worst level they are thrown out of their party.

Who can forget John Nunziata, who on a matter of principle, a matter of conscience and indeed the issue of the GST and a government promise, said he could not support the government on the particular issue? It violated a promise that he made when he was elected. As a result of doing that he was thrown out of the caucus.

This is the situation faced by every political party today to varying degrees. It is something we have to change. Members of my party have put up ideas such as the ethics counsellor. We put forth a motion to give the government an opportunity to vote for the promise that it made to the Canadian people in the first red book.

• (2020 )

The government voted against its own promise of having an independent ethics counsellor. We do not want an ethics counsellor who answers to the Prime Minister; neither do the members from the other side. What we should have is an ethics counsellor who is independent of the Prime Minister and who responds to the House.

We are concerned that with this motion the Prime Minister will exercise more undue and unnecessary control over the House and

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further strengthen his hold so that decisions will further be made by the Prime Minister and his office staff, who are a group of unelected, unaccountable and invisible individuals who rule the country.

Many members of the public watching today may not know or understand that the structure we have created today prevents and inhibits their views, wishes and desires from being exercised in the House.

Another serious problem is that we do not have any free votes. We talk about it but in effect we do not debate it.

Committees, by and large, are make work projects for members of parliament, and the health committee is a case in point. We have a crisis in our health care system today. Over the years members from across party lines have, as has the NDP critic for health, stood shoulder to shoulder with us. We may have a difference of opinion on what needs to be done to fix the problem but we certainly stand shoulder to shoulder in saying that we need to look at it. We need to examine it and implement effective solutions to save our publicly funded health care system. Given the fact that this is the biggest problem affecting Canadians, not an academic issue but a blood and guts issue where people's lives are at stake, we have a government that has directed the committee to study plain packaging of cigarettes, aboriginal health and other issues that, while important, pale in comparison to the overarching issue of how we manage to save our public health system.

Is the government dealing with the issue of our aging population? We have an aging population and a demographic that will turn all our social programs on their end, from CPP to health care, to other social programs. It is an impending crisis that looms on the horizon. The failure to deal with our aging population and the impact upon our social programs, and indeed on our economy, will have such a profound impact on our society that we will not be able to deal with it and those people who are the poorest in our society, the most vulnerable, from the aged to the young, are the ones who will get hurt. The only way to deal with that is to deal with it proactively. We cannot deal with it in a knee-jerk reactive mode. We have to deal with these problems proactively because it takes time to develop the solutions and enact them. If we do not do it now people will be hurt.

On the issue of the environment, Canada has been repeatedly told that we have some serious environmental problems. We need to address them but are we? No. We go through this mill that goes around and around. Ideas are tossed around in a big circle and they go nowhere quickly. Our failure to deal with these issues causes untold hardship to the public.

People in our health care system who are watching their rivers being polluted by a minority of the industrialists who dump garbage into our rivers and streams want to know why the government is not dealing with it. What do they hear? They hear

the sound of silence. They hear nothing. Does that engender respect and a willingness to engage and work with the government? Does that engender a desire to get involved in the political process? No, it does not. In fact, most people want to get involved but they recognize that the House does not work and that maybe they should find other ways to exercise their democratic rights. Unfortunately, too many people have become so apathetic that they are not getting involved at all.

Part of the reason that we have this situation is the unwritten code of conduct we have in the House, a code that rewards zealotry over objectiveness and a code that says if our ideas, our objectivity and our professional training run adverse to the leadership, we must be removed or follow blindly what we have been told. It is a code of conduct that says one must blindly follow the leadership of their party. It is a code that excludes external information from other sources when they run adverse to what the leadership of the party says.

• (2025)

This is disingenuous. We have a system that naturally rewards being able to destroy the other side. Indeed, the role of the opposition is to keep the government on its toes. It is to be the toughest critic of the government that can be found, but it should not and must not preclude the ability of members in every political party to engage in constructive and positive discourse for the betterment of Canadians.

If we cannot use our God given brains, if we cannot engage and pull out the best and brightest ideas from the people of our country, if we cannot stimulate and inspire the people of our nation to bring forth and have acted upon their ideas to make Canada the best nation in the world, what are we here for?

We cannot do that right now. We are seeing cracks develop in our great nation. We talk about western alienation. We talk about the well known disaffection of the west, but it is not the only alienation. We have eastern alienation. We have the maritimers saying that what goes on in Ottawa has very little to do with them. They feel left out.

We have rural alienation. We have a rural-urban split that is not well analyzed or spoken about. The rural alienation is very real. A lot of people who provide the economic backbone of the country are forgotten about. Because of a lack of health care, a lack of resources and an abysmal or a non-existence infrastructure on the part of the government, we have people who are turned off, tuned out, and have a great deal of antipathy toward the federal government.

We have aboriginal alienation, large swaths of aboriginal communities who are suffering the worst possible social parameters in the country today. That has been going on for too long.

My party has been wrongfully accused of being against grassroots aboriginal people. We are the only party which has given the grassroots aboriginal people a vector, a voice in the House. We are not as interested in advocating for the leadership they have as we are in ensuring that the wishes, the hopes and the fears of grassroots aboriginal people are brought into the House in the most eloquent and forceful terms possible. We have tried to do that time and time again.

**Mr. Werner Schmidt:** We will continue to do that.

**Mr. Keith Martin:** As my colleague says, we will continue to do that.

We have francophone alienation. Part of the reason we have such a terrible situation historically in Quebec is a lack of communication. There is justifiable alienation on the part of the Quebec people, the francophonie in this entire country, because they too have not been listened to. If we scratch the surface of many separatists we find some very real concerns, some very real desires to reform the country and to make it a better place for everybody.

That is what we need to listen to and we need to address. It is not rocket science. The government needs to listen to what these people are saying. It needs to go to their territory, their homes and their communities to ask them what they are saying and to listen to what they are saying. Lo and behold it will find that many of the communities across the country are saying the same thing.

I do not subscribe to the notion that we have different types of species of Canadians. We do not have homo sapiens British Columbiensis, homo sapiens Maritimiensis or homo sapiens Ontarioensis. We have one Canadian and one Canada. The hopes, the fears and the concerns of people from coast to coast, whether they are westerners, Ontarians, people from the prairies, maritimers, aboriginals, non-aboriginals, immigrants, non-immigrants, rural people or city folk, their hopes, their fears and their concerns are the same.

● (2030 )

They want a job. They want safe streets. They want good health care. They want social programs to be there in their time of need. They want to be sure the people who are most disadvantaged in our community will be taken care of. They want a better future for their children than they have had.

If the government were to address the problems and concerns of the people of the nation in a forthright fashion, it would be elected time and time again. However there is a political vacuum in which we are trying to engage. My party is trying to force the government to say to the Canadian people that it can do better.

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Why do we accept a 66 cent dollar? Why do we accept a higher unemployment rate than that of the U.S.? Why do we accept a taxation rate that is so much higher than the American one that it drives the best and brightest out of the country?

Why do we accept education standards in post-secondary and grade school that are below those of our competitors? Why do we accept environmental standards that are not adhered to? Why do we accept aboriginal communities that have social program parameters akin to the third world? Why do we accept three and a half year waits to see an orthopedic surgeon? Why do we accept health care that approaches that of a second world nation? Why do we accept our best and brightest leaving the country?

We should not and do not accept the level of mediocrity the government has been trying to sell to the Canadian people, and the people are not buying it. We can aspire to much more. It is not complex. Effective constructive solutions exist that must be applied in a quick, rapid and effective fashion to address the problems. If we do so, we will be able to aspire to more than we have and to build a country that provides a better future for all Canadians and especially for our children.

What are some of the things we can do? Many members in my caucus have put forth constructive solutions. Our House leader put forth many. My colleagues from British Columbia and Alberta and members from across party lines have put forth constructive solutions, and some have done so for many years.

We have fought for free votes in the House of Commons, and I mean true free votes. No bill can be made a vote of confidence in the government. If a bill fails because it was not good enough, we should send it back to committee and fix the bill.

We can also reform the committee structure. Why have a committee structure that is a make work project for MPs? We should give the committees a greater say. We should let them have greater flexibility in what they study. We should let them address the big issues. We should not allow parliamentary secretaries to act as mini whips who force government members to vote in a certain way. We should have secret votes for committee chairmen so that the best person across party lines has an opportunity to chair the committee. Then we would have the most effective committee possible.

We should expand private members' business. The public might be fascinated to know that members of parliament can get private members' bills into the House only by lottery. Names are drawn. If members are lucky enough to have their names drawn, their bills will go to committee and the committee will decide whether the bills are votable.

No other democracy in the entire world allows private members' bills to be put forward that are made non-votable. What an

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oxymoron, a non-votable private member's bill. Why even have a private member's bill if it can never become law? It is a waste of time.

The public may also want to ask why the government gutted the legal opportunities and powers we need to put our private members' bills together. They were gutted and removed. The lawyers, the key linchpin in our ability to put private members' business forward, were taken away from us.

At one time there were only three lawyers for more than 225 members of parliament, yet the cabinet had more than 70 lawyers at its disposal. That was a sly but effective way of preventing private members across party lines from being able to put forth bills on behalf of their constituents.

We should be given more lawyers to craft our private members' bills. We should expand private members' hour by two hours on Friday and one hour on Monday. We should make sure that every member of parliament has at least one bill to put forth.

● (2035)

As my time is running out, I would implore the government, for the betterment of everyone here, but more important for the benefit of our country, to democratize the House. If we fail to democratize the House we do not deserve the respect of the Canadian people. The House will be nothing but a dictatorship that compromises the ability of Canada to be as good as it can become. We need to do this now. There is cross party support for it. If we do not do it now we do not deserve the respect we should have.

**Mr. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia.

The motion tabled today restates the traditional power of the Speaker not to select for report stage debate motions of a frivolous, repetitive or vexatious nature. This is not so dramatic or unusual, it seems to me. Let us consider what the motion actually says:

For greater clarity, the Speaker will not select for debate a motion or series of motions of a repetitive, frivolous or vexatious nature or of a nature that would serve merely to prolong unnecessarily proceedings at the report stage and, in exercising this power of selection, the Speaker shall be guided by the practice followed in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom.

What are we doing? We are moving to the system we used to have. We are moving to the system followed by the mother of our parliament and of all parliaments, the U.K. It is not a huge change. We are returning to the original intent of the standing orders we now follow.

It is interesting that this is the same basic concept and rule that is followed by thousands of community organizations across the

country who use a very well known rule book, *Robert's Rules of Order*. I will read from *Robert's Rules of Order*, the section dealing with dilatory, absurd or frivolous motions. The intent of the rule, which is used across the country by so many organizations, is quite similar to the intent of the motion today. It states:

—whenever the chair is satisfied that members are using parliamentary forms merely to obstruct business, he should either not recognize them, or else rule them out of order. After the chair has been sustained upon an appeal, he should not entertain another appeal from the same obstructionists while they are engaged evidently in trying by that means to obstruct business. While the chair should always be courteous and fair, he should be firm in protecting the assembly from imposition, even though it be done in strict conformity with all parliamentary rules except this one, that no dilatory, absurd, or frivolous motions are allowed.

As an illustration of a frivolous or absurd motion, suppose Mr. A is to be in the city next week and a motion has been made to invite him to address the assembly at its next meeting, the meetings being weekly. Now, if a motion is made to refer the question to a committee with instructions to report at the next regular meeting, the chair should rule it out of order as frivolous or absurd.

That is the rule that is followed all across the country in all kinds of democratic organizations. We are adopting basically the same concept with almost the same wording.

Members opposite are up in arms about this, suggesting that it will limit important debate. Is it important that we go on for hours voting on questions of whether we should have a comma after every word in a bill or whether the bill should be hoisted for six months or reconsidered clause by clause? Such ridiculous motions are not intended to change the substance of a bill but only to waste the time of the House. That surely is not why we were sent here by our electorates.

In the last parliament members had to vote for days on report stage motions because of the abuse of a loophole in the standing orders on report stage motions.

In December 1999 there were over 42 hours of non-stop voting on 469 report stage motions to amend the Nisga'a bill. Were they really motions to try to improve the or change the bill substantively? No. The vast majority of them were vexatious, repetitive, frivolous motions.

● (2040)

In March 2000 the House spent 36 hours voting on 411 report stage motions to amend the clarity bill. Again they were frivolous, vexatious, repetitive motions.

In September 2000, just last fall, there were over 3,000 report stage amendments to the youth justice bill which would have taken two weeks or more to complete in non-stop voting. Let us imagine members of parliament spending night and day for two weeks standing and sitting in the House to vote on all kinds of ridiculous amendments.



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The public in my riding will not stand for that. I cannot imagine that members opposite can expect their electorate to stand for it either. It is enough that we take the time we do standing and sitting in the voting process. It is good that the government is looking at the idea of electronic voting to try to streamline the voting process. Sometimes it goes on and on and on. It could be done much more efficiently. Our time could be used far better than in this very slow process.

