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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, December 3, 2002

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, December 3, 2002

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)
[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 31 petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration entitled "The Safe Third Country Regulations".

In that report, under recommendation 2 on page 9 and page 19, there is a correction to be made. The section should read 159.6 rather than 156.9.

[Translation]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, on chapter 13 "Other Audit Observations (Parc Downsview Park Inc.)" of the December 2001 Report of the Auditor General of Canada.

I also present the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on chapter 1, "Financial Information Strategy: Infrastructure Readiness" of the December 1, 2001 Report of the Auditor General of Canada; and pursuant to Standing Order 108(3) (e), its examination of chapter 7 of the April 2002 Report of the Auditor General of Canada "Financial Information Strategy: Infrastructure Readiness and Strategies to Implement Modern Comptrollership".

I also present the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on chapter 4 "Voted Grants and Contributions: Govern-

ment-Wide Management" and chapter 5 "Voted Grants and Contributions: Program Management" of the December 2001 Report of the Auditor General of Canada.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts requests that the government table a comprehensive response to these three reports.

The Deputy Speaker: We congratulate the hon. member for St. Albert on his French and encourage him to continue.

* * *

● (1005)
[English]

VERBAL ABUSE PREVENTION WEEK ACT

Mr. Shawn Murphy (Hillsborough, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-320, an act to establish Verbal Abuse Prevention Week.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to re-introduce my private member's bill, formerly Bill C-414. The bill would establish the first week of every October as verbal abuse prevention week.

I have sponsored the bill again in the hope that it will bring to the forefront the seriousness of verbal abuse in our communities, homes and schools, and the importance of raising people's awareness on this topic.

I have received a great deal of support for the, bill, both from the constituents in my riding and from across Canada. The bill deserves to have a second chance in the House of Commons and be voted on by members of Parliament.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions from my constituents in Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca. The first one calls upon Parliament to protect our children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities involving children are outlawed.

Routine Proceedings

COAST GUARD

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon the government to make the coast guard an independent body, whose priority is the saving of lives, separate from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, with all the necessary resources for staffing and equipment, including a new hovercraft, to enable it to perform rescues of those in peril.

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition signed by a majority of the residents of the Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans riding and by many residents of the greater Quebec City area.

The petitioners begin by stating their opposition to further filling in of the Beauport flats bordering the river.

Next, they urge Parliament to intervene and to turn over the management of recreational property bordering Beauport bay, as well as the bay itself, to an organization that will develop its recreational and tourism potential, while fully respecting the environment.

INUIT COMMUNITY OF NUNAVIK

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to table four petitions from the Inuit of Nunavik, specifically from the Puvirnituk, Kuujuaq, Umiujaq and Ivujivik communities.

They point out that the federal government, through one of its departments and police forces, ordered the killing of Inuit sled dogs in New Quebec, between 1950 and 1969.

The federal government did not consult the Inuit communities in New Quebec.

The killing of these dogs has had tragic social, economic and cultural repercussions on the Inuit of Nunavik.

In closing, no effort was made by the federal government to put in place corrective measures to help the Inuit of Nunavik maintain their way of life.

● (1010)

[*English*]

CANADIAN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COLLEGE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from the people of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke asking Parliament to recognize that the Canadian Emergency Preparedness College is essential to Canadians for emergency situations, that the facilities should stay in Arnprior and that the government should upgrade the facilities in order to provide the necessary training. It is particularly important at this time because now the college is forced to turn away people from municipalities that are seeking training at a potentially high period of alert.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by constituents of Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys. The petitioners are asking Parliament to ensure protection of our children by taking all the necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify child pornography and that exploit children be met with swift punishment.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions today. The first one is on the issue of child pornography.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that child pornography is abhorred by the majority of Canadians and that the courts have not applied the current child pornography law in a way which makes it clear that such exploitation will always be met with swift punishment.

The petitioners, therefore, call upon Parliament to protect our children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities involving children are outlawed.

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with regard to the family. It is a petition that has been presented in this place probably over 200 times since I have been a member.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that managing the family home and caring for preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its contribution to our society.

Also, the petitioners would like to point out that the Income Tax Act discriminates against families who make the choice to provide care in the home to preschool children, the chronically ill, the aged or the disabled.

The petitioners, therefore, call upon Parliament to pursue initiatives to eliminate that tax discrimination against families who decide to provide care in the home to preschool children, the chronically, the aged or the disabled.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the final petition has to do with stem cell research. The petitioners, who believe, as I do, that life begins at conception, would like to draw to the attention of the House that Canadians at large support stem cell research. However the real issue is where those stem cells come from.

The petitioners want to point out that non-embryonic stem cells, which are also known as adult stem cells, have shown significant research progress without the immune rejection or ethical problems associated with embryonic stem cells.

Government Orders

•(1015)

The petitioners, therefore, call upon Parliament to focus its legislative support on adult stem cell research to find the cures and therapies necessary to treat the illnesses and diseases of suffering Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I suggest that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

KYOTO PROTOCOL

The House resumed from December 2 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning I will be splitting my time with the member for Winnipeg South Centre.

Everyone agrees that we must take up the challenge of dealing with climate change. It is morally and practically the right thing to do.

As Minister of Health and as an Albertan, I believe action is necessary. There is little dispute about the fact that greenhouse gases are changing the global climate. We now understand that there will be a broad range of direct and indirect impacts on our health and well-being.

However, deciding how we will take up this challenge raises a number of issues critical to our national interest, prosperity and well-being. One cannot discuss climate change without also addressing matters as fundamental as our long term environmental sustainability, our economic well-being and the functioning of our federation.

Unfortunately, I believe climate change and its very real and serious consequences have become sidelined in the minds of many Canadians and in its place we have a politically charged, rhetorical debate around the Kyoto protocol and its specific targets for Canada, targets that can only be met with substantial sacrifice and a determined effort on the part of all Canadians.

Let me be frank this morning. I wish the process that has led us to this vote on ratification could have been different. However, now the most important issue becomes how we as a country develop and implement a plan to meet our commitments.

Our pledge to all Canadians must be to work with all our partners on an implementation plan that promotes our economic competitiveness and is fair to all regions and sectors.

There are certain key principles that must inform our plan and its implementation.

First, we must do nothing that will undermine or limit our potential economic growth and prosperity. There must be no caps on growth and there must be no caps on the growth of any sector of our economy.

Second, no region or province can be expected to bear a disproportionate share of the costs, direct or indirect, of meeting our commitments. This is a national challenge, a national project. The public benefits will be shared nationally and so must be the burdens.

•(1020)

Third, our implementation plan must provide the certainty needed by business to ensure continued investment and economic growth. I am particularly interested in those sectors known as the large emitters. These are energy intensive industries that are key to the economic prosperity of our country.

They include the oil and gas industry, the electricity industry and the mining and manufacturing industries. These sectors are dealt with specifically in the government's climate change plan and are the only sectors in the Canadian economy from which specific greenhouse gas emission reductions, not more than 55 megatonnes, are required.

Canada can only make its contribution to the global problem of climate change from a position of economic strength. Therefore we know that we must provide the certainty needed by the large industrial emitters who will be the engine of our continuing economic prosperity.

These companies operate in an environment of great economic uncertainty. Within this environment their hallmark is their ability to make multibillion dollar investments that can span decades. They have been instrumental in building our country. For them, Kyoto adds a new complexity. For them, Kyoto adds a new kind of uncertainty, an uncertainty not yet well understood. These sectors already have made important contributions to greenhouse gas emission reductions through investments in and the application of world leading technologies.

They will continue to do so, but we must be clear about what we are asking of them. With respect to Kyoto risk, we owe them as much certainty as possible so they can explain their Kyoto obligations clearly to their shareholders and their investors. They are not yet in a position to do so.

I and others have been working to provide the details necessary for the large industrial emitters to be able to plan for their obligations under the Kyoto protocol. We are making progress in: defining achievable reduction targets; agreeing to flexible compliance options; addressing price risk; and setting out the longer term policy certainty necessary for long term investment.

More remains to be done and I am committed to seeing this process through.

Government Orders

The government understands the need for long term certainty. When I was the Minister of Natural Resources we implemented the recommendations of the oil sands task force. We recognized the long term nature of the major investments oil sands development required and we put in place the fiscal and policy certainty necessary to allow these investments to be made. As a result, this sector has enjoyed unprecedented growth to the benefit of Albertans and all Canadians.

My fourth and final principle is one about which I feel very deeply. We must build a strong collaborative partnership to meet the challenge of global warming, a partnership in which we must all be involved and be included.

To date, this process has been criticized by many as lacking in this spirit of partnership. On matters of national interest, we have an obligation to listen to each other, to hear each other and then show the flexibility and the understanding that has guided the development of our nation in the past and which now, more than ever, are required as we turn to face together the challenge of climate change.

Those are the principles that I believe we must follow. They capture, in my view, preconditions for implementation. They are also principles that I am confident will be applied. However, if those principles were not to be applied, then my choice would be a simple one. My first commitment is to Albertans. I know that the government will not turn its back on Alberta, nor will it turn its back on the energy sector, which means prosperity for all Canadians.

In conclusion, I will support the resolution before this House. In combating climate change, we are fulfilling that most basic responsibility of us all: to leave our world in a better condition than that in which we found it. However we would do that very cause a disservice if our means are ones that erode public confidence or undermine our long term interests. We must combat climate change but we must do so in the right way.

• (1025)

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in my hon. colleague's speech she went back on what she said earlier. She said earlier, "My view is very clear. One cannot make an informed decision on the ratification of Kyoto until you see the plan, until you know what the components of the plan are, how they will impact on the different provinces, industrial sectors and consumers, and who will be paying what".

She stated that publicly and she knows that this plan fulfills none of the conditions that she outlined for her own support of the ratification of this accord.

Furthermore, she knows that in the energy sector in her own province projects are being scaled back, particularly in the oil sands, because of the investment chill caused by a lack of a plan by the federal government.

How could she support a Prime Minister who did not have the decency to inform her before he went to Johannesburg and announced his support and his intention to ratify this before the end of the year? How could she say this is working together with the people of the province of Alberta when in fact the Minister of the Environment has gone out of his way to alienate the provincial government and the people of Alberta?

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Speaker, I will speak to that which I know that I am doing and others are doing in this government on behalf of a key industrial sector about which I have spoken this morning, the large emitters, including the oil and gas sectors, as opposed to, quite truthfully, trying to undermine the economic well-being of this country as the opposition does with its scare tactics.

What we are in the process of doing is in fact providing the very certainty that is necessary to ensure that the large industrial emitters will continue to prosper and continue to be a key component of the economy in this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, you invited us to make a few comments. I will make only one.

As members know, the Government of Quebec agrees with ratifying Kyoto. Nonetheless, the National Assembly of Quebec asked for four things: that the allocation formula take into account the reductions achieved since 1990 and those that will be achieved by 2008; that the manufacturing industry be treated equitably and not be assimilated to the energy sector in the allocation of emissions rights, in order to balance the efforts required of all the major economic sectors; that the allocation formula for the energy sector favour sources of energy that emit less carbon; and that a bilateral agreement be signed with the Government of Quebec.

I would like to have the minister's reactions to these four points.

• (1030)

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Speaker, I think it would be inappropriate for me to comment on a number of those points because they would be much more appropriately addressed by my colleagues, the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Natural Resources.

However, in relation to an overarching desire on the part of all of us and all industrial sectors to have certainty, I could not agree more. In fact that is where I have directed my efforts over these past number of months. I will continue in the weeks ahead to direct my efforts to providing our key industrial sectors with the certainty they need to continue to grow and prosper.

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to first thank the hon. Minister of Health for indicating her support for the ratification of the Kyoto accord, particularly as Minister of Health she is well aware of the very serious long term concerns about the impact climate change will have on the health of Canadians.

I want to ask a very specific question. The minister has spoken of the importance of certainty. She has talked about the importance of assurances to the large industrial emitters. Another very important area of certainty is the question of the impact of the Kyoto accord on workers and communities that will be affected. She knows the CEP union is very supportive of the Kyoto accord but it has called for just transition strategies to ensure that not just large industrial emitters but that workers and communities also are treated with equity and with fairness in the process of ratifying and implementing the Kyoto accord.

Government Orders

Could the minister indicate what steps the government is taking to ensure that just transition strategies are in fact in place for workers and communities affected?

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Speaker, I think the specifics of the hon. member's question, which is a very important one, would be better addressed by my colleagues, the Minister of the Environment and Minister of Natural Resources.

However I would hope that everyone in the House embraces the principle. It is very important for individual communities and workers in those communities. If in fact there are impacts as we move forward with the implementation of our commitment to reduce greenhouse gases, we have to be very sensitive to the fact that there may be industries of one sort or another that will be in transition. We need to work together with those industries, with the employees, with the communities and the provinces to ensure, and we have made it very clear, that no one province, no one region, and I would even add no one community, no one set of workers must bear a disproportionate burden of whatever the costs are as we move forward to deal with greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about economic certainty several times. Will she promote and advocate the federal government underwriting unforeseen losses to help that uncertainty? What will she do to make the principles that she talked about operational, instead of a nice speech? What is the specific mechanism that she will be recommending to deal with the potential economic harm? Where is the plan to deal with it?

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Speaker, if we look at it as it relates to the large industrial emitters, we are in fact working very hard with them to ensure that we provide them with the economic certainty they need. Those discussions have been ongoing for some time.

If the member were to look at the climate change plan that was released by the government some two weeks ago, he would see that specific and special attention has been paid to the unique challenges of the large industrial emitters.

I have every reason to believe that the government, where the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Environment and others have pledged to see a tripling in oil sands production over the next number of years, will ensure that everything necessary is done to ensure the long term economic prosperity of this country, which means we must provide the necessary certainty to the large industrial emitters.

