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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, February 28, 2001

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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OFFICIAL REPORT

Under division No. 14 at page 1312 of *Hansard*, February 27, Mr. Roger Gallaway's name should be removed from the yeas column and inserted in the nays column.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 28, 2001

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

● (1400)

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, led by the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

[Editor's Note: Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

GILDAS MOLGAT

Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with sadness and heavy heart I rise today to inform the House of the death of Senator Gil Molgat of Manitoba.

Mr. Molgat, who just last month completed a rare two terms as Senate Speaker, died this morning at the Ottawa General Hospital after suffering a massive cerebral hemorrhage Monday evening while on a flight from Winnipeg to Ottawa. He was 74.

Mr. Molgat was elected five times to the Manitoba legislature, where he served as opposition leader from 1961 to 1969. He was called to the Senate in 1970 and was Speaker there from 1994 to January of this year.

Senator Molgat was a great parliamentarian who was driven by the call to public duty. Above all, he was a gentleman and a true friend whom we loved deeply.

We have lost a great Canadian and an extraordinary public servant. He will be missed and long remembered. On behalf of the House and the thousands whose lives he touched, I extend condolences to Mrs. Molgat and the family.

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I wish to quote a letter I received from two teachers expressing concern over the situation on Canadians farms:

I have travelled in Canada from coast to coast and I have pride in this beautiful country. I have been humbled and grateful to be part of such a vast land filled with generous and friendly people. I've agonized with the people in Quebec and Ontario during the ice storm that was so devastating. I've watched in horror the flooding in Quebec and Manitoba. And in each instance I've sent a cheque because this is my country and my country needed help.

I can't understand why the rest of Canada does not realize that the prairies are now facing the same kind of economic crisis—a crisis not of their making.

I am adding my voice to the rest, imploring those in power to seek justice and economic fairness for those employed in perhaps the noblest of professions—growing food for a hungry world.

Yours Sincerely,

Mike and Elaine Kowpak.

I urge the government to heed these words and take immediate action to deal with the crisis facing farm families.

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GILDAS MOLGAT

Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Gildas Molgat was first elected to the legislature of Manitoba in 1953 when I was five years old. I became aware of him early on in my life as his work as the Liberal leader and leader of the opposition in the Manitoba legislature was often the focus of some very heated discussion between my very Conservative parents.

Later when I, having joined the Liberal Party, finally met this often demonized man, I was delighted to find a proud Manitoban, a proud francophone and a committed Canadian.

Elevated to the Senate by Prime Minister Trudeau, Gil Molgat was a formidable ally in the dark days when there was only one

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elected Liberal, federally or provincially, west of the Ontario-Manitoba border.

• (1405)

He was tireless. When the troops were frustrated and dispirited, Gil and his lifelong partner Allison were there, working with us, leading us, teaching us, chairing campaigns, recruiting candidates, and always advocating for his province and his people.

Since my arrival here in 1993 it has been an honour and a rare privilege to serve in the same caucus with him. He served for six years in one of the highest offices in this country and yet he never forgot what it was to be the MLA for Ste. Rose du Lac. We will miss him.

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PATRICIA BAIRD

Mr. Stephen Owen (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to inform the House of the appointment of a constituent from Vancouver Quadra, Dr. Patricia Baird, as an officer of the Order of Canada.

Dr. Baird first came to the attention of Canadians across the country when she produced her groundbreaking report on new reproductive technologies in 1993. This report quickly became the touchstone for this controversial area of genetics and public policy, and Dr. Baird became a key contact when these issues arose across the country as well as around the world.

She began her illustrious career at the faculty of medicine at the University of British Columbia, the key institutional constituent of Vancouver Quadra, where she was head of medical genetics and took that department to fame across the country in terms of research and clinical care.

In her personal capacity she has published over 350 papers. She has been a member of the Medical Research Council of Canada and a member of the Prime Minister's National Advisory Board on Science and Technology. Dr. Baird is a most worthy officer of the Order of Canada.

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HIV-AIDS

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, currently four remote Nunavut communities are hosting youth HIV-AIDS fairs in association with Health Canada and Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association.

Much like a science fair, projects and posters on HIV-AIDS were created and will be the basis of future community based HIV-AIDS education initiatives.

HIV positive youth will bravely share their stories with Inuit youth and reinforce the message that it is so important to prevent the spread of HIV-AIDS.

The youth of Arctic Bay, Taloyoak, Pangnirtung and Iqaluit took on this project with enthusiasm and I know the important message will be heard through Nunavut because of their courageous efforts.

I commend their involvement in their communities and their desire to protect their fellow man.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canada's soldiers have paid with their lives and their health in the service of our country since Confederation. How well we attend to the concerns of our veterans is a matter of our national conscience.

Today we mark the 10th anniversary of the end of the gulf war. With us today in the gallery are three retired gulf war veterans of Canada's peacekeeping mission. They are Captain Louise Richard, Petty Officer First Class Robert Clarke, and Captain Sean Bruyca. Each bears deep scars to health and soul brought on through their service to our country. Each wants respect and recognition as a war veteran.

Today I call on the government to do right by these peacekeeping veterans and to accord them the recognition and status that their sacrifices so clearly merit. I ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming our peacekeeping veterans.

* * *

HEROISM

Mr. Carmen Provenzano (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share with the House a heartwarming story that bridges the gap between generations and nations.

We have in Ottawa this week a very special visitor from France, Guillaume Faure, a grandson of André Faure, who put himself at risk to help a Canadian airman reach freedom during the second world war.

During his 32nd bombing mission, Canadian airman Thomas Lynch, who served in the Royal Air Force, was shot down over occupied France some 50 kilometres northwest of Paris. Thanks to Madam Faure and her teenage children who hid him from the Gestapo, Mr. Lynch was able to contact the French underground and escape safely to England.

More than 50 years later, Mr. Lynch and his grandson are meeting in person for the first time with the grandson of the family who saved his life.

This is a story that Canadians will be happy to hear. Through Mr. Lynch, these two young men of a new generation are sharing the experience that entwined their families.

* * *

• (1410)

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our farmers have already told us and now a report on agricultural policy by the OECD is telling us that Canada's support

for agriculture is much lower than that of most other OECD nations.

I applaud the Liberal government's commitment to a level playing field to ensure that our agriculture and agrifood industry can compete at the international level. Canada has taken great strides toward this goal.

At this time, however, I would encourage the government to look within Canada and provide our agricultural producers with the tools they need to compete, including effective policies and programs and more financial support.

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[*Translation*]

INVESTMENTS IN THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, the China World Best Group officially signed a \$45 million investment agreement for the construction of a dye-works in Drummondville. The plant will create 380 jobs in its first year of operation.

Group president Zhou Yu Chen made the following statement "By establishing ourselves here, we are going to be able to benefit from Quebec's comparative advantages as far as the costs of construction, energy and shipping, and particularly the quality of its workers, are concerned". He went on to say that he had absolutely no concerns about Quebec sovereignty.

This, the first Chinese manufacturing plant to locate in Quebec, chose to do so in the riding of Drummond, where companies from over ten countries have already invested their foreign capital in more than thirty properties.

Given that nearly all the elected representatives in Quebec are sovereigntists, it must be admitted that Quebec sovereignty no longer frightens anyone.

* * *

[*English*]

THE SENATE

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, a Senate seat has now become vacant in the province of Saskatchewan with the resignation of Eric Berntson. This represents a wonderful opportunity for the government to reach out to western Canada and show that it is committed to meaningful parliamentary reform.

The Senate was created to provide the checks and balances necessary for a democracy to work effectively. Areas of high population should not run roughshod over less populated regions, and for the Senate to be properly accountable it must be elected.

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The separation movement in my riding would likely not have started if the government had not neglected the agricultural areas of our country.

Our next senator in Saskatchewan should be selected by the people of Saskatchewan. The problem is not Canada. It is the federal government and the fact that we no longer have an effective democracy. It is more like an elected dictatorship.

Will the Prime Minister, who claims to represent the interests of all Canadians, allow this seat to be held in trust until the provincial government passes legislation to elect its federal representatives in the Senate?

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AGRICULTURE

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite all its accomplishments, mankind owes its existence to six inches of topsoil and the fact that it rains.

As sure as spring follows winter and the first robin is seen, our grain and oilseed farmers will be taking their machinery out of storage, preparing for spring seeding. As they venture out into the fertile fields of our nation, as they prepare once again to feed the world, there are storm clouds on the horizon which may lead to a bitter harvest in the fall.

It is time for action. It is time for immediate assistance to enhance our current farm safety net programs. It is time to recognize our primary producers and aid them in their battle with foreign subsidies four times higher than our own.

Spring planting will soon be upon us. Let us work toward that.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like many Canadians I once believed that our country had a strong record on the environment, a record we could be proud of both at home and abroad.

However the sad reality is that under the Liberal government Canada in fact has a rather shameful record. This was made abundantly clear by the auditor general in his final report to the House yesterday in which he summed up 10 years of disappointment with the lack of federal commitment and action on the environment. He once again highlighted in his report the Liberal government's dismal failure to meet international and domestic commitments to the environment.

Repeated audits have condemned the Liberal government for failing to address important issues like urban smog, a particular problem in my riding, and others such as global warming, toxic substances, groundwater contamination and biodiversity.

Oral Questions

The 1990 report of the auditor general asked of the environment department who is minding the store, a question that is repeated in yesterday's report but still remains unanswered 10 years later. The auditor general's report—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

* * *

• (1415)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has failed to address the catastrophic problem with P.E.I. potato exports to the United States.

The government threw away the tools to work with when it instigated the ban on Brazilian beef based on vague Canadian scientific information. When the Americans then used the same argument for P.E.I. potatoes, Canadians were unable to credibly defend themselves because they had just used the same questionable reasons to ban Brazilian beef.

The Government of Canada should now move to actively and assertively deal with the serious problem which affects the economy of the entire province of Prince Edward Island.

Will the minister of agriculture provide interim bridge assistance for the P.E.I. farmers and will the Department of Foreign Affairs aggressively deal with this problem on behalf of these same farmers?

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GILDAS MOLGAT

The Speaker: I would ask the House to rise for a moment of silence in memory of our late colleague, the hon. Senator Gildas Molgat, the former Speaker of the other place.

[Editor's Note: The House stood in silence]

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, our GDP growth for the last quarter slowed to 0.6%.

This is the lowest it has been in three years, but the Minister of Finance continues to assure us that things are just fine.

Why is the minister refusing to bring down a new budget to reflect these economic realities which are constantly changing and which changed today?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the Leader of the Opposition is always on the lookout for bad news.

But I must say that the last quarter was the 22nd consecutive one of growth. This has not been seen since the 1960s.

While I am at it, I also want to tell him that our rate of growth in the previous quarter was twice that of the United States.

[English]

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, he loves to talk about the United States, so let us do that for 22 seconds.

The consumer confidence index in the U.S. dropped 8.9 points in February. That is a drop that economists are telling us could signal a recession. Just this morning U.S. federal reserve chairman Alan Greenspan says the U.S. slowdown has not run its course yet. That was just this morning and he loves to talk about that.

In light of this continuing economic weakness in Canada's large export market, to which he constantly refers, why is he not adjusting our financial plan by bringing in a new budget of tax and debt reductions?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the president of the United States spoke yesterday. Let me just simply say that our stimulus package as of January 1 was six times greater in the first year, the year the member is referring to, than that being projected in the United States.

I would simply ask a question of the hon. member. Given the fact he has just stated that the problem, as Mr. Greenspan has stated, is one of consumer demand in the United States, what does he recommend that I do to increase consumer demand in the United States?

• (1420)

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, those segues make it too easy. We are not working a tag team here but I am glad he asked. I have already sent him some recommendations which he has not followed up.

The Bush administration in the United States is talking about a \$1.6 trillion tax cut and significant debt reduction. That will create economic advantage over Canada. It will lure investment and human resources.

His own former assistant deputy minister says we need further tax cuts to remain competitive. What he is preparing us for is a launching of more of the approach of failed government programs and massive Liberal intervention into the economy, the type of thing the auditor general has been criticizing.

Oral Questions

Why will he not instead bring in a new budget with a significant move toward tax and debt reduction?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is because President Bush's plan is over 10 years. Ours is over five. President Bush's is back end loaded. Ours is front end loaded. Ours is already in place. They are still talking about it in the United States.

Let us take a look at the results: fourth quarter growth twice that of the United States and 22 consecutive quarters of growth. In case I forget, let me also say that in the numbers that came out this morning Canada's current account surplus is at an all time high.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I know that many people who have recently been laid off at Nortel and other places will be stimulated by this apparent lack of reluctance to accept what is happening.

These are not my numbers. These numbers are reflected around the country by people who watch what economies are doing. It is his own former assistant deputy minister who said that the tax cuts up to October closed the gap but the gap was still there. Now the new proposals open it up again.

Why will the finance minister not include proper tax reductions and debt reduction in a new budget to strengthen the economy and strengthen—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why does the Leader of the Opposition not take a look at what Mr. Drummond actually said? Why does he not take a look at the reality?

I guess I will remind him. As a result of our budget, our corporate taxes will be lower than those of the United States after the Bush plan. As a result of what we have done, our capital gains taxes will be lower than those of the United States after the Bush plan. As a result of what we did, our treatment of stock options will be more generous after Mr. Bush's plan comes in. That is what we have done.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, he is the only one using the Liberals' own numbers who is saying that they have created the advantage. Most other economists are saying it is absolutely not true. Since I cannot address and engage the minister in this discussion, I will ask a question of the Deputy Prime Minister.

In 1991, only three months after a budget was overtaken by a worsening economy, the now Deputy Prime Minister was in the opposition at the time. He asked the finance minister at the time to produce immediately a new economic recovery budget. Then he asked, if not, would he and other ministers produce their resignations. We are not asking for resignations. We are just—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member simply ought to get his act together. He really should try from one week to the next to have a consistent story.

The Leader of the Opposition is now standing and attempting to fearmonger, attempting basically to say that things are very gloomy. The fact is that we are not immune to what is happening in the United States.

Would the hon. Leader of the Opposition tell us why it was only two weeks ago that he stated publicly that we had a very "vibrant economy in Canada"?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

* * *

[Translation]

FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we learned this morning that the government of Quebec was going to give the members of the national assembly's parliamentary commission on institutions access to the texts of the negotiations on the free trade area of the Americas.

The government of Quebec is taking this initiative out of a concern for transparency and to fight parliamentarians' loss of power of through the phenomenon of globalization.

Since he is refusing to make the texts of negotiations public, will the Prime Minister at least promise to give access to them to the members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the minister explained, since we are the hosts and are chairing the meeting, we have the obligation to our partners to follow the rules, which provide that we can make our documents public.

However, in the case of the other governments not wanting to make their position public, it is up to them. The suggestion of having a conversation in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade is something I would certainly like to discuss with the minister responsible.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the Prime Minister understands my point. I am not talking about making the texts of the other countries public. I am talking about making public the texts serving as the basis of negotiations at each of the tables.

The American representatives have access to these texts. Quebec MNAs will too. The Minister for International Trade says he wants to make all of these texts public and to persuade the other countries to do so as well.

Oral Questions

However, I am not asking for the texts to be made public. I am simply asking that the members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade here in Ottawa enjoy the same rights and information as elected representatives in the United States and in Quebec.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that, on the one hand, all governments must abide by the commitments that were made. On the other hand, however, I have not rejected the suggestion by the hon. member.

We have already talked of holding a briefing for everyone. However, should we do it in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade? This is an idea I said I was prepared to discuss with the minister. We will respond once I have had a chance to talk with my minister.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to transparency and consultation of parliamentarians regarding international treaties, Canada comes pretty close to dead last. Briefings will not correct the situation.

In the United Kingdom and Australia, governments are required to table treaties before their parliaments, where they are debated before being ratified.

How can the Prime Minister justify that, contrary to their counterparts from other countries, parliamentarians in this House are not entitled to this minimum of respect? How can the government claim to be transparent when its actions have nothing to do with transparency?

[*English*]

Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this was the subject of a full day's debate recently on a Bloc motion. The fact of the matter is that the point made during that debate remains the same.

The process proposed here is the same process that has been followed since Confederation. There is no change proposed. There will be an agreement signed if and only when Canada feels it is in the interest of all Canadians. That will be then brought to the House of Commons for review, possible amendment, full debate and then passage into legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the world is evolving but the Canadian federation has a very hard time doing the same, as the parliamentary secretary reminded us.

In addition to debating and reviewing treaties signed by their governments, British and Australian parliaments have the power to approve or reject these treaties, which is far from being the case in

Canada. The government underlined that by rejecting the motion by the Bloc Québécois.

Why is what is good for other parliamentary democracies not good for Canada? Is the Prime Minister afraid of transparency and democracy to the point of behaving in such a way?

[*English*]

Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is incredible to hear the member talk about the government being afraid of transparency. The government has been the leader in seeking transparency on trade treaties both at home and internationally.

There have been a number of meetings between the federal minister and international ministers. There have been consistent meetings with NGOs, with stakeholder groups. This went to the standing committee before the last election. There is a commitment to have it at the standing committee, as the member knows, in the near future.

The minister will attend. It is obvious transparency is a high priority for the government.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. Yesterday the Prime Minister spoke in Quebec City about the upcoming summit of the Americas. He described it as an "extraordinary exercise in democracy".

• (1430)

If the Prime Minister is serious about democracy, how could he call this an exercise in democracy when Quebec City is being turned into an armed militarized fortress during the summit and when his government refuses to make public to elected representatives and the people of the country the text that is being negotiated? Is that not really contempt for democracy?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the duty of any government to make sure, if there are people who want to demonstrate, that things are done in an acceptable fashion for the protection of citizens in that city.

It is irresponsible for a member of parliament to encourage civil disobedience when he has a chance to talk about it in the House of Commons.

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian citizens are entitled to be civilly disobedient if they are being ignored and if democracy is being trampled on.

The Prime Minister has also spoken about the summit being about human rights. Colombia has an appalling record of human rights violations, one of the worst in the world with murders, massacres and impunity.

If the Prime Minister is serious about human rights, why are countries like Colombia and Peru invited to this summit when the country of Cuba, with which we have an excellent trading relationship, is not being invited? Why is there a double standard?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these governments have been elected. I want to be in a position to talk directly with them about respect for human rights. I want to tell them that respect for human rights is not about members of parliament encouraging people to use civil disobedience.

* * *

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK OF CANADA

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. He will know that in his interview with Keith Boag of the CBC, the ethics counsellor said that when the counsellor was judging the appropriateness of the behaviour of the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister had not told him about the phone calls the Prime Minister made to the Business Development Bank on the Auberge Grand-Mère file.

That is a material omission. Why did the Prime Minister of Canada not tell the ethics counsellor about these representations to a crown corporation?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this has been debated for the past two years. I said, and I repeat, that as a member of parliament it is my duty to work to create jobs in my district.