I mentioned the youth justice bill. I will refer to some of those motions. There were almost 400 motions in Motions Nos. 2,646 to 3,029 from only 44 members to change the coming into force of the provisions of the act. For example, Motions Nos. 2,654 and 2,655, one member's motions, had a different coming into force proposal for the same section of the act. Another member's Motions Nos. 2,657 and 2,658 had a different coming into force proposal for the same section of the act. Motions Nos. 2,327 to 2,418 included almost 100 motions for the timing of a provision, from 691 days to 792 days, increasing one day per motion.

One member who is no longer in the House, Mr. Turp, proposed different times for the timing of the same provisions. Again they were silly, frivolous, vexatious and repetitive motions, wasting the time of the House and wasting taxpayer dollars.

Motions Nos. 3,030 to 3,133 included over 100 amendments from only 44 members requiring a statutory review of various provisions of the act.

What was the point if not to delay things, be obstructionist, cause problems, waste taxpayer dollars and waste the time of members and the time of the House? The cost of this abuse is completely unacceptable to Canadians who elected us to debate and study legislation, not to spend days and days voting on frivolous, repetitive and vexatious amendments.

Canadians in my riding and elsewhere across the country are not concerned about whether there are 10 commas or 2 commas in a sentence. They are concerned about issues like health care, about the taxes they pay and about economic growth across the country.

The concerns I heard during the election campaign in Halifax West were about the fact that Halifax West was undoubtedly the fastest growing area in Atlantic Canada. We do not have the infrastructure to support the growth we have seen over the past 20 years. We do not have the new schools that are needed. We have children in overcrowded schools and old schools that are becoming decrepit. They need new investment and new schools.

They are concerned about the lack of roads in Halifax West and the need for new roads to support this growing area. They are concerned about the need for recreation facilities and the waste of their tax dollars. The last thing they want to see is members of parliament wasting \$8,000 an hour sitting here overnight voting on ridiculous motions. It is the last thing they want to see.

They want us to be working. They want us to be looking at how departments are spending money and trying to make them work better. They want us to try to make government work better. That is the reason we are here. Let us spend our time focussing on what government departments and agencies are doing and trying to make them work better. Goodness knows there is a lot of room for improvement.

There are a lot of details we must look at in our work as watchdogs to get government departments to work better for the public. That surely is our job, not to sit here night after night voting all night long on ridiculous motions that wear us out and make us unable to do our jobs the next day, or whenever it ends.

It is a cost that is simply unacceptable to taxpayers who have to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in overtime costs for the House of Commons staff to stay when votes go on through the night.

• (2045 )

It is also unacceptable for the staff of the House of Commons, who have to work the extra hours or work overtime. It may endanger their health as well.

We should consider what impact this has on the institutions of parliament and how it degrades parliament in the minds of the public when it is engaged in silly activities that are clearly not constructive or substantive.

I realize that members across the way like to find topics to raise so they can have time to talk about all kinds of issues that are of concern to them. I appreciate that, but surely to waste our time sitting here and voting all night long is not an answer to the concerns of their constituents or my constituents. Surely we all can see that passing the motion will make our parliament more efficient and will help us get to the job at hand.

**Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, first I want to thank my colleague from Halifax West for allowing me to take part in the debate by sharing his time.

The first thing I want to say in my remarks, and I want to make it very clear, is that I happen to believe very sincerely that the opposition parties, not just the official opposition party but all parties, play a very important role in the House and in parliament. Their role is just as important as ours, ours being the government side of the House.

**Mr. Leon Benoit:** The Prime Minister runs the show over there. What would be the difference if you weren't here?

**Mr. John Harvard:** What we need is for everyone, wherever possible, and if we can change our rules, if we can enhance our rules, perhaps we can make—

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**An hon. member:** Oh, oh.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** I am sure that at this hour we all want to hear what the hon. member has to say, so I will ask the hon. member to resume debate.

**Mr. John Harvard:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I hope that is not subtracted from my time.

What has just happened in the last few seconds is quite instructive. I started off my remarks by trying to be positive and by trying to be complimentary toward the opposition. The opposition does play an important role. They are just as important as those of us on this side of the House.

Yet the member from Alberta immediately brought up the issue that the Prime Minister somehow controls every word and everything that is said and done in the House, which is totally irrelevant, especially in this debate and given the motion that is before us.

I listened very intently to the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca a few minutes ago. He is one of the more respected members of the House. When he speaks, I like to listen. I think he gave a pretty darn good speech, but almost everything that the hon. member said had absolutely nothing to do with the motion before the House.

Let me give an example. I think I can make my case quite clear. What are we debating tonight? We are debating a change in the standing orders so that we do not have to deal with these frivolous, vexatious motions at report stage, which we have been experiencing for the last couple of years. I think that is a very legitimate issue.

I would like the opposition MPs to address their remarks to the motion that is before us. What did I hear from the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca? I wrote it down. He talked about the alleged dictatorship on the part of the Prime Minister. I do not know what that has to do with the motion that is before us. He talked about rendering MPs impotent. I do not know what that has to do with the motion. He talked about the value of the dollar, the unemployment level, health care in Canada and aboriginals in Canada. He even talked about non-votable motions.

● (2050)

Maybe in some other debate, maybe in some other context, those remarks would be relevant and make a lot of sense, but we are not talking about those things. We are talking about a motion that would change the standing orders of the House because we have had a problem with these frivolous, nonsensical report stage motions.

**An hon. member:** Give us some examples.

**Mr. John Harvard:** Examples? The best examples are those where it is suggested that we change a period to a comma or a

comma to a period or, as the member for Halifax West mentioned a few minutes ago, where one member at one report stage made more than 100 motions having to do with the timing of the implementation of the bill. That is frivolous and I do not think it should be tolerated.

One of the speakers—and I do not know if it was the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca—said that this particular motion before us would somehow aggrandize the power of and add to the dictatorship of the Prime Minister. This has nothing to do with the Prime Minister at all. In fact, if anybody is going to get power out of this, it is extra power for the Speaker. We are actually deferring to the elected Speaker of the House to make decisions with respect to frivolous, vexatious motions. It has nothing to do with the Prime Minister at all, absolutely zero, yet that is the kind of charge we face.

One of the reasons that we have this kind of debate is that there is a kind of crazy culture in the House. Everything that the government proposes the opposition must criticize. Somehow or other in this culture anything the government does or proposes has to be wrong. In fact if government ever does anything that is disagreeable to even one Canadian, the automatic charge that comes its way is “You don’t listen”. It is the most familiar and common charge one can hear.

We could go out and consult 30 million Canadians. We might even find favour with 70% or 80% of them, and guess what? The opposition would say we just were not listening, that we were totally irresponsible, and not only that, probably idiotic. That is the kind of culture we have around here.

We are trying in one very small way to improve the performance of all of us, not just of opposition MPs but of government MPs. When we are having debates of this kind, instead of having these free-wheeling discussions where any kind of allegation and any kind of charge can be brought to the floor, I would suggest that we require members, all of us, to talk about the motion before us.

I remember many years ago hearing the story about a debate that took place in the House probably 40 to 50 years ago. It was a debate about wheat. One member stood up. I know his name but I will not mention it. Apparently in those days members could speak for 40 minutes. The member stood up and talked about wheat for 40 minutes and never used the word wheat once, not even once.

The reason I mentioned this is that I consider the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca one of the best members in the House, but when he can address these frivolous motions we face all the time at report stage and talk about the value of the dollar, health care, aboriginals and unemployment, what in the name of heaven has that got to do with the motion before us?

I believe that by tightening up the rules we would all become much more responsible. I think very often that we on the government side wander off on crazy tangents.

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**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

• (2055)

**Mr. John Harvard:** Yes, sometimes. Yes, we are human and we make those mistakes. Maybe we should have stronger rules, forcing us to perform better and to address the issue before us.

I just hope that Canadians who are watching this debate have some understanding of what the debate is about. It is about changing the House order to prevent these frivolous, silly motions that are brought forward at report stage.

Imagine over 400 amendments to the Nisga'a bill in 1999. We spent 42 hours on 469 report stage motions. A year later in 2000, we spent 36 hours voting on 411 report stage motions. It makes no sense. It is silly.

We are just trying to clean this up, so let us not hear this nonsense about dictatorship, about how we are out of control and not being responsible. I think we are being responsible, and I think this work we have put forward deserves the support of everyone in the House.

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege, actually, to be able to join in this debate, because I think what we are dealing with here is probably one of the most significant elements that has hit this House for some time. That element is parliamentary reform.

The particular issue I will raise is the quotation that I believe the member for Winnipeg South used. I think he took it from an office placard that he saw. I believe it went like this: "For every complex problem there is a simple solution". It is wrong.

I suggest that with parliamentary reform we have a very complex issue. It is not something that is going to be resolved simply. It will require a major review of a number of things and I believe the hon. member for Winnipeg South said as much. This is a complicated issue.

I wanted to ask him a question and unfortunately the rules of the House did not allow us to ask questions. The question I was going to ask him was this: is this not a very simple solution to a very complex question? I think it is.

It is good that the Speaker would have the right not to allow vexatious and frivolous kinds of amendments. I have no problem with that. We agree with that.

However, there is a difficulty, which is why the Canadian Alliance put forward an amendment. Our amendment reads as follows:

and, for even greater clarity, the Speaker may select for debate all motions, regardless of their nature, if in his or her opinion the rights of the minority have been infringed upon in any way.

At that point lies the very heart of the issue. The essence of parliament is to give a voice to the people of Canada.

I see the hon. member for Winnipeg South back in the House and it is great to see him nodding his head.

That is our purpose here. It is to make this place relevant. A number of speakers here this afternoon said that parliament, for many people, has become irrelevant. That is a serious indictment on every one of us here. We should be able to debate in such a way that it is relevant to virtually everyone in Canada, whether we are on the opposition side of the House or the government side of the House.

I will address my remarks in that regard. I will refer to the hon. Minister of Finance. Not too long ago the Minister of Finance made a comment in a speech. I will read the exact paragraph that he used. The Minister of Finance said:

We have been discussing the role of Parliament in enshrining the values of the nation and its response to change. This is an empty debate unless it recognizes the role of the parliamentarians themselves—in our case the 301 members of the current House of Commons. . .MPs must have the opportunity to truly represent both their consciences and constituencies.

• (2100)

I could not agree more. That is a wonderful statement from a very honourable gentleman in the House who has a major and very responsible position in the government. I really admire that he said that.

The question then is will this kind of a motion bring about a stronger and more effective voice for parliamentarians? It will if vexatious motions are not there.

One of the reasons why there are these, by some definitions frivolous or vexatious, motions is because there is frustration on the part of parliamentarians. They cannot express themselves the way they want to. They cannot give voice to the people. They cannot vote in the interests of their constituents. Why is this? The hon. members opposite know only too well what I am talking about.

I want to refer back to the position of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister stood in the House and said, "I am only an ordinary MP looking after the interests of my constituency". The Prime Minister is not an ordinary MP. The Prime Minister is a very special person with unique powers. The Prime Minister has the power to appoint supreme court judges, senators and all the ministers of the crown. The Prime Minister also has the right to

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take away those appointments. He can shift around particular positions. He is not an ordinary member of parliament.

There are times when the Prime Minister exercises certain powers over members of parliament that deny them the responsibility and the opportunity to exercise their representative power of their constituencies.

I remember clearly the vote that took place in the House on the remuneration for hepatitis C victims. I am sure all members of the House know that there are people on that side of the House who voted against what they had been fighting for and what they knew was the right thing to do. Why did they do this? They were told they must toe the party line. That is wrong. That is a denial of the democratic principles of the House. That is what we are decrying.

If there was not this kind of frustration, there would be no need for all kinds of frivolous and vexatious motions. These are expressions of something else that is wrong. We cannot fix a complex problem by taking one little item and changing it and think that all the other things are going to go away. They will not go away. The problems are inherent in the system. The system has to change.

The Prime Minister has to be accountable to parliament. We had a very recent example that happened in this 37th parliament. A red book promise was given to the people of Canada about appointing an ethics counsellor by parliament and having that ethics counsellor report to parliament. The Prime Minister said that was what they were going to do it.

When it came to a vote in the House of Commons to give effect to and implement that particular promise, what did the Prime Minister do? He said his party would vote against that motion, thus denying an opportunity for the ethics counsellor to become the truly impartial, objective person who could evaluate what the Prime Minister was doing and what other ministers might do.

That is what frustrates us. That is what makes it impossible for parliamentarians to do what they were elected to do. That is serious business.

I wish to address one other issue. This comes out of a study that was done by Queen's University. I am sure there are members opposite who know only too well that particular institution, an institution of great learning and one I respect.