Mr. Ken Epp: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In view of the fact that there are a number of members still wanting to ask the minister some questions, I would ask that you seek unanimous consent to extend questions and answers by five minutes for the minister.

• (1035)

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Elk Island have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by now all members of the House are aware of the serious implications of elevated greenhouse gas levels.

Since the industrial revolution human activities have greatly increased greenhouse gas levels. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a world panel of experts, the greenhouse gas effect is causing the temperature in the lower portion of the atmosphere to rise. If we continue the activities that have created this change, we can compare it to adding another blanket to the bed in an already warm house. We all know the results of that.

Something had to be done. A timetable, targets and mechanisms were developed to deal with our excessive production of gases that were causing the atmosphere to get hotter. This extra heat is producing changes that we are only beginning to see. Climate changes are occurring in winds, precipitation, cloud cover, humidity and all other aspects of climate.

In Manitoba, where I live, we are concerned about these changes. The effects in all our communities are now being seen. I toured badly flooded farmlands just south of Winnipeg this summer. Flooding in the middle of summer is something that farmers in the Red River Valley have not contended with in the past. Our northern neighbours are extremely concerned about the future of the winter road system which is the lifeline of many northern communities.

Churchill, Manitoba, is the polar bear capital of the world but these magnificent animals are threatened by climate change. The ice breakup is occurring two weeks earlier, on average, than 20 years ago. This shortens the time available for polar bears to hunt from ice flows. Climate change will affect the traditional economies of aboriginal peoples including their abilities to hunt and fish.

Canada contributes about 2% of the world's greenhouse gases but we are the second highest per capita producer of the gases in the industrial world. If this contribution were not curtailed, Canada would face some very serious implications. They would take the form of: droughts affecting agriculture in all regions, reduced water levels in the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence, insect infestations and forest fires, changes and reduction in marine fisheries, melting permafrost and increased heat waves, reduced air quality, and increased health problems.

Something had to be done. The Kyoto protocol and framework conventions on climate change is one result of decades of international negotiations to control and reduce greenhouse gases. If the Kyoto protocol were to falter, it would take years to negotiate and implement a new agreement.

We have all heard the arguments, from both sides regarding Kyoto and complex issues such as climate change, often becoming buried in the rhetoric of defence. I have attempted to listen to the theory from both sides of the debate including both the scientific and cost analysis, and to make an informed decision.

Government Orders

I agree with the evidence presented by bodies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which states that increased warming is due to the increase in greenhouse gas concentrations. I agree with the province of Manitoba when it states that the Kyoto protocol is the only mechanism currently available to nations from around the world engaged in a process that would combat the serious risks posed by climate change.

We do not know that Kyoto would destroy jobs. Kyoto would be a new approach to job creation and economic growth. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives says that a million dollars invested in conventional energy projects would generate 7.3 jobs on average while the same amount invested in renewable energy, wind and solar power, would create 12.2 jobs.

Premier Klein has said that Kyoto would drive investment away and kill jobs. I believe that ultimately oil prices, not Kyoto, would govern the growth on investment in the oil sands and other energy projects. The most important factor in the growth of oil supplies is that of the international price of oil and we all know the variables that apply to that price.

Many companies are finding that making their operations more efficient not only reduce greenhouse gases, it saves them money. Midwest Food Products in Carberry, Manitoba, made energy efficient improvements and cut its energy to save \$900,000 in 1999 and reduced its emissions by 10,000 tonnes.

●(1040)

Maple Leaf Foods in Manitoba installed a heat recovery system in its Winnipeg plant. With other improvements it is saving more than \$30,000 a year.

Recently the Ontario Medical Association reported that smog and poor air quality cost Ontario more than \$10 billion annually. This figure includes both health costs and lost work time. Any plan, such as Kyoto, that would reduce the cost to society and individual suffering must be supported.

I do not speak alone on this issue of smog and air pollution. Organizers as diverse as the Teamsters Canada and the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario both endorse and support the Kyoto protocol.

I want to touch upon another made in Manitoba initiative regarding the reduction of greenhouse gas. I speak of hydroelectric capacity. Federal studies have shown that developing Canada's hydroelectric capacity is one of the most efficient methods of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is clean and abundant. Manitoba is willing and able to participate in such an initiative. We have the flowing water, the know-how, and the people to build these facilities for the benefit of all Canadians. I encourage all Canadians to embrace that.

Hydroelectricity is not the only clean source of energy. With support from the Government of Canada, Vidor Machine Inc. of Arborg, Manitoba, is burning straw instead of coal to heat a number of barns. It is saving money and reducing emissions.

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Oh, come on.

Ms. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, I will send my hon. colleague who is heckling in the background some data on this because even he would be impressed by this information.

Straw also has the potential to be turned into ethanol. The government's climate change plan for Canada sets a target to have 35% of the gas supply have 10% ethanol. That is good for the environment and farmers.

I realize that Canada is a diverse country. The oil industry's concerns of Alberta regarding Kyoto are different from the concerns of a province like Manitoba and certainly no less important. But it is time we act together and logically for a common vision of a healthy Canada. The 20th century was the warmest the world has seen in 1,000 years. We owe it to the people, our children, our grandchildren, and the future generations of great-grandchildren to work toward a solution. The environment and human health would benefit from the implementation of the Kyoto protocol.

I urge the House to support the ratification of this accord, a move to a collaborative process of implementation.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where to start to critique that presentation, other than to say that generally speaking the entire presentation was nonsense, almost from beginning to end, except for the hello and the good-bye.

How can we counter someone who argues that we must do more to fight smog and pollution, when Kyoto has nothing to do with smog and pollution? What do we say to someone who says that we could create more jobs by having more wind power? That is like saying if we were to put horses in charge of turning windmills round and round, then we could have thousands of more farmers employed with the horses. It is a ridiculous argument.

The hon. member went on to say that the heat recovery system installed in her province was a good example of how to save energy, yet that was done without the Kyoto accord. It was done in advance of it for economic reasons and not for the Kyoto reasons.

What do we say to someone who says this is the warmest summer in a 1,000 years? What do we say to someone who has no proof of that and no way of substantiating it? It is ridiculous.

I believe the whole speech was nonsense, just to encourage her. The Minister of Health has said that we need certainty in this for business.

That reminds me a lot of the speeches that were given about the land claims process in British Columbia where we were going to have certainty and that, because of certainty, business would thrive. The government's land claims process in British Columbia resulted in not one settled land claim in my entire province in 10 years. For 10 years we have wrestled with uncertainty. For 10 years we have had hundreds of millions of dollars wasted. We have obligated aboriginal people and kept them in poverty for 10 more years, while the government screamed about how well it was all working. Yet there was no certainty in the land claims process.

Government Orders

As the Minister of Health has said, the business circles in Alberta are not yet able to explain the Kyoto agreement. Why? Because nobody understands Kyoto, especially not the businesses in Alberta.

How can the hon. member vote in favour of an agreement like Kyoto when her own Minister of Health says that no one can explain it in the business circles in Alberta? How does she think this lack of certainty will do anything to produce the economic growth that everyone feels is necessary for a general environmental clean up, not this Kyoto boondoggle that we will all supposedly sign next week?

Ms. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that we are seeing a new industry being generated right now in the House, that of wind power. I would suggest to the hon. member that he travel a little more across the country and learn of the impacts in other parts of the country and see what is happening in other countries.

●(1045)

Our Minister of Health raised some important questions as they related to certainty. I know that myself and all members of the government are anxious that no region of the country be penalized and that a process be in place of consultation with all industries, employee groups and communities to ensure that no one is harmed.

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must comment on the totally uninformed rant made by the member for Fraser Valley. Fortunately I do not think the rest of his party has such a lack of understanding of the agreement.

It was good that the member brought up the importance of Kyoto and the reduction of smog. The member opposite mentioned oversimplification. Unfortunately the former critic in health had the same misconception, and I must admit I had the same misconception when I first heard about Kyoto. It just relates to carbon dioxide and a number of other gases. One would think that it does not relate to smog, but when we cut those greenhouse emitting gases smog is also cut. There is a tremendous cut in smog when companies successfully cut greenhouse gases—

An hon. member: How?

Mr. Larry Bagnell: An hon. member is asking how? The answer is obvious, by cutting gas emissions from vehicles and oil burners, and by cutting coal and diesel fuel emissions. There are lots of particulates that go with those. They cause emphysema, lung diseases and asthma which hurt our relatives, our families and our health care system.

Could the member give us examples of how companies in Manitoba have cut energy and made money?

Ms. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, supported by both the Government of Manitoba and the Government of Canada, several industries in Manitoba are putting forward efforts to reduce emissions. Hudson Bay Smelting and Mining has put in a number of important initiatives thereby saving dollars and reducing emissions. Simmons Canada Incorporated, which is located in Manitoba as well as other communities across the country, has also put in a number of important initiatives. It is important that we work together, consult and continue with these initiatives.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today and enter into this debate on the ratification of Kyoto.

The Minister of Health, who represents Edmonton West, just spoke to the issue. She proposes that the risk to the oil and gas industry be reduced but at the same time we proceed somehow with ratification. That seems like an oxymoron. The very act of ratification itself without an implementation plan, supported by industry, exposes the industry to the worst risk. Already the consequences of that are manifest.

In spite of denials that such a report exists, my colleague had a report from Canada's leading investment dealers, the Investment Dealers Association of Canada, in his hand yesterday during question period. The report surveyed 53 top American equity analysts. Two-thirds of those surveyed warned that implementing the international climate control treaty would harm the Canadian economy and would cause Wall Street to rethink energy sector investments in Canada. That fallout already is happening. We already have threatened cutbacks in investments from big international investors, upon which we rely on Canada's future developed, if we attempt ratification without an implementation plan.

The member from Winnipeg South Centre who just spoke a moment ago said that the interests of Alberta were different than the interests of people in Manitoba and other areas. The riding which I represent, Nanaimo—Alberni, is in British Columbia. We have a lot of people who are very concerned about the environment, as are myself and the members on this side. However we are also concerned about a plan. How does the member propose to address the issues that a province like Manitoba faces, with huge transportation distances between, for example, Winnipeg and areas like Morden and Winkler where some of my family lives? There are huge transportation costs and it is a very cold province. I grew up in Winnipeg and it was cold, something like Ottawa is today.

We need to heat our homes. It would be nice if everyone could go to energy efficient homes, but what kind of costs would be imposed on homeowners? The government wants people to buy energy efficient cars. When people living in rural areas go into town they need vehicles that can carry farm supplies and groceries. The grocery store is not a five minute walk away as it is for many of the urban members. How would the member address the huge transportation costs? We are such a cold nation. We have serious problems with which we have to deal in terms of heating our homes.

Government Orders

We might all want to go back to sod homes like the first inhabitants in Canada, such as Mr. Snorri Thorfinnson. We read about the settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland. They made thermally sound sod homes, which were a metre and a half thick. They worked pretty well and conserved heat. I am not sure that most Canadians are prepared to or will live in homes like that. We wonder how some of the advocates of the Kyoto protocol expect us to heat our homes. We wonder how we can expand and develop as a country, with the restrictions that Kyoto will put on us.

Today in my speech I would like to focus on several issues related to Kyoto: science, economics and Kyoto's effect on my riding of Nanaimo—Alberni.

On the question of science, the government's climate change plan on page 5 makes the statement that there is a strong consensus among scientists that climate change is already occurring and that human activity is contributing to it. Is there a strong consensus and is that an accurate statement? I would suggest that it is a very misleading statement. Climate scientists agree that climate is always changing, but to say that there is a consensus that human activity is contributing to that is simply not true.

A dictionary definition of consensus is that it involves general agreement or unanimity; group solidarity in sentiment and belief. However there is no unanimity or even general agreement among scientists that global warming is even taking place, let alone that human activity is causing it.

Regarding the anti-Kyoto scientific community, since the climate treaty was hatched in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, scientists have shown their dissent in four petitions. We have the 1992 statement by the atmospheric scientists on greenhouse warming with more than 100 signatures. In 1992 we had the Heidelberg appeal, with more than 4,000 signatures. These are not high school biology students. They are reputable international scientists with recognized credentials.

• (1050)

In 1996 the Leipzig declaration was signed by some 130 prominent U.S. climate scientists, including several who had actually participated in the UN intergovernmental panel on climate change, the so-called IPCC.

In 1998 the Oregon petition was signed by some 17,000 U.S. scientists, thus far. We might suggest that it is obvious that there is no strong consensus among scientists and the government is plainly misrepresenting the facts when it tells Canadians that there is.

Why is there no consensus? The general circulation models, the GCMs, are weak instruments of prediction. Predictions vary by as much as 300% in temperature forecasts. They require arbitrary adjustments. We always have to look at our assumptions when making scientific models because there is something in logic called a non sequitur. One can arrive at an erroneous conclusion by logical reasoning if it is based on a false premise.

We had better look what the assumptions are. The assumptions in this regard involve arbitrary adjustments. They cannot handle crucial mesoscale and microscale cloud processes. The forecasts of substantial warming depend on a positive feedback from atmospheric water vapour.

The GCMs cannot account for past observations. The temperature rose between 1920 to 1940. Then we had the cooling trend up until 1975. Since 1979, there was the absence of warming in the satellite records.

Other explanations which need to be explored are: reducing the positive feedback from water vapour; an increase in cloudiness; anthropogenic aerosols; man-made land changes; increasing air traffic; and solar variations including climate. Goodness knows, the solar variations have tremendous impact on climate. It appears they have throughout history, from the beginning of time and recorded history.

Will Kyoto work? Here is a quote from Richard Benedick, one of the chief negotiators for the Montreal agreement on ozone reductions. That was an effective international agreement. He wrote an article entitled, "How Workable is the Kyoto Protocol", published in *WeatherVane*.