On this file, the caisse populaire and the Fonds de solidarité were involved in the loan. I publicly talked about that all the time. I did not hide anything from anybody.

It is the duty of a member of parliament to work to make sure that jobs are created in his riding. It is exactly what the member of parliament for Saint-Maurice has done and is his duty to do all the time.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, let me try another one for the Prime Minister. Subsection 9(1) of the conflict of interest code says “A public officeholder shall make a confidential report to the ethics counsellor of all assets and all direct and contingent liabilities”.

The Prime Minister knows that money owing is an account receivable. It is an asset. When the Prime Minister filed his statement of compliance he did not tell the ethics counsellor about the phone calls, but did he tell the ethics counsellor that he was owed money from the sale of the shares of the Grand-Mère Golf Club?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the long answer is yes.

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IMMIGRATION

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Antonio Nicaso is an expert on criminal gangs and organized crime. He says Canada has always been a welcome wagon for organized crime, a revolving door that lets anyone in regardless of his or her criminal past.

Gaetano Amodeo is one of the world's most wanted criminals. Why did the immigration department not stop him from entering Canada?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as soon as my department is given information that someone is wanted, a flag goes up and our frontline people then make inquiries.

• (1435)

The member opposite knows full well that people from countries of western Europe, including Italy, and people from the United States do not require a special visitor's visa in order to enter Canada.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the minister's answer is rather bogus in that her department had issued visas to this gentleman. Not only did the government let Gaetano Amodeo gain safe haven in Canada, but the public works minister's office asked immigration officials if the application would be approved soon.

Why was a cabinet minister helping a mob family establish itself in Canada?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is completely wrong. The premise of his question is wrong. I want him to know that 40,000 requests to immigration departments around the world come from members of the House, 6,000 to CIC headquarters in Ottawa alone. All members, including members of the Alliance, send in those requests.

I can tell him, for example, that the member for Calgary—Nose Hill has sent in 137 requests for information. I am happy to tell him that it is completely appropriate for members to make—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mercier.

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[Translation]

SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the summit of the Americas will be held in the national capital of Quebec in a few weeks. It seems natural to us for the premier of Quebec to be able to address the state leaders of the Americas. Yet the Prime

Oral Questions

Minister of Canada refuses to state his position here. He is gaining time by telling us all is well.

Can the Prime Minister tell us, yes or no, whether the premier of Quebec will be able to address the foreign leaders at the summit of the Americas?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the present time, discussions are under way between the federal government and the provincial government. There are also precedents, however. The discussions are addressing access by the premier of Quebec to the heads of government when they are in Quebec City. This is being discussed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the organizers of the meeting in Quebec City and the government of Quebec.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we want to know the Prime Minister's position on this. He must realize that, the way things are at the moment, it is as if a big family reunion were being organized in Quebec, our home, and we were being asked to stay out on the porch, not to speak to the guests, and wait quietly until they have all left before being allowed back in.

Are we not to conclude from the words of the Prime Minister that if we want to see Quebec able to directly address heads of foreign states the only way to achieve this is for Quebec to become a sovereign state?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they always resort to humiliation to get what they want.

Hon. Sheila Copps: Victims once again.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien: A few years ago, the G-7 summit was held in Montebello, which, if I recall correctly, was in Quebec.

An hon. member: And still is.

Mr. Yvan Loubier: In this instance, the meeting will be held in the national capital.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien: At that time, the premier of Quebec did not make a welcoming speech to the heads of the G-7 governments.

When the G-7 met in Toronto, Mr. Mulroney, the Prime Minister of the day, did not invite the premier of Ontario to speak to the G-7 representatives. When there was a G-7 meeting in Halifax, the premier of Nova Scotia did not speak to the government leaders.

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[English]

MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, when the public works minister was first

considered for cabinet the RCMP warned against it. Its concern was that the minister had been the accountant for over 20 years to Agostino Cuntrera, one of Canada's most notorious mobsters.

Now we learn the same minister helped expedite into Canada the wife of a mob hitman affiliated with the same Cuntrera crime family. This new information raises once again why the Prime Minister appointed the public works minister to cabinet over the concerns of the RCMP.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appointed the gentleman as a cabinet minister because he is an honest man and a great Canadian citizen.

• (1440)

When I see these people trying to drag this person through the mud because he is an immigrant who came to Canada and became—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Langley—Abbotsford.

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding all that, the public works minister himself said it was an error in judgment to be associated with organized crime.

Let us look at what else the public works minister said about his relationship with organized crime. He said "If I had it to do all over again, I would probably do things differently".

Would he today in this House tell Canadians that he made another error in judgment in helping the wife of one of Interpol's most dangerous world fugitives to enter our country? Would he again do—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find all that absolutely unacceptable because the undertone of all of that is the fact that this gentleman is an immigrant who came from Italy. It is a smear on people coming from that country. That is the reason. If somebody is lacking judgment, it is the gentleman who just got up.

* * *

[Translation]

FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the current negotiations on the free trade area of the Americas is raising the problem of Quebec's position at international negotiating tables. The Government of Canada is not permitting Quebec to attend.

How can the Canadian government refuse and justify its rigid stance when a federal country such as Germany is obliged, when its

negotiations within the EU concern the exclusive jurisdiction of its states, or Länder, to hand over control of the negotiations to them?

[English]

Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure where the hon. member has been, but Quebec has been widely consulted on these negotiations, as has every region of Canada.

There have been several meetings of the federal minister and the provincial trade ministers. There have been meetings with NGOs in Quebec and with the sectoral groups. There is a website with five of our nine positions available to Canadians. There has been extensive consultation with all parts of Canada, including Quebec.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary got the wrong page in his briefing book. We are talking directly about Quebec's place at the negotiating tables.

In another federation, Belgium, the ministers of the federated states can sit in Belgium's seat at the European Union council.

Why does the federal government consider it unthinkable to allow Quebec to negotiate itself, when its own jurisdictions are involved?

[English]

Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, I was not reading from any note in my briefing book because, quite simply, it is the same logic that pertains to the question asked of the Prime Minister about the premier of Quebec in addressing this forum in Quebec City.

Why would the province of Quebec, or any other province in Canada, be sitting there when there is a federal minister and a federal government elected to represent very adequately the interests of all Canadians?

* * *

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK OF CANADA

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from an internal departmental memo written in June 1997, regarding the Auberge Gouverneur and the Auberge Grand-Mère. It states "We should increase the cost per job in order to keep the same amounts promised at the press conference or as suggested by the Prime Minister during discussions with the promoters".

• (1445)

The question is: Who forced these bureaucrats to buckle to the Prime Minister's suggestions?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we had an RCMP investigation opened and closed on this matter. We have the words and the investigation of the ethics counsellor.

Oral Questions

We have an investment in a hotel, which is running four years later, and provides jobs for 19 employees, and we have members who are asking questions about a matter that is now being adjudicated before the courts for an individual who has increased his pension unilaterally from \$160,000 or \$170,000 to \$460,000. That matter is being adjudicated where it ought to be adjudicated, not here on the floor of the House of Commons.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that was a nice try and very eloquently said about the BDC, but this is an HRDC grant that I am speaking about.

Let me further quote, "It is a difficult decision as we depart from regional guidelines, but we have to maintain the proposed level of financing. I would like to give another answer but I have no choice".

Who bullied these bureaucrats into making sure the Prime Minister's investments were secure?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these questions have been asked in this place for the last year and a half. Members of this place have asked the RCMP to investigate. It has and it has closed the file. Members have written the ethics counsellor asking for an investigation. He has and has closed the file.

There is not a member in the House who does not believe that the Prime Minister of Canada, after 38 years in this place, is not an honourable gentleman. We are proud to stand with him on this side of the House.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Yolande Thibeault (Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard reports of an 11 year old girl who was abducted in the U.S. and brought into this country to work as a prostitute.

Can the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tell the House what she is doing to help put an end to these types of occurrences?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no one should doubt the government's concern for the protection of children. We have a special program in place called "Our Missing Children". It has been in place since 1986. It is an interdepartmental program that not only works across the federal government but with international partners.

Since 1986 they have reunited 937 children with their rightful parents and legal guardians. In 1999 alone 110 children were rescued. I only wished when I saw this story that the number had been 111.

*Oral Questions***EDUCATION**

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Nova Scotia has the poorest per capita education funding in Canada. It is so bad that local schools are closing and one school recently had to get a loan from its parents to buy the paper needed for report cards.

However, when the minister rejigged equalization yesterday, Nova Scotia received one measly million dollars out of an additional \$1.8 billion. How can he justify such treatment of Nova Scotia while the provincial government is making further cuts to health care and education, while basic services for Nova Scotians are disappearing?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the allocation among provinces is not a question of discretion by the federal government. There is a formula that has been established for many years and it is that formula which dominates. What has happened is that the Nova Scotian economy has shown greater growth than many of the other receiving provinces.

That being said, as I and other members have said in the House, our officials are sitting down and we are looking at the issue of equalization, and we do this on a continual basis.

* * *

GOVERNMENT LOANS

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry and has to do with an issue that I know he is concerned about and has concerned himself with, and that is the impending departure of the Versatile Tractors plant from Manitoba.

I wonder if the minister could tell us, given that the immigration department has apparently now put a stop order on Americans who have moved in to take equipment out of the plant, if there is anything the government can do, admittedly last minute, to prevent the departure of this plant to North Dakota and some \$30 million in federal money that was given to Mr. Buhler as part of the agreement by which he took over that plant. Is there anything the government can do?

• (1450)

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has raised this matter with me on another occasion. It is true that we are seeing the loss of an industry and a plant in the province of Manitoba that arises, as the member knows, out of a protracted and extended labour dispute where finally, in the absence of resolution, the decision has been taken by the proprietor to move elsewhere.

No money has been given. Money has been loaned, and that money has to be repaid, as the member knows and as we have discussed.

Following a discussion recently with the member opposite, I am looking at all of the options open to the Government of Canada—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has a lot of rumours flying around Parliament Hill right now. It seems, after numerous protests and demonstrations, he has finally found some new money for agricultural support.

I know the minister would love to stand and explain to the elected members of the House just how much money he has for agricultural support, how he will get it out into the hands of farmers and when this will all happen.

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has demonstrated clearly in the last number of years that when assistance is needed for producers, we are there with all the resources that we can muster. I can assure the hon. member and the farmers that we will continue to be there for Canadian farmers.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, that is well and good. I have heard that many times before, but will the minister announce to this elected House right now how much money he has for agricultural support?

When the finance minister needed \$1.3 billion, he got it that fast. Can this minister stand in the House today and say that he has at least \$1.3 billion? When will he get it out and how will he get it out to the farmers who need it desperately?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat what I said a minute ago. I will not take the time of the House to do that because I think the member heard me the first time.

* * *

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK OF CANADA

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Business Development Bank charged the Auberge Grand-Mère an astronomical interest rate of 25% on its loan.

Oral Questions

Information obtained through an access request shows that the highest interest rates offered by the BDC anywhere in Canada over the last seven years was 12.6%. This means that the Auberge Grand-Mère was twice as risky as the second craziest venture that the BDC was prepared to finance.

Why did the Prime Minister use his political muscle to put Canadian taxpayer money at such risk?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are having a hard time keeping track of the logic being exhibited on the other side of the House.

First they complain that they get a loan. Then they complain that the interest on the loan is too high. Now they claim apparently that not only the Government of Canada but all of the lending institutions that made the decision to grant this loan did not act properly.

Four years later the hotel is still open, and four years later 19 people are still employed.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we have been pressing the government to take another look at equalization, especially on behalf of Atlantic Canada and Nova Scotia, and it has been resisting that.

Today, after I asked him yesterday, the finance minister said no, that they will not discuss it. We have just heard him today, and I appreciate this, say that his officials are looking at equalization and maybe doing something. Which is it?

Will he go ahead and do what we asked, as he denied yesterday, and have some discussion on equalization to see what can be done for Atlantic Canada to make long term hope and opportunity possible?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many times over the course of the last three weeks to a month I have stated that our officials are sitting down, which they do it on a continuous basis, and looking at equalization.

I would have thought that as a former treasurer of Alberta, given the fact that it was also discussed at a finance ministers' meeting, he would know that it is an ongoing process.

The question I really would ask is, if he does not know it, what was he doing at these finance ministers' meetings and what is he doing in the House?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

CANADA INFORMATION OFFICE

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

We have learned that the budget of the Canada Information Office, the federal government's propaganda machine, was increased by 150%. This means a 150% increase in patronage and contracts to friends of the government.

How can the federal government justify such generosity when it comes to propaganda, patronage and cronies?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the CIO's permanent budget will hold at \$21.3 million for the next three years. All the other adjustments are program transfers from departments to the CIO. There is no new spending in these programs.

The CIO's role is that of a co-ordinating body for the government's corporate communications. For reasons of effectiveness, we have transferred the management of certain programs from Public Works to the Canada Information Office.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a similar vein, is the House aware that the federal government's hiring policy for the public service does not apply to the CIO?

How does the minister explain this, unless it is because he has decided to free himself of inconvenient rules so that he can hire whom he wants, when he wants and how he wants?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member should read the documents. He could have seen for himself that this arrangement no longer exists, that the CIO concluded an agreement with the public service and is treated just like all other agencies and departments.

* * *

[*English*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the auditor general tabled his report in which he stated:

Oral Questions

Our audits of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada have identified a wide variety of problems, including poor accountability and unacceptable results in Aboriginal programs.

Canadians on and off reserves are disappointed that their tax dollars are not going to the people who need the help. Why is the minister dragging his feet on demanding proper accountability so that we can get some acceptable results?

Mr. John Finlay (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Desautels is quite right in saying that the mandate of the department of Indian affairs poses a highly complex and sensitive challenge.

We understand that improved government to government relationships will help the first nations in solving some of these social problems on their reserves and in making them more able to deal with the problems in the future. That is the way we are working.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general states very clearly that the minister and his department must be accountable for the way funds are managed and that program results must be acceptable. He insisted that management must be transparent and responsible.

Does the minister acknowledge that the lack of accountability threatens public support for these programs and at the same time leaves aboriginal women and children out in the cold?

Mr. John Finlay (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the department is working on this problem constantly. There were 900 audits last year. There were only 15 that were not accepted.

These problems require governance on the part of the first nations, help from this ministry and some time and understanding in order that aboriginal people can solve some of these problems themselves.

* * *

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last throne speech the government promised to double research and development as part of its innovation agenda. We on this side of the House have every confidence that the government will honour this promise, as do Canadians, after all they increased our majority.

Perhaps the Minister of Industry would like to explain to the other side of the House how the government will honour its promise.

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the government announced \$140 million for Genome Canada in 2000.

• (1500)

After consultations within cabinet and direction from the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance I was able to announce this morning, as part of our commitment to double R and D investment in Canada, another \$140 million for Genome Canada.

* * *

TRADE

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government is currently negotiating a trade deal with Costa Rica on sugar. Canada already has the most open sugar market in the world. Any change to the present rules will be disastrous to Canada's sugar cane refineries, sugar beet processors and sugar beet producers.

Why is the government so hell bent on systematically destroying our agriculture industries one at a time by poorly placed trade policies?

Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is very interested in a free trade arrangement or free trade agreement with Costa Rica. Discussions are ongoing to achieve that type of arrangement. We feel that progress is being made.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, any agreement with Costa Rica will lay the foundation for future negotiations with other Central American countries and eventually the FTAA.

Will the government live up to a commitment it made to western Canadian beet producers when it was in western Canada last year that it will do nothing to destroy their industry? Will he stand here today and say that the government will not hurt the sugar industry in Canada?

Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is quite self-evident that by pursuing a free trade agreement with Costa Rica the only interest the government has is in improving the trade relations of all parts of the economy of Canada with the country of Costa Rica.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA JOBS FUND

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following the transfer, in June, of the Canada jobs fund to Canada Economic Development, Quebec employers are still waiting to find out what amount of money will be allocated and what the criteria for government assistance will be.

It has been almost one year since the fund was transferred to Canada Economic Development. I am asking the secretary of state

responsible for economic development to tell us where the money from that program is. What did he do with that money? When will he set the criteria?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer to the first part of the question is that the funds have not yet been transferred to Canada Economic Development. They will be as of April.

Canada Economic Development takes initiatives to support the development of all regions of Quebec, under certain criteria that are closely monitored by Treasury Board. We work under a system of refundable contributions.

The funds that will be added to base A, that is the regular budget of Canada Economic Development, will be managed by the government so as to maximize regional development and job creation.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: The Chair has received notice of a question of privilege from the hon. leader of the Bloc Québécois. I wonder whether it arises out of today's question period.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): It does, Mr. Speaker. During Oral Question Period, we occasionally exchange remarks with members on the opposite side of the House. I know you do not like our doing so, but we do talk directly to each other on occasion.

I commented to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, during the debate on the free trade area of the Americas, that in Canada there were two nations, the Canadian nation and the Quebec nation.

His reply: "There is but one country, one nation. The Quebec nation does not exist". To this he added "You're crazy".

It is unusual for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to adopt such an attitude toward members on this side of the House, and even some within his own party, I imagine.

I call upon him to withdraw his words. This is unacceptable language in parliament. I believe he should act as a respectful parliamentarian and withdraw what he said to me.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is unable to respond at this time—although I cannot remark on the presence or absence of a member—to the point raised by the leader of the Bloc Québécois in the House of Commons. I promise that I will raise this with him.

Routine Proceedings

• (1505)

I am convinced that the leader of the Bloc Québécois will also wish to discuss with the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot the frequent comments he makes in similar circumstances.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the House leader to limit himself to what I asked. If accusations are to be made against the member on this side, let him make them.

Rather than spread innuendo, let him make specific charges and act rather than try to say "We will answer your question, but, as you know, it seems normal to say this sort of thing". This is his attitude.

It is not easy, because a spirit of competition and invective prevails, but I think we must limit unacceptable excesses. I ask the House leader to stick to this case, to behave as a respectful parliamentarian and to not make insinuations without proof.

The Speaker: The Chair will consider the situation described by the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie and, if necessary, I will return to the House.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ALLEGED UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to your attention that the member for Waterloo—Wellington has been yelling things across the floor that are totally unparliamentary and unacceptable.

I understand that he is far enough away that it is very difficult for you to hear these remarks, but they are well heard on this side of the House. It is unacceptable. I would ask the Speaker to speak with him privately and tell him to resist the temptation of what he has been doing for the last few days.

The Speaker: The Chair will take the comments of the chief opposition whip under advisement.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, in both official languages, a number of order in council appointments recently made by the government.

Pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 110(1) these are deemed referred to the appropriate standing committees, a list of which is attached.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the 30th annual meeting of the Canadian group of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association held from September 9 to September 16, 2000 in France.

[English]

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association delegation which represented Canada at the preparatory meeting of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development at the Council of Europe in London, England from January 16 to January 20, 2001.