**Mr. Reg Alcock:** You're too smart for that.

**Mr. Werner Schmidt:** I would like to address the hon. member for Winnipeg South because he understands this university very well. He probably knows many of the people who teach there. I would like to refer to this particular study entitled, "Searching for Good Governance". I am going to quote a couple of paragraphs from this particular study. Bill Stanbury in 1994 concluded that the present system of cabinet government was seriously flawed with respect to one of its most widely cited virtues, accountability.

• (2105)

We have just talked about exactly that. Accountability is the issue. It is not vexatious or frivolous motions that come to us. Those are byproducts of a much bigger problem which is accountability.

Mr. Stanbury went on to say "Little useful information is disclosed that would permit the voters to properly assess the performance of the government. The ability of parliament and voters to hold accountable the cabinet and the rest of the executive is highly limited".

That is what we are talking about today and it is very significant. The issue is the accountability of parliament and the accountability of the Prime Minister and ministers of the crown. He argued that between elections a majority government was ultimately constrained only by self-restraint, a form of self-regulation.

Members know that self-regulation that is talked about here is nothing more and nothing less than the self-regulation of the Prime Minister himself. It is the Prime Minister's office that decides what will or will not happen. Mr. Stanbury went on to say "The government often controls the means of monitoring its performance. It controls much of the quantity, quality and type of information available. It is unlikely to admit non-performance and will do its best to conceal bad performance".

In his book *Checks Unbalanced: The Quiet Side of Public Spending*, Herman Leonard wrote: "Civilized people go to great lengths to avoid having to confront unpleasant news and uncomfortable feeling. But when we practice avoidance and obfuscation in public affairs, the consequences reach us all. A civilized penchant to look away. The willingness of some to hide and of others to tolerate the hiding of the public's business is on its face antithetical to our society. Society's fundamental governing precept, governing by the informed consent of the governed".

That is a major insight but very important for us to realize. That is at the heart of what we are debating here today, that we make parliament relevant so that every Canadian can say it is a place where their representatives can tell the people what it is that they want done in a democratic form. They will take their view from the majority position but they want their voice heard there.

This is the point that he is making. He is saying that if information is not given or if it is somehow obfuscated or it is adulterated in some way, electors no longer make an informed decision about who can represent them. That is what that is all about.

He goes on to the accountability of expenditures. This is probably even more significant than anything else I have said so far. The authors of the study concluded:

Most of the "bottom line" focus of accountability in the media is the general budget presentation of the deficit by the Minister of Finance.



We do not have a budget right now but we do have the rest of this which does apply. It is a well established practice that the media takes the bottom line from the budget presentation by the minister. It provides an incentive to manipulate the presentation of the general accounts to give the impression of better performance in this regard.

The study further stated:

For example, spending might be shifted "off-budget" to an independent agency such as a Crown corporation, or into a loan guarantee as opposed to a direct subsidy, to reduce the "deficit" registered in the general accounts. Alternatively, accounts might even be made to look worse in order to make more dramatic an expected improvement. It is well-known that new governments tend to attribute as much responsibility for deficits as possible to the previous political managers.

How many times have we seen that in the House? We have seen it over and over again.

It goes on to state that preliminary work done by Postner emphasized the need for a consolidated budget, a budget that would provide a unified presentation of all government activities, including general government activities, trust fund activities such as public sector pension plans and enterprise type activities such as crown corporations.

• (2110)

By doing so it would help to illuminate the complete financial picture of the government and diminish the potential to shift activities off budget to conceal politically embarrassing information.

There is the heart of the issue. We are unable to assess accurately whether the information we are getting in the budget document is an accurate description of where the government has spent its money and how much it has spent. We do not know and we cannot know because the accounting system is such that it does not accrue the total expenditures. They are expenditures that take place off budget. They are still a liability to the government. It has spent the money but it does not appear in the budget that as presented to the media and the public. It is not an accurate reflection of the real financial position of the government.

This is at the heart of the frustration which we are experiencing. We can argue about free votes. We can talk about the role of committees and amendments. If we do not deal with the fundamental issue of representation of our constituents, of our consciences in this place, we are denying the fundamental principle of democracy. That is what we need to address.

I would like to say one more thing with regard to the whole business of reforming parliament. We must first of all recognize that we are Canadians, that we are here as a democracy, a democracy that has stood the test of time, a democracy that is in a

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crisis situation right now and a democracy where many people are saying it is no longer relevant and they really do not care. That is a serious indictment. We must care because the iron law of politics applies to us and to every Canadian. Those who choose not to get involved are bound to be governed by those who do.

The time has come for each of us to work together and to work through the principles of true democracy. This is where people are elected on the merits, platform and philosophies they present. They are elected on the basic principles and policies that they stand for, that they will implement when given the reins of power and that we can depend on those people to do what they said they would do.

**Mr. Dennis Mills:** Sounds like a Liberal.

**Mr. Werner Schmidt:** The hon. member cries that it is the Liberal way. That is not the Liberal way. I just gave the House an example that said clearly that a promise was given to appoint an ethics counsellor. He would be appointed by parliament and report to parliament. The Liberals denied that. They voted against it. That is what the Liberals did.

The ethics counsellor should have been appointed by parliament. He should have been given that kind of power. If they did not want to do it then, they should do it now. It would have been far better for the government in power today to have put that kind of motion before us. We could all have supported that motion, not this kind of motion which does not get to the heart of the issue and which deals with peripheral duties. The real frustration comes from these other issues. That is what we need to keep in place and recognize that it is the case.

The point has come for us to realize that many of us in the House, and I have spoken to several members on various committees, whether it is from this side of the House or from the government side are asking what in the world they are here for? They feel they are wasting their time. They say the minister tells them the bill they will be voting on or the legislation they will be dealing with. They cannot make any amendments to it. They cannot determine who the witnesses will be. To some degree there is some flexibility but by and large, if the minister does not want, or if the Prime Minister does not want, certain witnesses to appear, they will not appear, notwithstanding the committee has the power under legislation to subpoena people. However, what happens? Nothing.

There is the frustration. We need to come to grips with the realities of giving to the parliamentarians meaningful work, inside and outside committees. We need to allow them to vote the way they want to vote and allow them to express what needs to be done. That is consistent with what the people want them to do. That is at the heart of the issue. I am pleading for the House to reform parliament to make that possible.

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• (2115)

**Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to some of the members opposite and I half expect someone in a red or blue cape to come flying through here. They just have all the solutions and all the answers. Frankly, I find it a little bit tiresome and a little bit frustrating.

First, here are a couple of facts. We are sitting here and it is 9.15 p.m. On a normal sitting day the House would have been recessed by approximately 6.30 p.m. We will be here until 11.30 or 12 o'clock tonight at least. Just so people know, the cost to run this place beyond the regular hour is somewhere around \$25,000 per hour. The debate this evening will cost the Canadian taxpayer, for whom I assume my friend from the Bloc could not care less, about \$125,000. I just wanted to make the cost clear.

Why do we have the motion? Other members have stood up and said to speak to the motion. We have sat in this place through 24 hours of not debating and not talking but simply voting on motions that would make absolutely no difference to the legislation or to the quality of the legislation. They would have no impact on the end product. They do nothing more than delay. To sit here doing that is not just a waste of money, it is an abuse of the democratic system.

If members opposite want to talk about ways to reform this place, why do we not start with this motion? The motion is indeed parliamentary reform. The motion says to my hon. friends opposite that if they want to filibuster and stand in their place and talk with at least a modicum of intelligence about the particular issue involved they can do so. They have that opportunity. In the good old days, filibuster meant talking out the issue, debating.

When I was a member of the Ontario legislature I recall sitting through filibusters that would last a day or two. I may not have liked it or agreed with it but I had to respect the ability of parliamentarians to stand in their place in opposition to the government of the day. Whether we were members of the opposition or members of the government, we had to respect the ability of the individual to stay on topic and talk about the issue that was of concern to their constituents and, in that example, to the people of the entire province, and in this example, all of Canada.

What have we had? We have had a major debate. The one that comes to mind is the Nisga'a treaty. The opposition did not agree with us. It did not like the treaty and did not like what we were doing. I did not have a problem with that. It is totally within its rights and its purview to disagree with us.

However, the opposition submitted hundreds of amendments that were—and I love the word—vexatious, which means annoying. They did not change the treaty one bit and did not change the outcome of the government legislation one iota. They simply

required the government to stay here and vote on periods, commas and semicolons.

Now, really, is that what Canadians elected any of us in this place to do? Absolutely not. Canadians may have some respect for a member opposite who could stand up and clause by clause, line by line, word by word, go through that particular bill and explain to the Canadian public why he or she is against a particular bill.

• (2120)

I do not care what bill it is. I have served in opposition and I have served in government. I respect the responsibility and the important role that opposition must play in this kind of democracy.

What bothers me, though, is that when the opposition today does not like what the government is doing it says that it does not like the process. When it says it does not like the process means it lost. Rather than argue the substantive impact of the motion, the bill or the document before parliament, members of the opposition cry foul that somehow the big, bad Prime Minister whipped them. He has chains and runs racks in the back room where they are tortured mercilessly. Their brains are taken and put in jars somewhere when they arrive. They just denigrate the role of MPs.

When I am here in the nation's capital as a member of parliament, like many of my colleagues on all sides of the House I work between 12 and 18 hours a day. Our day starts very early with committee meetings, working in caucuses and working with opposition members. We find quite interestingly that in spite of the theatre which goes on in here, when we get members of parliament from all across Canada sitting in committee talking over issues they can actually be reasonable. I wonder why they are not like that in the House of Commons. Why can we not work together?

Someone from the NDP asked when we would start to work together. I was at the HRDC committee the other day talking about Bill C-2 and changes to the employment insurance bill. At that time I questioned the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the construction trade unions that were before us.

I asked the chamber why, when the country is in a recession, when the government supports all people who lose their jobs and when the EI account is in major deficit, we do not hear from it? Why does it not say that it knows the account is in deficit and it will pay more? We do not hear from the chamber in that instance, because it is the responsibility of the government to be the insurer of last resort.

Is that a question that someone might expect from a government member? I think not, because I think some of the more socialist minded folks might agree. Some of the more right wing people might not agree. They might think I was being hard and harsh on the poor chamber of commerce. I see at committee all the time where we cross on issues.

The member opposite doing most of the chirping served with me on the citizenship and immigration committee for some time. With the odd exception, when that member decided to ignore the rules of parliament and released a document to the media before it was tabled in the House, for which he was properly chastised by the Speaker of the day, I found that he tried to work and to deal with issues of concern around the citizenship bill and around refugees. He tried to put forward from time to time some thoughtful comments in debate.

Why is it that after we have gone through the process of losing whatever is the issue of the day—

**Mr. Ken Epp:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am not sure that we on this side should be the only ones required to listen to this diatribe. I would like to see more Liberals in the House and I am challenging you on quorum.

*And the count having been taken:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** We now have a quorum.

• (2125)

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Mr. Speaker, I wanted an audience. I generally perform a little better when I have an audience, so here we go. That is exactly the kind of nonsense that sends this place into disarray because that party over there does not have—

**Mr. Leon Benoit:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We can stray a little in debate but I would question the relevance of the comments the member is making.

**The Deputy Speaker:** With the greatest respect to my hon. colleague, I think that is not a point of order.

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Mr. Speaker, they always interrupt me because they have very thin skins.

Let me deal with the issue. The issue is parliamentary reform. The issue is whether our Speaker should have the ability to rule an amendment out of order that is put forward by anyone in this place. As a matter of fact I am not even sure we need the particular amendment to the standing orders. Having read them, it is my opinion the Speaker already has the ability to throw those kinds of things out.

If he or she considers them vexatious or irrelevant, it is my opinion that the Speaker of this place can rule them out of order. However, we want to have a debate about toughening up the rules, making it more clear to the boys and girls that we will no longer allow periods to be substituted for commas because they simply do not change the basis of the bill. We will no longer allow someone to submit 3,000 amendments for the sole purpose of stopping a bill that the government, duly elected in a majority position, has not

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only a right but a responsibility to put forward. It is the agenda of the government that needs to be put on the table.

If opposition members had any credibility whatsoever they would stand and fight. They would stand and debate. They would stand and disagree, but they do not. What do they do? They say that this place is dysfunctional and that MPs are irrelevant. I take exception to that.

It is my view that the proudest thing one can do in this great country is serve in this place. It is clearly an honour to have people in our communities, our neighbours and our friends, say that they trust us to go to Ottawa to represent them, that they believe in what we are telling them. They do not like everything we do. They disagree with us from time to time. We may have to vote a certain way because we do or do not agree on a certain bill. They understand that. That is the process. That is the democratic way.

I will paraphrase Winston Churchill who said that it may not be the best system in the world but it is a long way ahead of whatever is in second place.