According to Richard Benedick, "the Kyoto outcome will have an inconsequential impact on the climate system". What sacrifices is the government asking Canadians to take on for an outcome that is very questionable indeed? It is a valid question.

Dr. Jerry Mahlman, a Princeton scientist and environmental adviser to President Clinton, was quoted in *Science*, December 19, 1997. He said, "It might take another 30 Kyotos over the next century" to control global warming. There is not a lot of confidence that the agreement, even if it were signed and if it were possible to implement and comply, would have a significant impact on global climate change.

Two-thirds of the countries are not covered by Kyoto. The total of CO₂ emissions could just as likely skyrocket if Kyoto is implemented. We might say that because the Kyoto deal allows for emissions trading. It does not require that Canada would make CO₂ reductions. Kyoto would establish emission trading credits. The scheme would allow Canada to buy credits toward its targets by transferring money abroad and in some cases to the countries that have worse environmental records, far worse than our own, and we could do that rather than make CO₂ reductions.

Implementing Kyoto as it is, a very weak, damaged environmental agreement, could endanger the environment rather than help it.

Now I have some facts. Man-made CO₂ accounts for about 0.4% of atmospheric CO₂. Water vapour, which causes 97% of the greenhouse effect, accounts for 100 times more of the volume of CO₂.

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•(1055)

The Kyoto accord does not deal with the serious concerns about environmental contamination in general or air pollution in particular, for example, particulate matter, sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxide and smog. Canadians are being misled somewhat in thinking that reductions in CO₂ will mean a reduction in the smog about which we are concerned.

It is interesting to note that weather balloons have shown no warming in the past 45 years. Anybody walking on the streets of Ottawa today would be hard pressed to think about global warming. In fact, we are in a freeze across the country. If there is any agreement on global warming, we are not experiencing it this week in Canada.

Weather balloons have shown no warming in the past 45 years. Satellites have shown no warming in the past 23 years. Both methods are infinitely more reliable than surface temperature readings. We might want to have that question answered. Could members opposite explain that to me? If we are so sure that man-made intervention is causing global warming and if we are sure that it is happening, then why have weather balloons not shown warming in the past 45 years nor satellites shown or confirmed that in the past 23 years? That is a valid question.

Let me talk about Kyoto economics. When we ask what the cost of implementing Kyoto will be to Canadians, we do not get much of an answer.

An hon. member: No answer.

Mr. James Lunney: One of my colleagues says no answer and that is really what we are getting.

The only cost mentioned in the latest plan is \$1.6 billion which the government has already spent. That is an interesting statistic. A lot of money has been spent on this because we are concerned. We ought to be interested in science and be good stewards of the planet. We ought to be thinking about how we can best develop the resources we need and how we can best live as human communities, protecting the environment by having minimal impact on the environment and making our footprint one that we can live with for generations to come.

If we are to go into something that will have potentially tremendous costs to us, we ought to ensure that it is at least something that will produce a desirable outcome. At this point we do not know what the costs are.

Canadian manufacturers and exporters estimate 450,000 jobs will be lost to Canada with a cost of as much as \$40 billion. We already suffer from a challenge in being competitive in this new global environment. How can Canada, by saddling itself to this agreement, ratify it when our biggest trading partner south of the border and our North American trading partners will not ratify it? When 85% of our trade is south of the border, how do we think we can this without impacting on our economy?

Most of our industry is concentrated right along the 49th parallel. One mill has uprooted itself this week from Fort Langley, British Columbia and will move just across the 49th to Sumas, Washington. The CEO said that this will avoid \$800,000 a month in softwood

lumber duties and will capture other efficiencies. We have to wonder if it has something to do with the new 600 megawatt gas generating plant which is being built south of the 49th at Sumas.

The hon. member sitting next to me represents a riding that will be greatly impacted by that project because the Americans will get the 56 jobs from the Fort Langley mill and they will also get hundreds of jobs in the construction of these plants south of the border. That energy is purported to go down to Seattle and California.

The plant cannot be built in Seattle because it has its own air pollution concerns. Seattle does not want the plant so it is being built on the 49th, next to Canada. Energy will be shipped through Canada so B.C. will have the benefit of hydro lines passing through a populated area which has concerns about electromagnetic radiation from the hydro lines. That energy will go down to the grid south of the border.

Meantime the particulate matter from these new generators will flow into the Fraser Valley. Because of the concentration of population and the way air funnels down that valley, people there will have to deal with the consequences of increased air pollution. This air pollution will be equal to thousands of idling cars every day blowing fumes into the Fraser Valley which is already one of our most challenging areas for air pollution.

•(1100)

An hon. member: Kyoto doesn't address it.

Mr. James Lunney: No, Kyoto does not address this. In fact, this is a harbinger of things to come. So much of our industry is already owned or co-owned by American interests. As we saw with the Ford plant in Oakville just recently, when its industry was threatened it just closed a very efficient plant and went south of the border to protect its own industry. If we now create an energy incentive for industry to produce on its side of the border, do we think that industry is not going to be motivated by profit to close down on our side of the border and move south of the 49th? For those who suggest that only Alberta is concerned about this, I hope the people in Ontario are taking a good look at it, because Ontario's industry stands to be struck very hard by the agreement and investment is very likely to pull out of that province as well as British Columbia.

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From British Columbia's perspective, we have taken such a hit on the softwood lumber agreement and now we face being saddled with this kind of agreement that has very questionable objectives in regard to it ever doing anything to help the environment. Do we think that air pollution somehow stops at the 49th? Do we think that as development goes to the U.S. side pollution is not going to blow across our border? Is the government proposing a plan to somehow fence it out? Do we think we are somehow isolated from the rest of the global community? When so many of the countries of the world, the big producers, are not signing on to the agreement, it is unlikely that our little contribution is going to make a significant impact.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation has estimated that Kyoto would cost as much as \$2,700 per family. There probably are families that can afford to increase their homes to R2000 and some are probably already there, but I believe that many Canadians are not there. For many Canadians, \$2,700 per family is a big chunk of their disposable income.

It would be nice to be able to buy a smaller car. It would be nice if we did not have to drive so far. It would be nice if it were not so cold. It would be nice if we did not have to let our cars warm up before we get into them, like so many of the cabinet ministers do who have their cars idling outside the House on a day like today, and as they will after question period. We see them perking away out there.

An hon. member: Even the environment minister?

Mr. James Lunney: Yes, even him, and I think of the hon. member from Red Deer, who did such a job for us in trying to explain these issues to Canadians. We are very grateful. The member has taken the time to study the issue and he understands this. He has a background in biology, he is an environmentalist and he is concerned. Some people called it a filibuster. It was not a filibuster in a classic sense. It was the member for Red Deer trying to inform Canadians about the important issues related to Kyoto and what it is going to cost us. He has a passion for the issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I understand you can hear me. Excuse me if I have raised my voice. It is hard not to get passionate about something that is going to cost Canadians so much for so little gain.

Simon Fraser University energy economist Mark Jaccard calculates that the Canadian economy will suffer a permanent discount in its gross domestic product and a real drop-off of up to 2.5% of the country's annual wealth. A 1998 study conducted in part by the American Farm Bureau Federation concluded that implementing Kyoto would increase expenses. I hope the member from Winnipeg South Centre who spoke, and her constituents and those in farm country in Manitoba, including my brother-in-law, are listening today, because the study showed that implementing Kyoto would increase farm expenses by up to 32%. I wonder how our farmers in Saskatchewan or Alberta, where they are already pressed to the limit, feel about that. The federation estimates it would increase farm expenses by up to 32% and decrease annual farm income by 24% to 48%, diminishing agricultural exports, the net effect being to put many farmers out of business.

● (1105)

As for government costs, what are the cost estimates for the federal government's new plan? The government cost of Kyoto-friendly alternative energy plants, homeowner incentives and foreign pollution rights have not been disclosed. What about the size of the innovation partnership fund? That is not available. The budget for all of the above? Not available until February and beyond. What about corporate penalties for non-compliance on gas emissions? That is not available. As for the impacts on big industry, that may be available in April. If big industry cannot get its act together by 2012, the deadline for implementing Kyoto, it can claim an extension until technology is developed to make gas reductions possible. Constituents in my own riding are very concerned about this. I have had letters. They want to know what the costs will be for the people of Nanaimo—Alberni.

The government wants Canadians to buy fuel efficient vehicles, to use cars less, to reduce idling, to retrofit our older homes, to buy R2000 homes and to replace appliances with more energy efficient models. They want us to abandon the clothes dryer and go back to the clothesline. That may work for some people. My wife likes the clothesline, but it does not work for everybody.

People in B.C., in particular those who live in the riding of Nanaimo—Alberni, are already experiencing the devastating effects of the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber dispute. It is estimated that we have lost 15,000 jobs, many of them in coastal B.C. and certainly in my riding.

I have had people write to me regarding their concerns about Kyoto: Ed and Linda Matt, Brigitte Deleeuw, residents of Parksville, and Jeff Jordanov. Another man from my riding wrote to me wanting to know what the effects would be on the construction industry and how it would impact on him. They all want to know why Canada should commit to an unachievable target that requires us to make payments to countries without targets.

There are many questions about the accord, questions that need to be answered. There is a lot that Canadians want to know about it. There is a lot of consultation that has not been done. We encourage everyone to consider the cost to the government and encourage members not to enter into a plan that will handicap and hamstring Canada without knowing what the costs will be.

● (1110)

Mr. Murray Calder (Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way made reference to this mysterious Oregon petition. He also made reference to the fact that there are 17,100 scientists who have signed this petition.

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In fact, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences released the following statement, and within that, very notable scientists within the United States, stated, "The petition does not reflect the conclusions of expert reports of the Academy". So there we have this, whatever it is, this Oregon petition, with these 17,000 scientists going up against the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. What I would like to hear from the member across the way is his response to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, because they disagree.

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's intervention. He has illustrated the point I was trying to make at the beginning: that there is no consensus among scientists. There is a lot of discussion about what is affecting the planet, and there are a lot of factors affecting the planet. Solar energy changes affect the planet. In the urban environment, people see that their environment has changed. Where I live on Vancouver Island, I have seen changes since I moved there 12 years ago. In my own neighbourhood there is development where there used to be forests. We are seeing changes around us and we want to be concerned about that.

In fact, to say that scientists studying this issue have come to a consensus is simply not the case. There are many factors impacting the environment around us. Surely the point is well taken by the member that there is not agreement at this time. That is why putting ourselves under such an economic harness to try to meet an ideological objective, when the outcomes are certainly anything but obvious or anything but achievable, is a very serious concern that Canadians want to entertain.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in the previous speech from the member for Winnipeg South Centre, she mentioned first of all that Kyoto would address the problem of smog. Then she said that one way to produce alternative energy would be to burn straw, which struck me as being contrary to the goal of getting rid of smog, not that Kyoto deals directly with the issue of smog. I would like the hon. member to comment on that.

I would also like him to comment on something else the member said, which was that 1,000 years ago the earth was actually warmer than it is today. She said that this is the warmest century in 1,000 years. She did not provide any proof for that, but she said that. Then she suggested that 1,000 years ago the earth was warmer again, which I suppose is where we get the term Greenland, for instance. A thousand years ago when people settled Greenland and were farming there it was actually a green country. Now it is of course covered in ice.

I wonder if the hon. member would care to comment on what to me were obvious contradictions in the previous speaker's speech.

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. Burning straw is certainly interesting and we have to wonder where that was coming from. Certainly we are concerned about pollutants and particulate matter in the air and that might be a good way to create a problem in the environment.

The main concern on this side of the House is that Kyoto deals primarily with emissions of CO₂. If anyone around here is a greenhouse operator, they will know that most greenhouses actually pump extra CO₂ into their greenhouses. It is good for plants. They grow better. CO₂ can hardly be considered a pollutant. We are all respiring CO₂. A lot of it has been blown around the House today.

Maybe we need to open the windows and let some oxygen in to help balance the debate here.

We are concerned that Kyoto does not deal with environmental contamination in general or air pollution in particular. It does not deal with the real pollutants: sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxide and smog itself. The Kyoto plan will not cover countries that are producing two-thirds of the man-made carbon dioxide emissions.

Therefore, global production of CO₂ is unlikely to fall under Kyoto, and as for Canada's little contribution to this whole equation, if we put the brakes on our industry, restrictions on our own emissions and all go back to pedalling bicycles instead of driving cars, do we think that will stop industry from developing south of the border, in the Soviet Union, in China and in other countries that are contributing far more than Canada probably ever will in our entire existence?

It is an ideological pill that our friends opposite are trying to feed us. It is a very nice idea to think that we should somehow protect the planet in this way, but realistically, friends, we want to protect the planet and we want to do what is right. We want to have a made in Canada plan that will invest our money. Rather than sending Canadian dollars out to other countries with worse records and worse controls than we have, we would like to see our money invested here in energy alternatives. We should be advancing the better use of solar energy, wind energy and hydroelectric energy. We have still untapped resources. Surely we can find a way to build dams and tap in on our hydro power and still provide fish ladders. There has to be a way to do that without damaging the environment.

We have tremendous possibilities in this country. We are an energy rich country. Why we would handicap ourselves in this kind of an agreement with the kinds of realities and the cold climate that we are faced with? We need to heat our homes. We have huge transportation costs to deal with, which European countries, where people are huddled together in small communities, do not have. They do not have our transportation costs. Neither does Japan. Japan has public transit. We have huge distances involved and people need transportation. Most of us cannot walk to a grocery store right around the corner.