I am also honoured to present in both official languages, under Standing Order 34(1), the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association delegation which represented Canada at the Council of Europe parliamentary assemblies plenary session held in Strasbourg from January 20 to January 27, 2001.

* * *

● (1510)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Canadian Alliance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-286, an act to amend the Official Languages Act (provision of bilingual services).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the enactment is to redefine the criteria set out in the Official Languages Act so as to avoid unnecessary expense. In setting criteria for significant demand, the act states that 25% of the population of an area must speak an official language in order to warrant service in the language.

I would point out that in addition to restoring sanity to the language debate and to the language laws of our country, the amendment would end the current effort by the federal government to force the newly amalgamated city of Ottawa to be officially bilingual.

The amendment would result in a rational approach to bilingualism in which regions whose numbers did not warrant it would not incur unnecessary expense and unilingual Canadians would not be denied fair access to jobs in the public service.

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

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-287, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (genetically modified food).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill, as you have already indicated, would provide for a mandatory labelling system of all food ingredients that are or that contain a genetically modified organism.

The bill would require the genetic history of a food or food ingredient to be recorded and traced through all stages of distribution, manufacturing, packaging and sale. This requirement would ensure accurate labelling.

The precautionary approach adopted in the bill would allow the Minister of Health to monitor the presence of genetically modified foods in the Canadian food chain and to initiate research into the potential long term effects of the consumption of genetically modified foods on human health.

Finally, the bill would also enable food manufacturers and consumers to make an informed decision when purchasing products containing genetically modified material.

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

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-288, an act to amend the Criminal Code (impaired driving causing death or injury).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce this private member's bill again which would enhance and assist police officers in their ongoing battle against impaired drivers on the highways. The enactment would in essence expand the investigative powers of police officers and give them the ability to automatically demand a breath or blood sample when an accident has occurred in which death or bodily harm was the result.

This private member's bill has broad support from groups like MADD and from individuals across the country, like the Murrays from Pictou county, Nova Scotia, and others, who want to see impaired driving in the country curtailed.

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

• (1515)

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-289, an act to amend the Young Offenders Act (public safety).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce my first private member's bill. The bill seeks to make the protection of society the first and guiding principle of the Young Offenders Act.

In the name of public safety, the bill allows for the publishing of all names of young violent offenders. It also seeks to change the minimum age of criminality from 12 to 10 years of age. It provides young people, who at this tender age get mixed up in crime, with the opportunity for guidance and rehabilitation that is necessary for them to get back on track.

In June 1997 the justice minister promised to make amending the Young Offenders Act a top priority. That was almost four years ago and nothing has been done. There have been a number of futile attempts but we are still saddled with what the minister, in her own words, calls "easily the most unpopular federal bill".

I ask for all members to help with the bill for the sake of our children and grandchildren.

The Speaker: I know the House will appreciate that it is the hon. member's first bill, but he should know that a brief summary of the bill is all that is permitted on introduction. It is not an opportunity for a speech. I know the hon. member perhaps got away with a little more than he might on the second crack at it.

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

* * *

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 Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask

Government Orders

that you call Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-3 in the name of the hon. member for Lakeland.

The Speaker: I cannot recognize the hon. member for Lakeland. He is not dressed for speaking. I gather the hon. parliamentary secretary will call one of these notices of motions.

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, if you call Motion No. P-3, I will speak to it. The member opposite may also wish to speak to it.

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all studies which were done prior to the banning of the 2% and 5% solutions of strychnine to show the effect the banning of these solutions would have on Canadian Farmers.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like this motion transferred for debate.

The Speaker: The motion is transferred for debate.

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the other Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SPECIES AT RISK ACT

The House resumed from February 27 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): Mr. Speaker, when I was concluding my comments yesterday I was addressing concerns that we have about the bill and specifically with the protection for the endangered species habitat.

• (1520)

With regard to the wide discretionary power of the minister to designate an endangered species, one of the problems we have with regard to the legislation is that if he ever does so there is a 30 month time lag during which only the nest, the den or the immediate locale where the species reside is protected. The protection does not extend to the habitat for the entire 30 months.

A prominent environmentalist has been quoted as describing this as protecting a bedroom while allowing for the destruction of the house and the bulldozing of the neighbourhood. It is a very accurate portrayal of one of the weaknesses in the legislation.

Government Orders

It will be our argument at committee where we will seek amendments that to be effective the legislation must make habitat protection mandatory, not discretionary, and that the exercise of that discretion be over a much shorter period of time.

Our second major concern with the bill is the methodology by which an endangered species is listed. COSEWIC, the committee on the status of endangered wildlife in Canada, has been tracking endangered species and placing them on a list for several decades now. The committee would continue to exist under the new legislation, but even though its decision is based on purely scientific methodology it would not be the final determinant of whether an endangered species is listed under the legislation and receives protection. That decision would only lie in the hands of the minister and may be based on any number of other considerations.

Our concern with this process is that it is subject to wide discretion. In spite of the fact that the bill has a number of provisions about community participation, making information available and claiming to protect vulnerable wildlife, everything hinges on the minister's discretion. There is no provision for how that discretion would be exercised. It does not have to be based on science. It may be based on the COSEWIC list, and then again it may not. There are no provisions for that.

I draw the attention of the House to the fact that there are 354 species on that list. Would they be protected after the bill is passed, assuming it gets passed? The answer is that they would not. There is no provision in the bill to make that already existing list a part of the legislation.

Again this is an item that must be addressed. We will be arguing strenuously both in committee and in the House that the legislation should incorporate that list by grandfathering it in so that species already at risk in the country would become protected immediately.

One other major issue is that the bill contains no provision, no detail or fleshing out around what compensation would be provided to people who are financially disadvantaged once the bill is passed and put into place.

The minister is indicating that perhaps there would be some provision in the regulations, but he is reserving the discretion to himself as to when it would be used. We would argue that we do not have a lot of confidence. A number of other existing pieces of legislation have been in place for 20 to 30 years where at various times it could have taken steps as a government to protect endangered species. It has never done so.

On behalf of the NDP I indicate that we do not believe people should be financially impacted negatively without compensation. Landowners must be assured that they are not facing personal

losses if a species is designated on their property. Similarly it is our position that workers in various industries and communities that could be impacted by the legislation should be compensated.

● (1525)

We believe the guiding principle in this regard must be that the cost of protecting endangered species should be shared by all of us, not just the people on whose land endangered species happen to live.

One final major concern we have is with regard to the extent, geographically and jurisdictionally, that the legislation would cover. Let me throw out this one statistic. It will only cover five per cent of the country.

Recognizing that I am almost out of time, I will make one final point. The legislation is extremely weak with regard to protecting our migratory birds and animals. If they cross the border they will probably be protected in the United States but they will not be protected here.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me this honour to participate in this debate. As the Progressive Conservative Party, and as a recognized party in the House, we have a prearranged order for speaking. I would request from the Chair that attention be paid to that particular issue because on other occasions previous members have been missed.

I will now begin my 20 minute speech by saying that it is a pleasure to have a chance to participate in this particular debate. As members know, this will be the first piece of environmental legislation that we have seen before the House in this particular parliament. Members will also know quite clearly that this will be the government's first attempt to pass its first piece of environmental legislation since taking office on October 25, 1993. It is the government's first bill of its own initiative.

Mr. Speaker, you may recall, being the learned individual that you are on legislation, that the previous Conservative government was very proactive with respect to environmental legislation. We delivered to the country an acid rain protocol with the Americans, a packaging protocol that we did in conjunction with industry to reduce waste in our landfills. The Conservative government also pioneered a bill known as the Canadian environmental protection act which was first tabled in 1988.

Canada was a world leader on environmental protection by bringing the international community together in eliminating and reducing the consumption of ozone depleting gases with the

Montreal protocol of 1987. The hon. Jean J. Charest was a very proactive environment minister who brought forth legislation with respect to new inroads in reducing pulp and paper effluent. One of the other hallmarks, in addition to the acid rain protocol brought forth with the Americans, was the \$3 billion green plan which had an infinite affect on pollution prevention.

Having said that, this is the government's third attempt to bring forth a piece of legislation to protect species at risk or endangered species. Bill C-65 died on the order paper leading up to the 1997 election. The hon. member for Saint John was active in the debate at that time. We also know that Bill C-33 died on the order paper as the Prime Minister chose to call his vanity election three years and four months into his mandate.

The position of the Progressive Conservative Party will largely follow the positions developed by the species at risk working group, which is composed of the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association, the Mining Association of Canada, the Canadian Nature Federation, Sierra Club of Canada and the Sierra Legal Defence Fund.

• (1530)

These are individuals who are normally at each other's throats when it comes to developing legislation of this sort, but they have been able to build an unprecedented consensus, which I believe the government should be utilizing far more than it currently is.

In December 1999, a few weeks after the Progressive Conservative Party tabled its position paper, the government tabled a brown paper, which actually described essentially what its legislation would be composed of. Our position paper was graded A by the environmental community and received accolades from industry groups as well, while the government's position paper received a mere D.

I would like to compliment not only the consensus that was built with respect to SARWG, the species at risk working group, but also the consensus that was built with the Progressive Conservative caucus on this file. It is a unified position built in conjunction with our natural resources critic, the member for South Shore, with our agricultural critic, the member for Brandon—Souris, and with the leadership that we received from the right hon. member for Calgary Centre in ensuring that we had a very comprehensive and team approach to this particular piece of legislation.

We are all well aware that Canada has over 300 species that are at risk or endangered. I believe endangered species are what we could call our canaries in the coal mine. When we continue to lose species from our environment, from the various habitats, it is an indication that our overall environment is starting to decline. That will have a negative effect on the air we breathe and the water we drink.

Here we are eight years after the government has taken office and this is its third kick at the can in trying to deliver a piece of

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environmental legislation. After all the consultations, after all the homework, one would think we would essentially be reviewing a piece of legislation that would be nearly perfect. As the critic from the NDP pointed out in his remarks a few moments ago, we are far from there.

There are a couple of particular issues I wanted to speak about with respect to the legislation. Clearly, habitat loss is the single largest cause of why species become at risk, become endangered and ultimately become extinct. Habitat loss is responsible for over 80% of species decline in Canada.

Bill C-5 and its predecessor, Bill C-33, are in fact weaker than the first attempt at species at risk legislation that was brought forth, which was known as Bill C-65. Bill C-65 had significant problems, but it did contain stronger provisions for habitat protection, especially on federal lands. This was largely the result of the work of the environment committee.

Bill C-5 does not require protection of critical habitat for endangered species. It merely states that cabinet may protect it. This is a significant shortcoming, especially when critical habitat protection is crucial to survival of a species. Some of Canada's best loved species could potentially become at risk, whether it is the beluga whale, the woodland caribou or even the grizzly bear.

By making habitat protection discretionary, the federal government is abdicating responsibility for major areas within its own jurisdiction, and I will repeat that: within its own jurisdiction. We are not asking the federal government to actually sidestep or make a foray into jurisdictions where it does not have the responsibility. The federal government can and must protect habitat of all species within federal jurisdiction. This is absolutely critical.

Upon review of Bill C-5, members of the House will recognize the fact that there are provisions for the federal government to intervene in provincial jurisdictions to protect species at risk. There are provisions whereby the federal government can intervene on private lands to protect species at risk. However, it is not mandatory under this legislation to protect species at risk within federal jurisdiction, or within federal lands, for that matter.

• (1535)

This is indeed ironic given the response from the environment minister to the last speech from the throne. He said "Any species protection legislation must include provisions for the protection of critical habitat of endangered species. This is fundamental. No habitat, no species".

We would like to have a piece of legislation that would reflect the minister's own words as spoken in the House.

Building successful legislation requires input and support from affected stakeholders. The Progressive Conservative plan calls for

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carrots before sticks, for incentives to reward stewardship. We believe it is imperative to encourage, recognize and reward stewardship by offering more carrots and resorting to fewer sticks.

We believe this can be accomplished by listening to the concerns of stakeholders and by working in co-operation with them to build a consensus on an effective legislative design and, most important, engaging stakeholders in the recovery process.

Finding an endangered species on one's land should not mean that all development stops. The key is to manage the land to ensure that a species can continue to survive. We have to do away with the myths that have been spoken about. I am talking about the myth that finding a species on one's property will result in an immediate economic loss. We can reward stewardship. There are many ways to address this particular issue.

The fact is that if a species at risk is found on a woodlot owner's lot, chances are the owner is working under responsible forestry management regimes that actually encourage an environment for the species. If the species did not like it there, it would not be there.

The Progressive Conservative Party believes that without the support of the provinces, private landowners, resource users and communities the endangered species bill will be impossible to institute. Moreover, it will be ineffective. It will breed the "shoot, shovel and shut up" response, which will result in more species at risk.

The Progressive Conservative Party believes that when designing a recovery plan, with stakeholders of course, social and economic considerations must be accounted for. Both objectives can be achieved, both to encourage stewardship and save endangered species. These objectives are not mutually exclusive.

Another glaring weakness, which I would say is the most obvious and which the member for Windsor—St. Clair touched on, is that in Bill C-5 the cabinet rather than scientists will decide whether a species is at risk. The committee on the status of endangered wildlife in Canada, the scientific body that has been in place for decades, will not have the call on determining whether a species is endangered. This puts at risk the extinction of any species that cabinet opts not to protect and makes the decision a political one rather than one based on scientific fact.

There is an enormous flip-flop from the Canadian Alliance on this particular issue. I am not talking about pensions or Stornoway or anything like that. What I am referring to in this particular circumstance is that we can give solid credit to the member for Red Deer and what he now believes. Although the member for Edmonton—Strathcona who was the previous critic said that it should be a political determination as to whether a species is at risk, I interpreted from the speech of the member for Red Deer in the House on February 21 that he believed scientists, not politicians,

should determine whether a species is at risk or not. I find it shameful that the Liberal Party of Canada would be the only party in the House of Commons that would rather resort to a political listing perspective.

I know that my friend who will be speaking shortly on behalf of the Liberal Party was a member of the environment committee that studied this particular issue. An all party consensus was built that the scientific list of COSEWIC should be adopted and that COSEWIC should determine whether a species is at risk or not. Now the Liberal Party of Canada is renegeing on its promise on that particular issue. I find that very shameful indeed.

• (1540)

While the Liberals may argue that they do not want the scientists to be lobbied as to whether a species is at risk or not—

An hon. member: And the minister won't be.

Mr. John Herron: And the minister won't be. First, today scientists can be lobbied. That is a case in point. Second, those provinces that have permitted a political listing regime as opposed to a scientific listing regime just do not add new species to their endangered species lists. Species do not get listed. That has been the practice. That is what the witnesses have actually told us before a committee.

The categorical issue is that we believe in order for the Progressive Conservative Party to support this bill we must have mandatory protection of critical habitat on all federal lands and, I might add, within federal jurisdiction, we believe, and we must have scientific listing, not political listing, in order for us to be able to support the bill. That is why we will be voting against the bill at second reading.

However, the committee may have its chance to be able to address these particular concerns, and I will comment that the Minister of the Environment, since the election, has had a far more co-operative approach to this particular issue and to the committee's work than he had exhibited beforehand. So we will take the minister at his word that the committee, in conjunction with all the critics and all members of the House, will have a chance to ensure that we have better legislation which will protect species at risk.

The other aspect I would like to be able to touch upon with respect to this bill is to challenge the Government of Canada to take a harder look at the SARWG position. That particular committee, consisting of the Mining Association of Canada, the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association, the Canadian Nature Federation, the Sierra Club of Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Federation, has built a coalition that we should be celebrating and utilizing to a larger degree than we currently are.

The protection of species at risk is a fundamental issue of public policy that all Canadians want addressed. A government commis-

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sioned Pollara poll indicated quite clearly that over 94% of Canadians want strong species at risk legislation to protect our endangered species. Those findings were from all regions, including those regions in rural Canada.

We have seen the provinces take a lead in at least tabling species at risk legislation over the last number of years since the Rio earth summit of 1992, when the Government of Canada at that time really cared about the environment and was a fundamental leader on environmental issues. We have not seen this federal government following suit.

I would like to quote the executive director of the Sierra Club of Canada. She said that if this bill is passed in its current form it would be the weakest endangered species legislation in the world.

There is a framework here that could be augmented and could actually produce a very relevant bill, a very good bill, that would protect our natural heritage in this country.

That is where we are right now. We are speaking from a position of currency at the moment. During the election campaign it was the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada and, I might add, the NDP, that actually received accolades on their positions on protecting species at risk in their platforms of the election of November 27, 2000. The Government of Canada neglected to put it in its platform. It was added to its website later on. The government said it had forgotten about it. We are here to remind the government that this is a very important issue of public policy.

We have laid out our position. We look forward to working co-operatively with the minister and the chair of the environment committee and to trying to work diligently at the clause by clause stage in order to produce a sound piece of legislation.

• (1545)

Mr. Gar Knutson (Elgin—Middlesex—London, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying I intend to split my time with the member for Yukon. Other than a few comments I made in last evening's debate, this is really my maiden speech. As such, I would like to begin by thanking the constituents of Elgin—Middlesex—London for honouring me as their third term MP.

I know hon. members will agree that obviously the highest professional honour anyone could ever have is to be elected to parliament. It is simply a tremendous overwhelming honour that they have elected me three times and I am very grateful for that privilege.

I would also like to thank my family for their support and in particular, my wife.

An hon. member: What is her name?

Mr. Gar Knutson: Her name is Christine. She has had to deal with the challenges of being married to a member of parliament over the last seven years and I appreciate her support.

Last, if I may be allowed to stay with the personal issues for a minute, I would also like to thank my parents for their support and, in particular, my father for his guidance. Unfortunately, he passed away just after the election.

As I turn now to the issues of today's debate, we should ask ourselves the question, why should we care? Does it matter in effect that the loggerhead shrike is on the verge of extinction? Does it matter that the passenger pigeon has become extinct? We all know that extinction exists in nature. The dinosaurs have become extinct. In effect, why is this an issue?

The issue of extinction is not the natural rate of extinction, but we should concern ourselves when species, whether they are plants or animals, are becoming extinct at a rate far faster than they would under normal evolutionary circumstances. We should care at a most basic level because extinction of plants and animals may be an early warning of our extinction, that is the extinction of the human race. If not of our extinction, it should at least be an early warning of threats to our well-being.

Endangered species can play the role of a canary in the mine shaft. If all of a sudden our frog population is declining because of changes in the atmosphere which can be a signal that we need to change our ways. It can be a signal that there is tremendous damage being done to the environment, to the ecosystems, to the plants, to the animals and to human beings, which depend on those ecosystems. It is important that we pay attention to these issues.

We should also care because of the importance of biodiversity. By that I mean, having the widest possible variety of plants and animals on the planet earth. We should care for medical reasons. Oftentimes, unthought of medical solutions, whether they are pharmaceuticals or whatever, come from plants that probably have not even yet been discovered or categorized.