Let us understand that when they lose and when they cry about the system that is one thing. The next thing they do is denigrate their colleagues. However, when they look in the mirror and say as members of this place that MPs are not doing their jobs, that they are irrelevant or that they are trained seals, they denigrate the face in the mirror.

That is the problem in this place. If we want to return respect of parliament to Canadians, if we want to return respect of parliamentarians to Canadians, it is time we respected ourselves. That is not to say we should be arrogant. We have no right to do that. In fact the opposite is true. We need to work, as my colleagues do and even members over there do. We have round tables in our communities. We have public meetings in our communities. We put out householders. We all return phone calls, I would hope, to our constituents.

I find it interesting that constituents will phone my office and say that they are calling because they are mad about this or mad about that. They leave their names and phone numbers. They think I will not call them back but I do.

• (2130)

My policy is that within 24 hours I return a call personally. Guess what they say, Mr. Speaker? They ask whether that is really me. They are stunned that a member of parliament actually called them back. If they did not want me to call them back, why would they call and leave a message?

It is our job to talk to the people. That does not mean and never will mean that we are puppets. I love it when the whip of the Alliance Party says that members of the Alliance Party will vote in

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favour of the motion unless they are told otherwise by their constituents.

Do they have a hot line? Do they have all their constituents on a big speaker phone doing a yea and a nay, doing a referendum of some kind? I guess three per cent of the people told them that this was what they wanted them to do. They are all out there saying "Mary, what do you think? Should I vote in favour of this or not?"

I am being a little facetious but the serious point is that we do an injustice to the Canadian people to run down this institution. If members want to know what fuels the so-called alienation we hear about in places like Quebec and western Canada, it is exactly that kind of behaviour which runs down this place. They throw gasoline on the fire and the people say it is awful that those terrible politicians in Ottawa will not listen to them.

It is interesting that the people of Canada do not buy it at the end of the day. I have talked to people in my community who say that they do not like politicians but that they do not mean me. I am sure everybody in this place gets that. I do not want a second opinion, either.

That is what happens because they read it in the newspaper, saw it on the news or heard someone in parliament say we are all a bunch of bad people who do not care about our communities. We know that is not true. Putting forward motions to change periods and commas and semicolons is not even an intelligent way of using the parliamentary democracy that is available in this wonderful place, in this incredible establishment.

It says to Canadians that we are here. I agree with one thing the member opposite said in his speech, that we are here to provide a voice for all Canadians.

I want to talk on the issue of the ethics counsellor that the opposition is having a field day with. Nobody over there mentions the fact that in 1999 the ethics counsellor appeared before the industry committee and made a report to parliamentarians. I am assuming, a terrible leap in faith maybe, that there were members opposite in attendance at that committee since it was a standing committee of this House. They heard Mr. Wilson make his report and they had opportunity to question him on his findings. That committee then reported to parliament.

I refer to the commissioner of the RCMP, which brings up another point that the member of the fifth party over there in the corner does not want to accept, the absolutely independent investigation by the RCMP which found that there was no wrongdoing. Those members say they want it referred to the ethics commissioner and then when the ethics commissioner says there was no wrongdoing on the part of the Prime Minister, what do they do? They complain about the process. It is what I said before. They complain that the ethics commissioner, because they did not like the answer, is a lapdog. That too is an insult.

As far as how I voted and my colleagues voted, I am very strongly of the opinion that we have already lived up to the commitment in the red book by appointing the ethics commissioner. He has the responsibility and the opportunity and will be invited from time to time to appear before a committee of the House. All we have to do is ask and he will come. He will answer questions and then the committee will report to this place. It is absolutely normal.

• (2135)

I will give the members opposite credit for one thing. They managed to trick the media a little bit. They managed to put some kind of message or image out there that we were breaking a promise when in fact they knew full well we had already kept that promise and lived up to that commitment.

To this day that ethics counsellor is there. If they want to apply to have him investigate, they can do so. If they do not like the answer, they had better not come crying to me. He is there to do a job and he has his responsibilities. He will absolutely discharge those responsibilities.

I want to talk about someone else. Someone always throws out the name of my former good friend Mr. Nunziata. Mr. Nunziata stood in this place and voted against the government on a confidence motion that had to do with the budget. Everyone said how wonderful and great he was.

Let me ask members a question. Everybody loves hockey in this country. If I played on a team and I shot the puck on purpose into my own net, what would my team members do to me? They would tell me to sit on the bench or they would kick me off the team.

If Mr. Nunziata would have had the courage to step out of caucus and vote against the government, I would have nothing but admiration for him. He did not. He voted against the government, against the team, and the end of the day this is a team sport, a blood sport and a fabulous place to be. I could not be more proud to represent the constituents of Mississauga West and I will continue to do so with vigour in this place.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will try not to raise the pitch used by the hon. member for Mississauga West in his speech.

Those who are listening to us and winding down in their living rooms now that their children are in bed have heard examples taken from hockey by the member for Mississauga West. With all due respect for the hon. member, his speech was worthy of a chihuahua. Members know that a chihuahua is a small dog that yaps a lot but does not bite. So, the member for Mississauga West made a speech worthy of a chihuahua. I am only referring to the pitch of the speech, not its content.



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Getting back to the issue before us, it is unfortunate that we must debate until 11 p.m. the government House leader's Motion No. 2, because this motion—

**An hon. member:** A motion for closure.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** A motion for closure, I agree with the hon. member for Roberval, has very serious implications. It is appropriate to read it.

Mr. Speaker, let me say from the outset that it is not the integrity of the Speaker or of the Chair, as it is called, that is being questioned, but the action taken by the government House leader.

The motion reads as follows:

That section (5) of the Standing Order 76 and section (5) of the Standing Order 76.1 be amended by adding at the conclusion of the notes thereto the following:

“For greater clarity, the Speaker will not select for debate a motion or series of motions of a repetitive, frivolous or vexatious nature or of a nature that would serve merely to prolong unnecessarily proceedings at the report stage and, in exercising this power of selection, the Speaker shall be guided by the practice followed in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom.”

Mr. Speaker, I know that you are a man of law. I did say a man of law not a man of the right.

• (2140)

I know that the government has hit one of your tender spots. I do not know you well enough to know all your tender spots, like in hockey, when they know a player has bad knees for instance, and focus on them, but I do know, with his reference to the parliamentary system of the United Kingdom, that the government House leader has hit on one of your soft spots, because you are greatly fond of the parliamentary system as it prevails in the United Kingdom.

This motion contains elements which give incredible latitude and we cannot subscribe to them. Who, for instance, will be the one to determine whether motions are indeed repetitive, frivolous or vexatious?

I submit, respectfully, that in parliamentary law these are totally subjective concepts. There is nothing objective about this. We are in the realm of subjectivity.

With this motion, then, the government wants to give itself a clear conscience by including an initiative we consider totally partisan, something it had been thinking about for a very long time, but did not want to take the fall for. Taking advantage of the election last November 27, and the first block of the new session, the first five weeks of sittings, the government, and the government House leader in particular, said to itself “Now is the time to strike”. I submit that the government is going to have to take the fall for this.

This motion confers upon the Speaker the right to decide on the motives and motivations of the members of the opposition when they bring in amendments in the House.

If the opposition is denied the right to bring forward amendments or if our amendments are subjected to an arbitrary decision, what is there left of the opposition? Is the government unhappy with the fact there is an opposition? Would the government like to have had all the 301 seats in this 37th parliament?

I think that the members on this side of the House are legitimate as well. In other words, they are elected just as democratically as the members on the other side. Does that mean that the government is unhappy about having an opposition?

There is no doubt that, when the government House leader presented his motion, he certainly did not think his own motions in amendment could be frivolous or vexatious. This is surely not the case with the some 200 amendments to Bill C-7 on young offenders.

This motion is very insulting to any self-respecting political party working sincerely to improve legislation introduced by the government.

Thus, according to the motion the government introduced, the Speaker will have the power to judge, to all intents and purposes, the relevance of any party's political strategy. This Liberal government wants as little criticism as possible and imposes changes to the standing orders in order to manage public affairs on its own.

Here we have a basic question before us. Does a mathematical majority of members give the government the right to do everything? Can the government usurp this power simply because it had a standing of 172 seats at the latest election? Does that give it the right, literally, to negate any opposition? If this government is democratic and transparent, as it claims, what is the point of presenting such a motion as Motion No. 2, presented by the government House leader?

There is a political price to pay for managing public affairs.

• (2145)

When government decisions are not popular, they must be debated in parliament. The opposition has a legitimate role in parliament of working to amend legislation. If this right is withdrawn, we might as well ask what is the point of committee work, and of making speeches in the House, most of the time before empty chairs. What is the purpose?

I have a suggestion for the government. If the government wants to move quickly, all it has to do is introduce its bills and say “There will be no debate on this bill that we have put together. No opposition member will speak. Only members of the party in power will be allowed to speak. There will be no parliamentary commit-

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tees, and no witnesses will be called to appear before them. I, such and such a minister, rise to introduce a bill, and I ask my Liberal colleagues in the government majority if they have any speeches to make. I give them the floor and I order that we proceed immediately to pass the bill at first, second and third readings". Bingo. We send it to the other chamber and that is that, no more discussion.

Is this the kind of democracy that the Liberals want and the kind of country in which they want to live? If so, we need to know. I think they should have been just as plain about it in the campaign leading up to the November 27 election.

The process whereby the opposition tries to amend an act is, in itself, a sound process in a democracy. It is the expression of democracy by a part of the population that does not think like the government. I looked at the situation, and we on this side of the House should be lobotomized to ensure that nothing the members opposite say will be questioned.

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

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Of course, government members are applauding. They would love that, but they really should not applaud when I make such comments. This is what they are aiming for, but in a somewhat more hypocritical if not subtle way.

The process whereby the opposition tries to amend an act is a sound, democratic process, and the opposition has a duty to ensure that the government respects the public in managing the affairs of the state.

Depriving opposition parties of the tools that they need to do their job tends to change the role of our democratic institutions. This is a serious matter. It is through debates and decisions made democratically in the interest of all that a government should manage public affairs, not in the interest of a fistful of individuals, and not in the interest of a certain group of members who sit in cabinet.

The role of each and everyone of the 301 elected parliamentarians, whether they sit in the fifth row on the opposition side or on the government side, is to improve the legislation, unless the government House leader thinks he has a monopoly on truth, in which case I am wasting my time, I should sit down immediately and no one else should talk.

With all due respect, I submit that the government House leader does not have a monopoly on truth. At any rate, all we on this side have to do is look at the way he directs the work of this House to see that he does not have a monopoly on the truth.

The government is calling upon the institution you represent, Mr. Speaker, to intervene in order to limit opposition delaying tactics. The government House leader is giving this reason to all

the media: "I do not want to see MPs turned into voting machines".

• (2150)

I regret to inform hon. members that we were elected to listen to the debates, to get some idea of what bills are about, and to respect the concerns and needs of our fellow citizens. Then, having done all that, our fellow citizens expect us to come here precisely for that reason, to vote. Is that being voting machines? If, within one year, we are able to pass 600 pieces of progressive legislation which will help improve society, which will add something to democracy, to the relationship between citizens and their government—for this is what we often fault government for, and I do not necessarily mean this one, or a provincial one—we will have done our duty as parliamentarians.

When the people listening to us run into us at the mall buying groceries, what criticism do they often share with us? They fault government for being out of touch with their concerns, with not listening to them. That is why they elect someone and tell them "You, sir or madam, are the one we have decided to send to Ottawa to represent us in parliament, and we want you to be our spokesperson. We want you to be the one to speak on our behalf". Is that what being a voting machine means?

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons added that dilatory motions can lead to hours of unnecessary voting. This is once again a value judgment on the part of the government House leader. That is what he thinks. He is the one who feels the voting is unnecessary, but if the government introduces bills that are reasonable, if the government House leader introduces bills that are valid, that have the approval of society and all the political parties, we are in agreement.

Members have seen that, in such cases, there have been no lengthy debates for hours and hours and no amendments. When there is a consensus on the bill, we can pass it quickly. For sure, when the government introduces bills that are meaningless, such as the bill on young offenders, such as the clarity bill, such as the bill on the Nisga'a treaty, which our Canadian Alliance colleagues considered inappropriate for the people they represent, naturally amendments are tabled.

This is the right of parliamentarians. The best proof that it is a right is that we do not use it unreasonably and in a repetitive fashion with every bill. You use a right when you want to, when you feel a need to use it. A right and a privilege for an MP, that is what that is.

The government says that we are voting unnecessarily for hours and that it costs some \$27,000 for each hour of overtime the House sits. I say to the government House leader that democracy has no price. If we find that \$27,000 is too much, and if the government House leader wants to make cuts—

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**An hon. member:** Let them abolish parliament.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Let them abolish it. Let us say that if there are savings to be made, we should shut it down. Shut it down for six, eight, nine months a year. We should try to compress all of parliament's work into one week. If we sit for just one week, we will save \$27,000 an hour times 24 hours for 51 weeks. That will save a bundle.