● (1115)

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the senior minister from Alberta, the current health minister, has said that there are four conditions that she feels it is necessary to meet before this goes ahead. One is that the Kyoto agreement should do nothing that will undermine our economic growth, which starts things off with a farcical suggestion.

Second, she says that no region, province or sector should be selected out and be adversely affected, which may or may not happen. We may all suffer equally, and by suffering equally together it will be sort of like socialism, where people say they do not have anything but at least they are together in it. Maybe that is her idea.

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One of her last two points, she says, is that we must have certainty for business. In other words, people have to know what it will mean to their businesses. Her final point is that we need strong partnerships to reach the goal of meeting Kyoto targets.

On those last two points, she admitted that businesses cannot explain Kyoto to their shareholders or to one another or just do not understand it and cannot explain it because she cannot explain it to them. Second, on this need for a strong partnership, the provinces have bailed out and none of the major stakeholders understand it or will take part in it. She says, then, that if the preconditions are not met then her premier allegiance is to Alberta and she would have to not support it.

How does the member think that the Minister of Health can possibly support this when two of the four conditions that she has laid out cannot be met at this time?

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the intervention. It is a bit of a paradox to see the minister, who represents a riding in Alberta, stand up and try to somehow defend this protocol when her province is at such risk.

Indeed, there is no certainty. The economic certainty for business is already threatened. The IDA chairman told the Prime Minister just the other day that the 190-member association, which represents all major brokerages and the securities arm of all chartered banks, feels that federal friction with the provinces has created a feeling of uncertainty toward the Canadian economy among a large segment of the investment community in the U.S.

Our investments are in jeopardy and our future is in jeopardy, all to pursue an ideological dream that is not based on reality.

• (1120)

Mr. Tony Valeri (Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am splitting my time with the member for Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this resolution. It should be noted, as has been mentioned by members previously, that parliamentary approval itself is not required to ratify it; it is a matter of executive power. It is certainly something that the House, maybe through committee, may want to give some thought to changing at some point in the future.

I would like to focus on the implementation plan and the fact that Kyoto cuts across so many policy areas. The implementation plan itself needs very close scrutiny by individual members of Parliament. The real issue today for me, and the issue which the debate should focus on, is the implementation of it, how we make Kyoto best work in the interests of Canadians.

We have certainly seen some progress in the revised plan that was put forward with respect to the sectoral agreements. Upon review it does show that the government has acted on some of the concerns expressed.

The most important element in that plan has to do with how we deal with industry, and the large emitters in particular, on a sector by sector basis. The government has always said it does not want to unfairly disadvantage any sector and it is important that we stay on this track. However, the one further change I would push for in the

implementation plan is that we lift the cap when we are negotiating the sectoral covenants with large emitters. Let us negotiate those covenants. Let us assess the risks they may incur and the progress they could make without a cap.

There was some mention of the credit for early action in the plan, but we have to be unequivocal throughout the whole process. The Minister of the Environment and others have indicated that early action is key. They want to encourage corporations to take early action.

In my mind the message we need to send to the economy as a whole is that when companies act early on maximizing energy efficiency and are more profitable as a result of this energy efficiency, we should not punish them but we should reward them. There needs to be incentive for companies to take this on. In going forward we must enshrine full credit for early action as a fundamental principle of the climate change implementation strategy.

On the issue of buying credits I want to be on record that it should not be an exercise in transferring wealth. It is a safety valve that is in the protocol, but it is certainly not the preferred approach. We do not need to transfer this kind of wealth to places like Russia.

With respect to the provincial context, certainly members have concerns about the response from the provinces. We need to address those concerns in a very meaningful way. The implementation plan gives us an opportunity to do that. The implementation plan itself must make Kyoto a reality in a manner that does not tear us apart as a country. Canadians expect no less than that, those in the west, those in the east, and certainly those in the central parts of Canada. We must function as a nation.

There are some challenges. I still have some difficulty with the fact that we do not see the specific numbers. We often talk about federal budgets and the details are always very significant. The implementation plan must contain more detail.

Another is the time constraint that we are up against. We start measuring in 2008, in five years. I am not suggesting that we cannot do it, but we have to be cognizant of the short timeframe. The incentives that we put in place must respond to the timeframe that we have when we start to measure and ultimately meet the Kyoto obligation.

What is it that we should be doing? We need to clearly indicate in the implementation plan the financial instruments we want to employ to reach this target. We need to indicate the financial instruments that deal with the impact of Kyoto that we may see on the economy, how we would offset any sort of downturn that may be experienced. We need to emphasize the increase in economic activity that we may see, instead of what might exist.

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•(1125)

We need to look at the whole Kyoto protocol through the innovation lens. We have to make sure that the Kyoto protocol does not contradict what we are saying with respect to the innovation agenda. We have to be cognizant that investment decisions are being made today for many years down the road. When companies are making their investment decisions they need to know the rules of the game in order that they do not find themselves five, eight or ten years down the road in some way impacted as a result of what we are talking about today. That is why it is absolutely important that this implementation plan be as specific as absolutely possible.

I certainly do not see any companies closing up shop and leaving, but I am concerned at the moment that as investment decisions are being made, that they are looking elsewhere in North America. We work in a North American context and in a North American type economy.

We need to look at renewable and non-renewable energy sources. Oil and gas companies for all intents and purposes today are energy companies. They are looking at both renewable and non-renewable energy sources and how best to take advantage of those opportunities. The implementation plan needs to encourage the non-renewable side of the energy source as well.

From a municipal standpoint, there is lots of opportunity and lots of incentives through the FCM to deal with recapturing methane gas through landfill sites. We need to focus on those types of initiatives in the implementation plan.

With respect to the North American context, we are connected by a geographic circumstance and a level of mutually beneficial economic integration without comparison in the world. When the U.S.A. decided not to ratify the protocol, it fundamentally changed the context of the Kyoto assumptions for a lot of people. We have to be cognizant of that.

It is also not as simple as saying that the U.S. is now doing nothing. In fact the United States of America is doing quite a lot to deal with this issue. We could look at it on a state by state basis and California in particular, in terms of its economy and size, and it is taking action.

We need to treat this issue in sufficient depth to mitigate its impact on the Canadian economy. We must also understand that we need to deal with and make progress on greenhouse gas reduction. We also need to keep in mind in that North American context that the U.S. is the fiercest competitor for capital in North America. I and many other members in the House want to ensure that Canada is very well positioned to deal with attracting direct foreign investment in Canada. We need to have a comprehensive strategy and we need to look at how Kyoto impacts our relationship.

Yesterday the member for LaSalle—Émard talked about reference to a special parliamentary committee. It is a vehicle that we should be taking advantage of to scrutinize the implementation plan in very clear detail which is required.

We have made progress. Back on March 7, 2002 we agreed to build on the existing bilateral cooperation on climate change with the United States. We need to pursue that more effectively.

What are some of the things that we could do with respect to the implementation plan? Strengthening compliance standards under the Energy Efficiency Act might be something to consider when we consider that the act covers almost 60% of the energy type products that are being used. We should look at how we could deal with the regulatory regime and how to harmonize our approach to these compliance standards from a North American context. We should look at fuel efficiency standards. We should look at California, look at New York, look at Canada. We should combine our approach to fuel efficiency standards. It comprises about 25% of the auto market in North America. It is very important.

We need immediate budgetary measures to show that we are serious about the implementation of the accord. We must speak to issues such as a national building retrofit strategy. We must look at collaborating with labour, business and municipalities. The U.S. has already done it, in providing a \$2,000 tax credit to people for improving their homes or building their homes to certain standards. The U.S. is doing it and we could also do it.

•(1130)

In summary, there should be no caps on growth. We should pursue the sectoral agreement with large emitters. We need a climate of investment certainty. We must operate within the North American economic space. We need an implementation strategy that stresses and reflects partnership and collaboration with the provinces, business, labour and consumers.

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that was a very interesting speech. The member said some very positive things. The unfortunate part is that my colleague is right in that none of the things that he mentioned as being important are covered under the Kyoto protocol.

My question to you is twofold.

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt members but I think it is worth mentioning and reminding ourselves that our questions and comments have to be directed through the Chair, not directly across the floor. Sometimes it is pretty friendly but sometimes it can turn not so friendly so I would rather err on the side of caution, please.

Mrs. Betty Hinton: Mr. Speaker, I beg your pardon. I have all due respect for the Chair and I will address my question through you.

Ratification of Kyoto carries a heavy price tag. It addresses CO₂ only. It does nothing to improve the health of Canadians, contrary to what the minister may have suggested earlier.

Could the member please explain how ratifying Kyoto without certainty of targets for large emitters is going to reduce risk?

Mr. Tony Valeri: Mr. Speaker, that is a valid question. In terms of the implementation plan, I want to focus on the large emitters. Certainly negotiation has gone on. More needs to be done.

In my remarks I made reference to the sectoral approach and signing covenants on a sector by sector basis. We need to push a little harder and eliminate the caps.

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There is a 55 megatonne cap on the large emitters at the moment. I would much rather see us engage in a negotiation with large emitters without that target there and see how we could improve efficiency, see what the impact would be on the investment climate because the investment climate is very important. I do not want to prejudge this negotiation with large emitters by suggesting that there is a 55 megatonne cap. We may go beyond the 55 megatonne cap with good economic principles and good economic objectives in place.

The large emitters I have talked to are very heartened that a sectoral approach is now being taken. The issue of a cap is still a problem to some extent for some large emitters but pursuing on that basis could create the climate for investment certainty for those sectors.

At the end of the day, I think everyone in the House wants to pursue an economy that continues to create wealth and prosperity for Canadians in the context of a North American economy because that is the economy we work in. The objectives are not mutually exclusive. I believe that we can succeed in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, whether it is CO₂, methane, or the other types of greenhouse gas emissions that were targeted under the Kyoto protocol. We can do it while ensuring that we have economic prosperity.

The question is, what economic incentives will we have in place to deal with, mitigate and provide offsets for any downturn that may occur as a result of the plan? Pursuing sectoral agreements will allow us to move forward. If the large emitters are on side, we can collectively work together. I do not want to pursue any type of accord or any type of national policy that ultimately tears this country apart. We cannot operate in that fashion. It is certainly not the way members in the House want to operate.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the member for Stoney Creek talked about some of the concerns. Even in answering that question, he referred to the fact that he did not want to see one part of the country torn apart from another part or put at a disadvantage. He mentioned in his discourse that he had concerns for some parts of the country and he said that we must “function as a nation”.

We are dealing with one of the largest agreements that has come before the House in perhaps 12 years. The Kyoto protocol will be significant to the oil and gas industry. It will hurt the oil and gas industry. It is going to devastate sectors and regions of the country more than other regions. Why would the government proceed without other levels of government buying into the plan?

Why would the federal government unilaterally move ahead on an agreement that does not have the provincial governments on board? British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan have said it is going to cause huge economic disasters in certain regions of the country.

Why would the member buy into an accord when just a week ago the *National Post* reported that the member for Stoney Creek, the head of the steel caucus, said that the protocol was ruinous but added, “I believe the government when it said no one section will be made uncompetitive”. What has made him change his mind?

●(1135)

Mr. Tony Valeri: Mr. Speaker, I am the chair of the parliamentary steel caucus and I take that quite seriously. We have worked effectively with all members in the House. By 2012 the steel sector would find itself about 12% below 1990 levels so the Kyoto accord itself would not impact the steel sector specifically.

However there is concern with the customers that the steel sector supplies. The steel sector is very integrated in North American markets so there are some concerns there. The steel sector is quite content at this moment but we need to move a little farther with the sector by sector approach, the covenant approach. It has been effective in making progress with respect to the negotiations.

When we talk about the provinces it is important to remember that of the 12 concerns that the provinces had, nine have been dealt with and accepted. Three are being debated. It is not an issue of not engaging the provinces. I want to restate that it is important to ensure that provinces are onside.

I am focused on the implementation strategy and that is what the House should focus on. Parliament, through a special committee, should scrutinize that implementation strategy so that all provinces, consumers, labour and business are onside.

Mr. Murray Calder (Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on this important issue facing our nation and indeed the entire world.

I want to make it clear before I go any further that I do not like sitting on the fence, it hurts. I want to state categorically that I am in favour of ratifying the Kyoto protocol. Today we are making decisions that will affect our children and grandchildren for years to come.

I am reminded of the debate that took place in the House a decade ago—maybe you were even here, Mr. Speaker—concerning free trade. At that time we were asked to make a leap of faith, and we did. I believe it is important that citizens be engaged at the local level.

Not long ago I was at a meeting in my constituency of Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey where the topic was Kyoto. It was well-attended and supportive of Kyoto. There is a lot of misinformation right now that is being floated around out there. I think communication at the level of the ordinary citizen could be much improved. I know it is something that we are working on right now.

I however disagree with the claim that businesses and provincial governments have not been adequately consulted. There has been five years of extensive consultation and we must get on with doing the work. Any further delay on ratification is time wasted. The opposition seems committed to wasting time.

I make a major distinction between ratification and implementation because that is where the debate is. I still have a number of questions on how Kyoto would be implemented. I have heard from business groups and organizations who have had major concerns about how Kyoto would affect the economy and their own interests. Their concerns cannot be ignored and must be carefully considered as we debate how we would meet our targets. All regions of Canada must face this challenge together.

Government Orders

Climate change is real. Humans have raised carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to 30% above the levels that were virtually stable for millions of years. Global warming is the result of greenhouse gas emissions and we only have to look at the effects of the ice storm and the drought in western Canada to see the dramatic effects. The ice storm of 1998 caused \$5.4 billion worth of damage. We do not know how much it will cost us for the drought out west. If we do not do something now things would get worse, especially for the well-being of our agricultural industry.

I have spoken far too much about the costs of Kyoto and not nearly enough about the opportunities. I see Kyoto as a golden opportunity for rural economic development. We need to promote biofuels and bioproducts. We need to do it now.