We should not only care for practical reasons in terms of our own self-interest, but I believe that we should also care for more basic spiritual or religious reasons. While I do not share an animal rights point of view of the world, I believe our natural world deserves our respect. The unnecessary extinction of plant or animal species is akin to a crime.

I would also like to suggest that Canada has a particular responsibility to deal with this issue. With so much of our population concentrated in a relatively small part of our land mass, habitat protection, which is fundamental to species protection, is relatively easy for us when compared to other countries with larger populations or perhaps fewer resources. If Canadians cannot

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protect habitat and the species that depend on them, how can we expect other countries to do it? I think it is our responsibility to take a lead on this.

Talking about habitat protection and more specifically, protecting wilderness, His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, stated:

The sorry story of the almost absent-minded degradation and destruction of so much of the world's biosphere is becoming only too well known to millions of people. Every other day there are disturbing stories about the burning of tropical forests, reclaimed wetlands, polluted rivers, lakes and oceans and the growing list of species of animals and plants becoming extinct.

Canada has an almost unique opportunity to ensure that future generations will be able to see examples of the state their land was in before the rush for development and exploitation began. The task is to conserve a whole range of viable ecosystems and habitats covering all the country's natural regions. It is also necessary to ensure that those human activities that impinge directly on the natural environment, such as forestry, farming and commercial fishing, adopt sound conservation practices.

• (1550)

That was in the forward to a book put out by the World Wildlife Fund called *Endangered Spaces*.

In the same book, William Francis Butler is quoted upon visiting the western plains shortly after confederation. As he stood in an ocean of grass and solitude he said "One sees here the world as it has taken shape and form from the hands of the creator". He had a profound respect for the land in its natural state.

Before I turn to the details of the bill, let me also just say that a concern for extinction is part and parcel of a more general concern about the environment. It would make no sense at all to concern ourselves with endangered species while not concerning ourselves with, for example, climate change. Any work we do on habitat protection can be wiped out in a matter of months, if not days, by damage from our weather systems. Fundamental to any activity is an appropriate humbleness as we look out upon the world and respect for nature.

On that same theme, again taking a particularly Canadian view, writing in 1944 on a wilderness canoe voyage, Pierre Trudeau said, "I know a man whose school could never teach him the patriotism but who acquired that virtue when he felt in his bones the vastness of his land and the greatness of those who founded it".

We have it from the great Prime Minister Trudeau himself about respect for nature and respect for the Canadian wilderness. It is part and parcel of respect for habitat which is fundamental to protecting endangered species.

In my remaining time let me comment directly on the bill that is in front of us. The government should be applauded for making some improvements on its previous legislation. Specifically, the compensation part of the bill is going to be essential for having the

bill accepted in various parts of the country. It is clear that the cost of changing behaviour should not be borne simply by the landowners. There is a public good at large. Consequently, the public should be prepared to pay for land conservation or habitat protection. I do not foresee this being a tremendous amount of money. It would be money well spent.

However I share with some of my colleagues in the opposition and my Liberal colleagues concerns about the bill. The legislation needs to go further in terms of protecting habitat, particularly in the area of federal jurisdiction. I have concerns about who actually does the listing. I look forward to exploring that issue further in committee.

I also have concerns about the rollover of the list. Currently we have identified some 300 plus plants and animals that are on the verge of extension or are threatened. Most, if not all of the scientific work, has been done. We can make this list part of the legislation itself rather than making it the subject of cabinet regulation.

Those are my initial concerns. I look forward to working with the opposition on this very critical issue. It is part of a broader issue of concern for the environment. As we look forward, the environment will be the issue of the next period of time. This is only one small part of proper environmental stewardship and I am happy to play a role in it.

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to hear the hon. member indicate his concern that this legislation, as it is currently drafted, does not go far enough in a couple of critical respects.

Could he elaborate on the two most critical areas in particular that have been raised by my colleague, the member for Windsor—St. Clair? The first is the question of habitat protection. The second is who will ultimately have the responsibility for designating which are the endangered species? Will it ultimately be politicians or scientists? Could he comment on those two issues and his intention to seek the strengthening of the bill in those two very important areas?

Mr. Gar Knutson: Mr. Speaker, I will deal with the simpler question first which is the issue of federal jurisdiction. I have been quite clear that we should have a section in the bill that says that the government or the minister is required to pass regulations that the protect habitat within areas of federal jurisdiction.

• (1555)

Unfortunately, when the Fathers of Confederation wrote the constitution in 1867, environmental concerns were not part of the

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decisions on which level of government, federal or provincial, had jurisdiction.

There is some debate in the country, on a legal level in the courts and on political levels in Ottawa and provincial capitals, as to who actually has jurisdiction. That is something the committee needs to turn its mind to before making a final decision on this. It is something I have an opinion on but it is not a universal opinion. The committee needs to look at where federal jurisdiction ends and provincial jurisdiction begins.

Regarding the other issue of who makes the final decision, the question is not as simple as it may seem at first. If we are going to give blank cheques to scientists and ask them to tell us what is on the verge of extinction, which on a certain level sounds quite attractive, and if politicians are not part of that decision, they need to follow a close second behind that and question the consequences of the listing.

For example, what recovery plans or socioeconomic costs are we prepared to endure in order that a species might be protected? Is it practical that a particular species be protected? Those are questions that need to be answered as part of a recovery plan or part of a process.

Certainly scientists should be given the opportunity to tell us, from a scientific basis, what should be listed. There is a proposal floating around calling for a reverse onus. Species would be listed and the government would have 90 days, or a similar time period, to take them off the list with an explanation as to why. Perhaps that is a better way to go at it.

Again, this is one of the things the committee needs to turn its mind to, listen to the debate and the various views from the government and others, and make a recommendation either by passing an amendment at committee stage or some other form, depending on what the committee's views are.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, the question I have for the hon. member is quite simple. I believe he was a member of the standing committee that actually studied this particular issue. It produced a report leading up to Bill C-65. The all party report recommended adopting the COSEWIC list, in particular grandfathering the COSEWIC list, as well as using it as the starting point.

I had previous conversations with the member on this issue. Does he maintain that same position on the listing process or has there been some 11th hour revision?

Mr. Gar Knutson: Madam Speaker, my colleague's facts are a little off. What was part and parcel of Bill C-65 was a referral to committee before second reading. This was toward the end of the 1993 parliament. From my memory, automatic listing was never agreed on or never passed.

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to help introduce Bill C-5, an act respecting the protection of

wildlife species at risk in Canada because during the election I was asked if our government was going to reintroduce the bill.

Today I will make only introductory remarks because there will be much feedback and suggested improvements from constituents to input later when it will be reviewed in committee. For instance, I met with an official of the Sierra Legal Defence Fund. He assures me that he will present its detailed input to the committee.

• (1600)

I have also received a letter from Juri Peepre, executive director of CPAWS Yukon, which highlights three key areas: strong mandatory habitat protection, public accountability, and a very creative compromise ensuring science based lists and the ultimate role of cabinet. I forwarded the letter to the minister and to the committee chair.

Senator Ione Christensen, the other half of the Yukon caucus, and I often work together on initiatives and this is no exception. Senator Christensen has distributed Bill C-5 to such Yukon organizations as the Yukon Outfitters Association, the Yukon Chamber of Mines, Minister Dale Eftoda, Grand Chief Ed Schultz, the Yukon Conservation Society, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce and the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce.

Notwithstanding the fact that parliament has been receiving and incorporating input on the main elements of the bill for seven years, I will forward any feedback I receive from those other organizations to the minister and the committee chair just as I have with the CPAWS letter. It is very exciting to be part of an effort to help preserve some of the species we share the earth with.

Members who were here through the first two iterations know it is not easy to come up with common ground for such a huge variety of stakeholders, some of whom want weaker legislation than that presented today and some of whom want stronger legislation. Because there are species that inhabit virtually every metre of our nation, there are obviously a myriad of stakeholders and interests with whom to try to build common ground.

In my constituency in Yukon there are first nations governments, territorial governments, municipal governments, land use planning bodies, farmers, miners, loggers, trappers, sports and subsistence fishermen, big game outfitters, tourists, wilderness adventurers and campers, boaters, naturalists and snowmobilers, et cetera. Our challenge as a parliament is to come up with a bill that protects species and is as acceptable as possible to the many elements of our diverse society.

Bill C-5 incorporates a number of new suggestions from individuals and groups as refinements to previous drafts. The following are some highlights.

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It prohibits the killing, harming, harassing, capturing or taking of species officially listed as threatened, endangered or extirpated, and the destruction of their residences. It includes a public registry and a scientific assessment of species at risk.

There will be mandatory action plans and recovery strategies, including the ability to enforce critical habitat protection. It provides the authority to prohibit the killing of endangered or threatened species and the destruction of their critical habitat on all lands in Canada.

It provides emergency authority to protect species in imminent danger. It uses three mechanisms: positive incentives, which we hope will be used in most cases; strong legal protections; and, if absolutely necessary, the Government of Canada can act alone.

It complements and works together with first nation, provincial and territorial governments. It involves landowners and land users. It uses traditional aboriginal knowledge.

It complements the stewardship program in which Canadians can take voluntary actions to protect habitat. It fulfils Canada's obligations to the court for protection of species at risk. It unifies the efforts of the provinces and territories.

There will be some compensation which will act as a positive incentive to assist in implementation. Budget 2000 provided \$90 million over three years and another \$45 million thereafter.

Some work has already been done. Under the new habitat stewardship program the Government of Canada has contributed \$5 million toward 60 partnership projects with communities and regional organizations. In the government implemented ecological gift program Canadians can use capital gains for ecologically sensitive lands and easements for the protection of habitat, a measure I support because habitat is a concern in my riding. It recognizes the role of boards established under land claims agreements such as the UFA in Yukon.

I will also use the debate to highlight a relatively new process in the federal government, the rural lens. It is one of the initiatives of the Secretary of State for Rural Development. Any new initiative by the federal government should be examined through the rural lens to see how it affects rural Canadians in ridings such as mine in Yukon.

Bill C-5 has been carefully vetted through the lens in its development. I would encourage all members of the House to support the use of the rural lens for all programs, services and legislation. It is very helpful to Yukon residents and to rural Canadians in all ridings to have new initiatives viewed through their eyes.

We hope the bill will bring stakeholders together in support of the common goal of saving species. The bill shows respect for property owners by having many co-operative and voluntary recovery possibilities and compensation if need be.

I will, however, fight to ensure that the rights of rural Canadians and Yukoners are reflected in this and other legislation. Yukoners often live on the land with these species, sometimes at -50°C, and all have learned to survive together.

The proof is that at the present moment, according to the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, of the 364 COSEWIC listed species there are no species in the endangered category in Yukon.

• (1605)

We could not tolerate the dictums of an urban created myth that does not reflect our rural reality. We hope all parties will support the legislation and help Canada live up to its international obligations.

[*Translation*]

Nine provinces and territories, including Quebec, have laws to protect species at risk. Bill C-5 is structured in such a way as to complement these laws and not to create overlap.

[*English*]

A number of provinces and territories do not have comprehensive legislation and, in the long run, the bill is a safeguard to filling those gaps. Any time two governments work toward the same noble cause, in this case preserving species, they may on occasion run into overlap. However, if it came, for instance, to saving a species of whale, I would rather have overlap than a gap because failure is irreversible.

[*Translation*]

Failure is irreversible. We respect the agreement on harmonization, because the intent of this legislation is to complement the efforts made by the provinces and territories.

[*English*]

If a province has a combination of its species at risk and other complementary legislation in place so that everything is protected, then this or other complementary federal legislation will not have to kick in.

[*Translation*]

I think that Bill C-5 is effective and in keeping with the Constitution of Canada.

[*English*]

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment said the last time around on May 11, 2000 "We have examined and benefited from the experience of other jurisdictions, other provinces, other nations".

I have a short note on the compensation percentage under the legislation. The deal will be covered in regulations. It will be thought out and studied carefully over the next several months and will be ready in time for the bill to be passed.

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The time to act is now. As the NDP member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar said on May 29, 2000, in the previous debate, “Worldwide we are experiencing the largest extinction since the time of the dinosaurs. Historically on average about two to three species a year went extinct due to natural causes but currently two to three species go extinct every hour”.

As the Bloc member for Jonquière stated on May 15, 2000 “I would like to state the position of the Bloc Québécois since species are disappearing more rapidly, the problem is serious and we must take effective action”.

The Alliance member for Edmonton—Strathcona said, on the same day, “I am confident there is nothing partisan about endangered species and nothing partisan about protecting endangered species”.

[*Translation*]

That said, I hope we will be work together to pass this bill.

[*English*]

In 1623 a British parliamentarian said that if a clod of earth washed away from Europe then Europe would be less. It would be fitting, in that context, to say that if a species dies out then we are diminished because we are involved with them.

In this House of great bells, a parliament I respect, the bells will soon be calling us to vote. If we do not enact legislation to protect species at risk, then heed the words John Donne wrote in 1623:

If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were. . .any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for Yukon who just spoke. However I could not help but notice a contrast between what the member for Yukon said, which sounded like he was very supportive of the bill, and what the member with whom he was sharing time said, which was that he had concerns with the bill and was looking to make some changes.

I have a specific question for the member for Yukon. In reading the bill our concern is that it does not cover the federal government's core jurisdiction, especially north of 60, with which the member for Yukon will be a lot more familiar than me. It does not cover the habitat of migratory species and does not apply on federally owned lands north of 60, which incidentally make up about 95% of federal lands.

Would the member for Yukon comment on what I perceive to be a deficiency in the bill?

• (1610)

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, with regard to the member's initial comment, I too mentioned the same concerns as the previous member but I mentioned them in the context of those who have more information than I do.

The Sierra Legal Defence Fund will comment on those very issues at the committee meeting. The CPAWS Yukon branch, and Juri Peepre's letter, which mentioned the issues of habitat protection and scientific listing, will be at the committee meeting. I look forward to those issues and concerns being brought to the committee.

If a province or territory does not act, even if it is not in a federal jurisdiction, there is provision for the federal government to act to save a species. The member raised a very important point relating to federal lands in Yukon. There was a deficiency in that area in the last round, but I have been told it has been changed in this round.

Mr. Murray Calder (Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech made by the member for Yukon. I am still an active farmer. What happens if farmers do find an endangered species on their farm? What type of compensation will be in place for them so they will not have to resort to what I refer to as the three s's: shoot, shovel and shut up? Could the member tell us what type of compensation package would be available?

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, the federal government is emphasizing conservation actions before compensation. I listed a number of available programs and projects in which Canadians have voluntarily and through community projects protected a number of habitat. I also mentioned the amounts of money, \$90 million and \$45 million, that were available for those programs.

The destruction of critical habitat, especially on private land, is a last resort and hopefully in most cases it will not come to that.

The Pearse report had some very detailed direction on compensation. It will be studied by the department and the compensation will come out in the regulations. That is why we have made no comment on the exact percentage. The Pearse report had recommended 50%, but we still need to study in detail the ramifications and what would be the best compensation framework. It is a very complex issue and the exact details will be handled in the regulations.

In order to allay some fears that members on the other side might have, I would like to say that expropriation is not envisaged. The minister has been on record as saying that he does not think it would ever come to that and that other methods would be used to ensure habitat protection.

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Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I am splitting my time. I am pleased to address the topic of endangered species again in the House of Commons. My party supports the government bringing in this bill early in the legislative calendar. Our party members from coast to coast have repeatedly voted at national assemblies for the creation of such legislation if it works in a pragmatic way to find the balances needed to be a viable law.

The specific purposes of the enactment are to prevent Canadian indigenous species, sub-species and distinct populations of wildlife from becoming extirpated or extinct, to provide for the recovery of endangered or threatened species and to encourage the management of other species to prevent them from becoming at risk.

● (1615)

The committee on the status of endangered wildlife in Canada, commonly known as COSEWIC, is an independent body of experts responsible for assessing and identifying species at risk. COSEWIC's assessments are to be reported to the Minister of the Environment and to the Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council. It authorizes the governor in council to establish by regulation the official list of species as risk based on that process.

The legislation requires that the best available knowledge be used to define long and short term objectives in a recovery strategy for endangered and threatened species. It provides for action plans to identify specific actions. It creates prohibitions to protect listed, threatened or endangered species and their critical habitats. It recognizes that compensation may be needed to ensure fairness following the imposition of the critical habitat prohibitions. It creates a public registry to assist in making documents under the act more accessible to the public.

The government claims it is consistent with the aboriginal and treaty rights and that it respects the authority of other federal ministers and provincial governments, as the legislation has a shared federal-provincial jurisdiction.

Our party has a principled approach to the bill. The written constitution of the Canadian Alliance, under point no. 10 in the addendum under statement of principles, states:

We believe that government must act for the benefit of future generations as much as for the present, maintaining policies that will nurture and develop the people's knowledge and skills, preserve a stable, healthy and productive society, and ensure the responsible development and conservation of our environment and natural heritage.

Further in the party's published declaration of policy about the balance between environmental protection and economic and social development, paragraph 44 states:

We are committed to protecting and preserving Canada's natural environment and endangered species, and to sustainable development of our abundant natural resources for the use of current and future generations. Therefore we will strike a balance between environmental preservation and economic development. This includes creating partnerships with provincial governments, private industry, educational institutions, and the public, to promote meaningful progress in the area of environmental protection.

Paragraph 45 states:

We believe responsible exploration, development, conservation and renewal of our environment is vital to our continued well-being as a nation and as individuals. We will establish a unified and timely "single-window" approval process, and will vigorously enforce environmental regulations with meaningful penalties.

Paragraph 46 states:

Canada's water is an especially precious resource over which we must maintain complete sovereignty. Any federal legislation dealing with this resource will respect that jurisdiction is shared with the provinces.

My assertion is that the Canadian Alliance is a lot greener in character than portrayed in the media.

Significantly, we temper our environmentalism with responsible attention for the pragmatic. We will not be tempted to propose things that cannot be realistically delivered, unlike what all the other parties have done from time to time. The government talks a great line but has done little in substance on the environmental front since 1993. Certainly its accomplishments do not match up to its overreaching rhetoric.

A sticking point with the bill will be cost. When action is taken to change human behaviour for the national and international good, we must organize ourselves so these broad objectives are indeed broadly shared in cost. We can probably look to the case law around expropriations for guidance rather than the current suggested formulas. Certainly the mechanics must be placed in the bill rather than left to uncertainties and the changeableness of regulation. In my view, it is the major shortcoming of the bill.

The government is to be commended for again attempting the bill. However if there is no receptivity to amendments at the upcoming committee and report stage, then the whole world will know that what is important to Liberals is the name of the bill. They can then say that they actually have a bill, rather than putting in place a workable set of rules that will actually save species. I do not think the current form of the bill will do it.

There is also a huge body of additional expertise available to find a better balance which must be incorporated if we as a society are going to save anything.