Democracy does have a price, and I think that passing a motion such as Motion No. 2 would be to deny the right of all parties, including the opposition parties of course, to introduce amendments.

While the government is using this faulty argument, while it is trying to prevent us from representing our constituents, it has, since 1993, pocketed no less than \$31 billion of the surplus in the EI fund, money that belonged to unemployed workers. The government has many ways of limiting opposition to a bill.

• (2155)

I will give an example. We do not need to give the government House leader ideas for keeping us down; he has all sorts of his own. One of the tools used by the government House leader is closure.

What is the main reason for closure? It is intended to silence the opposition members. The government House leader decrees "There will be another two and a half hours of debate on such and such a bill. We feel that you will have said all you had to say in those two and a half hours and we are not interested in hearing any more. It does not matter whether you can provide additional arguments, whether research assistants found a study somewhere in the world or in Canada to show to the government that it is headed in the wrong direction. The government has decided to put an end to the debate after two and a half hours with a gag order. You will have said all you had to say by then". I say two and a half hours, but it could be one hour, three hours or three days. We cannot accept such a measure.

From 1984 to 1993, the Conservative government used a gag order 49 times for 519 bills, or 9.4% of the time. In the seven years it has been in office, the Liberal government has resorted to closure 60 times for 350 bills—

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** It was even more than 60 times.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** —or 17.4% of the time, which is almost double. The hon. member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes tells me that it was more than 60 times—

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** It was around 70 times.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** —because it happens regularly, on a weekly basis.

My Latin teacher used to say *tempus fugit*, time flies. Since you are signalling that I have only one minute left, I simply want to conclude on this: What power will the opposition have if it has increasingly less access to the parliamentary tools that are necessary to the expression of a true democracy? How will opposition members be able to protect the fundamental interests of their fellow citizens?

From the moment that a government stops listening to the public and adopts a piecemeal approach based on a strictly partisan agenda that takes into account only the interests of a few, all our institutions lose their meaning.

[English]

**Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Oxford.

I would like to first begin by actually congratulating the member opposite for his impassioned remarks, because I think this is an important debate and I am very sensitive to the fact that opposition members always have reason to fear that their rights to a fair hearing in the House of Commons must be protected and guaranteed.

Having said that, I do not think the amendment that is being debated right now actually constructively adds to the original motion, because I point out, Mr. Speaker, that the original motion gives you, Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to interpret what the words unnecessarily prolong mean.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, in my view, if you really felt it was of interest to protect the opposition or minority rights in the House of Commons, you could decide that if the opposition felt in order to make a statement they had to move a series of amendments for debate, if you felt that was in the interests of the Commons at large and the debate at large, you could so rule, so I really do not see the amendment as constructively adding to the main motion.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to speak in this debate because I am very, very sensitive to the need to preserve the rights of backbench MPs on this side and opposition MPs on that side, the rights, Mr. Speaker, to move amendments of substance or even, Mr. Speaker, substance is of course, shall we say, something that one decides subjectively.

• (2200)

However, I think it is very important that MPs retain the right to move amendments that they believe in, even if those amendments do not succeed, that may make a statement with respect to how those members individually or collectively feel about legislation.

I have to say that I have availed myself of report stage amendments on a number of occasions knowing full well that I could not proceed with my ideas with respect to the legislation at hand through the committee process.

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For the benefit of people who may be watching the debate, they should understand that after second reading, legislation goes to a committee, that committee hears witnesses, considers the testimony of those witnesses and then hears proposals for amendments that may come from members of that committee or from the government through solicitations to the parliamentary secretary. Those amendments are then voted upon in committee and they go forward and the government gets to decide whether or not those amendments are actually acted upon at report stage.

The problem with that system is that many of our committees are dominated by the government. It is an artifice of the way the committee structure is set up. Whether one is an opposition member of parliament or a backbench member of parliament, sometimes when we present an amendment through the committee process and it is defeated at the committee, it cannot be re-submitted at report stage.

Well the difficulty with that is that if a backbench MP or an opposition MP has an amendment, which he or she knows full well the government does not support, if he or she introduces it at the committee and it is defeated then it disappears forever.

The advantage of the report stage amendment process for a backbench MP like myself, or an opposition MP, if we know we cannot win at committee, we can submit it at report stage in the House of Commons. We then have an opportunity to rise in this place, with the amendment grouped among a number of other amendments or other motions, but we have an opportunity to rise in this place in front of all of our colleagues on both sides of the House and the public at large to speak, I like to think, with feeling to the amendment that we know full well will be defeated.

I never tire of saying in this House that this House is not just about passing legislation, winning or losing, voting or not voting. This House is about debate and about presenting ideas. I think the public gets dreadfully discouraged if it does not hear valid debate not only from the opposition but from the backbench MPs on this side.

I have to commend the government House leader for the type of motion he has put forward now because I believe other speakers have alluded to the fact that the House leader did present, about a year ago, amendments along this line to report stage proceedings pertaining to vexatious or frivolous amendments that were of such a nature that many of the members on this side of the House could not accept it.

I think the members opposite should know that when that occurred many of us on this side expressed our feelings to the government House leader in the strongest possible terms. In other words, we said that we would not support the proposal he had before the House. The government accepted the resistance that came from this side and the result is the proposal that the government House leader has now before the House.

I would like to say that I ultimately have no problem whatsoever with opposition members trying to prolong debate at report stage in order to make a point about legislation that they do not agree with.

During the debate about the clarity bill, for example, in which there were about 100 amendments, if not more, that were presented by the opposition, and many of them definitely of a frivolous nature, I had no problem with the fact that the House sat late, sat into the middle of the night, because if I sat here into the middle of the night, the opposition members sat into the middle of the night as well. When it comes down to defending government legislation that I believe in, I am willing to sit in my place as long as it will take and I am prepared to out sit, if need be, any member of the opposition who wants to make a point in this particular way.

• (2205 )

Ultimately I did not have a lot of problem with what the opposition was doing from time to time by moving multiple amendments that were, shall we say, of a frivolous nature. The problem, and I think this is where the government House leader has a real point, is the optics to the public out there when they see amendments that basically are the moving of a comma, the changing of a little bit of grammar. The optics is such that I am afraid that members of the public would lose confidence that this House is really undertaking serious business, even though I would agree that the opposition ought to have as many opportunities as possible to make points even if it is by filibuster or by prolonging debate.

That having been said, I do feel that what the government House leader has done by moving this particular motion, which devolves upon you, Mr. Speaker, enormous opportunities, if not power, of interpretation and the reason why I was so keen to speak in this debate, and, Mr. Speaker, I am speaking directly toward you, and I hope you are giving me 100% of your attention, the reason why I am speaking directly toward you and seeking your attention, Mr. Speaker, is because I am hoping that you will appreciate that when you interpret this amendment that is proposed by the government House leader you will interpret it only in ways that defend the rights of backbench MPs and the rights of opposition MPs to move amendments of substance at report stage.

It is a subjective call on your side, Mr. Speaker. I am glad that you are giving me such rapt attention because of course I am trying to make a dreadfully important point. I just wanted to make sure you were with us there, Mr. Speaker. I have full confidence that you will interpret this, and I want to stress that I only support this motion from the government on condition that when you interpret it you interpret it in terms of the minority rights, the rights of free expression, the rights of state position that has to be a part of being a backbench MP, or being an opposition MP.



*Government Orders*

That having been said, I think that the government House leader has done something that I know the opposition members would find hard to credit, but I can assure them that there was great objection to the original proposal on this side. The government did concede that it was going too far. It has come up, I think, with a compromise. I really do not think it is necessary because I do not mind if the opposition wants to use up House time. I am conscious of the fact though that the optics would be improper and I will always bow to the government when it has a proposal that I think is reasonable and that is ultimately in the interest of the House at large.

But I end with one caution because the member for Oxford wants to speak very shortly. I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that whatever you do, you must protect the rights of the backbench MPs and the opposition MPs to have their say in debate on legislation at report stage.

**Mr. John Finlay (Oxford, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the motion deals with empowering you and your assistants to rule on repetitious, frivolous and vexatious amendments at report stage.

I listened to my colleagues this afternoon and evening and found myself agreeing with many points made by some of the members opposite, particularly the member for Winnipeg—Transcona and the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

We could have a committee to review the democratic purposes and actions of the House of Commons. This could be done, but that is not what we are voting on tonight. We are voting on a way of preventing amendment abuse and hence voting abuse.

I was involved with the Nisga'a agreement and the work on the bill by the committee on Indian affairs and northern development.

• (2210)

I remind the House that the Nisga'a worked on that bill for 500 years. Chief Gosnell worked on it for 21 years and Frank Calder worked on it for life. This government and previous governments worked on it for some 20 or 30 years. In the last 11 years we finally got an agreement. To have that agreement held up for 42 hours while we voted in the House on frivolous, vexatious and repetitious amendments was terribly disheartening to me, and I am sure to the Nisga'a who watched. It did nothing for public perception.

People have made much of the fact that the public did not understand that waste of time, that waste of talent, that waste of effort. I do not either. We have a committee system that works. It involves witnesses. It involves travel if necessary. It involves all parties in the committee working toward a common end. It is one of the things I enjoy most about being here and working with my

colleagues. Sometimes things go awry between committee stage and the House but not always.

Report stage allows motions from members who are not on the committee and have not had a chance to make an amendment, but it is not designed to allow games to be played with the work that has been done by serious parliamentarians. Endless voting on frivolous, vexatious and repetitious amendments is not productive of anything but cynicism, ennui and disrespect.

The member for Winnipeg North waxed eloquent about closure, which is not what we are talking about. The heart of the matter is how we develop good laws for Canadians. Some members opposite talk of overall change, closure, the auditor general's report, et cetera. Somehow they forget that we have just had an election based on party platforms, based on the country's choices for the future.

My colleague from Waterloo—Wellington talked about the development of parliamentary democracy. He suggested it was a slow but steady process. It is adaptive to new technological challenges and social changes. It did not burst full blown from the brow of Zeus or the brow of Simon de Montfort. It developed gradually, haltingly.

There were big steps like the Magna Carta and the Reform Act of the 17th century. There were a lot of little steps day by day. We are taking one of those little steps hopefully tonight and saying that we went too far in this direction. We have to change. We have to come back to the centre and do the right thing. Amendments at report stage were not intended to get us into that kind of trouble.

It has worked because Canada has just been voted for the eighth year as the best country in the world in which to live. That is pretty good.

There is another saying many people use around here and that is "if it ain't broke don't fix it". The committee system is not broken. Having bills go through at least three stages is good. Our voting system is good and our timing for speeches seems to work. The nonsense of wasting time on silly amendments is not productive, sensible or defensible by any member who thinks his work is useful to his constituents and his country.

Most members have all had experience in many organizations and how they run. We have had experience in motion making, in elections and in amendments. Personally I started at about age 10 with a neighbourhood stamp club among my boyhood chums. We had elections. Minutes were kept. We prepared an agenda. We even had a stamp evaluation committee.

From there I went to cubs, a scout leader, patrol leader, the university student union as a director and a member, staff president

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at the high school, union president, the hospital board and a lot of other social organizations, and now here. My colleague from Winnipeg South made a great deal of sense. He concentrated on the point of the motion before us: the achievement.

• (2215)

Let me conclude by saying that we should focus on the motion and pass it. It is a festering sore which we can eliminate tonight and then get on with future improvements to our parliamentary system.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, before I start I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Fraser Valley. It is not that I really like it but he came up with an excellent proposal so I must give him time.

I listened to the member for Mississauga West a little while ago. When I looked at my watch and saw the time I thought it was past his bedtime because he was slipping. He was trying to tell Canadians, with his bellowing, booming voice, that this amendment was great. He was saying that the Alliance had taken its supply day motion exactly from the red book. The member was defending it and saying that the Liberals had fulfilled their red book promise. Can hon. members believe that? He said that there was an ethics counsellor, forgetting that the ethics counsellor reports to the Prime Minister and not to parliament as was promised in the red book. The member had the guts to stand over there and say that they have fulfilled the red book promise. That is why I thought it was past his bedtime.

The essence of the motion is about parliament, the voice of the people. In the House democracy works for the government and for the opposition. People who disagree with the government have a voice through the opposition. From what we have seen over the years, our voices have been silenced by procedures, manoeuvres and all the power of the majority government. Opposition parties have eventually had to resort to narrower ways and means of taking their message to the public.

The Liberals stand over there and say that the amendments are not changes but they will not say exactly what the opposition, the other voice in parliament, is trying to do. The opposition is trying to get the message out to the public about what is happening in the House, and its voice is being silenced.