Ethanol can be produced from grains such as corn and wheat. Cellulose technology is on its way and it can produce ethanol from different things, including agricultural and forestry waste. Today gasoline containing up to 10% ethanol is sold roughly at 1,000 service stations across the country at no extra cost. Ethanol increases the octane of fuels and is much cleaner than octane enhancing chemicals like MMT. It is better on the engine. It acts as an oxygenate to reduce emissions in colder weather, which we have an abundance of today as an example. It also acts as a gas line antifreeze.

Transportation is one of the biggest contributors to greenhouse gases. The beauty of moving to E-10 gasoline is it can be done right now with no changes to the engines and no big changes to the service stations. In fact, Brazil uses E-100 which is 100% ethanol fuel. It would require some engine modifications. It is something that we should look at down the road.

Another big advantage of using biofuels is that the plants used to produce the fuels themselves absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The storage of carbon in plants more than offsets the emissions from burning the biomass fuels. Therefore, we have a totally green cycle. When this is taken into account ethanol made from corn can produce up to 100% less carbon dioxide than fossil fuels even when production is taken into account.

● (1140)

Canada produces 238 million litres of ethanol each year. The U.S. is far ahead of us in ethanol production producing seven billion litres every year. It is constructing one new ethanol plant each month on average. The reason the U.S. is so far ahead of us is because 12 years ago it amended the clean air act to include mandated oxygen levels in fuels. We must do the same thing or something similar, but only after we create the environment for production capacity.

Unfortunately, Canada imports nearly 100 million litres of ethanol from the U.S. each year just to meet its current demand. We have the ability to become a net exporter of ethanol, creating a dynamic new industrial sector which would have ripple effects into other areas.

For example, we need grain and other agricultural products to produce ethanol. That would greatly help offset the downward trend of our grain and oilseeds prices. It would help out farmers which is something we on this side of the House have committed ourselves to doing. I am committed to increasing grain based and cellulose based ethanol industries in Canada as part of a made in Canada solution.

Biodiesel can be produced from vegetable oils such as canola and soybean. At present, it is not cost competitive with petro-diesel, but that would change as new technology and opportunities arise. It is much cleaner and a great alternative. It is worth paying a premium to have cleaner air.

The bio-industry is not limited to fuel. Numerous products produced with petrochemicals can also be produced using bioproducts. It is clear that the Kyoto accord could have great benefits for Canadian farmers if we were all willing to work together. I cannot believe that members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition can stand over there and once again play games with the livelihood of farmers.

The bio-industry is something that we must look at. In 1994 we lobbied hard with a task force for the environment and we received an exemption from excise tax.

Commercial Alcohols was established in Chatham. It has expanded a number of times and currently produces 173 million litres of ethanol each year. It consumes over 400,000 tonnes of corn each year. In fact, last month it had to shut down for a refit for a couple of weeks and it actually depressed the price of corn within Ontario by 10¢ a bushel.

It has stabilized the corn market in Ontario by its own consumption by 25¢ a bushel. If we were to apply that to 7 or 10 ethanol plants across Canada then we could establish a partnership similar to what we have right now with Suncor and with other oil companies in Canada. Once that is set up we would have a distribution system. In three years time we could tell the oil companies that they should be mandated that a certain percentage of fuel burnt in Canada should be green.

The next step from there is the crushing of soy and canola oil. Alberta has refineries to refine vegetable oil to make diesel. There is a huge opportunity here.

● (1145)

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned that in the early 1990s a leap of faith was asked for with regard to the free trade agreement. He also suggested that a lot of misinformation about Kyoto was out there.

I would like to point out that he is asking for a huge leap of faith by farmers and agricultural producers.

Government Orders

This morning at the agriculture committee we heard the deputy minister in charge of the research department of the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food say that the department had done no thorough cost benefit analysis of the cost of Kyoto on agriculture. This is the agriculture department that has not done the work.

When I walked away from that meeting I thought the agriculture department was completely incompetent for not having done that analysis, but then I realized there was a second option and one that I think was more accurate, which was the fact that it did not want that information. The department knew the results and chose not to do the work. The information that we do have comes from a study in the United States. It says that farmers will likely be paying 30% more in input costs if Kyoto goes through and that their farm incomes could be cut from 25% to 48%.

Obviously we are looking at higher energy costs if Kyoto is put in place because the energy companies will have to either buy credits or change their technology, which will drive up the costs of fuel, fertilizer and chemicals. Clearly, farmers in Canada will be less competitive. The United States has said that it will not ratify the agreement which will cause us to be less competitive on the world market.

There is no mechanism in place for sinks or carbon sequestration yet and it looks to me like this will be one of the biggest central planning initiatives that we have ever seen in Canada.

The member himself is involved in a sector in agriculture where he can recover his costs by raising prices. I am wondering why he is so determined to hammer the grains and oilseed sector and defend an accord that neither he nor I know the effects of. We know it will have negative effects but we do not know what those effects will be. He is supposed to be representing farmers and producers. Why is he so eager to support the accord?

Mr. Murray Calder: Mr. Speaker, what is wrong with the member across the way is that he has tunnel vision, which is a big problem with the opposition.

The example I gave at the end of my speech with commercial alcohols in Chatham from 1994 to date, with 400,000 tonnes of corn, is a market that did not exist in 1993. It is a domestic market too, by the way, which is helping to stabilize corn prices within Ontario. Let us apply that to a national perspective. We have plants across Canada that are producing ethanol and biomass diesel, which, by the way, comes from the grains and oilseed sector.

I think we have all established in the House that we do not have pockets deep enough to get into a subsidy war with the United States and the European economic community. Therefore, if we have already proven in Ontario that a domestic market can stabilize the price, then let us apply that to a national perspective with biomass fuels and establish a domestic market right across Canada, which will go a long way to stabilizing corn and the grains and oilseed sector. It is just common sense to me.

• (1150)

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my friend across the way would agree that the implementation plan put out by the government so far, which limits the use of ethanol as a target in that plan to only 35% of all the fuel

we consume in the country, should be increased to a full 100%; that is 10% of the full 100% of the fuel that is consumed in the country should be mandated. Should we have a mandated program that would require all fuel in the country, a full 100% of it, to have at least 10% ethanol in it as opposed to what his government is proposing, that only 35% should have ethanol in it?

Mr. Murray Calder: Mr. Speaker, this is a cart and horse issue. We do not want to put the cart in front of the horse.

I will explain to the member right now that we should set up the infrastructure across Canada to take and produce ethanol. Let us establish a partnership with the oil companies to get a distribution system working with them, like Suncor has with its green hose. Co-ops across Canada have green hose right now at the pumps.

Three years down the road, and I agree with the member, we should mandate that 10% of the fuel used in Canada has to be green. In fact, once we get it all set up, let us go up to 20% once we have grains and oilseed, because it keeps increasing the domestic market to stabilize prices within the country. That is what I have been talking about.

I agree with the member but let us get the cart in the right place.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Winnipeg North Centre.

We have made it clear as a party that we are in favour of ratifying Kyoto and that the government should do so as quickly as possible, and by that I mean about a year ago.

The real issue is not about ratifying. It is a given that we should do that. We committed internationally five years ago to ratify Kyoto. Our international reputation is being affected by the fact that we are moving so slowly on this, when we were the very first country in the world in 1997 to signal that we were in favour of the protocol and that we would carry through on our responsibilities under that protocol. The history since then has not been very good and our reputation has been badly affected by the meanderings that we have seen from the government.

We need to do this and we need to get on with the job. We need to move as rapidly as we can to finalize what in fact is the implementation process and then put it into place.

We have had a great deal of argument in the House, I would say particularly from the members of the Alliance Party, about the risks and the costs. It is interesting that they never talk about the costs of not doing it. Equally, the government has never done an assessment of what it will cost us if we do not proceed to implement Kyoto and meet our targets within the timeframes. I have never seen those from the Alliance or the government.

Government Orders

It was interesting to hear the member from LaSalle speaking the other day about Kyoto and raising certain concerns around the costs and that everyone be treated fairly as we implement it. It is interesting to compare that with his own position as he made very severe cutbacks in the budget in the mid-1990s. The effect of those cutbacks was to reduce the GDP in this country by a full 4%. By the government's own estimates, at the very worst, Kyoto might have the impact of reducing our GDP by 2% over a very extended period of time, probably 10 years minimum. That 4% cut that he caused in the mid-1990s was over a two year period.

He also argued, and we heard it from other government members, that we could not have any Kyoto costs applied disproportionately. Alberta, for instance, even though it is the heaviest polluter and creator of greenhouse gases, should not be treated unfairly or unequally. They use those types of terms.

However, in the same period of time, 1995 to 1997, as he slashed the budget, which had the impact of reducing the GDP by about 4%, that 4% reduction was much more greatly served against the Maritime provinces and the province of Quebec.

When we are looking at what the impact will be of Kyoto, we have to keep that in mind. We recognize that there will be a significant shift in the way we plan the economy and in the way the economy develops but from everything we do know, particularly from the European experience, we can offset those costs by new development.

• (1155)

I always use the example of Denmark. It moved into alternative energy and now leads in the world, with Germany close behind. Denmark has a small population of roughly 3.5 million people but it has created, in a very short period of time, in two to three years, 12,500 new jobs building the windmills and turbines that are now being exported to countries all over the world. Canada is one of the recipients of that technology because we did not develop it here. We have fallen behind. It is another reason that we need to ratify now to get on with it. As the years go by, other countries are outpacing us quite dramatically in that technology. The Japanese have taken over the lead quite significantly with regard to solar power. We need to catch up. We actually need to get into the race. When we are talking about the need to ratify within a certain timeframe, we need to keep technological development in mind.

With regard to some of the other reasons that we should be moving ahead, I would draw to the attention of the House the argument that we hear so often from the Alliance, that Kyoto is not a health issue. We have heard from any number of sources that of course that is not accurate.

I want to address the ignorance in the comments that I am hearing from the Alliance members once again. The reality is that there is a solution. I probably live, in terms of the metropolitan area, in the most heavily polluted area in the country from the perspective of air pollution. The solution that we will find to that is to reduce the use of coal-fired plants in both Ontario and, more specifically, in some of the states in the U.S. If we do not move ahead with Kyoto, if the U.S. states, which are much further ahead than the U.S. federal government, do not move ahead, those emissions, the greenhouse gases and things like mercury and benzene, which come from the

burning of coal, will continue to float into my constituency and we will continue to have, as various medical associations have documented, a significant increase in premature deaths and all the other health factors.

The implementation of Kyoto and the reduction of the greenhouse gases will coincide, as we reduce the consumption of fossil fuels, coal in particular, but not alone, with the reduction in a number of toxins, mercury and benzene, just to name a couple of them.

It is interesting as well to listen to the members of the Alliance and Premier Klein in Alberta talk about a made in Canada solution. It is nothing of the kind, of course. It is simply that party and the Conservative government in Alberta toeing the American line. It is a made in America solution and it is no solution at all, because that solution, as we have seen from the model that the vice-president enunciated a year and a half ago, is simply to do less and to do it over a longer period of time. We know by those models that greenhouse gas emissions will continue to go up, not be reduced.

Just last week the Bush administration watered down the environmental protection act and the protection it gave or was about to give requiring the clean up of coal-fired plants in the United States. That is the kind of policy and plan that the Alliance would have us follow as opposed to implementing Kyoto, a plan, I would add, that was heavily opposed, including lawsuits, by a number of the northeastern states opposing the watering down of those provisions, those provisions that would have done something about the health of my constituents by reducing the emissions that were coming from those plants all over the mid-western United States that eventually flowed into my riding.

• (1200)

As much as the government wants to take credit for Kyoto, I wish to say to it and to the Canadian people that we just cannot watch the ratification become the end of the process. We very much have to keep after it to see that the implementation is done properly, to the terms of the protocol that we are now committing ourselves to, finally, at the international level.

Mrs. Karen Redman (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address a matter of great interest to all members of the House and specifically to my hon. colleague opposite, and that is the fact that greenhouse gas emissions are indeed a global issue and not something that just an individual country needs to be concerned with.

I know that the governors of the eastern states have entered into a bilateral agreement with our maritime provinces in looking at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In the United States, 42 states have brought in regulatory regimes that are very much harmonized with the kind of initiative of reducing greenhouse gas emissions that Canada is undertaking with its provinces and territories.

Government Orders

I wonder if he would like to comment on the fact that indeed, as much as President Bush may have backed away from the Kyoto protocol, the states in America and Americans themselves recognize what Canadians do and that reducing greenhouse gas emissions is a very important global issue.

An hon. member: He works with them.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, I am hearing some comments from the Alliance about the Bush administration working with the states. New York state would be very interested to take that issue on, because it is currently suing the U.S. administration, as are a number of other states including Illinois, because of the practices and policies of that government.

The reality, as we have heard in terms of this bilateral agreement that has been initiated by the maritime provinces and some of the northeastern states, is that all of the activity in the United States that is progressive and meaningful in terms of dealing with the issue of greenhouse gas emissions and, I will add to that, air pollution generally, is coming from the states. It is not coming from the federal government. They are in fact fighting rearguard actions all the time against the Bush administration and the steps it is taking to protect its friends in the oil industry, at least those of them who are so antiquated that they do not understand what their responsibilities are in dealing with the issues of Kyoto and air pollution more generally.

I do welcome the initiative that we have seen from the northeastern states, with New York I think being the leader in that regard, and the maritime provinces because they do recognize the problems that we are confronting.

The same air pollution that floats through Windsor and Essex County eventually moves its way across into the Maritimes and into the northeastern states. I think that is why they have been so progressive in the activities that they have carried on with and continue to do in spite of all the rearguard fighting they have done against the Bush administration.