● (1620)

In conclusion, I am claiming that a Canadian Alliance government would be proactive on environmental issues in a responsible way. While being a leader, we would work most diligently at the

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international level to bring our neighbour states along because in many respects protecting endangered species knows no borders.

The government has not told the truth to Canadians about the ramifications of the Kyoto agreement. Therefore I am not so sure that it is entirely sincere with its endangered species bill either. That remains to be seen.

We will work to make the bill more effective in a pragmatic way, for the earth is our home for now and we have stewardship responsibilities for all it contains. The public will is there to do good things. Let us hope that the government will also find it.

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague talk about judicious stewardship of endangered species and pragmatism. I am a farmer. We have some land in Alberta with a creek running through about 80 acres. When my wife and I bought the land we also bought the land adjacent to the creek and we pay taxes on it. It is not excluded from our title.

Now there may or may not be some endangered species of wildlife or flora on that land. I know there are a few bush partridges. I fret about their existence and wonder if they are endangered.

Would my colleague like to speak to the effectiveness of the bill? If someone finds that I have an endangered species on that land, will I have to forfeit the use of the land? As it is, our cattle go down to the creek to drink. Are there provisions in the bill that would compensate me if I had to set land aside for some endangered species to flourish? Does the bill provide for that? If not, what would my colleague suggest to improve that situation?

Mr. Paul Forseth: Madam Speaker, the problem with endangered species legislation, and it was certainly the problem in the American experience which was litigated through the courts, is that the good intentions of a law can wind up having a perverse purpose or a perverse consequence. We have heard of the tendency of the three esses from a previous speaker.

The main problem is that in order to further a protection regime some intended use of someone's land could be prohibited, or perhaps the land currently in fallow may require a future plan for planting crop. Landowners, especially in rural Canada, are already doing myriad things to preserve endangered species and the characters of wildness and habitat. The bill must recognize the wonderful things that are ongoing.

In the example cited, maybe some limits would have to be placed on the watering of cattle. Maybe there would have to be some mitigation factors such as a small amount of fencing to keep the cattle from destroying the shoreline of the stream or ensuring they only have access to the stream at a specific spot.

Perhaps there are other fields where the cattle would not be allowed during the early part of the year or they would be not allowed to go into a section until later in the year, after nesting has been completed. There are some costs involved. Perhaps the cattle would have to be trucked to another field or fed in a feedlot. The principle of that is that if there is a national or international objective there must be fair compensation for the willing landowner who wants to co-operate but does not want to pay the total social or environmental cost specifically by himself when the nation wants this objective accomplished. The problem is that in the bill there is no formula.

● (1625)

Professor Pearse was asked to do a consultation paper for the government but rumour has it that the minister is not predisposed to accept that formula.

We will have to look at regulation in the future. I suggested in my speech that perhaps we could look to the body of law and jurisprudence that is already there and learn from the expropriation principles. However we are not talking about expropriation. The cost could mean a limit on use at a particular time of the year or maybe putting up a new kind of fence in an area to protect some nests.

The problem with the bill is always cost. The administration has difficulty putting in legislation something that has open ended cost into the future. I can understand the government being very careful to stay away from that.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak to this bill today. The idea of a bill to protect endangered species has been kicked around Parliament Hill for a long time. It has gone through numerous ministers. The only continuous factor has been the chairman of the environment committee, the member for Davenport, who has been through all of it and is certainly an advocate for strong environmental laws.

We support the protection of endangered species. My colleague from Red Deer said the other day that polls have indicated that 95% of Canadians support some kind of legislation to protect endangered species. He wondered why it was not 100% and why anybody would not want to do that? We agree that it needs to be done, but it needs to be done in a way that is fair and that deals with some issues that we feel are not being dealt with in this bill.

We will support the bill but we will put forth some amendments. We are hopeful that the government will, at some point in time during the bill's process through the House to become law, look at those amendments. We are also hopeful that the government will listen to the people of Canada and make the changes needed to make the bill work properly.

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We cannot have the three ss, shoot, shovel and shut-up, in Canada. It happened when some strong handed legislation was introduced in the United States and it did not work. We need to deal with co-operation, compensation, partnerships and working with stewardship initiatives in the private sector.

Compensation and scientific integrity are two issues in the bill for which we will have a lot of input. Scientists should decide what species are at risk. They should create the list and that is it. There should be no political interference in who decides what an endangered species is. It should be done scientifically and then presented to the House.

However, I feel, and I am sure this has been stated by others, that if any action is taken on that list it will require dollars and the intervention of some body with authority, which should be the duty of the elected politicians.

We have to be very careful that the co-operative efforts put forward already and the stewardship initiatives that we see across Canada are supported, enhanced and rewarded. We have a huge concern with that issue. We have to ensure that the people who are working so hard on their own to create habitat for endangered species and to preserve habitat that exists are recognized.

I had a great opportunity the summer before last to go up to the eastern irrigation district around Brooks. I was invited up there by a fellow named Tom Livingstone. There is a huge tract of pure virgin prairie grass that is being used for grazing. It is managed very well. There are oil and gas wells on this land.

• (1630)

Among all of this is the burrowing owl habitat. I was able to actually see a number of owls living there and raising their young right in among the cattle and the other development. The people there do things very carefully. They make sure that when the species need to be left alone, they are left alone. There is a huge tract of water that is used for wildlife and fowl. It was incredible. There were antelope and all kinds of ducks and geese there. It was quite a thing to see. These people have done that as an irrigation district to preserve what was on the prairies when we first came.

So in regard to this idea that we need to have heavy-handed legislation to bring our ranchers, our oil and gas exploration companies and our farmers into line, I do not think it needs to be done. If we work co-operatively with them and show them some support for their initiatives, we can go a long way to really doing this thing in a proper manner.

We have to make sure of something: people have told me that they want to have input into the bill. They want the committee to sit. After the committee gets Bill C-5, people want it to hear witnesses from all sectors of society. They want the committee to travel, to get out to parts of Canada, to get into the north. The

member from the Yukon has issues in his area. People on the east and west coasts have issues. All across Canada people should have the ability to come to the committee to present their ideas to help make a bill that will work well. I encourage the members of our caucus on that committee and the others to work that way, to get out and go across this country to get that input that is so rightfully needed.

My party feels the compensation issue has to be in the legislation. To say that it will be worked out in regulation afterward is not something that we can live with. We certainly do not support the position presented by the Pearce report that one does not receive compensation until over 10% of one's livelihood has been affected and then one is only compensated for 50%. We would like to see full compensation. If we do it that way, we will encourage landowners and others to really take an active part in this. That has to be in the legislation. It has to spelled out very clearly that compensation will be given and that it will be given to the full extent that the landowner is affected.

The idea that all Canadians feel something needs to be done for the protection of endangered species brings us to the fact that all Canadians should be part of the cost of any mitigation implemented to preserve habitat. If it is a cost to society in general, then let us put it into the legislation and let all Canadians have a look at what that means. Certainly the elected officials have to be the people who are responsible for any spending of dollars that go into the protection of endangered species.

When I was on the environment committee we talked at length about residual powers, as we have here, about who should have effect over whom or which level of government and provinces should. A lot of the provinces have strong endangered species legislation. We have to work hand in hand. We have to receive the input from the provinces. We must make sure they understand that this is going to be a co-operative effort and that the end result will be to the benefit of the endangered species in the country.

We saw some really unusual coalitions formed when the bill was introduced last time in the House. We saw environmental groups get together with industry. We saw the mining industry come forward with the pulp and paper people, the Sierra Legal Defence Fund and the Canadian Wildlife Federation. Seeing all these people getting together to work together for the common good of endangered species was very encouraging. That is something that we as a country have to build on.

We have to encourage these types of partnerships and coalitions to get together to come up with the right plan that will work. If we have them all involved, if we have input from everybody and if we come up with the proper balance, there is no reason why we cannot have a law in place that will do the job but will allow us to go on with our lives.

Members know that we need to preserve what is here. I have children and grandchildren and I certainly want them to have the ability to see the things that I have seen in my life. We need to do this as a country.

In regard to the whole idea that it will not work, the idea that one part of society will go against the other and it will not come to be because we cannot come to an agreement, I do not buy into that. I think there are ways we can do it. If we have the compensation in the bill, if we work hard at the co-operative level to reward stewardship and reward the programs in place today—and enhance them if need be—if we show that we are willing as a government, as a body of elected officials, to receive input from Canadians in all parts of society, we will have support. We will have a bill that we can work with.

• (1635)

One of the things I experienced in the environment committee when we went through some other legislation was the wish of some to take out any reference to the word economics. If we were looking at social and economic reasons for doing something, people said let us not worry about the economics. However, I think we need to. When we are talking about the livelihood of people on the land and on the waters of the country, we need to bring that into the mix, into the formula.

Let us put the compensation aspect into the bill, let us work co-operatively, let us listen to all Canadians and let us come up with a bill we can all be proud of.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the member in reference to those who work our land, our farmers, ranchers and any others who are using the land as their living, because they have been there a long time. I can remember as a youngster the care taken by farmers and ranchers in the area where I grew up to make sure there was a sort of habitat for some of the birds and some of the ground animals. That seemed to be the order of the day. That seemed to be the norm.

Today we have a very highly mechanized farming community and that concern is still out there, because it is something, it seems, that is passed on from one generation to another. I can recall farmers leaving wide tracts of grassy plain spotted with trees to allow the birds and ground animals to flourish there. They deliberately set that land aside so that they too could enjoy seeing those creatures around.

I do not think a great deal has changed in our farming community. I will ask the member to tell us if he sees that kind of change taking place since he is from that same background.

I also have another question. I was in California three years ago, in the Fresno valley, where there is a very strong environmental law. I must say that I find it almost unsettling to think of the

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reaction that would take place if that kind of law were to come up here in regard to those who are protecting certain species at risk and how the state handles it. I will relate to members the situation that I learned about down there.

A farmer ploughing his land in the Fresno valley happened to run over a nest of kangaroo rats and kill them all. The environmentalists had been monitoring this. They swooped down on the poor farmer and seized his equipment. Here was a man who was trying to make a living in a very competitive world. They held his equipment, almost like they had the evidence and they were going to keep it, much to the detriment of his business. He is subject to court appearances and court action at great cost, which he has to bear, because he happened to run over some endangered kangaroo rats.

There is something out of balance there. I would like the member for Lethbridge to comment on that and tell us if he actually envisions something like that happening here.

Mr. Rick Casson: Madam Speaker, that is exactly what I was referring to. If we have a heavy-handed command and control approach to protecting endangered species, we will not have any co-operation. We need to do it in a co-operative way, recognize that landowners are faced with some of these situations and help them get by.

• (1640)

One thing in the bill is penalties. There are penalties of a million or half a million dollars for this or that. If that is to be in the bill, why can we not have the compensation factor in the bill as well? We have to let people know there is some mechanism in place that will allow them to carry on with their way of life or their processes without giving them the heavy end of the stick all the time. We must have some method of keeping people working.

Certainly I was raised in an agricultural community and I too have some farmland. When I drive through the rural parts of this country, I am encouraged to see the things that people are doing on their own accord. Some of the practices we have today do take out some of the protective hedgerows and things. I will not deny that. However, in other areas people are still volunteering to put some land aside to create habitat and we really need to encourage that.

One thing the member mentioned too was this whole idea of people being able to point a finger at a person who is on the land, say that the person has just disturbed some critical habitat and bring a suit to bear against that person. We have a little bit of a problem with that as well. We think there should be a way to do this without having everybody who is going for a long walk in the country being able to point, say that something is wrong and get some action started.

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Co-operation and the balance are the things we are getting at. We need to see that. If those things are not there, the bill will not work.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Alberni, Coast Guard; and the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt, Employment.

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Minister of the Environment is to be congratulated for reintroducing the bill. It is urgently needed.

As we all know, Canadians care about endangered species, as proven by the many conservation projects across Canada, and the minister has provided funding to support current and future initiatives in this respect.

His promotion of stewardship is a major improvement over previous bills. In addition, the measure to provide a safety net, should the provinces fail to enact similar provisions, is also a fine improvement on the 1996 version, namely Bill C-65.

The minister should also be commended for some changes to Bill C-33. His changes include definitions in the bill, so amended to be consistent with those used by the committee on the status of endangered wildlife in Canada, a scientific committee. His changes also include the publication of specific documents in the public registry set up under the act, to provide greater openness, transparency and accountability.

Let me now describe some of the shortcomings of the bill, which could be corrected in committee. As regards the initial list of species, cabinet may, on the recommendation of the minister, establish the list of wildlife species at risk, but it may not. The bill does not even guarantee that there will be an initial list.

Scientists have appeared before the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. They expressed a serious concern. There are currently approximately 185 species that have been reassessed by scientists. As I recall the discussion, we were asked that the reassessed scientific list, currently at 185 species, come into force at the moment the legislation is proclaimed so as to make it the starting list. I support that proposal. Earlier this afternoon, the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London put forward another proposal which I think has a great potential.

As to future changes by scientists to the list of species at risk, it is important to note that the provincial record, because of reliance on political listing, is very weak. Only 12% of endangered species have made it onto the legal list in Quebec; only 23% in Ontario; and only 32% in Saskatchewan. The abysmal provincial record

shows how little protection may be given to species when politicians decide about listing.

The poor provincial record also underlines how crucial it is for Bill C-5 to ensure that the federal safety net will apply should a province fail to protect a species identified at risk by scientists. I commend the minister for having included this net. It is worth noting by contrast that in Nova Scotia the scientific list automatically becomes the legal list under the legislation. We should follow the Nova Scotia example.

• (1645)

Another weakness with the bill is that it contains too much discretion. In too many instances the minister may make a recommendation to cabinet, but he or she may not. Then there is the hurdle posed by the fact that cabinet may decide to enact crucial provisions of Bill C-5, but it may not. This means there is uncertainty in the implementation of the act affecting those who use the land. Landowners and other interested parties would not be given a clear indication of how they are to improve their practices to protect endangered species because of the uncertainty surrounding the implementation of key provisions of the bill.

Next, as we all know, the primary cause of the loss of species in this country is the loss of habitat, therefore, the importance of critical habitat. There is very strong public support for mandatory habitat protection. I received over 1,500 postcards and letters urging the government to provide mandatory habitat protection and I am sure my colleagues have too.

In the bill there is no mandatory habitat protection to species even within federal jurisdiction. Provisions against destroying the critical habitat of an endangered species would apply only where specified by cabinet even on federal lands. Similarly, regulations to implement necessary measures to protect critical habitats on federal lands are left to the discretion of cabinet.

By contrast, in the earlier bill, Bill C-65 which died in the 35th parliament, the responsible minister had the authority to regulate or prohibit activities that would adversely affect the species or its critical habitat. Why should cabinet be required to determine every component of the critical habitat to be protected for every species? Why not give the authority to the Minister of the Environment alone?

Then we come to the protection of the critical habitat of species within federal jurisdiction. That includes species on federal lands, migratory birds, aquatic species and cross border species. Here again the critical habitat of species at risk within federal jurisdiction may or may not be protected, depending on the will of cabinet, not of the responsible minister alone. Why leave such a key decision, clearly within the federal government's jurisdiction, to

the entire cabinet and not to the Minister of the Environment alone as is very often the case with other important key legislation in other sectors?

Moreover, prohibitions against destroying critical habitats may apply to species on federal lands in the exclusive economic zone of Canada or in the continental shelf of Canada. Cabinet may make regulations to protect critical habitats only on federal land. These sections of the bill need to be strengthened to include all federal jurisdictions, namely all federal lands, migratory birds, cross border species and aquatic species.

The Minister of the Environment made a strong commitment when he said in the House on February 19: "These species, the species at risk, and their critical habitat will be protected whether they are on federal, provincial or territorial or privately owned land".

However there are too many layers of discretion in the bill to facilitate the implementation of the minister's commitment. There are two other ministers whose approval is also needed. Then there is the whole cabinet that needs to be persuaded to act. The likelihood that the federal government will apply habitat protection even on federal lands is slim as the bill is written at the present time.

As to chances that the federal government will provide a safety net are even smaller. Where the minister finds that the province or territory is not protecting the critical habitat, the minister must make the recommendation to cabinet after consulting with the territorial or provincial minister. There is no time limit on these consultations. They could go on for a long time. Added to this is cabinet discretion. Conditions make it unlikely that habitat protection provisions will be put in place in the provinces or territories when needed.

The same can be said about the general prohibitions against killing a species or destroying its residence. Such provisions would apply on lands of a province or territory only to the extent that the federal government may specify after the minister has consulted with the province or territory. Obviously Bill C-5 would be more effective with a time limit for consultations and a time limit for the minister to make his or her recommendation.

• (1650)

I strongly urge the government to make the necessary amendments, so as to give the Minister of the Environment the tools he, or she, may need in the future to do what he said he would do, when he said in the House:

Make no mistake, where voluntary measures do not work, or other governments are unwilling or unable to act, the federal safety net will apply.

As to the discretionary federal powers, make no mistake. We all know these powers, which address cross border or federal-provin-

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cial environmental problems, have existed for many years. They are included in the Canada Wildlife Act, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, the Canada Water Act, et cetera. However, federal discretionary powers have not been used. Why rely on their use for providing effective protection of endangered species if in reality there is no record of the use of such powers?

I am splitting my time, Madam Speaker, with the member for North York. Canadians place high expectations on this government for protecting endangered species. The legislation offers great potential for co-operative management and stewardship of our land and wildlife but amendments are needed. Hopefully, after hearing witnesses the committee the government will decide to make the necessary changes.

I will conclude by saying that we need strong legislation to halt the continued slide toward extinction of endangered species before it is too late.

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill C-5. My sentiments on the various incarnations of endangered species bills have been aired many times in this House. I will address a few particulars of this legislation, but as one who has followed this issue closely for many years, I would like to begin with some broader thought.

To set a context for my comments, I will borrow a few words from Wendell Berry, the noted farmer, poet and writer. In an essay entitled "The Conservation of Nature and the Preservation of Humanity" he tells us:

When we include ourselves as parts of belongings of the world we are trying to preserve, then obviously we can no longer think of the world as "the environment"—something out there around us. We can see that our relation to the world surpasses mere connection and verges on identity. And we can see that our right to live in this world, whose parts we are, is a right that is strictly conditioned. There is simply nothing in Creation that does not matter. Our tradition instructs us that this is so, and it is being proved to be so, every day, by our experience. We cannot be improved—in fact, we cannot help but be damaged—by our useless or greedy or merely ignorant destruction of anything.

This small quotation touches upon a number of important themes in the debate around the protection of endangered species. First, it emphasizes that we all too often and conveniently view ourselves as disparate from the natural world. What possible relationship can we have with nature, one might ask, as we hurtle along a superhighway wrapped in an SUV with our ear pressed to a cellphone? If we cannot see nature and we cannot hear it and we cannot feel it, then it becomes easy to believe that it is something that is not us, something that we engage in on our terms perhaps when driving through a national park gate.