The Canadian Alliance and my colleague from Fraser Valley have put forward proposals on the reform of the House. The whole purpose of the reform is to have a sound, reasonable debate. The other voice can be heard as well, not only the voice of the government.

My colleagues on the other side have said that there are committees where the opposition can debate the issues of the day.

We all know that they were in opposition before 1993. They should know very well that those committees are totally ineffective. We have been there.

• (2220)

This is my second term. I have been here for three and a half years. I have never seen the government listen to a committee. It does not. Committees are nice. Committees are a very nice way for the government to deflect criticism of what it wants to do.

The government says a matter is going to a committee. It goes to a committee and when it comes back it is up to the minister and up to the government whether or not it wants to take a committee's recommendation. We are finding that most of the time it is not.

Where is the voice of the opposition, the voice of the other side, the voice of the people who elected us to speak in the House? We stand here and debate, but what happens? Nothing.

The motion, quite interestingly, says the government wants to be guided by the practices followed in the house of commons in the United Kingdom. Of course we all know it is the mother of all parliaments and that would be nice. However other practices are followed in that house which give a voice to the other side as well. A balanced voice is heard in that house, but not here. Here the government picks only what suits it so that it can ram through whatever it wants and forget about what the other voices are saying.

When the immigration minister said the Alliance Party attracted bigots, racists and Holocaust deniers, who was she talking about? Millions of people voted for our party. Was she talking about them?

Is that the respect the government has for other Canadians? Can it not respect the views of the opposition and other Canadians? It cannot. This motion is another example of the attitude that the government has of ramming things through.

We agree that to vote on 3,000 amendments would take a long time. The Speaker will still have some discretion over that. It is not the amendments we are worried about. It is the method of getting the message out. That is what is called democracy.

It is no wonder Canadians are losing confidence in the House. It is interesting that the members on the other side know that and allude to it. The member for Mississauga West referred this evening to one of his constituents. He claims it was a constituent but I doubt if it was a constituent; it was probably a family member who said "I hate all politicians except you". It was probably a family member who said that, but the point is that Canadians are losing confidence in the House because debate is curtailed. They see the power of the government, the dictatorial power of the government, and their inability to effect any change in the House.

Then we start seeing little flames of separatism. We do not support them at all but those sentiments start to come out. I hope they do not become big sentiments but that is where they start.

The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said it was blackmail. It is not blackmail. People are trying to find ways and means of saying what they want to say and having someone listen. If we do not listen, people will find other means to make us listen. That is what the amendments are all about.

● (2225)

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the motion although it is not a pleasure for any of us to be here late this evening. Once again we are speaking about what the government is about and how it has found another way to curtail the legitimate role of opposition members within the House.

It is moving again to restrict the ability of opposition members to slow down the work of government, a role that both Beauchesne's and Marleau and Montpetit have said is a legitimate role for opposition parties. Once again it will remove, after tonight's vote, our ability to hold up government legislation and to make the public aware of opposition points of view on contentious legislation.

I would like you to remember, Mr. Speaker the challenge I gave you the first time the government used time allocation or restricted debate in this session. I argued with you at that time that somewhere along the line you would have to step in between the government and the legitimate role of opposition to allow the opposition to do its role.

This is the 70th time that the government has restricted debate in the House. It is always offensive, but to use closure to force changes to the standing orders is not just offensive. It is inexcusable. The present minister of public works said in 1991:

The government claims that the proposed changes to the standing orders will make the proceedings more relevant and increase the efficiency of the House.

Does that sound familiar? Have we heard that all evening long from across the way? Do they say it will make it more efficient? I will go on:

First of all, we must realize that this is being proposed by the very government that applied closure 13 times and time allocation 8 times. How can we seriously take a proposal to improve the efficiency of the House made by a government which, in the past, showed contempt for the Standing Orders of this House?

The minister of public works was complaining about a government that had abused time allocation and closure 21 times. He found that offensive in the extreme. The same member is now part of a government that has used time allocation and closure 70 times to shut down debate in this place, not 21.

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He should be ashamed of his House leader. He should be ashamed of the way the Prime Minister runs this place. The fact that he is not ashamed shows that Lord Acton still lives. If power corrupts, the power concentrated in the Prime Minister's Office now is so absolutely corrupt that we cannot tell the difference.

I have listened to talk about spurious and vexatious amendments. Let us talk about the spurious and vexatious arguments made on that side of the House. I have heard that we cannot make changes unless we do it all at once. First I heard that we had to do it piecemeal. This is just one step.

Why is it that every time the government makes one step it always strengthens the executive's hand? Why is it that every time it shuts down debate it strengthens the government's hand?

It restricts the list of witnesses and it strengthens the government's hand. It does not allow a free vote in committee to elect a chairman. Why? It is because it strengthens the government's hand. Why is it that the whip will come in at the last minute and take members off a committee who have sat on it faithfully for months? When the vote comes, it brings in the trained seals and they vote. Why? It is because it strengthens the government's hand, the executive's hand, time and time again.

Somewhere, sometime I am convinced that unless you, Mr. Speaker, step into the breach and stop this from continuing, the question will not be should we sit on Fridays, which some people might ask. The big question will be: Why sit at all? I said this in an article today which was printed in *The National Post*. Why sit at all if the government treats this place with contempt? Every time it gets an opportunity it makes an announcement, not here in the House but anywhere other than in this place.

We asked the Speaker in the last parliament time and again how the government could make multimillion, sometimes billion dollar announcements and treat this place like it did not matter. The then Speaker admonished the government not to do this. He said that it was treating this place with disrespect and should not do it.

● (2230)

However, what happens? Guess. The next time an announcement comes along the government treats this place like it is irrelevant and just goes about its business.

You, Mr. Speaker, have to step in and stop it. Somewhere you are going to have to flex some muscles.

The important thing to remember is that the government is closing off the ability for opposition parties to bring forward amendments and the question that has to be asked is this: why have the opposition members felt compelled to bring in so many amendments?

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I will tell you why, Mr. Speaker. Because when we get into committee, guess what happens to our witness list. The witness list is tossed aside like trash. Only government members are allowed to come in on this.

On the Nisga'a agreement, they went out to British Columbia supposedly to talk to the people. They would not listen to the Indian bands that had counterclaims on that same Nisga'a land. They would not even listen to them. They flew in witnesses from Vancouver to that committee. They would not listen to witnesses from Prince George, from Prince Rupert and from neighbouring Indian bands. They would not listen to them and they shut down the debate in the committee. They would not allow us to continue the debate there.

The government brought back the bill to the House. It used closure in committee. It restricted our witnesses. It restricted our ability to bring things to the House. When push came to shove, what happened? The government used its authority to again shut down the debate in this place, which should be a debating Chamber. The government shut it down and that is inexcusable. The government has shut it down 70 times.

Do you know what happens, Mr. Speaker, when the government treats this place with contempt—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I know all hon. members want to hear the hon. member for Fraser Valley. It is hard to hear when everybody is yelling.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** What happens, Mr. Speaker, when the government shuts down debate, which it has now done 70 times? Governments have fallen by shutting down debate. We remember the pipeline debate, when it used to be a heinous crime to shut down debate in this place, but what happens here now?

On the first bill that came to the House in this session, the government shut down the debate. We hit the second day of debate and the government shut it down. It brought in time allocation. It said that we could not speak about it any more. Why? It had to get the bill into committee. The only problem was that the committees did not exist yet. The government shut down debate so it could do what with it, just hold it in abeyance and wait for what, an epiphany? What was it waiting for? Was it waiting for a road to Damascus experience? It did nothing with it.

The government is so addicted to shutting down debate. The government is so afraid of other points of view that it shut down the debate when there was not even a reason to shut it down. There was not even a committee to send it to. We were on the second day of debate and the government shut it all down in this place. The government members said they did not want to listen to anybody on

the other side of the House. They said "Anybody who disagrees with us is irrelevant. This House is irrelevant".

What happens then? Opposition parties find ways to make themselves heard. They have to. Our job is to legitimately oppose the government. Rather than let us have a reasonable amount of time to debate, rather than let us have a reasonable number of witnesses, rather than let us work in committee and give and take and make amendments and so on, what happens? The government sends its parliamentary secretaries into committees to say, "This is what you shall do in committee. This is what you shall allow for amendments. This is what you shall permit to go through the system".

That is what the government does instead of give and take, instead of debate, instead of amendments, instead of making legislation better and listening to a point of view that the government maybe has not thought of. The government never does that even when it could and it would not hurt a bit. It is not even part of the government's agenda or even part of the throne speech. The government will not listen to an opposing point of view.

When this idea came forward to give you the power, Mr. Speaker, to restrict the number of amendments that could come forward at report stage, I spoke to the government House leader. I said that if we were going to do that, then let us go the rest of the way, like the United Kingdom has done. It is even quoted in the motion. Let us talk about some of the other things. Let us then allow the Speaker to intervene when, in the Speaker's opinion, the debate has not gone on long enough. Let us allow the Speaker to intervene when he thinks the rights of minorities have been unfairly afflicted. Let the Speaker have some real power to intervene, not just against the opposition but on behalf of minority parties so minority views come forward.

However, none of that happened. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because time and again, every amendment to the standing orders, to the rules of the House and to the way we do business in this place strengthens the hand of the executive on that side and every single time it weakens both the backbench on that side and opposition parties on this side.

• (2235 )

Mr. Speaker, it is time for you to intervene and to use the influence of your office to say that you will have debate in this place. You were elected, Sir, to give us fair debate, a lot of debate, and opposing points of view have to be listened to.

Mr. Speaker, if you continue to allow the government to go down this path of treating this place like a second rate House instead of the first rate House of debate it should be, not only will we continue to have a Canadian electorate that finds us increasingly irrelevant but members of the House will find it so as well. That would be the



ultimate shame of allowing these kinds of motions to continue to pass in the House.

**Mr. Gar Knutson (Elgin—Middlesex—London, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise and make my maiden speech in this 37th parliament.

Before I get into the gist of what I want to say, I want to commend the previous speaker. I think he articulates a point of view very logically and very forcefully. I agree that the opposition certainly should be concerned about the powers of the government.

We work in a system that gives tremendous power to the Prime Minister and to the government. If my colleagues across the way had bothered at some point to take a first year political science course, they would know that is part of our system. We should have a debate as to whether it is an appropriate system. It is not a function of the Prime Minister's personality. It is not a function of this particular Prime Minister. It is a function of our rules. There are certain advantages to those rules.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague reminds me that I am splitting my time with the member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

I point out to my hon. friends across the way that we should have a debate about whether our parliament, our rules and our system are serving the needs of the country in the 21st century.

I was scheduled today to speak on the endangered species bill. That was scheduled to be my maiden speech. I much would have preferred to be talking about a substantive issue like endangered species or the environment. As well, I watched the news tonight and we have bad economic news. I would much rather be debating the economy or a variety of other issues that are pressing on Canadians.

Instead we are talking about the rights of a Speaker to enforce the rules. We are talking about whether it is appropriate for opposition parties to tie up the House of Commons for three, four, five or six days by debating whether to move a comma to another line or change a period into a semicolon. We are talking about the most trivial, vexatious and frivolous amendments. This is the right that the opposition wants to hold on to.

If we read the motion that is put forth it says:

For greater clarity, the Speaker will not select for debate a motion or series of motions of a repetitive, frivolous or vexatious nature—

Nothing in the wording of this motion will prevent the opposition from putting forward hundreds of substantive amendments. However, they are going to have to be substantive amendments, not the silly amendments we had in the last parliament. They will have to be about ideas. We could have a debate about ideas, not about personalities. We could have a serious debate over the coming months about parliamentary reform.

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Let us leave the accusations about whether we are puppets or they are puppets. Let us talk about how we make the system work. We are in the 21st century. Let us talk about how we make it better for Canadians. That does not include, I am sorry to say, three, four, five or six days or longer of simply debating whether a comma should be moved. I am sorry, but that is not what Canadians sent us here to do. It is not why I was elected.

My constituents want me to concentrate on substantive issues. They want me to concentrate on issues that matter to them, such as whether the air they breathe is clean or whether their jobs will be safe. They do not want us to concentrate on this nonsense.

I think this is a perfectly legitimate motion. All it does is tell the Speaker to enforce the rules. If we want to have a debate about changing the rules, then let us do that as well.

• (2240 )

**Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few remarks tonight before we reach the end of our time. I thought the quality of the debate tonight was rather good and I think most of us have had a chance to share our views on the issue in front of us.

I want to address what I think is a bit of historical perspective on this: how we got here from there and why we are dealing with this particular rule change. I want to suggest that it really is not much of a rule change at all. I am sure all members have read the existing rule, which says very clearly that the Speaker "shall have the power to select amendments to be proposed at report stage".