• (1205)

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I simply have to address some of the things that the member raised a moment ago in his speech.

First, he completely contradicted himself. He said that Alberta is the heaviest polluter and then he admitted that his own riding is more heavily polluted than any place in the country.

He only gives one side of the formula when he talks about the impact of Kyoto on the health of Canadians. If in fact we bought everything that he was trying to sell us, if we accepted that Kyoto was going to deal with the issue of smog and deal with health problems that arise from smog, what he forgets to take into account is that when we place higher costs on business it means less economic activity and it means less money, therefore, for the health care system. This is self-evident. That of course has an impact on people's health.

Why is it that developed countries, those with the healthiest economies, also have the best health care systems and are able to ensure that people live a lot longer? I note that Canada and the United States, developed countries that can invest in environmental

protection, are the ones that ultimately provide the best standard of living for their citizens.

My friend has it exactly opposite. He thinks that if we impose all kinds of restrictions on the economy suddenly people will become healthier, when in fact what will happen is exactly what has already happened in his own riding. If we keep imposing higher and higher costs on business, then guess what? We see those businesses move into other jurisdictions, as has already happened in the member's riding. He had already lost factories and automobile production plants from his riding because of increasing costs.

I wonder if my friend—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret that the time has already elapsed, but I will allow the better part of a minute for the hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair to respond.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, let me respond to the point on losing the plants from my area. I understand that. The member obviously does not. The lack of knowledge in that party is just so amazing. Those plants are having to compete under a trade arrangement that party supports, not one that we do. We are losing those plants because the states in the U.S. are able to bid under the NAFTA agreement for those plants. That is why they are going there. It has nothing to do with anything else. It certainly has nothing to do with environmental standards. That is such a joke.

I think I have used up my time, but I would love to go on for another hour.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in this debate. Right off the bat I want to indicate my unequivocal support for the motion before the House and join with all of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party to say very clearly that we absolutely support the ratification of the Kyoto protocol and urge the government to show the necessary leadership so that we can in fact be a shining light to the whole world on something as fundamental as the future of our planet.

Let me also say how proud I am to represent a constituency in the province of Manitoba, where the leadership has been so enlightened and so courageous on this fundamental question. I want to offer public commendation to the Premier of Manitoba, the Hon. Gary Doer, and all of his colleagues in the Manitoba government for their courage and commitment to advance this agenda with respect to environmental sustainability and to of course indicate in fact how Manitoba has been clearly one of the leading lights in terms of this whole issue of Kyoto. We strongly support the leadership in that province and want to congratulate Gary Doer and his colleagues for their attitude of rolling up their sleeves to do their part to fight climate change through clean energy like ethanol and wind power.

I know that some of my colleagues from the Alliance Party have questions about some of Manitoba's strategies, which I would be pleased to answer later on. Suffice it to say that at this point I would suggest that when it comes to the issue of straw and chickens, the members of Alliance Party look very carefully at the Vidir biomass systems of Arborg before they jump to any conclusions and recognize in fact that we are talking about an enlightened, innovative project that could make a difference in combination with many other forward looking strategies.

Government Orders

I am pleased to take part in this debate on the ratification of Kyoto because the ratification of this agreement will have a profound impact on the health of Canadians. I am delighted to hear today that the Minister of Health has finally cleared the air and has indicated that she will support the ratification of the Kyoto protocol. However qualified her comments were this morning, I appreciate the fact that she has cleared the air and finally has been forthcoming in terms of her position. We have been waiting a long time for the Minister of Health of the Government of Canada to say unequivocally that she takes her responsibilities seriously and recognizes the absolute importance of supporting Kyoto in terms of the health and well-being of Canadians. Bravo, finally, to the Minister of Health. Let us hope that her leadership will continue in and among her colleagues.

In this debate, the New Democratic Party has addressed the economic considerations of ratification in considerable depth and has indicated its vital significance for the environment. These are areas that quite reasonably have been the focus of a great deal of public discussion and debate about this important initiative, but just as significant to the ongoing well-being of this planet and its residents are the health implications of signing or not ratifying Kyoto.

Last Thursday, the commissioner on the future of health care in Canada issued his final report. After 18 months of extensive consultations with Canadians and intensive research, Commissioner Romanow has offered Canadians a solid blueprint for the future. The viability of that blueprint depends as never before on securing a healthy environment and protecting Canadians from the negative health impacts of greenhouse gas emissions.

The design of this new health care system will be undermined if the health of Canadians deteriorates as a consequence of the unchecked rise of greenhouse gases and the climate change factors that result. We are at a stage where the health of Canadians is seriously and already affected by greenhouse gases and the climate change that is resulting from their unchecked growth.

• (1210)

We have allowed ourselves to pretend that we have a bottomless account of healthy air from which to draw. Clearly we have been deluding ourselves. We have used up that legacy and Canadians are paying the price with their health and their lives as we try in vain to overdraw that account.

Sixteen thousand Canadians are estimated to die prematurely each year from the intensifying air pollution in which greenhouse gases play a major role. Like the canary in the mine shaft, this is an indicator of much more serious problems with Canadians' health than already exist.

Asthma alone already accounts for fully one-quarter of all school absences. To put it in dollar terms, smog already costs Ontarians \$1 billion a year in hospital admissions, emergency room visits and absenteeism. That is according to the reputable Canadian Public Health Association.

That is why health professionals from all walks of life working with organizations like the Canadian Public Health Association and others, all led by the Canadian Medical Association, are desperately urging us as parliamentarians to ratify this agreement and to get on

with a rigorous strategy, a health oriented strategy, toward a full recovery.

I remind the House that in August of this year the Canadian Medical Association passed the following resolution:

That the Canadian Medical Association urge the federal government to ratify the Kyoto protocol and adopt a strategy that will reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 6% below 1990 levels by 2012.

Health professionals, doctors, consultants and activists in the health community are adamant in their support for ratification. They are adamant for very good reasons. They are the ones on the front lines of health care. They are the ones who deal not only with the case by case symptoms through firsthand experience but who are also in a position to understand the trends, the big picture, for health.

The House dealt recently with the possibility of contaminated blood caused by the West Nile virus. Let us put that issue in the context of this debate. The urgent attempts to deal with each case of West Nile virus are not somehow isolated. The West Nile virus and other diseases which medical practitioners in Canada have never had to deal with before are part of a profound shift in global disease patterns that are currently linked to global climate change. The West Nile virus is only one example of what lies ahead, or indeed of what is already occurring.

Health consequences from climate change do not stop at provincial borders or national boundaries. Neither are they consequences that we can ignore or downplay. This is not about trade clauses that can be negotiated. The health aspects of this issue cannot be willed away.

The Kyoto protocol is an attempt to deal on a global basis with what is truly a global problem. The health aspects of this debate are inexorably linked to climate change and whether Kyoto opponents wish it or not, they will have a profound and costly impact on the lives and health costs of Canadians. We ignore this at our peril and the peril of our children's health.

• (1215)

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have sat here and listened to the last two speakers from the New Democratic Party give their party policy and basically their canned speech over and over again.

The member for Windsor—St. Clair spent most of his time smearing the Canadian Alliance Party for being opposed to the Kyoto accord. Most of his speech smeared Alberta and most of western Canada. Of course the grand daddy of them all, he spent most of his time smearing the United States of America.

The member who just spoke pulled out the policy book on health. She said that Kyoto deals with the greatest threat to the health of Canadians, recognizing that CO₂ emissions are putting every life into jeopardy.

The concern of the Canadian Alliance, Alberta and many others is that if the Kyoto protocol is signed, Canada will have the distinction of being the only country in the world, the only country on the planet, that will have to significantly, perhaps more significantly than any other country signing on, lower its CO₂ emissions. Developing countries are exempt, countries with populations of five billion to six billion. The United States is exempt.

Government Orders

If the economy is as devastated as what projections show, where will the member find the resources to put into health care?

• (1220)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, first let me be clear. No one on this side of the House is smearing the Alliance or casting aspersions on its position in this debate. It just happens that we fundamentally disagree with that party's position.

If the member wants to discredit my remarks today, he is discrediting every reputable health care association and medical organization in the country. My speech was a listing of the statements and findings of our doctors in Canada and medical associations that have done extensive research on these issues and have presented the facts.

Those facts include problems in terms of the spread of serious diseases because of climate change, rising temperatures and the warming of our waters. I would suggest that the member refer to John Hopkins University for information about the spread of cholera, hantavirus, dengue hemorrhagic fever and lyme disease. I would suggest he refer to the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment which lists in very significant detail the human health effects of climate change, including vector-borne diseases, respiratory disease, water-borne diseases, as well as social disruption issues.

I would suggest that the member refer to the leading figures with respect to the Canadian Public Health Association, the Canadian Medical Association and other organizations which have been very clear about the direct link between ill health and climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.

The member asked me a question about how we would pay for our support for the ratification of Kyoto. I would like to know how the member intends to ensure a healthy economy if the workforce is not well and is suffering from the serious health effects of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.

I would suggest to him that we cannot afford not to act. We must ensure that we move forward with respect to Kyoto ratification. We must do everything we can on matters of the environment and sustainability or we will not have an economy left to support us in the future.

It is absolutely clear that what we are talking about today is a commitment to improve health. It is a commitment to improve the health of people here in this country and around the world.

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member to comment on the importance of just transition strategies. One of the most significant developments in the ratification process of Kyoto is the support of the CEP union and the workers in this sector. Perhaps the member could comment on the importance of just transition strategies for workers and communities that are affected by the Kyoto accord implementation.

• (1225)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, the question from the member for Burnaby—Douglas has raised a very important issue that is fundamental to our approach to the ratification of Kyoto.

We absolutely are committed to just transition strategies. We have called on the government on numerous occasions to actually consider all factors with respect to a strategy.

We support very strongly a plan to assist displaced workers to retrain, find new opportunities through employment insurance and direct sectoral programs. That is fundamental to the task at hand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

The Kyoto protocol is an international accord established five years ago, which led to several large international conferences where the world community negotiated, sometimes bitterly, the conditions for the implementation of the accord. It was at the Conferences of the Parties held in Bonn and Marrakech in 2001 that the international community, or some 178 countries, came up with the realistic framework that gave each country a certain flexibility in determining how they would meet their targets.

This is the context in which the government has already, it should be noted, committed more than one billion dollars toward measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and undertaken studies and consultations leading to an action plan tailored to the realities and the limitations of our country.

Through, on the one hand, our sustained participation in this international process of unprecedented scope and complexity, and also through a large-scale mobilization here within Canada, we have paved the way toward the ratification of the Kyoto protocol

Now the time has come for our Parliament to approve the process and to ask our government to ratify the protocol, in other words, to announce officially that Canada will take part in this international agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By this agreement, we send the message that our country agrees with this major international contract to fight global warming within the framework of a combined effort involving dozens of other countries.

I wanted to recall briefly the international context surrounding the ratification procedure that we are now debating, in order to show that our actions here in Canada will be an integral part of international actions.

I wanted to remind members of this to demonstrate that one cannot contrast—as some have tried to do—a completely Canadian action plan with the enormous international effort resulting from the Kyoto protocol.

Our action plan fits within the international action plan, and is not independent of it. However, it can be completely tailored to Canadian realities.

In the past few days, our colleagues have debated the Kyoto protocol and Canada's ratification of it in scientific and economic terms, and in terms of the political repercussions.

As far as the scientific aspects are concerned, I will refer to the findings of the three working groups of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This panel brought together the best government experts in the world and prepared consensus reports that the *Financial Times* considered to be models of their kind. These reports describe what we can expect. When I say we, I mean the earth, the oceans, the climate, human beings and other life forms if we continue down the current slope in terms of climate change brought about by human activity. These reports suggest possible adaptation strategies, while noting that “tackling climate change is now a political, at least as much as a technical or economic, problem”.

As for the economic aspects of the issue, during this debate we have seen numerous scenarios unfold, often with alarmist predictions, including an economic slowdown, loss of competitiveness, loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs, unknown costs, unfair distribution of the burden, and so on.

In reality, the most credible numbers come from the National Climate Change Process, Analysis and Modeling Group, a group comprised of representatives from all levels of government in Canada.

What does this group predict? After consulting with experts from business, universities and environmental groups, this group predicts that our GDP will increase by 30.4% in 2012, instead of 31%.

Is there really cause for concern with such a prediction that is well within the standard margin of error? More importantly, this prediction does not weigh the possible positive impact on our economy, health and lifestyle stemming from innovation, new investment, new developments in energy and so on.

• (1230)

We also know that hundreds of businesses in many European and Asian countries and even in the United States, with billions in sales have joined in support of the Kyoto protocol under the banner “emission 55—Business for Climate”. These businesses believe Kyoto is appropriate.

We also know that dozens of Canadian companies, including oil companies, have taken the lead and understand that reducing greenhouse gases will in no way harm their ability to compete or be efficient.

We also know, and the Canadian Labour Congress reminded us of this point, that the Kyoto protocol is not seen as a threat to jobs in Canada. On the contrary.

The CLC urges the Government of Canada to ratify Kyoto because, they say, it would be good for the Canadian economy, for job creation, for the health of workers, for our children and for our cities.

Furthermore, we know that the federal and provincial governments can negotiate sectoral agreements with industry and unions, while ensuring that fair transitional measures and incentives for change and adaptation measures are established to ensure the necessary flexibility.

Government Orders

Over and above these measures, however, what counts the most, both now in the debate and in the years to come, is our capacity for innovation and creativity as far as clean and renewable energies, as well as new construction materials, new technologies, transportation and bioeconomics, are concerned.

Then there are the political dimensions of this debate, which merit considerable attention also.