I believe that intrinsically most of us know that this is not so. We are not so far removed from an age when we were more aware of being of nature. This awareness has been buried deep within us by the mechanism of modernity. The challenge therefore becomes one of how can we reanimate this? How can we bring ourselves to a

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place where the world ceases to be defined in our minds as that which we have created, to a place where the term environment is no longer a category, a compartment, a file but instead includes us as part of this broader natural world? Such a reanimation would help us to abandon the current focus on, as Berry put it, our connection with the world and lead us to an emphasis on our identical identity. Were we to identify with nature rather than objectify it, who knows what wonders we might achieve.

• (1655)

Second, Berry wisely asserts that because we are of this world there are conditions to our participation in it. The conditions of every other species' participation are determined by the laws of nature. We alone among species get to set many of our own rules. For example, we can kill any species, anywhere at any time. We can kill for fun. We can kill deliberately or we can kill accidentally. We can kill quickly and efficiently through direct action or we can kill a species over a long timeframe by altering the conditions that it requires for survival. We can even kill from great distances.

Surely some responsibilities come with such apparent exceptions to the rule of nature. Most fundamentally, if we are in nature and nature is in us, then the unconditional application of our authority is nothing less than its unconditional application against ourselves.

That brings me to Berry's third point, that our destruction of anything in nature, whether intentional or through ignorance, damages us. Actually, he puts it better: "We cannot be improved" through such behaviour. The superficial and immediate rewards of destruction may tempt but by other measurements we are poisoning our own larder. By way of example, let me ask the human focused critics; which of our present species of plants would prove to contain ingredients essential to future medicines, vaccines and cures? We cannot know this now, hence we must accept as a condition of our participation in the world that we not eradicate them.

When I spoke on the previous version of this bill last June, I noted that on an issue of such fundamental importance to Canadians as the environment, when those concerned with its preservation and restoration rise to speak, few are really ready to listen. Many in this place say they care and many make fine speeches themselves, but words are a poor substitute for action. All of the rhetoric in the world will not save a river, a fish, a forest, nor will it protect a child from a hazardous contaminant.

Our words will not protect species at risk; only our actions can. Discretionary authorities to act may be political deal makers but they risk becoming convenient barriers to action in the hands of those who do not recognize a duty to protect the common. When we respect nature we can begin to understand the incredible services it provides. For those who must, putting a monetary value

on nature's services is difficult for many reasons. What price can be assigned to the last drop of water or the last gasp of air?

On the task at hand, Bill C-5, let me first commend the Minister of the Environment for implementing several changes to the bill since its last appearance as Bill C-33. Most notably, the decision to recognize the current COSEWIC list as a scientific list of species at risk in Canada is laudable. However, in order to trigger action, the species must be legally listed. Currently the decision for legal listing resides solely with governor in council. Canadians from all walks of life, including industries, scientists, conservationists and environmentalists are concerned that this will therefore be a political and not a scientific decision.

The political listing approach has proven to be ineffective in other jurisdictions. The proposed round table meetings every two years to discuss species at risk are a welcome addition to the bill, as are changes to what will be placed in the public registry.

• (1700)

The safety net provisions in Bill C-5 allow the federal government to step in if a province fails to protect species. However, the safety net is also subject to cabinet discretion. In other words, even if a province fails to protect species there is no duty for the federal government to act.

While the scope of the safety net provisions in a former endangered species legislation, Bill C-65, were more narrow than in Bill C-5, they contained a mandatory requirement for the federal government to act to protect species if provinces failed to do so.

One of the things that makes the public debate around the bill vastly different from those around other so called environmental bills is that a coalition of industry, environment and conservation groups have come together and worked for years on the legislation. I cannot tell the House how unusual this is. I congratulate them for their efforts in this area. The group is known as the species at risk working group.

Along with many other Canadians, the working group has raised concerns that the bill does not go far enough to protect species. It will be the role of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development to hear from this group and from a wide range of Canadians on how we can improve the bill.

We will do nothing to protect species at risk unless the bill leaves committee as a good, effective piece of legislation. The House must support legislation that is strong, fair, effective and makes biological sense. It must be enforceable and it must be enforced.

Let me close with a few more words from Wendell Berry:

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In taking care of fellow creatures, we acknowledge that they are not ours; we acknowledge that they belong to an order and a harmony of which we ourselves are parts. To answer to the perpetual crisis of our presence in this abounding and dangerous world, we have only the perpetual obligation of care.

I call on all members of the House to care about species at risk.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speeches of my colleagues from the Liberal Party and the Canadian Alliance on Bill C-5.

I will begin by quoting a successor of the former Quebec minister of the environment, Mr. Bégin, who said this about Bill C-5 introduced by the Liberal Party: "Another example of useless duplication for Quebec". These words are from the Quebec minister of the environment, who is also the minister of revenue and the minister responsible for the national capital region, namely, as members know, Paul Bégin.

This is what he said when he looked at the federal government's proposal to pass this legislation on wildlife species at risk in Canada and to create a safety net for the protection of threatened species and their habitat, not only on federal sites, which would be acceptable to Quebec since it would only be normal, but also on the whole Quebec territory, which is much less acceptable. In fact, Mr. Bégin added:

Quebec has always behaved in a responsible and appropriate manner regarding the protection of the most threatened fauna and flora species and intends to keep on exercising its authority in this matter. We will never accept an umbrella piece of legislation covering all the initiatives in this area.

It is out of the question for Quebec to accept federal intrusion on its jurisdiction. This bill must exclude all species, sites or habitats under Quebec's jurisdiction and must only be implemented at the request of the provinces or territories. Quebec has always taken good care of its species at risk and it will not need to use this legislation.

Quebec passed an act respecting threatened or vulnerable species in 1989. It has its own act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife as well as fishery regulations to protect species at risk in their habitat. If I am not mistaken, these two bills were passed under a Liberal government in Quebec. It is the hon. member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis who deserves credit for these two initiatives.

• (1705)

As I will explain later, we can see that these two pieces of legislation have allowed Quebec to address the situation of threatened species very well.

Quebec's minister of the environment reassured us in these terms:

These measures have given Quebec the full range of tools needed to identify species at risk, legally designate them as threatened or vulnerable, protect their habitats, and develop and implement recovery plans.

I would like to talk about how Quebec has been looking after its endangered flora and fauna for the past almost 12 years since the introduction of the bill.

First, I will give an overview of this, to say the least, worrisome problem of the disappearance of species, this symptom of a worldwide problem. It is not just a problem in Quebec or in the national capital region or in Canada; it is a problem the world over.

The acceleration in demographic growth, the unrestrained consumption of the planet's resources, coupled with the occupation of land by human beings, has resulted in pollution, the destruction of natural habitats, and the disappearance of many living species throughout the world.

Quebec has not been spared. The great auk, the Labrador duck, and the passenger pigeon are some of the recent victims of this worldwide problem. These birds have not just disappeared from our region; they have been exterminated from the face of the earth in a few short years.

Certain more fortunate species, such as the elk and the trumpeter swan have disappeared from our region, but still exist in small numbers elsewhere on the planet.

Nowadays, several hundreds of plants and dozens of animals are on the list of threatened species in Quebec.

In order to stem this alarming phenomenon, many measures have been taken since 1978. The Association des biologistes du Québec created a committee for the preservation of endangered species and, in 1984 or 1985, published the initial reports on the status of endangered plant and animal species.

In 1983 the Montreal botanical garden and institute were already publishing a list of 408 rare plants in Quebec. I will not give their names, but I think that the member for Berthier—Montcalm is now consulting the list of these 408 plants at the table.

As hon. members can see, the concern for endangered species is nothing new. Back in 1974 Quebec passed its ecological reserves act, one of its objectives being to protect endangered species.

The Réserve écologique du pin rigide was created in 1978 to protect the pitch pine. It was the first ecological reserve to protect a rare tree. In 1981 came the Parc de conservation de la Gaspésie, created to save a distinct caribou population and its habitat. Thus, parks and reserves are created in order to protect certain exceptional elements of our natural heritage, the heritage of Quebec.

Finally, and this one a major event, the government of Quebec passed, as I have already said, its act respecting threatened or vulnerable species in 1989, as a reaction to the increasing threat to

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the integrity of the biodiversity of Quebec and in response to the urgent and legitimate demands of the environmentalists.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the enactment of this legislation, the government of Quebec proposed a brief overview of its major environmental accomplishments and those of its partners in connection with endangered species.

There are some high points in the implementation of the Quebec legislation on endangered or vulnerable species that merit attention. I will list them if I may.

In November 1988, the Centre des données sur le patrimoine naturel au Québec was established. In July 1992, the government adopted the first component of the endangered or vulnerable species policy. This policy sets out the process to be followed for designation of a species of flora or fauna that is at risk of becoming endangered or vulnerable. In June 1993, the *Gazette officielle du Québec*, by ministerial order, published the list of species of endangered or vulnerable vascular flora and vertebrate fauna liable to be so designated.

This list, which dates back to 1993, comprises 374 species of vascular flora and 76 species of vertebrate fauna of Quebec. It is the outcome of an analysis of the available knowledge and of consultations with a large number of specialists and environmentalists.

In Quebec we have made protection a real issue. Species designated or likely to become designated have been the object of many actions aimed at ensuring their protection and re-establishment.

Over the years, thanks to numerous studies and inventories carried out throughout Quebec, we have acquired more knowledge of our endangered heritage and its status.

● (1710)

This information permitted the production of reports describing the status of species, that is, their geographic distribution, their habitat, their characteristics, the state and trends of their populations and threats to them.

In Quebec the management of most biological resources is a matter of provincial or territorial jurisdiction, with the exception of migratory birds—we acknowledge and accept that—and marine organisms, which are federal responsibilities.

Even before the passage of Quebec legislation on threatened or vulnerable species, all threatened vertebrates were protected by certain measures under the Quebec laws on the environment and respecting the conservation and development of wildlife and regulations on fishing.

In Quebec, 76 species or animal populations are considered to be in difficulty, over 10% of vertebrate fauna. Most of them are birds

or mammals. However, amphibians and reptiles form the category most affected with more than half of their species recorded on the list of species likely to be designated threatened or vulnerable.

Of the 76 species and populations in difficulty, 34 have been studied or specifically inventoried; 19 have been the subject of a status report; 14 have been the subject of a specific plan of action, in co-operation in certain instances with the co-operation of the federal government, bordering provinces and non-governmental partners; 13 are covered by specific measures to protect their habitat, and 10 are in the designation process.

Quebec's flora has not been left out either. All plant species, except for marine plants set out in the Fisheries Act, come under provincial jurisdiction, need I mention. At the moment, there are, as in the case of the animals, no plants either threatened or at risk under federal jurisdiction. The Quebec ecological reserves act and the act respecting threatened or vulnerable species are unique in the area of plant protection in Quebec.

Out of the 374 plant species that are threatened or vulnerable, 178 have been the subject of inventories or specific studies, 41 have been the subject of a status report and an assessment by the advisory committee, 19 were designated as threatened or vulnerable species, and 14 others are in the process of getting designated.

Special measures to protect habitat or stocks were implemented for 55 of these species, including the arisema dracontium, the American water willow and the giant holly fern. Wild leek has also been designated as a vulnerable species, while American ginseng may soon be designated as a threatened species. In the case of these last two plants, it is now prohibited to sell specimens that were taken from their natural habitat.

As for flora, efforts have been made in co-operation with various organizations to inform the public and develop greater awareness. Botanists from the Quebec ministry of the environment and their associates took part in numerous seminars and various botanical inventories and activities to promote awareness. Information and educational documents were published, and many articles and specialized inserts were included in Quebec's major natural science magazines and in some dailies. In the past few months, the Internet site of the Quebec ministry of the environment has been providing information sheets on certain species that are at risk.

Quebec can also count on numerous allies. The study and the protection of threatened or vulnerable species is first and foremost based on co-operation between many government and non-government partners.

Regional county municipalities play an essential role in the protection of threatened species. In recent years, RCMs, as they are called in Quebec, have been asked to take into account the presence

of threatened or vulnerable species when they draw up their land use plans, so as to protect critical sites for these species.

In 1997 the Pabok RCM even adopted the *Aster anticostensis* as its floral emblem. The world's largest population of that species is found on the territory of the Pabok RCM.

The Commission de la protection du territoire agricole and the regional agencies promoting the development of private forests have recently been made aware of the importance of protecting threatened or vulnerable species.

Ad hoc joint initiatives have also been taken by Quebec and Canada, in a positive atmosphere. For example, the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans are the main players in the efforts to protect wildlife species that come under federal jurisdiction, that is migratory birds, mammals and marine fish, while Quebec's Société de la faune et des parcs and the Quebec Department of the Environment are responsible for all other wildlife and plant species.

• (1715)

Over the years, these departments have joined forces with a variety of institutions: the Jardin botanique, the Institut botanique, the Biodôme de Montréal, the Musée Redpath, the Jardin de Métis, the Jardin zoologique de Québec, the Jardin zoologique de Granby and the Jardin zoologique de Saint-Félicien, and the Aquarium de Québec.

Organizations such as the Association québécoise des groupes d'ornithologues, the Groupe Fleurbec, Flora Quebec, the Fondation pour la sauvegarde des espèces menacées, the Groupe de recherche et d'éducation en milieu marin, the Société d'histoire naturelle de la vallée du Saint-Laurent, the Société d'entomologie du Québec, the Société Provancher, the Société linnéenne du Québec, and the Union québécoise pour la conservation de la nature have all contributed actively to these efforts, along with countless scientists, students, university researchers and amateurs from a wide range of backgrounds.

Much of the funding for studies and activities to protect endangered or vulnerable species is provided by the departments responsible and by their partners. The Endangered Species Recovery Fund of the World Wildlife Fund Canada and the partners for biodiversity program of the Fondation de la faune du Québec have made many initiatives possible.

Federal-provincial co-operation, with respect for respective jurisdictions, is possible. As proof, many projects have been carried out under the St. Lawrence Vision 2000 agreement, a federal-provincial program involving several partners.

More recently, an administrative agreement between the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of the Environment and the Société de la faune et des parcs du Québec resulted in joint

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initiatives for the protection of forest species at risk. The contribution of the private and parapublic sectors is also important. Some examples are: Ducks Unlimited, Hydro-Québec, Alcan, and the Montreal microbrewery, Le Cheval Blanc.

Quebec's accomplishments in the area of endangered or vulnerable species are so numerous as to be hard to count. One of the finest of many fine examples is the Centre de données sur les espèces menacées ou vulnérables.

The conservation of endangered or vulnerable species is based on the available scientific data. The Centre de données sur le patrimoine naturel du Québec, created by the Quebec ministry of the environment in 1988, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and the Natural Conservancy in the United States all make active contributions to the gathering and distribution of information on these species.

Today, the centre is administered by the Quebec ministry of the environment and the Société de la faune et des parcs du Québec. It is far more than merely a focal point for collecting and analyzing data. The information it contains is necessary for setting priorities for the conservation of various species that are in precarious situations. It makes it possible to determine the phenological distribution and the population of these species in a given area. It carries out species censuses of protected areas, natural sites of interest for conservation.

The centre's creation has made it possible to take vulnerable species into consideration within the process of preparing development projects, environmental impact studies and various research projects. Each year, close to 400 inquiries are handled by the centre's specialists and the regional offices of the ministry of the environment and the Société de la faune et des parcs du Québec.

So much for the past. Now for the future. There have been a lot of changes in the past 12 years for certain threatened or vulnerable species. The objective of reintroducing the peregrine falcon has been attained: new nesting sites are being established, which holds promise for the future of this species. Once gone from the St. Lawrence valley, hawks have now reached their previous population levels.

The copper redhorse and its habitat are now protected. Specific protection programs and the application of current standards will make it possible to limit the negative impact of human activities on the populations, migration and spawning grounds of this fish unique to Quebec. The intervention plan for the survival of the copper redhorse is aimed at promoting the reproduction of this fish. Fishways and a wildlife refuge are needed for the Richelieu River.

After a brush with extinction, the St. Lawrence belugas are increasing in number. However, their disturbance, water pollution and sediment continue to cause concern among scientists. Draconian protection measures and the recent creation of the Saguenay—

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Saint-Laurent marine park permit a more hopeful outlook for the future of this species.

● (1720)

Wild garlic has been designated a vulnerable species. This designation brings with it the prohibition against picking for commercial purposes. Picking it for personal use is highly regulated. Measures of this sort have slowed the decline of populations of this plant.

Ginseng is about to come under the protection of the act respecting threatened or vulnerable species. The fact of its being grown agriculturally may soon mean the demand for this plant with its desirable medicinal properties will be met, while the natural forest populations remain protected.

However, the wild species and their habitats remain under pressure. Much remains to be done to conserve biodiversity. The growing demand for the use of domestic plants for horticultural purposes puts pressure on wild plants in natural settings.

Similarly, the marketing of wild mushrooms is increasing and the loss and alteration of habitats associated with human activities is still the main factor explaining the drop in numbers for certain species.

Forestry and farm operations affect habitats, and so does the constant expansion of highways and cities. Acid rain, contamination caused by the emissions produced by industries and motor vehicles still play a major role in the acidification of soils and waterways, thus threatening plants and wildlife.

Even climatic change force plants and animals to make adjustments that must be carefully examined. In this context, it is appropriate to speed up the review of the situation of endangered species, their legal designation and the implementation of protective measures.

We must also continue the work undertaken and widen the scope of our studies. There are too few studies on invertebrates, molluscs, insects and spiders or non ligneous plants, including mushrooms.

From a legislative point of view, greater complementarity between federal and Quebec laws would be beneficial. I insist on the notion of complementarity, which is more conducive to success than intrusion and duplication. The recent agreement on endangered species helps promote greater federal-provincial co-operation in this area.

In conclusion, as I tried to show, Quebec is doing very well with threatened species. The member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis, when he was the minister, gave us an act that is effective in this respect, and we must think in terms of complementarity instead of duplication and intrusion when it comes to these threatened species.

[*English*]

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the way we treat nature and our mixed biodiversity translates in

many ways to the way we behave as a society and the kind of future we build for our children and grandchildren.

Intertwined with the treatment of nature and its biodiversity is the underlying principle of equity, that is, respect for others, respect for nature around us and respect for the ecosystems that create life and support living.

[*Translation*]

This is why the bill is so important, even essential, as a tool to protect the environment and nature.

[*English*]

I rejoice that Bill C-5 was reintroduced after two of the previous bills died on the order paper. I also rejoice that the minister brought in several changes to promote transparency and make the bill a better one than Bill C-33.

However, there are still fundamental amendments that need to be made. In presenting the bill the minister said “All reasonable suggestions to further improve Bill C-5 will be considered carefully as the bill progresses through parliament”. I am very glad that the minister is open to amendments being made and I hope several amendments will be made in committee.