Mr. Speaker, you already have the power to select amendments at report stage. The problem is that the Speaker is not selecting amendments at report stage. The Speaker will group them for a vote or group them for debate, but the Speaker is not selecting.

Why is the Speaker not selecting now? The Speaker is not selecting now because 20 or 30 years ago a Speaker decided that he or she would not do any selection. As the practice evolved, we ended up with many amendments. The Speaker still did not select proposed amendments, and we ended up in this box at the present time where we have 400, 500 or 3,000 amendments, as the Speaker was not using the power that he or she had under the existing rules. This could keep us voting for days or even weeks solid, 24 hours a day. The House went through this a year or two ago and it was clear to all members that we could not continue this.

So we may ask ourselves, if the Speaker already has the power to select amendments for debate, which means excluding proposed amendments, why do we have to move this little change to the rules? The reason, I believe, is that the Speaker felt boxed in by the previous evolving practice and did not want to make a move to alter what had been an evolution of the practice.

*Government Orders*

During one of the marathon voting nights that occurred in the House, during the clarity bill, I believe, a year or two ago, I happened to be in Westminster. I felt perhaps fortunate not to be here at that time. I was in the U.K. parliament. When word of this marathon voting procedure came up over there, MPs and clerks there asked me what was happening. They did not understand. Even I could not understand. I could not explain to them how our House had allowed this procedure to evolve to the point where we could have 10,000 report stage amendments. There was no restriction in our rules. Over time, Speakers simply appear to have accepted that it did not matter whether there was 1 amendment or 100 or 1,000 or perhaps even 10,000.

At that point I inquired into the U.K. situation. Normally under rules similar to our own and a practice similar to ours, which says that the Speaker shall select for debate, the Speaker purges all amendments that may be described as frivolous, vexatious, repetitive or unnecessarily prolonging the process.

All we have done here is propose for greater clarity for the Speaker a rule of thumb that will allow him or her finally to select on a basis that will exclude the frivolous, the vexatious or the unduly prolonging.

The opposition thinks it is being prevented from doing that. I—

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Given that the hon. member opposite, the parliamentary secretary, has in essence outlined how the Speaker feels and how the Speaker has pronounced on this issue already, and knowing that this certainly is not common, I would suggest that this is highly inappropriate. The Speaker is certainly in a position to speak for himself. Although that is not common practice, perhaps the Speaker would like to speak to this issue himself.

• (2245)

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the very kind thoughts of the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough. I think he knows that the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River really meant the speakership because certainly this Speaker would not have any opinion whatever on a subject like this one.

**Mr. Derek Lee:** Mr. Speaker, opposition members say that they have been restricted in some way, precluded from doing things that they feel they should be able to do in their role in opposition. There is a role for opposition.

Let us just say tonight that all the opposition parties are doing a good job being the opposition. However what they are being prevented from doing under the rule is being repetitive, frivolous and vexatious in unnecessarily prolonging debate. I do not think the rule change is particularly momentous or onerous.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Derek Lee:** The party at the end of the House is now interested in the debate. It is nice to see them participating at this point.

Let me close by saying that the rule change is not much of a rule change at all. It does not give the Speaker any more power than the Speaker already has. It simply gives direction to the Speaker to do what the Speaker perhaps should have been doing all along but has not been for reasons of evolving practice in this place.

I can only think that a Speaker would be glad, fortunate and pleased to have this kind of direction from all members of the House.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, before coming here, I was wondering what the government was trying to do exactly with this motion and why it has come to the point where it wants to impose this kind of motion upon the opposition.

I think the House of Commons is about to vote on a very serious issue tonight. The members opposite seem to change their tune depending on which side of the House they are sitting. I remember clearly that, when they were on this side of the House, they used to cry bloody murder every time the Conservative government invoked closure or used its majority to impose its will.

Before voting on this motion, members must ask themselves the following question: did the opposition go too far?

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

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur:** The government House leader is applauding like a five year old. He may very well do that tonight.

Did the opposition bring parliament to a halt? Did it go too far in the use of the legislative and procedural tools? That is the question we must ask ourselves before voting tonight.

If there is a group of persons who went too far in the use of the legislative tools at their disposal, it is the government members. They went too far in the use of closure or time allocation, for example.

I am sure members will remember the rat pack, when the Liberals were in opposition, how they criticized the government. Today, one of these individuals is the government House leader, and he is proud of what he is doing. It is undemocratic.

If we look at the statistics, we see that the Conservative government limited debate 49 times on a total of 519 bills. Over a shorter period, the Liberal government opposite did that 17.9% of the time on a total of 350 bills. Is this what we can expect from a responsible government?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** We are a responsible government, unlike you.

• (2250)

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur:** I hear the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs say the government is responsible because it is gagging the opposition. In gagging the opposition, it is also gagging democracy. Does the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs think this is a responsible government? I understand he is the best liked minister in Quebec as well.

Why is the motion today, and I think it must be read, borrowing from the United Kingdom's house of commons? Even though we have a British history, the United Kingdom's house of commons does not have the same legislation as we have.

Before speaking, I was wondering. The government wants to gag the opposition, because we are doing our job. Yes, I plead guilty to bringing forward 3,000 amendments on a bill. Once again, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs is applauding.

If I brought forward 3,000 amendments on the young offenders bill, it is because, in Quebec, no one wants the minister's bill. Thanks to my 3,000 amendments, the government did its homework even further, because it moved 170 to 200 amendments on the same bill. In some of these amendments, and I invite members to read them, it changed some commas. Are these frivolous amendments, as the motion implies?

Mr. Speaker, when you will rule on this issue, will you reject one of the government's amendments? No. The government House leader is staring at his papers, and so he should, because if I were in his shoes, I would be ashamed of doing this.

This is a strange country indeed, where the opposition can be gagged. I can be denied my constitutional rights, my freedom of speech in the House.

When it comes to the Hell's Angels, the government does not dare to do anything. They have constitutional rights. The mafia and organized crime have constitutional rights too. But members who have been democratically elected are denied these rights. It is ironic. I cannot understand how Quebec members can vote for this.

Nowadays, under the charter of rights, just about everything can be done. You can even have a website with slanderous comments. The supreme court even ruled that one can draw pornographic pictures at home if it were for personal use. That is what is called freedom of expression.

Members of the House have been given a legitimate mandate in an election. We are here to stand for our constituents. That is what I did with my 3,000 amendments to the young offenders bill. It was not a kind of power trip. I wanted to represent adequately the people of Quebec, something the ministers from Quebec are not

### *Government Orders*

doing at this time. They just sit on their behinds and keep an eye on their limo.

They should be supporting the Bloc Quebecois on this kind of bill, but they are not. Where are the members from Quebec in the government caucus? Where are they, when they should be standing for Quebec?

It is even worse than that. The issue today is above partisanship. It is a matter of democracy. Some day, you will be back on the opposition benches.

• (2255)

Where is the member for Laval West when it is time to fight for the interests of Quebec on an issue like the Young Offenders Act? She hides behind the curtains like all the ministers in the front row, like the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. Where is he? Today, he will hide behind a motion in which the Liberals refer to the United Kingdom, but the United Kingdom does not have the Canadian constitution, the magnificent constitution of the best country in the world, as the Prime Minister says, with the mounted police and whatnot.

Sincerely, and I will repeat what my leader said, I do not envy your situation, Mr. Speaker, once the motion is carried. I am anxious to see what the words repetitive, frivolous and vexatious mean for you.

Was the amendment moved by the Minister of Justice to move a coma in Bill C-3 frivolous? Was that vexatious? We know that the legislator does not speak for nothing, a small comma can make a big difference in the interpretation. I do not say that the minister should not have made that change or changed words as she did. What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that you will be in a very uncomfortable position when time comes to decide what is to be considered frivolous and what is not.

Honestly, you are going to have a very hard time ruling on that, and eventually, that will turn against one person: the one in your chair.

**Mr. Guy St-Julien:** Then we'll change the Speaker.

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur:** The member opposite just gave me an answer: we just have to change the Speaker. I have more respect for you, Mr. Speaker, than the members opposite. At the beginning of my speech, I asked a question—

**Mr. Guy St-Julien:** We just have to change the opposition.

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur:** I would invite the members opposite who are making comments among themselves to look at their own record, especially the member for Abitibi who brings in motions without even being able to find a seconder in his own party.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Guy St-Julien:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member did not tell the whole truth. He could have mentioned the full name of my riding, Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik. Moreover, I was able to make my speech anyway.

**The Speaker:** I believe this is a point of debate, not a point of order.

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur:** Mr. Speaker, I was in the House and I can say that the member had a hard time finding a seconder for his motion and finishing his speech.

That being said, I will close with a quote from Marleau and Montpetit. The government wants to give lessons in democracy, but if we knew all that is being said on the government benches while we are making our speeches—

**Mr. Yvan Loubier:** Outrageous.

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur:** It is outrageous for Canadian democracy. I will try to rise above the level of debate set by the Liberals.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** It will not be difficult.

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur:** Here is what it says on page 260 of the book entitled *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*:

The duties of the Speaker of the House of Commons require balancing the rights and interests of the majority and minority in the House to ensure that the public business is efficiently transacted and that the interests of all parts of the House are advocated and protected against the use of arbitrary authority.

A little further on, it is even more interesting:

The Speaker is the servant, not of any part of the House or any majority in the House, but of the entire institution and the best interests of the House as distilled over many generations in its practices.

• (2300)

I was present when the government House leader introduced his motion. He said that, ultimately, it would not change much because the Chair was already doing this work. I urge the government not to go any further and to withdraw this motion, because so far the Chair has indeed used its authority wisely.

In a bill such as the one on young offenders, of the 3,000 amendments for which I gave notice, the Speaker still accepted 2,977. This is proof that these amendments were not all that pointless, and that the Chair could very well continue to do the work as it is doing it now.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. It being 11.01 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Speaker:** Call in the members.

• (2330)

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

*(Division No. 13)*

## YEAS

## Members

Abbott	Anders
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Benoit
Blaikie	Borotsik
Breitkreuz	Brison
Cadman	Casson
Clark	Comartin
Cummins	Davies
Day	Desjarlais
Duncan	Elley
Epp	Forseth
Gallant	Galloway
Godin	Grewal
Grey (Edmonton North)	Hanger
Harris	Hearn
Herron	Hilstrom
Hinton	Keddy (South Shore)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Lill
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)	MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Mark	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	McDonough
McNally	Meredith
Merrifield	Mills (Red Deer)
Moore	Obhrai
Pankiw	Peschisolido
Proctor	Rajotte
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)	Reynolds
Robinson	Schmidt
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	Spencer
Stinson	Stoffer
Strahl	Vellacott
Wasylcia-Leis	White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams	Yelich—66



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## NAYS

## PAIRED MEMBERS

## Members

Adams  
Allard  
Assad  
Augustine  
Bagnell  
Beaumier  
Bellehumeur  
Bennett  
Bertrand  
Bigras  
Blondin-Andrew  
Bonwick  
Bourgeois  
Brien  
Bryden  
Byrne  
Calder  
Cardin  
Carroll  
Catterall  
Chamberlain  
Coderre  
Comuzzi  
Crête  
Cuzner  
Desrochers  
Dion  
Dubé  
Duhamel  
Easter  
Eyking  
Folco  
Fry  
Gagnon (Champlain)  
Girard-Bujold  
Goodale  
Grose  
Guay  
Harb  
Harvey  
Jackson  
Jordan  
Keys  
Knutson  
Laframboise  
Lalonde  
Lastewka  
LeBlanc  
Leung  
Longfield  
MacAulay  
Mahoney  
Maloney  
Marcil  
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)  
McCallum  
McKay (Scarborough East)  
Ménard  
Murphy  
Neville  
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)  
Owen  
Paquette  
Parrish  
Peric  
Phinney  
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)  
Plamondon  
Price  
Provenzano  
Regan  
Roy  
Savoy  
Scott  
Shepherd  
St-Hilaire  
St-Julien  
Stewart  
Telegdi  
Tirabassi  
Tonks  
Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis)  
Vanclief  
Whelan—167

Alcock  
Anderson (Victoria)  
Assadourian  
Bachand (Saint-Jean)  
Baker  
Bélanger  
Bellemare  
Bergeron  
Bevilacqua  
Binet  
Bonin  
Boudria  
Bradshaw  
Brown  
Bulte  
Caccia  
Caplan  
Carignan  
Castonguay  
Cauchon  
Charbonneau  
Collenette  
Cotler  
Cullen  
Dalphond-Guiral  
DeVillers  
Dromisky  
Duceppe  
Duplain  
Eggleton  
Finlay  
Fontana  
Gagliano  
Gauthier  
Godfrey  
Graham  
Guarnieri  
Guimond  
Harvard  
Hubbard  
Jennings  
Karetak-Lindell  
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)  
Kraft Sloan  
Laliberte  
Lancôt  
Lebel  
Lee  
Lincoln  
Loubier  
Macklin  
Malhi  
Marceau  
Marleau  
Matthews  
McCormick  
McTeague  
Mitchell  
Myers  
Normand  
O'Reilly  
Pagtakhan  
Paradis  
Patry  
Peterson  
Picard (Drummond)  
Pillitteri  
Pratt  
Proulx  
Redman  
Robillard  
Sauvageau  
Scherrer  
Sgro  
St. Denis  
St-Jacques  
Steckle  
Szabo  
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)  
Tobin  
Torsney  
Ur  
Venne

Discepola  
Gagnon (Québec)  
Gray (Windsor West)  
Reed (Halton)  
Rock

Fournier  
Girard-Bujold  
McLellan  
Rocheleau  
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)

**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment lost.

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And more than five members having risen:*

[*English*]

**Ms. Marlene Catterall:** Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, I think you would find unanimous consent of the House that the members who voted on the previous motion be recorded as voting on the motion now before the House, with the Liberals members voting yes.