I feel that our primary responsibility as elected representatives is to call upon the business community to show greater vision, to move beyond short term considerations and follow the lead of the numerous companies that have already embarked upon new practices which have proven that economy can go hand in hand with respect for the environment, and that it can be profitable to work with the environment.

We also have a duty to point out the path we want our country to follow, while still keeping the door open to bilateral, multilateral and sectoral negotiations, with a view to ensuring all necessary fairness to the various parties to the action plan, and while respecting jurisdictional limitations and the past efforts of certain provinces, as well as their specific characteristics.

In my opinion, this is not the right time for the federal government to wait for consensus on an action plan that would dot all the i's and cross all the t's, as far as each measure to be adopted and each phase to be undertaken are concerned.

We are not here for the purpose of micromanaging every transitional and adaptive measure arising out of the action plan. What we are here for is to define the horizon and the vision that is right for this country and for the international situation.

The cost of inaction is greater than the cost of action. The time for action, concerted action, has come. It is time Canada ratified the Kyoto protocol.

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague who just finished his speech on the merits of the Kyoto protocol. He obviously speaks with a great deal of experience, having been the spokesperson for and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment. I know him to be a member who studies a subject thoroughly and who gives it much thought and consideration.

Therefore, I am happy to add my voice to those in the House who believe that the Kyoto protocol should be a *fait accompli*.

• (1235)

[*English*]

It is that. I have listened to debate among members in the House who have a genuine and deep-seated commitment to the benefit of Canada and all Canadians. When we speak about Kyoto, I note that some of my colleagues address this with the fervour that in the past some of us might have addressed a philosophical or religious attachment to a particular thing. There is nothing wrong with that. In fact we have needed that kind of attachment to move things along.

Government Orders

Today, in a much more secular environment, we address this as sort of political will. Perhaps we are in a period of political correctness. Be it as it may, we are today in a position where those who have been looking to Canada for leadership on the environmental issues we can rightfully say, "Here we are. We are providing such leadership".

The facts would seem to bear that out. Canada, as an industrialized nation, is responsible for only 2% of emissions that contribute to climate change, the so-called greenhouse gases. However we are a very small player on the pollution index and we are attempting to make a big dent in the way that the world will respond to this challenge.

I know that my colleague who just spoke would say to everybody in the House, and I dare say without presumption to those who sit in judgment on what we will do, that this is a challenge for each and every one of us. It is no longer an issue for us in the House that we will or will not accept Kyoto, because we will. It is there, it is a question of ratification and it is out of our hands. Much as many of us would like to think differently, we are all participants in a system that recognizes the nature of hierarchical decision making. We have already in this Parliament devolved to the executive the authority to ratify international accords, international protocols and international treaties, and so it should be. Here I would reflect on my colleague that we are happy to see that the leadership of this House has determined that ratifying Kyoto is a good thing.

Whether we would agree or disagree, as some people in the House would position themselves, we cannot change that. Should we? Certainly our vote in the House will not make a difference. I do not mean to be dismissive in that regard, but I do want to reinforce that. The challenge for all of us is not whether we can bring forward all the data that we think our scientists can provide us so that we can look good in making an argument for or against ratification. Those arguments have been made. They have been eloquent. Some of them have been compelling and many of them have been persuasive. Obviously they have persuaded those who will make the decision on our behalf.

I think most of us have come to grips with the fact that a particular philosophical position has already won the day. I do not know of anybody, certainly not on this side of the House and maybe not on the other side of the House, who does not want to make a contribution to a cleaner environment and to diminish the potential for ruining an environment down the road. If such a member exists in the House, please stand up and advise all Canadians of his or her position. Seeing none, I will continue.

The challenge then is that we ought to engage in a discussion about an implementation process. Let us acknowledge what has happened and what is happening and let us engage ourselves in an implementation process that will take into consideration all those dynamics that make us a separate, distinct sovereign country and that afford us as Canadians all those advantages that we say will accrue to all humankind as a result of our ratification of Kyoto and as a result of the leadership that we will provide.

• (1240)

It is leadership, because so far the countries that have ratified Kyoto account for only 37.4% of all the greenhouse gas emissions.

Members have already said that this would not be a binding protocol unless 55% of the countries in the world responsible for 55% of the overall emissions sign on. We would contribute an additional 2% to that 37.4%.

If I were a cynic I would say it would not happen no matter what we do, but I am not. We are providing leadership. By our signature and ratification we would hopefully bring other nations along with us, particularly some of the more polluting countries. I am thinking of one now that is responsible for over 17%. It is probably waiting for us to make a decision.

It is important for us to think in terms of an implementation program that is consistent with the objectives of the philosophical position of the environmental position that we are advancing. The implementation program should not diminish the intensity of our drive nor the value of our leadership by engaging in exercises that merely shift some of the obligation without bringing any actual benefit to Canada. If we are not going to diminish the amount of greenhouse gases or pollutants in Canada then we are diminishing that drive and that leadership.

One of the principles we should be looking toward is a position that is uniquely Canadian, taking into consideration the sectoral requirements of all Canadians in this vast territory which is geographically bigger than all of Europe, and much more challenging. It is much more challenging because geographically we have differences in resources and consumption.

We need to take those differences into consideration. We need to make those investments in technology and innovation that allow us to meet our own objectives here, domestically. We need to keep in mind the competitive nature of our society, our industries and our sectors. We need to ensure that we engage all of those jurisdictions and all of those industries that are going to be part and parcel of a solution. We need not engage in any exercise that would pit one Canadian versus another, one industry versus another, or one jurisdiction versus another.

The political environment is uniquely suited to establish the kind of implementation program and oversight program that would make us all proud as Canadians that we ratified Kyoto.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his interesting perspective. I find it more odd that he would use leadership as his thesis for the speech when his party is the one party that is lacking leadership above all else. The Kyoto protocol will be anything but leadership.

Leadership taking the forces, walking and having someone follow is not necessarily positive leadership. What we need is leadership that can take a look at and recognize the Kyoto protocol for what it is. It is dangerous for Canada, Alberta, and to the economy.

If Canada were to sign the Kyoto protocol we would have the distinction of being one of the countries that would perhaps, more than any other country, have to significantly reduce its emissions. Countries in the developing world would not have to reduce their emissions. They have not signed the protocol. They are not included in it and yet out of the six billion individuals on the planet, five billion are from the developing world.

Government Orders

The United States has shown leadership. It has looked at the impact that it would have on its economy and on the country and it has said it needs a different type of plan to reduce CO₂. Australia recognized that it was able to negotiate and it will not sign the Kyoto protocol.

Many of the western European countries would not be affected because they have already reduced their amounts to levels that would not force them into making a plan that would hinder and hurt their economies to the degree that Canada would be hurt.

I must note that Europe uses nuclear energy and it is a leader in that area. Is that the type of leadership that this member would like to see Canada move toward, more nuclear powered energy? Japan obviously has not.

Given that the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Chamber of Commerce, and all those dealing specifically with the economy of the country, have warned us and told us of the hurt to the economy that we would see with the ratification of the Kyoto protocol, what kind of leadership is it from a country that would walk its economy into that type of situation?

• (1245)

Mr. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, when I was speaking about challenge my hon. colleague was thinking about leadership. The two are not necessarily at odds with each other because the decision presents a challenge. I indicated what some of those challenges were and the fact that decisions that would be made may require all of us to come up with a “how to” plan, not a “what to” plan because that has already been decided. That is not dangerous.

A “how to” plan would involve a strategy for maintaining competitiveness in the environment in which we operate, a political and economic involvement. That is not dangerous. There is no dissonance with leadership there.

The hon. colleague makes reference to whether we are heading in the right direction or not. There are members on this side of the House who have paid great attention to this issue. My colleague from Stoney Creek set out a few examples of a strategy where Canadians would be able to maintain their dominant position in a relatively wealthy environment. What we need to do is to take a look at challenges as not being dissonant with competitiveness.

What we need to do is to take into consideration the interests of Canada as an industrial interest and as a home for Canadians who are looking for not only this direction, because we are back to the “what to”, but as a place where Canadians can maintain a competitive environment.

We need the “how to” process where we would not only protect but nurture and encourage our industries, where we would not only protect our resources but nurture innovation, and where we would not only take a look at the conditions that we currently have in terms of the consumption of energy resources but where we could renew them, make them sustainable and make them exporters of the innovation.

Mr. Rex Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls, PC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from South Shore.

We sit around the table and talk about Kyoto, but a lot of Canadians out there, believe it or not, still do not understand what Kyoto is all about. I will try to simplify it as much as I can so that not only people in the media understand it, but also people out there reading the papers.

It is irresponsible of the House to blindly ratify the Kyoto accord without knowing exactly what is in it and exactly how it would affect ordinary Canadians. We could talk about how it would affect the provinces and that is important, but how would it affect Canadians who are paying the bills, and paying our salaries to work on their behalf?

It is important to realize that Canadians are doing their part to ensure that they take care of the environment in one form or another. An example is the price of gas which has risen across this country. It is very high in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have some of the highest gas prices. People are doing their part because they cannot afford to do otherwise. They are carpooling to cut down on people driving from one point to another because they cannot afford the cost but at the same time they are thinking about the environment.

I would like to make the following analogy. If anyone in the House were to go to a construction company and ask it to build a house, the first thing the contractor would say is how much it would cost. If a person only has \$100,000 to put into a house and the contractor builds the house for \$150,000, that person would be in trouble. To look at it simply, one would not build a house if one could not afford it. Therefore why would the government expect parliamentarians to vote for Kyoto without actually knowing how would affect us and what is in it?

We are all concerned that climate change is happening and that we all must do our parts. All we ask is to be told how it would affect our pocketbooks and how it would affect us long term, and we would all work toward it.

I do not know how my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party will vote on it, but I have made it clear that it would be irresponsible of me to blindly ratify the accord without knowing what is there. If my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party feel differently, I encourage them to vote for it, but then they are not doing justice to themselves or the people they represent. It is no good to just sit here and say that the party in power has brought it in, so we will support it. That is not good enough. It is important to be given the details, to slow down on the ratification, speak to the provinces and business people, and do it right.

Premier Roger Grimes of Newfoundland and Labrador is not against Kyoto as far as making it work, but he is opposed to Kyoto when there is no consultation, no plan in place, and no impact study to show how it would impact the province and the people. It is important to realize that this information must be given to us first, and if we do not do that, it is irresponsible.

Government Orders

The thing about Kyoto is that a Canadian plan is one made up with the provinces. Canada should have changed the format in the way it handled this. I have heard in the House that the government did not have to bring this to the House for debate, that it did not have to be ratified in the House, that it could have just pushed it through. That again shows the arrogance and the irresponsibility of any government that would do that.

• (1250)

We have to realize that if province by province had the input like they did when Kyoto was first was discussed, the Prime Minister could have told the provinces at that time that they had two to four years to come up with a plan and then they would sit together and format it into a major plan for the country. Therefore, Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador and all provinces would have been on side.

Now all we have is a major battle from province to province, and that is not good for the country. If that had been done, we would have been way ahead of the eight ball and we would have probably unanimously supported the report. The provinces would have had their own made in Canada, made in Newfoundland and Labrador, made in Alberta, program for the environment and to fight climate change to ensure that we left the heritage for our young people so that they would not have to worry about major problems with regard to the environment.

We are all here for the environment. We will not do anything that will hurt the environment. However we are here to ensure that it is done right. If that had happened, I guarantee we would probably have been the unanimous of the House for the accord.

However we cannot support it if we do not know on what we are voting. It is okay for some people to say that we have not read it, but tell us how much it will cost us. We cannot blindly ratify something. It is like the house; we cannot build a house unless we know how much it will cost. That is the same with Kyoto. That is very important.

We have read all the documents and have heard people speak on this, and they put all these big words into it. However a lot of people do not understand really what is happening. They honestly do not know what all the fighting is about with regard to Kyoto. As a result, we have to try to make it very simple so that they can understand it. That is very important.

One thing stands out the most when I speak to people. They want to know what it will do for them. They want to know how it will help them. They want to know if companies are trying to develop technologies to make it easier. If Kyoto will make it easier for them, they want us to tell them how so they can buy into to protect the environment. They do not want us to blindly ratify it and then make changes after. They say that will not work. If they do not support it now, they definitely will not support it after if all these changes are brought in. It is no good to put something in at beginning which is no good and then change it after.

My grandmother always told me, "If you are going to do it right the first time, do it right so you do not have to change it for the second time because as soon as you change it the second time, you have actually said you made mistakes in the beginning." It is okay to make mistakes. If we admit our mistakes. If we do not admit those mistakes and make changes for the sake of making changes, then that is poor leadership, it is irresponsible and we are not doing what we are being paid for, and that is to represent the best concerns of our constituents and for all of Canada.

We have to realize that we have to move forward. If we are to move forward as a group, we have to show that we are building relationships and consensus with all parties in the House to ensure that concerns like Kyoto go forward with the best interests of the country and of all political parties in mind. There is no one in the House who is opposed to it but it is the manner in which it has come here.

We cannot vote on this blindly. We must have a clear vision of where we are going, what we are voting for and how it is going to impact us. If we cannot do that, I suggest the members are irresponsible and they will fail their constituents and Canada. This has nothing to do with leadership. It is all about working for our constituents to make their concerns heard and to ensure that Canada is the greatest country. We are the greatest country but let us make it better by ensuring that technologies are there which will ensure that we do not pollute our environment.

• (1255)

Mr. Julian Reed (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my friend across the way that Kyoto is not a house. Kyoto is an objective. It is a direction that we must go in. It was precipitated because of a recognition that our climate was changing on earth due to human activity.

I also remind my young friend, who is relatively new in this Parliament, that consultations have been going on with the provinces for over five years. At least one province, Alberta, has had a detailed plan in its hands for 12 years, which the premier of Alberta somehow chooses to ignore.