[*Translation*]

I happy to say that there is almost unanimous consent amongst Canadians for this bill. In a Pollara poll done only a very short while ago, over 90 % of the Canadians living in urban or rural areas said they supported a strong and proactive bill on endangered species.

● (1725)

[*English*]

Some time ago, the committee on the status of endangered wildlife in Canada, known as COSEWIC, brought in for review a list of 339 species that were listed as threatened and endangered. At this point the review is nearly completed. Only 53 species need to be reviewed. By the spring the total review will be completed.

The problem is that we leave cabinet with the discretion of when to list these species and at what point each species will be chosen or not chosen instead of having a startup list in the legislation before it becomes a statute. We have been asking for this very strongly. I do not think cabinet should be left with the discretion of deciding when, where and what species will be listed.

We also want habitat protection to be compulsory in the law instead of being at the discretion of the cabinet. It is like that in several pieces of legislation that the provinces have put forward. There is not one substantive argument that has been brought forward to convince us that habitat protection should not be compulsory.

I believe that habitat protection must be compulsory on federal lands, north of 60 and in areas of federal jurisdiction for cross border species and species that migrate between our country and other countries. In this connection, a letter was sent by the United States senate to the President of the United States on October 6, 1999 by 11 senators of both parties, republicans and democrats alike, including the senate minority leader, Thomas Daschle. The letter pointed out that Canada must ensure that any new bill contains habitat protection for U.S.-Canada shared species on all lands.

I believe that unless we can cover species and habitats on a compulsory basis on our federal lands and on lands north of 60 for cross border species and species that migrate between our country and other countries, our law will be left to the discretion of this government and successive governments that may or may not enforce it and put it into place. We need it very badly because it is an essential tool.

The government has a wonderful chance with this bill, which will soon go to committee. We all know there are only a few areas in the bill that need modification or improvement in order to make it a strong piece of legislation and one for which we can all be satisfied and proud.

I implore the minister and the government to give the committee a chance to work freely. Allow it to amend the bill in the critical areas, such as the listing of habitat protection and coverage on federal lands and in federal jurisdictions, so that we will have a substantive bill and one that has a mandatory safety net. A safety net that leaves discretion to the cabinet is no safety net.

All of us know which areas need to be improved. All we need now is that little push forward, that consent by the minister to do what he kindly suggested to us himself, to let these suggestions come forward so that the bill can be improved. This is my fondest hope.

• (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): 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

[Translation]

TAX ON TOOLS

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved:

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That, in the opinion of this House, the Goods and Services Tax and the Harmonized Sales Tax should be eliminated for employees in the trades who are required as a condition of their employment to provide the tools they need to do their job.

He said: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Burnaby—Douglas for seconding this very important motion for employees in the trades.

During the election campaign, I met with many constituents of mine, particularly those who are in the trades. They said to me "Why is the parliament not adopting regulations to give us a tax break when we buy tools for our work?"

At this point, I would like to say that for once I might have a bit of a problem to concentrate and to make my speech because, being the youngest in a family of 11 children and the only one who does not have grandchildren, I am proud to tell the House that I will become a grandfather tonight.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Yvon Godin: My daughter is presently in the hospital, and we never know for sure, but it seems that it will be a baby boy. He might be in the trades one day and he could then benefit from my motion and get a break on the harmonized taxes. This little boy will be named Jonathan.

It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House and speak to this motion. Employees in the trades, like miners, and mechanics working for car dealers or in small garages, have to buy their own tools, and they feel nothing is being done for them.

If a company needs to hire employees in the trades and decides to buy the tools for them, it will be a tax deductible expense for the company. Moreover, it does not have to pay the GST on these tools. If the employee buys them himself, he has to pay the GST.

Often people who have just completed their courses in a community college to learn their trade have had to pay this expensive training, and, when they look for a job in their trade, they have to buy their tools.

For example, in the Brunswick mine, in my riding, the carpenter had to buy \$1,200 worth of tools over a year, and the GST was \$85. That may not be the end of the world, but, for an ordinary worker, it counts. Income tax is also deducted on his pay cheque. The electrician in the same mine paid \$2,918 for his tools, and \$148 in GST. For the heavy vehicle mechanic, it was \$4,970, and \$347 in GST.

• (1735)

These tradespersons say "I get up in the morning, I go to work, I contribute and I do not want more privileges than anybody else, but I would like to have a little more. I participate in the economy and I help these companies to survive while supporting myself and my family. I would like to have a little something".

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This is much like the discussion we had here, in the House of Commons, when we asked for tax deductions for forestry workers who have to go out to logging camps every spring, drive their cars, buy trucks, and so on. We asked for a tax deduction for expenses incurred to go work in logging camps.

More and more we see workers who want to have a piece of the pie. If employers can get tax deductions for everything they buy, if they do not have to pay the GST or the HST, why would it not be the same for workers? The only difference is that when employers buy products, they do not have to pay the GST on those products, but when workers buy products, they have to pay the GST.

This is why workers always feel like they are being punished. I think it would really help if, for example, tradespersons just starting out, whether they are electricians, painters, welders or instrumentation mechanics, were given a GST exemption to buy their tools. I think it would be really helpful to them.

Perhaps these workers would say then they got at least a little from the government and would like the government a little more. Every time we talk to workers, they say the government is always digging into their pockets, but they are the ones who help companies survive, they are the ones who pay taxes, while the others do not pay any. I think this would be a small reward for these trade workers.

Perhaps the government will say, if we do this for them, we will have to do the same for others. Well, this has to start somewhere. There is a GST on everything that we buy, but for the worker who has to use his tools to do his job, I think no one would mind if this worker were to be considered the same way as the owner of a company. It would be important for Canadians to have this chance and this opportunity.

[English]

I think my motion is very important. It is too bad that when it went through the committee it was not deemed to be votable. I would have appreciated if it had been votable and left for the members of the House of Commons to decide.

It is easier now for committees of the House of Commons to say that it is too bad, it is not votable. I would like to see the Liberal member across the floor face the mechanics and electricians in his riding for whom he has refused to eliminate the GST. Those working people just want a break when they buy their tools. These people work all their lives. They use their tools to earn their livings. They should be given a little break when they start.

After they complete grade 12, they go to community college. They pay to educate themselves to become mechanics or electricians. When they come out of community college, they are already in debt. They have to pay a fee to become electricians. They will pay income tax all their lives. They will not be on social programs.

They will be prosperous in the economy. They just want a break when they start.

We all like to flick a switch and have the lights on in our houses. When our cars break down, we like the fact that we can have them fixed by mechanics. When our water system is broken, we like the fact that we can call a plumber to fix it.

Why do we not give them a little gift at the beginning of their careers? We could say that when they buy their tools they will not pay tax because they will probably pay income taxes for the rest of their lives. The company that hires those people and provides them with tools gets a tax deduction.

• (1740)

If he is the employee though, it is another story. When it is the working people it is like a sin if we treat them the same way as others. I believe strongly that if we want the working people to say good things about the government, we have to give them a little break. It would be a break that they would appreciate.

In my riding I have lots of people in the trades. They have come to me and asked me why they do not get a tax break when they buy their tools. They say the government will get its money back when they pay their income tax. Every time they get their cheque \$200 or \$300 is taken off for taxes. However this little \$89, or \$148 or \$180 would be a welcome compensation for them.

It is the principle. Sometimes the principle means a lot. For example, sometimes stores have a sale, say 20% off, but no one rushes in to buy. Then they put up another sign that says GST free. People run in and buy because, out of principle, they do not have to pay the tax. The GST is 15% in my riding in New Brunswick because of the harmonization. A store could have at 20% off sale but it would not have the same effect as if it were 15% because of the principle of it.

It is because of principle that we should do it. It is too bad the committee refused. However, that was its right and I accept that. However, it would have been nice for the trades people of our country to get that break.

[Translation]

I used this as an example. This is a matter of principle.

People are used to seeing, when they walk in front of stores, a 20% discount on certain items. People are used to this. It is only a 20% discount, prices have perhaps been marked up and then the stores claim reduced them by 20%, but it is nothing more than that.

However if people see a sign in a window saying "Pay no GST" or harmonized tax, then they go in and say "Look, in the end I will save money, because I will not be paying the tax". It is the principle of the thing. There is a reason stores do this. It seems to

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bring in more customers. It does not work to offer 20% off, but if there is a sign advertising no GST, which is 15%, that brings them in. And yet it is 5% less. It is the principle of it.

If we were able to say that the government is doing that for them, employees in the trades would be thrilled. It is also a matter of principle. I know that I am repeating myself, but sometimes it has to be said 27 times for the members on the other side to understand. I may not have the chance to say it 27 times, but I am at least going to say it several times. If this tax relief were to be given to our mechanics and electricians, I think that they would appreciate it. They have gone to school, paid for their studies and, at least, when they buy their tools in order to join our country's labour force, they would get a small reward. The government would not be seen as being there solely to take their money away.

A woman in my riding told me "It is unbelievable. The government taxes us when we come into this world, and we are taxed right up until we are buried, because they even make us pay taxes on our coffin". When my grandson is born this evening, he will be taxed as soon as he takes his first breath. We are taxed from the time we come into this world until we die. It is unbelievable. It is as though the government is tax crazy.

We should give people a break once in a while and show some humanity in this case. I think it is only human to give employees in the trades a break. I think it would boost morale and it would help them financially.

Having finished my short speech, I would like to hear what other members have to say.

• (1745)

I would like to know what they think and whether they agree with me that employees in the trades here in Canada should benefit from a small deduction representing the 15% tax. This would show that we appreciate these workers who must buy tools to earn their living.

[English]

Mr. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Acadie—Bathurst for his initiative in bringing the motion before the House of Commons.

[Translation]

I also congratulate him on his good news.

[English]

Mechanics' tools and tools required for work seem to be a very topical debate right now. The motion proposes that the Excise Tax Act be amended to eliminate the application of the goods and

services tax and the harmonized sales tax for employees in trades who are required as a condition of their employment to provide on the job tools.

[Translation]

Currently GST-HST relief is provided via a rebate mechanism for the GST-HST paid on those employee expenses that are deductible in computing an employee's income from employment for income tax purposes.

[English]

It is recognized that presently there are a number of private members' bills, as I mentioned before, Bill C-222, Bill C-244 and Bill C-225, before the House with respect to the income tax treatment of the tools of mechanics and others.

As the GST and the HST rules should be consistent with those for income tax purposes, it is prudent to await the outcome of the debates and the outcome of the discussions on these private members' bills. I am sure the hon. member would agree.

[Translation]

Nevertheless, it should be stated that any tax policy with respect to the matter of employee tools should be fair. In addition, any changes should also be relatively simple to administer and enforce for the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, and easy to comply with for taxpayers. In this regard, any changes with respect to the tax treatment of employee provided tools should take into account a number of factors.

[English]

First, any measure in this regard should be targeted to extraordinary expenses. In other words, the cost of the tools in question should be beyond those that most employees must incur in the normal course of employment. The motion before the House today would provide GST and HST relief to all employees irrespective of the size of their expenditures instead of targeting relief to those who incur extraordinary expenses relative to their income.

For employees with tool expenses comparable to those incurred by other employees this would be unwarranted as tax relief for normal employment expenses is provided through the basic personal exemption amount. That is the case with apprentices. Perhaps a special case needs to be considered for those with low incomes and high tool costs.

Second, effective control mechanisms would have to be put in place. Under existing rules for income tax purposes the employer must certify certain expenses as eligible for deduction from employment income. This is important as many items provide a personal benefit even when they are required for work. One would need to ensure that any tax relief is provided only for items required as a condition of employment and not for those purchased for personal use.

This would be very difficult to do because many items could be purchased mostly for personal reasons even if they are used for

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work. For instance, the computers home based employees need to purchase are available outside working hours for personal use. In these circumstances providing full tax recognition and a GST-HST employee rebate would be unwarranted.

[Translation]

Finally, any new measures would have to both take into account the existing capital cost allowance provisions and appropriately deal with change of use and transfers to other arms length persons.

[English]

The provisions needed to address these issues would inevitably be very complex since they would need to account for the large variety of items for which tax relief may be claimed and the different work situations in which such items are used.

To understand this, let us consider the extensive provisions needed to ensure the equitable recognition of automotive expenses. Provisions governing the deductibility of employee equipment expenditures and corresponding GST-HST employee rebates would apply to hundreds of disparate items and numerous occupations.

• (1750)

[Translation]

As members can see, this is a complex issue with many aspects that need to be examined carefully. In particular, with respect to the GST-HST employee rebate, I hope the hon. members agree that it is essential to ensure that the GST-HST rules be consistent with those for income tax purposes.

[English]

As a result, I think members of the House would agree, given the number of other private members' bills dealing with the tools of mechanics and others, that it is prudent to wait for the outcome of the aforementioned private members' bills, for the deliberations of the House and for any government response that might deal with the issue of income tax deductions for employee tools.

[Translation]

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, first, I want to congratulate my friend from Acadie—Bathurst on his good news.

I agree with the purpose of the motion, which is to do our utmost to improve the economic well-being of workers, in particular employees in trades who need tools to do their jobs. My father was and still is a member of the Painters and Workers' Trade union in Toronto. And I understand what a challenge it is to ensure that one's family has the best possible life. Unfortunately, I do not agree with the way my hon. colleague wants to proceed.

[English]

As I mentioned, I applaud the member's goal. My party and I want to do everything possible to help the hard-working men and women of the country. However I agree with my colleague for Etobicoke North that the mechanism would be too complex given all that was outlined. I would like to perhaps see a utilizing the income tax system to incorporate the incentives.

As was mentioned by my friend from Acadie—Bathurst, there is a discrepancy between workers who are workers and those who are self-employed. Why not eliminate the discrepancy and utilize the income tax system to deal with some of the legitimate concerns that have been put forth by my friend from Etobicoke North?

For example, if a self-employed trades person buys a tool, it can be deducted through the income tax system through something called a depreciating business capital acquisition. That basically means one can deduct a certain amount of the cost of the tool through the income tax system.

However, as was correctly pointed out by my hon. friend for Acadie—Bathurst, if that same person is an employee the deduction cannot occur. However there is a provision in the Income Tax Act, T-2200, that allows employees to claim certain types of expenses. The rule for this would be if it is consumable. It deals with certain types of supplies such as paper, pens and gasoline. It would not include tools, except for one exemption and that is what I want to talk about.

Under the Income Tax Act now, loggers are covered. Their power saws are utilized under this part of the Income Tax Act for the purpose of deduction.

I would propose, and I am sure my friend from Etobicoke North would agree, that if we eliminate the complexities of applying GST to a particular point and utilize the income tax system as I outlined, perhaps we can work together on passing a motion which I and the party believes is good. It would not be this particular one. It would be one that incorporates the good points that I and my hon. friend from Acadie—Bathurst have put forth.

• (1755)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join the previous speakers in commending the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst for the motion he has brought forward.

We can tell that the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst has a strong social conscience. So do I. This motion is consistent with his concerns and those of some workers who do not necessarily feel supported by society.

I am not saying that these people are working for minimum wage. However, contrary to popular belief, these people spend a lot of money to buy the tools they need to do their job. The key words here are “tools they need to do their job”.

To get a job, any electrician, pipefitter, welder, building painter, blue collar worker or carpenter needs a tool kit. Members will see what I mean when I thank the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst for standing up for the workers who do not necessarily get all the support they need, who do not earn high wages but still have to incur major expenses.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, the member for Etobicoke—North, pointed out earlier, there are before the House other bills addressing the same issue, including one of mine. I introduced my bill in the 36th parliament. It was called bill C-205. I have again introduced this bill, which a committee of MPs has judged to be a votable item. Eventually, sometime during March I imagine, we will be discussing my bill, Bill C-222, which is aimed at allowing automobile mechanics to deduct from their income the cost of purchasing their tools.

The amounts involved are considerable. I am talking about the tools required by auto technicians. I will take this opportunity to raise the awareness of all colleagues in this House. In order to work, an auto technician requires a tool kit worth at least \$15,000, and the amount can easily be as high as \$25,000, \$30,000 or \$40,000. He has to have that tool kit in order to be able to work. Today, with all the computers and electronic sensors, a person has to have quite a tool kit in order to work.

This is a heavy burden for a young apprentice, who has just finished a course and is saddled with student debts, whose parents may not be well off and often have gone into debt to help him get the minimum tool kit he needs to get a job. From my meetings with those working in the automotive industry, I know that the apprentice's tool kit costs at least \$4,000.

● (1800)

A young person just finishing his course and already in debt has to go into further debt or ask his parents to co-sign a \$4,000 loan for him. When he goes looking for work at an auto dealer or a service station, he will have to have his own tools. The first thing the owner will ask him is “Do you have your tool kit?” He cannot be constantly begging tools from others, going into other people's tool kits. That is not the way it works.

I am glad that the parliamentary secretary said earlier that there were other bills before the House. I hope that when we debate Bill C-222 he will not tell me what he did when we debated Bill C-205—. I listened very carefully to what he said. He said “We

cannot agree to deductions for mechanics. What will we tell electricians, plumbers, pipefitters and welders?”

He has found a way to distance himself from the entirely reasonable and legitimate motion by the member for Acadie—Bathurst. I do not want to start taking a dislike to the parliamentary secretary, because I would like this motion and mine to be approved, but he cannot have it both ways.

He tells the member for Acadie—Bathurst “Perhaps we would not be ready to go with your approach, because there are other bills that will cover the deductibility of tools”. I am anxious to see what will happen.

I had discussions beforehand with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance. He held this position and he told me that he could not vote in favour of the motion. I met with members individually and brought the problem to their attention. I urge the member for Acadie—Bathurst to bring this problem to his colleagues' attention, because we each of us have in our ridings pipefitters, plumbers, automobile technicians, welders and house painters. These are ordinary people who are not floating in money and who are listening now, over supper in the case of those on eastern standard time. These people are eating their supper and saying to their spouse “That is right. A motion like that should be agreed to, because we need this”.

I brought this problem to the attention of members of the House and the vote at second reading was 180 for and 11 against. I therefore hope that when it comes time to continue the discussion on the mechanic's bill, we will remember the fine words of the parliamentary secretary.

I will close because it is getting late. Once again, I point out that in an earlier life, before I was elected, I worked in the field of human resources for 16 years, 14 of them in the pulp and paper industry. I think that such a deduction for the cost of tools required in employment is important.

In my work, the necessary tools have always been a pencil, an eraser and a calculator, to some extent. I am not a mechanic buff and my toolbox at home only includes a minimum number of tools. But I know that there are workers who need something like Motion No. 248, which was tabled by the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst. It is simply a matter of equity, of social justice.

There are other categories of workers who are already allowed a deduction, including musicians and people who must use their car to work. These people can take full advantage of the deduction. Whether or not they pay the GST does not really change things, because they can deduct the amount from their income.