[*Translation*]

**The Speaker:** Is there consent to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[*English*]

**Mr. John Reynolds:** Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members vote no to this motion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois oppose this motion.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP members will vote against the motion.

*Government Orders**[English]*

**Mr. Rick Borotsik:** Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Party vote no to this motion.

**Mr. Roger Gallaway:** Mr. Speaker, I want to be recorded as voting no.

• (2335)

*[Translation]*

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

*(Division No. 14)***YEAS**

## Members

Adams	Alcock
Allard	Anderson (Victoria)
Assad	Assadourian
Augustine	Bagnell
Baker	Beaumier
Bélanger	Bellemare
Bennett	Bertrand
Bevilacqua	Binet
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Bonwick	Boudria
Bradshaw	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Byrne	Caccia
Calder	Caplan
Carignan	Carroll
Castonguay	Catterall
Cauchon	Chamberlain
Charbonneau	Coderre
Collenette	Comuzzi
Cotler	Cullen
Cuzner	DeVillers
Dion	Dromisky
Duhamel	Duplain
Easter	Eggleton
Eyking	Finlay
Folco	Fontana
Fry	Gagliano
Godfrey	Goodale
Graham	Grose
Guarnieri	Harb
Harvard	Harvey
Hubbard	Jackson
Jennings	Jordan
Karetak-Lindell	Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson
Kraft Sloan	Laliberte
Lastewka	LeBlanc
Lee	Leung
Lincoln	Longfield
MacAulay	Macklin
Mahoney	Malhi
Maloney	Marcil
Marleau	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Matthews	McCallum
McCormick	McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague	Mitchell
Murphy	Myers
Neville	Normand
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Reilly
Owen	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Peric
Peterson	Phinney
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Pillitteri
Pratt	Price
Proulx	Provenzano
Redman	Regan
Robillard	

Savoy  
Scott  
Shepherd  
St-Jacques  
Steckle  
Szabo  
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)  
Tobin  
Torsney  
Vanclief

Scherrer  
Sgro  
St. Denis  
St-Julien  
Stewart  
Telegdi  
Tirabassi  
Tonks  
Ur  
Whelan—136

**NAYS**

## Members

Abbott	Anders
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bellehumeur	Benoit
Bergeron	Bigras
Blaikie	Borotsik
Bourgeois	Breitkreuz
Brien	Brisson
Cadman	Cardin
Casson	Clark
Comartin	Crête
Cummins	Dalphond-Guiral
Davies	Day
Desjarlais	Desrochers
Dubé	Duceppe
Duncan	Elley
Epp	Forseth
Gagnon (Champlain)	Gallant
Galloway	Gauthier
Girard-Bujold	Godin
Grewal	Grey (Edmonton North)
Guay	Guimond
Hanger	Harris
Hearn	Herron
Hilstrom	Hinton
Keddy (South Shore)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lañctôt	Lebel
Lill	Loubier
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)	MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Marceau	Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McDonough	McNally
Ménard	Meredith
Merrifield	Mills (Red Deer)
Moore	Ohrai
Pankiw	Paquette
Peschisolido	Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon	Proctor
Rajotte	Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Reynolds	Robinson
Roy	Sauvageau
Schmidt	Skelton
Solberg	Sorenson
Spencer	St-Hilaire
Stinson	Stoffer
Strahl	Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis)
Vellacott	Venne
Wasylcia-Leis	White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams	Yelich—97

**PAIRED MEMBERS**

Discepola	Fournier
Gagnon (Québec)	Girard-Bujold
Gray (Windsor West)	McLellan
Reed (Halton)	Rocheleau
Rock	Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

**CANADA ELECTIONS ACT**

The House resumed from February 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to order made Friday, February 23, 2001, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred division on the motion at second reading of Bill C-9.

**Ms. Marlene Catterall:** Mr. Speaker, I think you would find unanimous consent that the members who voted on the previous motion be recorded as having voted on the motion now before the House, with the Liberal members voting yea.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent of the House to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[*English*]

**Mr. John Reynolds:** Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members will vote no to this motion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this motion.

[*English*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP vote yes to this motion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rick Borotsik:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Progressive Conservative Party will vote yes to this motion.

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

(*Division No. 15*)

YEAS

Members

Adams  
Allard  
Assad  
Augustine  
Bagnell  
Beaumier  
Bellehumeur  
Bennett  
Bertrand  
Bigras  
Blaikie  
Bonin  
Borotsik  
Bourgeois  
Brien  
Brown  
Bulte  
Caccia  
Caplan  
Carignan  
Castonguay  
Cauchon  
Charbonneau  
Coderre  
Comartin  
Cotler  
Cullen  
Dalphond-Guiral  
Desjarlais  
DeVillers  
Dromisky  
Duceppe  
Duplain  
Eggleton  
Finlay  
Fontana  
Gagliano  
Galloway  
Girard-Bujold

Alcock  
Anderson (Victoria)  
Assadourian  
Bachand (Saint-Jean)  
Baker  
Bélanger  
Bellemare  
Bergeron  
Bevilacqua  
Binet  
Blondin-Andrew  
Bonwick  
Boudria  
Bradshaw  
Brison  
Bryden  
Byrne  
Calder  
Cardin  
Carroll  
Catterall  
Chamberlain  
Clark  
Collenette  
Comuzzi  
Crête  
Cuzner  
Davies  
Desrochers  
Dion  
Dubé  
Duhamel  
Easter  
Eyking  
Folco  
Fry  
Gagnon (Champlain)  
Gauthier  
Godfrey

Godin  
Graham  
Guarnieri  
Guimond  
Harvard  
Hearn  
Hubbard  
Jennings  
Karetak-Lindell  
Keyes  
Knutson  
Laframboise  
Lalonde  
Lastewka  
LeBlanc  
Leung  
Lincoln  
Loubier  
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)  
Mahoney  
Maloney  
Marcil  
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)  
Matthews  
McCormick  
McKay (Scarborough East)  
Ménard  
Murphy  
Neville  
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)  
Owen  
Paquette  
Parrish  
Peric  
Phinney  
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)  
Plamondon  
Price  
Proulx  
Redman  
Robillard  
Roy  
Savoy  
Scott  
Shepherd  
St-Hilaire  
St-Julien  
Stewart  
Szabo  
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)  
Tobin  
Torsney  
Ur  
Venne  
Whelan—187

Goodale  
Grose  
Guay  
Harb  
Harvey  
Herron  
Jackson  
Jordan  
Keddy (South Shore)  
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)  
Kraft Sloan  
Laliberte  
Lancôt  
Lebel  
Lee  
Lill  
Longfield  
MacAulay  
Macklin  
Malhi  
Marceau  
Marleau  
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
McCallum  
McDonough  
McTeague  
Mitchell  
Myers  
Normand  
O'Reilly  
Pagtakhan  
Paradis  
Patri  
Peterson  
Picard (Drummond)  
Pillitteri  
Pratt  
Proctor  
Provenzano  
Regan  
Robinson  
Sauvageau  
Scherrer  
Sgro  
St. Denis  
St-Jacques  
Steckle  
Stoffer  
Telegdi  
Tirabassi  
Tonks  
Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis)  
Vanclief  
Wasylcia-Leis

*Government Orders*

NAYS

Members

Abbott  
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)  
Breitkreuz  
Casson  
Day  
Elley  
Forseth  
Grewal  
Hanger  
Hilstrom  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Mark  
McNally  
Merrifield  
Moore  
Pankiw  
Rajotte  
Reynolds  
Skelton  
Sorenson  
Stinson  
Vellacott  
Williams

Anders  
Benoit  
Cadman  
Cummins  
Duncan  
Epp  
Gallant  
Grey (Edmonton North)  
Harris  
Hinton  
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)  
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)  
Meredith  
Mills (Red Deer)  
Obhrai  
Peschisolido  
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)  
Schmidt  
Solberg  
Spencer  
Strahl  
White (Langley—Abbotsford)  
Yelich—46

*Government Orders*

## PAIRED MEMBERS

Discepola	Fournier
Gagnon (Québec)	Girard-Bujold
Gray (Windsor West)	McLellan
Reed (Halton)	Rocheleau
Rock	Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

The bill is therefore referred to the House Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

\* \* \*

[English]

**IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT**

The House resumed from February 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, an act respecting immigration to Canada and the granting of refugee protection to persons who are displaced, persecuted or in danger, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to order made earlier this day, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-11.

**Ms. Marlene Catterall:** Mr. Speaker, I think you would find unanimous consent that the members present and voting on the previous motion be recorded as voting on the motion now before the House, with the Liberal members voting yes.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent for the House to proceed in this way?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. John Reynolds:** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Alliance members present vote no to this motion.

[Translation]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois are in favour of this motion.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the NDP will oppose this motion.

[English]

**Mr. Rick Borotsik:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Progressive Conservative Party vote yes to this motion.

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

*(Division No. 16)*

## YEAS

## Members

Adams	Alcock
Allard	Anderson (Victoria)
Assad	Assadourian
Augustine	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bagnell	Baker
Beaumier	Bélanger
Bellehumeur	Bellemare
Bennett	Bergeron
Bertrand	Bevilacqua
Bigras	Binet
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Bonwick	Borotsik

Boudria	Bourgeois
Bradshaw	Brien
Brisson	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Byrne	Caccia
Calder	Caplan
Cardin	Carignan
Carroll	Castonguay
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Charbonneau
Clark	Coderre
Collenette	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crête
Cullen	Cuzner
Dalphond-Guiral	Desrochers
DeVillers	Dion
Dromisky	Dubé
Duceppe	Duhamel
Duplain	Easter
Eggleton	Eyking
Finlay	Folco
Fontana	Fry
Gagliano	Gagnon (Champlain)
Galloway	Gauthier
Girard-Bujold	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Grose	Guarnieri
Guay	Guimond
Harb	Harvard
Harvey	Hearn
Herron	Hubbard
Jackson	Jennings
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Keddy (South Shore)	Keys
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson
Kraft Sloan	Laframboise
Laliberte	Lalonde
Lancôt	Lastewka
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Leung
Lincoln	Longfield
Loubier	MacAulay MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—
Guysborough)	Macklin
Mahoney	Malhi
Maloney	Marceau
Marcil	Marleau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Matthews
McCallum	McCormick
McKay (Scarborough East)	McTeague
Ménard	Mitchell
Murphy	Myers
Neville	Normand
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Reilly
Owen	Pagtakhan
Paquette	Paradis
Parrish	Patry
Peric	Peterson
Phinney	Picard (Drummond)
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Pillitteri
Plamondon	Pratt
Price	Proulx
Provenzano	Redman
Regan	Robillard
Roy	Sauvageau
Savoy	Scherrer
Scott	Sgro
Shepherd	St. Denis
St-Hilaire	St-Jacques
St-Julien	Steckle
Stewart	Szabo
Telegdi	Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tirabassi	Tobin
Tonks	Torsney
Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis)	Ur
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## Members

Abbott	Anders
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Benoit
Blaikie	Breitkreuz
Cadman	Casson
Comartin	Cummins



*Government Orders*

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Davies	Day
Desjarlais	Duncan
Elley	Epp
Forseth	Gallant
Godin	Grewal
Grey (Edmonton North)	Hanger
Harris	Hilstrom
Hinton	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lill	Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Mark	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	McDonough
McNally	Meredith
Merrifield	Mills (Red Deer)
Moore	Obhrai
Pankiw	Peschisolido
Proctor	Rajotte
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)	Reynolds
Robinson	Schmidt
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	Spencer
Stinson	Stoffer
Strahl	Vellacott
Wasylcia-Leis	White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams	Yelich—58

Discepola  
Gagnon (Québec)  
Gray (Windsor West)  
Reed (Halton)  
Rock

Fournier  
Girard-Bujold  
McLellan  
Rocheleau  
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

**The Speaker:** It being 11.40 p.m. the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11.40 p.m.)





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