It is simply a matter of social justice and equity. We just had an election campaign last fall. Members from all parties in the House,

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including myself, worked hard to get elected. We visited many companies, small and medium sized businesses and plants.

• (1805)

The member for Acadie—Bathurst introduced this motion in the House. Of course, he is intelligent enough to have thought of it on his own, but I think he will honest enough to recognize that he did so because people have made him aware of that issue. It must be understood that our role as members is to act as messengers, as spokespersons for the citizens whom we represent. This motion only asks for greater justice.

[English]

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise tonight to speak on Motion No. 248. The issue of fairer tax treatment for all Canadians is one in which we have been actively engaged in the House over the last several years. Fairer tax treatment for all Canadians is an issue that has been at the forefront of my personal interest as a member of the House since being elected in 1997.

The hon. member's motion specifically addresses the tax treatment of those involved in trades. It would provide relief for GST and HST on the tools required for those trades and would certainly help, but I think we have to address the issue in a macro sense and in a more holistic way. The whole issue of tax reform needs to be addressed in this place, at the finance committee and in the House.

Frankly, we should now be engaged in a budget debate. It is late February. Every February we have a budget introduced. That is the tradition. In fact, we do not have a budget this year. One of my colleagues opposite, a member of the Liberal government, has just said that we have a budget. In fact we have a mini budget, which was introduced in October and reflected a set of circumstances very different from those that exist today.

We currently are at the edge of, if not a recession, certainly an economic slowdown, which is not just a U.S. phenomenon. It is a global phenomenon. Our reliance on the U.S. market certainly means significant levels of concern in Canada. For instance, yesterday in response to a survey, 57% of Ontarians expressed the view that we will be in an economic downturn in the next year. Canadians are very concerned.

We have a recent report from the chief economic analyst of the Toronto-Dominion Bank, Don Drummond, who used to be the associate deputy minister of finance under the current Minister of Finance. In his report he said that even after the promised tax relief from recent federal budgets, our reliance on personal income taxes in Canada will mean that we are the most highly taxed jurisdiction in the G-7.

The fact is that we have not even caught up to the U.S. in terms of fairer and lower tax rates. The U.S. is preparing to leapfrog even further ahead with a \$1.3 trillion tax reduction in the Bush tax plan, which is proceeding through congress now, garnering support.

The government is dreaming in technicolour. The Minister of Finance and my colleagues opposite, with due respect, are dreaming in technicolour if they believe that we are insulated against the effects of a significant economic downturn in the U.S. We have not, in the mini budget, done as much as can be done through fiscal policy to provide the level of economic stimulus that Canadians need in the—

• (1810)

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am new here, but I thought we were discussing a mechanics' bill. This member is talking about the budgets of the United States and Canada.

Mr. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, I do agree with the hon. member. He is new here. If he would read a little further, he would see that we are talking about taxes and that does tie into this subject. I certainly appreciate his intervention.

The fact is that this is the kind of debate in which we in the House should be engaged in the context of a federal budget. My colleague from Acadie—Bathurst has introduced the motion in terms of a tax reform measure that would provide fairer tax treatment for tradesmen. Other colleagues have, at various times, presented motions to provide mechanics the ability to write off the cost of their tools every year. These types of tax reforms are all very important, but they form only a part of what we should be debating aggressively in the House and at the finance committee in the context of a federal budget.

We should be talking about issues such as capital gains taxes, for instance, and the fact that we still have a higher capital gains tax burden in Canada than citizens in the U.S. do. This is a very critical area as it affects the new economy. We still have a tax burden in Canada on the corporate side which puts us second highest in the OECD. That is of course going to have a significant impact on growth.

My friend and colleague in the New Democratic Party may not agree with all my positions on tax policy, but he would agree that we need to have a legitimate debate. A mini budget was introduced which reflected the many levels of intellect on the opposite side of the House when it came to economic and other matters, but that mini budget was part of another parliament.

One of my hon. colleagues opposite actually shadowed my riding for the last caucus. I do not know the name of his riding and no one else in the House does either. He was the shadow member

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for Kings—Hants and was represented in the Liberal caucus. I want to thank him for the great job he did, because his involvement in representing the Liberal Party in my riding obviously helped me to come back to the House representing the Progressive Conservative Party for that riding. I hope he continues to do that type of great job because he is such a likeable individual.

The fact is, that mini budget, which reflected a mini vision of Canada, was introduced by the previous government. A previous group of parliamentarians approved, discussed and debated that budget. This is a new parliament. Many of the members here now were not here in the previous parliament. The question is why current parliaments and the current House of Commons are denied the opportunity to debate and discuss the fiscal direction of the country. That is what parliament is for.

We know the contempt in which members opposite hold parliament. We have seen that demonstrated time and time again, including during the debate last night on the motion of the government House leader, the former patron saint of effective opposition. He has become the patron saint of hypocrisy in terms of what he has done in denying opposition members and, in fact, members of his own caucus opportunities to effectively represent their constituents in this place.

However, the fundamental issue in not having a budget and not having an accountability for the fiscal policy of the government to parliament goes much deeper than simply having a budget that does not reflect current economic times. It strikes to the very core of parliamentary accountability and respect for the parliamentary institutions that are the cornerstones of our democracy in Canada.

• (1815)

We are all concerned on this side of the House. In fact many members opposite are gravely concerned although they will not express that in the House. They express their views of dissatisfaction with the current government and lack of respect paid to backbenchers behind the curtains as they impale themselves on microphones when reporters talk to them quietly looking for comments without names.

They are very brave when they are outside the House where they can make comments with the impunity of comments provided as background and without any regard or fear of repercussions from the Prime Minister's Office or Mr. Goldenberg.

The fact is that we need a significantly renewed sense of respect for parliament. There is no better way to provide that in the current context than to introduce a February budget. In the past seven years there has not been a worse February than this one to duck the issues and not even introduce a budget. I would like to be debating the hon. member's tax reform measures as part of a February budget as we should be doing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to touch on a few points that were raised in order to make corrections.

My colleague of the Canadian Alliance said that independent workers have the right to deduct their expenses, but not the mechanics or the electricians or the ordinary trade employees who work for them.

This is not what I was saying. I was saying that, if it is the companies, the big corporations or the small businesses that buy the tools, they are deductible, but if it is the employee himself who buys them, they are not deductible.

I have to disagree with my colleague from Kings—Hants, because I am introducing a motion to assist the small mechanics and the small electrician. However, he takes his little two minutes to talk about corporations, to say that we should give a tax cut to big corporations. I believe parliament talks about this day in and day out.

It is sad to see the parliamentary secretary, across the floor, asking me how we are going to do this. He is telling us that the solution might be to allow those with lower salaries to use the deduction, and not those who have higher salaries.

I have never seen the government give tax deductions to small and medium sized businesses that do not make a lot of money and take them away from the big companies. Strangely, they had the formula in those days and they were able to live with big companies that make a lot of money enjoying tax deductions. But when it comes to workers, they cannot find a formula. What a pity.

If my colleague from the other side, the parliamentary secretary, has a problem with the GST formula, I would suggest that the Liberals fulfil the promise they made in 1993 and eliminate the GST as they said they would do in the red book. We would have no problem with that. The tax would be eliminated for everybody. This is what the Liberals promised in 1993: to eliminate it altogether. Then it would not be a problem for anybody, rich or poor. It would not exist anymore.

That is not what happened, however. It is still there. Despite all his promises, the Prime Minister realized that he needed it. The only thing we are asking of the government is to try to be fair to certain workers.

It is just like eating a pie. Everyone takes only one piece, but after it has gone around the table, maybe there is nothing left. With the GST, we can start with one group of workers, and maybe, in the end, there will be no more GST. It was introduced by the Conservatives. I would say, with all due respect, that the Conservatives may say all they want about corporations and things like that,

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but they should not forget that they are the ones who introduced the GST, who imposed this 7% tax burden upon workers.

In closing, I would ask the House to agree to my motion unanimously. I am sure the Liberals opposite will agree, because it is a reasonable motion. Therefore, I am asking for unanimous consent to have my motion agreed to.

• (1820)

If that does not work, I may bring forward another motion to abolish the GST completely. So I am asking for unanimous consent to have my motion, Motion M-248, agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Bakopanos): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[English]

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 as a votable item, even though the member did try, the order is dropped from the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to seek some clarity on an issue that I raised in the House on February 5 after the fatal accident involving a Russian diplomat. I rose in the House to ask two questions. Actually I asked the same question twice and I did not even come close to getting an answer. I am very optimistic that the distinguished parliamentary secretary, who is commissioned today to answer the question, will answer my question.

This question arose after a Russian diplomat was involved in a fatal accident in Ottawa. We have recently learned that he is being investigated for criminal charges in Russia. He has now been fired from the diplomatic service, which is only too appropriate. It appears that he will never come back to Canada, at least as a diplomat, and be a menace to our society.

It was not the first time that this Russian diplomat was involved with the police. In fact, on two other occasions he was found to have been drinking and driving. However, after one episode, Mr. Knyazev, the diplomat, received a letter of apology from foreign affairs due to the manner in which he was treated by the Ottawa-Carleton police. It appears now that the Ottawa-Carleton police were absolutely correct and the apology should not have been submitted to the Russian embassy.

The question that I asked twice and did not get an answer either time was: When Canada apologizes to a country like Russia does it not require the approval of a minister, or can just anybody apologize on behalf of Canada? My first question was: Did the minister approve this apology specifically? When I did not get an answer I asked again: Who authorizes letters of apology on behalf of the Canadian government to other governments?

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am prepared to answer all the questions the member has raised.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade manages its relationship with the diplomatic and consular community in Canada through the office of the chief of protocol. The department's deputy head has traditionally delegated the responsibility to interact with the diplomatic and consular corps to the chief of protocol, and in his absence the deputy chief of protocol.

As part of its duties, the office of the chief of protocol is to be accountable for upholding the Vienna convention on diplomatic relations so as to guarantee to this community that Canada will respect its rights to immunities and privileges under the convention. A corollary to this responsibility is that the office of the chief of protocol endeavours, to the extent possible, to ensure that diplomats and consular representatives respect Canadian laws and regulations.

In cases involving a breach of Canada's obligations under the Vienna convention, the offended diplomat entity can at times merit an apology. Each such incident is treated on a case by case basis. Traditionally this responsibility has been delegated to the deputy head of the chief of protocol or his representative.

In the specific case which the member raises in which a letter of apology was sent to the embassy of the Russian Federation in July 1999, the facts were deemed to merit such an action. The diplomat in question was handcuffed by the police, taken to the police station and detained for a number of hours. This form of detention of a diplomat is specifically prohibited under the Vienna convention, and thus an apology was provided.

This apology did not receive ministerial approval but was effected by the office of the chief of protocol under the authority delegated to him by the deputy head.

• (1825)

As a result of the department's analysis surrounding this recent tragedy, a number of corrective measures are being taken to strengthen the accountability and policy frameworks. As such, letters of apology will receive greater scrutiny in the future and, when appropriate, higher levels of sign-offs will be given.

COAST GUARD

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, last week I directed a question to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans regarding the Canadian coast guard search and rescue dive team based on the west coast, on Sea Island. The question was this: why has the minister disbanded this dive team?

The Canadian coast guard dive team at Sea Island was founded as a pilot project in 1995. Previous to this, between 1985 and 1995, there were 36 deaths, at least 13 of which, it is suggested, could have been prevented had there been divers present. The coast guard dive team was operating on a Hovercraft out of the Sea Island base.

In a letter I received from the minister, the reasons put forward for disbanding the program were that there was risk to the divers and a minimal gain. While the letter was in transit, a tragedy did occur on the west coast. A car driven by Mr. Paul Sandhu went over a dike and ended up in the Fraser River. Tragically, Mr. Sandhu died in that accident.

There have been three reasons put forward as to why the dive team was disbanded. The safety of divers was one issue. Second, there was the issue of the need for a dive team. Third, there was a question of jurisdiction. Exactly whose responsibility is it for search and rescue dive capability on the west coast?

According to the minister, it is not the coast guard's responsibility. If it is not the coast guard's responsibility, then whose is it?

The *Richmond Review* published an article on this just recently. According to an interview with Vice-Admiral Ronald Buck, commander of maritime forces in the Pacific region, he said that it is not the department's mandate to respond to these types of emergencies, although it will respond when it is ordered to.

The Department of National Defence has bases in Esquimalt and Comox, but both are quite a bit removed from the Sea Island area where there is such heavy marine and air traffic exposed to considerable risks.

If it is not the responsibility of the Department of National Defence, then perhaps it is the RCMP's responsibility. The RCMP also has a dive team, but when contacted, RCMP Sergeant Dennis Erickson, program manager for the E division underwater recovery

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team, said that his squad is not set up as a rescue team although it will respond to distress calls. It is not the RCMP's mandate to perform underwater rescues.

In the tragic incident involving Mr. Sandhu, the RCMP divers arrived at the scene of the accident about 35 minutes after they were alerted. The hovercraft based team was there within three minutes of being notified.

The question of jurisdiction comes back to this: why was this team disbanded? Looking at the other two issues, that is, safety of the divers and need, I alluded to a report that said in the 10 years previous to when the dive team was originally operating, there were 36 incidents, 13 of which might have resulted in lives being saved.

There is no other site in B.C. and probably in Canada with a combination of search and rescue influences like the lower Georgia strait and the Fraser River. The factors include heavy year round traffic, a demonstrated high frequency of capsized vehicle incidents, close proximity to a busy year round port, and a major urban centre. All this is in proximity to an existing 24 hour a day crewed high speed vessel platform, with personnel who are very well trained.

The minister said he would be taking several weeks to review the issue. Will he commit to table in the House the parameters of the review, indicating the deadline that he has issued to his department for the review?

• (1830)

Mr. Lawrence O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today about the government's commitments to safety on the water.

Before I continue, I wish to state that it is unfortunate that the automobile accident in Richmond, British Columbia, resulted in a death on February 18. My heartfelt sympathies go out to the Sandhu family on this tragic accident.

Rescue diving was initiated in the Canadian coast guard as a two year pilot project in 1995. The project was undertaken to determine the effectiveness of rescue diving as a complement to coast guard search and rescue. The pilot project was meant to gather necessary information.

Rescue diving is not a core mandate of the coast guard. However, the coast guard is not a static organization. It continuously reviews all aspects of its services to Canadians as part of the government's commitment to safety. This includes establishing projects as necessary to ensure that the coast guard has all the facts before recommending changes to the government.

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In 1997, after two years of operating the rescue diving pilot project, the project was extended in order to collect further information. The coast guard did not have sufficient information to determine the effectiveness of providing a rescue diving capability.

In November 2000, after reviewing the information spanning a six year period, the coast guard, in light of the low demand and low effectiveness of rescue diving and out of concern for the safety of divers engaged in the very high risk operations in these activities, suspended the pilot project.

Ending a pilot project that is well known is a difficult decision. The dedication of the professional specialists in this project is well known. We acknowledge that. Let us not forget that this was a pilot project. It is not the mandate of coast guard to deliver underwater rescue services. It is noteworthy that the United States coast guard and the British royal navy terminated their programs for the same reasons that prompted our decision.

As members are aware, on February 21, 2001, the minister announced an independent review of the February 18 accident and of the basis of the decision to terminate the Sea Island rescue diving pilot project. Until this review is complete, and a final decision is announced, the rescue diving project will remain suspended.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, last Friday I asked the minister for multiculturalism to explain an advertisement that appeared on the online job search for the Government of Canada. This was a job with Correctional Service Canada that specifically excluded anyone from applying for the job who was not an Indian person.

The job advertisement was brought to my attention by a constituent of mine. She was highly offended that the Government of Canada would deny her the opportunity of even applying for a job, an administrative position in this case, with Correctional Service Canada because she was, according to the government, not the right skin colour or not the right race to qualify for this job.

The government's justification for this policy was what it called affirmative action. Affirmative action or employment equity are racist policies that discriminate against people on the basis of race in the hiring process. There are a couple of things that the proponents of these highly discriminatory and prejudiced race based hiring policies do not understand or are not able to answer. I would like to direct my comments to the minister about that.

First, I would like to explain to the minister, because the minister appears to not understand, that it is not possible to discriminate in favour of someone on the basis of race without discriminating

against somebody else because of his or her race. For example, June Kuhn, a constituent of mine brought to my attention the fact that she was discriminated against because she was not an Indian. That is a blatant act of discrimination and is unjustifiable. The person who obtained the job in this case received it because he or she was discriminated in favour of while my constituent was discriminated against because of her skin colour.

• (1835)

These policies are not only racist but highly offensive. That is why over 90% of all Canadians are opposed to them. They are offensive in many ways, not the least of which is the message, which in this case singles out Indian people. The message is that they are inferior and incapable of competing for jobs on the basis of skills and merit, so they must therefore be provided with special circumstances that discriminate against other people.

I could go on for quite some time, but I will wrap this up by asking the minister a very specific question. I request a detailed answer. What does the minister say to my constituent, June Kuhn, who is denied the opportunity to even apply for a job with the Public Service of Canada because she is not the right race? What does he say to her? Instead of politically correct rhetoric and doublespeak, I would like the minister to be very specific in the answer. What does he say to someone, in this case my constituent, who was denied the opportunity to seek employment with the federal government because she is of the wrong skin colour?

Mr. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the concept of merit as the basis for hiring is one that we all agree on. However, good jobs and promotions elude many visible minorities and aboriginal men and women in Canada according to a recent report written by the Canadian Council on Social Development, the CCSD, and based on 1996 census data.

The study, "Unequal Access: A Canadian Profile of Racial Differences in Education, Employment and Income", found that while keeping education levels constant, 50% of aboriginals were unemployed, followed by 34% of visible minorities and 25% for non-racialized groups. Even though labour force participation is higher for visible minorities than it is among other Canadians, their occupational status is generally lower.

The CCSD study also found that visible minorities earn less money than non-visible minorities with the same qualifications. The same is true for aboriginal people and women and persons with disabilities. Earnings gaps were found between visible minority groups and aboriginals and white males after accounting for factors such as education levels. The gaps increased if the individual visible minority person obtained his or her education in a foreign country.

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Given the same education levels, aboriginal people were the least likely to be in the top income bracket, 5.8%, followed by foreign born visible minorities at 12.5%. Non-racialized groups were most likely, 20%, to be in the top income bracket.

In his paper, "Immigrant Skill Utilization in the Canadian Labour Market: Implications of Human Capital Research", Professor Jeffrey G. Reitz speaks of the underutilization of skills in Canada which leads to substantial economic losses and has a negative impact on Canadian society.

Government and its institutions must represent the people they serve. Forty-six percent of Canadians report at least one origin

other than English or French. In order to represent all of this diversity we must ensure that we find out why they are not equally represented in our institutions and set strategies in place to rectify that. Good government ensures that we help Canadians identify and remove barriers to full participation in Canadian society.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): It being 6.39 p.m. the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.39 p.m.)

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