Reaching the objective of Kyoto is going to be a combination of two things. It is going to be a plan, yes, but also running the race as technologies develop and as we reintroduce old technologies, which served the industrialization of this country so well before the days of petroleum and so on.

Would the member recognize that this is a two-pronged approach? Not only is it just the plan, but is it not also the race we have to run?

Mr. Rex Barnes: Mr. Speaker, again it shows how much people really listen and how much they understand. I did not say that Kyoto is a house. I said it is like a house when it comes to point of knowing how much it is going to cost to build a house. We must know how much it is going to cost us as Canadians and what the implications of Kyoto are going to be. If we do not do that, we are failing our people.

Government Orders

I agree with the member that yes, we are probably dealing with a two or three-pronged plug. It will take time to do it, but let us put the plan front and centre now. Let us stipulate in the plan that in year one we will meet a certain objective and indicate what it will cost; in year two this is what we will do; and in year three and year four this is what we will do. Let us have the plan outlined. Let us not change it from year to year because of a whim. What we have to realize with Kyoto is that if we are to do it right, we have to have a plan. We have to know where it will go and how much it will cost people.

• (1300)

He talked about consultation. Premiers across the country have said that they have not been consulted in the manner which everyone says they have. Yes, there was consultation, but what type of consultation was there? The consultation should have been to instruct the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador to start formulating a plan for the province and then inform the government what the province wanted. Ottawa should not dictate to the rest of Canada what it will be. Let the provinces have input. Canada is only as strong as its provinces. If the provinces are not strong, Canada is not strong.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the comments from my colleague from Gander—Grand Falls. His last analogy probably sums this up as good as any analogy that I have heard. He said that the whole is only as strong as the sum of its parts, that Canada is only as strong as its provinces.

Instead of having a confrontational attitude and approach to difficult issues, the government would have been much better served to have had an approach that would have brought the provinces on board and would have allowed them some modicum of cooperation and some reward in the process that would have encouraged them to embark upon the Kyoto protocol.

Instead, it is typical of the government and its almost now 10 years in office. It did not have a plan. It waited until the very last moment in the process. It is my understanding that the Prime Minister has given word that the vote will occur on the Kyoto protocol on Monday. It would seem to me that there is a very limited amount of time to debate this in a responsible, reasonable, rational manner and, hopefully, in an intelligent manner.

I do not think many members of the House, although there may be a few, would debate that climate change is not occurring. There may be some debate about why it is occurring.

What went wrong? How can a government, which has been in power since 1993 and which signed this Kyoto protocol in 1997, now all of a sudden say that Kyoto has to be signed by December 31? All the legislation in the House seems to have to be passed before 2003, whether it is the nuclear bill, Bill C-4, or the gun control bill or Kyoto. There must be something awfully bad coming in 2003, something that we do not understand on the opposition side. What would be the difference if Kyoto was signed by August of 2003?

Have we somehow given a promise? All our trading partners have not signed on to it. All our trading partners do not intend to sign on to it. We do know enough about this legislation.

If we go back to the Rio summit, two major issues arose from that summit, biodiversity was the first one. Ten years later we have a Liberal government that has failed to pass the species at risk act. It has failed to pass any significant piece of environmental legislation.

Global climate change was the other issue that came from the Rio summit. That was in 1992. Kyoto was in 1997. On December 31 are we going to turn into something, but we do not know what it is yet. There is absolutely no reason for the government to pursue the course that it has. There is no reason the government could not have had the provinces on board. There is absolutely no reason that it could not have lead by example.

Two years ago in the natural resources committee members asked the committee to investigate the Kyoto process and look at the issue of climate change. Nothing happened. While we had agreement from some, we could not get an agreement from all government members. We could not get agreement from all opposition members. There were at least two of us who agreed to the motion but we could not get agreement to work on the cost of Kyoto. That was amazing.

• (1305)

Here we are at the last hour of the last day debating this issue and trying to find some reasonable position to take. The government has changed its position. It turns over more than one would turn bacon in a frying pan. It is absolutely incredible. It started off with an implementation date of 2008 to 2012. Now it may be 2020, 2030 or 2040.

Canada is the highest energy user per capita in the world. We use energy. We live in a cold climate. We have big distances to travel. Canada is a huge country. Our energy costs are high now and they will continue to be high.

What has the government done to lead by example? The Parliament Buildings do not even have thermopane windows. If we wanted to reduce heating costs that would be a small and fairly inexpensive first step. The government should wrap its head around that. The government is telling the rest of the nation how to retrofit for billions of dollars and it has not spent 2¢ of its own money to do the job itself.

What will a litre of gasoline cost at the end of the day? Do not say it will only be 3¢ or 4¢ more expensive because we know that is not true.

What will be the cost of a litre of home heating fuel? What will be the cost of a cord of firewood? We live in a cold climate. It is important to keep warm. A sweater will only do so much; we have to have an alternative heating source.

Why did we embark upon a program that encourages pollution by third world countries? We are saying that we will forgive the carbon produced by third world countries until they get up to scale with their own economies. Would the world not have been better served and would Kyoto not have been better served if we had said we would supply those third world countries with clean sources of energy? Would that not have been a better process to embark upon? Did not one think of that? Is that too complicated for the members on the government benches? Surely it is not. It is pretty basic.

Government Orders

How will carbon credits work? I still have not heard a satisfactory explanation from the government side.

Why did we not receive credit for clean exports? Hundreds of thousands of megawatts of clean electricity go from Canada into the U.S and there is no credit for those clean exports. With respect to the natural gas which comes from Alberta, the east coast and the high Arctic, there is no credit for those clean exports. We will be shipping product to the U.S. and allowing the U.S. to cut its carbon dioxide emissions but we will not be getting credit for shipping that product.

It seems that there has been a lot of obfuscation to make a fairly simple issue very complex. The government has done a poor job of defending the interests of Canadians. There is not an issue that we have ever supported in the House that was not costed out ahead of time. The government could say, "We have a cost here and it will be so many billion dollars in the first year and so many billion dollars in the second year". We do not believe it, and Canadians do not believe it. There has to be a better and more pragmatic approach to this issue.

• (1310)

Where have we looked at emissions? What has the government done to foster green energy? What has the government done to foster ethanol production in Canada? We could have 10% to 20% of all the gasoline in Canada supplemented with ethanol. Nothing has been done.

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it was refreshing to hear someone who thinks the same way that I do and who has obviously looked into this in great detail. I have one question for the member.

Would he ever consider ratifying a protocol knowing full well that he could not meet the targets in it and also understanding fully that there are huge penalties to pay for implementing it and not being able to follow through?

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is no. The long answer is a little more complicated.

The hypocrisy, and I do not think that is too strong a word, Mr. Speaker, of ratifying an accord that the government knows it does not have a chance of implementing and coming up to the standards that are involved is shocking to say the very least. To embark on an issue like this and to not know the cost involved is even more shocking.

I note that the hon. member did not say that she was against environmental controls or that she was against doing something about climate change. That is the fundamental difference between the approach of at least some of the opposition parties and the government. It is not the goal. The goal at the end of the day may be the same. We would like a little proof on this side of what the real costs will be.

I understand Alberta's position very clearly. I understand the position of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia with offshore oil reserves and offshore gas.

It does not mean that we cannot do a better job of cleaning up the environment. It does not mean that we cannot reduce carbon

emissions. There should be a step by step plan showing us very clearly how we could accomplish that end goal. That is not out there.

When I was concluding my remarks, I was talking about alternative forms of green energy. The government has done nothing to encourage alternative forms of energy, such as small hydro, wind power, or supplementing every litre of gasoline by making 10% of it ethanol. It has done nothing to do that, absolutely nothing. The government should start by leading by example. Let us retrofit the government buildings and insulate them.

The last time there was an energy crunch in the late 1980s, there was a tremendous retrofitting program. The walls and ceilings of private homes were insulated. Alternative oil burners were brought into production where we could get more fuel efficiency. We went to smaller vehicles. We went to more fuel efficient carburetors and motors. All that could be legislated.

It is no problem to reduce greenhouse gases. There is a huge problem for the government to reduce greenhouse gases because it does not know how to go about it. It cannot get an agreement or an accord with the provinces, but it wants to sign on with 168 countries around the world and force the provinces to abide by it. It does not make much sense to me.

• (1315)

Mr. Julian Reed (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am at a loss to know where the hon. member for South Shore has been since he was elected to the House.

Has he forgotten about the ethanol biomass program? Has he ever thought to tour the plant in Chatham that is turning out nearly 200 million litres a year? Has he forgotten about the elimination of the excise tax on ethanol? Does he not know about the Iogen Corporation in the south end of Ottawa near the airport? It is working on ethanol development from cellulose with a very hefty infusion of cash from the federal government. Has he forgotten that? Has he forgotten the last budget? The former minister of finance announced supplemental buy-back rates for wind powered energy. Has he forgotten about that?

I realize we could always do more, but perhaps the member could comment on those initiatives.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, it is infinitesimal, not even a blimp on the radar screen. It is less than 1%. There are big words and a lot of talk, but there is nothing in the total amount of gasoline used in Canada. It is infinitesimal.

In order to start a comprehensive program, we have to set a goal. Is the goal 10%? Is it 20%? Is it 30%? Is it 50%? The government has to set a goal and then try to reach it. I would like the government to do that. The government should not just sign Kyoto because the Prime Minister got up one day and thought it was a good idea. The government should sign it because the goal can be reached.

Government Orders

Mr. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I shall be sharing my time with my friend, the member for Toronto—Danforth.

I rise today to support the immediate ratification of the Kyoto protocol. I do so in the belief that humanity is facing an unprecedented crisis of historical proportions. For our generation of parliamentarians it is hard to imagine a choice, a decision, that carries with it such monumental consequences. Nothing less than the future of the planet and the fate of humankind is at stake in this debate.

For us to rise to the challenge, we must summon up within us, within ourselves, qualities of courage, of imagination, of empathy with our brothers and sisters around the world, and of intergenerational moral obligation to our children and grandchildren.

What sort of world will we leave those children? Will it be a world fit for human habitation? Will it be a world where droughts continually worsen here in Canada's prairies or in the Sahel region of Africa? Will it be a world where the great oceans themselves inexorably rise, drowning ocean states like Nauru and coastal states like Bangladesh and threatening our own coastal villages and cities with flooding and storm surges?

Will this be a world where heat induced diseases like malaria, dengue fever and Lyme disease advance to overwhelm poor and vulnerable people around the world and indeed threaten even us in our seemingly safe bastion of North America?

Will this be a world in which increased temperatures combine with increased pollution to produce a toxic cloud to hasten the deaths around the world of young and elderly alike? And all this because we in North America failed to grow up, because we insisted on the acquisition and proliferation of sports utility vehicles as our birthright, indeed, the very definition of our moral worth as human beings?

When I recall the notorious Cheney energy plan of a year and a half ago in which the Vice President of the United States insisted that any restriction on the manufacture and sale of SUVs would be a constraint, indeed, an attack on the American way of life, I am sickened. What a paltry definition of American greatness. What pathetic, self-indulgent infantilism. What moral bankruptcy. What a failure of the human spirit.

Yet Canada has its own Dick Cheneys, its own self-absorbed, careless, short term, small minded critics of the Kyoto protocol, all equally bereft of scientific analytical capacity and moral imagination. What a monumental gamble they are asking us to take. What an extraordinary risk they are willing to run, not only for themselves but for their children. And all for short term gain, all for today and nothing for tomorrow, all for shallow political and economic ideology and nothing for science, nothing for moral decency.

When 2,000 of the world's leading scientists gathered together at the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and agreed so clearly on the impact of human activity over the past three centuries in hastening the speed of climate change, reasonable non-expert people like parliamentarians have to take them at their word. Probability analysis historically suggests that the consensus view of scientists has about nine out of ten chances of being right and the

minority position has no more than a one in ten chance of being right.

Do we make public policy on the basis of a 10% chance of a minority view of scientists being right? More important, do we gamble with the future of our planet, the future of mankind, the future of our children, the future of our grandchildren, by failing to take action against a global risk that has a 90% chance of being right? What derogation from our duties as legislators, as global citizens, indeed as sentient moral human beings, would that be?

● (1320)

Supposing we followed the precautionary principle, took the 90% risk seriously, and ratified and implemented Kyoto, what is the worst that could happen to us? What is the downside?

Imagine our world in 2020 if we implement Kyoto. In 2020, we have stabilized our greenhouse gas emissions. True, fewer new jobs have been created in the fossil fuel industry, but new jobs have been created in the renewable energy sector. Natural gas prices have risen slightly, as have the costs of oil. Canada is a world leader in green technology. We are a more efficient country. The vehicles we drive have higher fuel efficiency standards and are fueled by ethanol blend gasoline. The next generation of cars powered by fuel cells is making its way onto our roads thanks to incentives and the existence of a domestic and international market for them. We have significantly reduced our dependence on fossil fuels, with dramatic implications for the health of Canadians, national security and the geopolitics of the Middle East.

In 2020, despite the population increase in urban areas, we have less congestion and fewer smog warnings because our public transportation infrastructure has been rejuvenated. Canadians and industry use fewer resources to accomplish the same tasks. Appliances are more energy efficient. Homes and industrial processes waste less energy.

In 2020, we are a world leader in renewable energy. We are a world leader in energy efficiency, in energy demand management, in forestry research, in waste management, and in materials research. We are a leader in disseminating that knowledge and technology to the rest of the world. We are spending less on our diminished energy needs. Canada has transitioned to a low carbon economy.

As columnist Andrew Coyne has pointed out:

The chances that many distinguished scientists who predict an impending climatological catastrophe will prove to be right...are greater than zero. In which case, would it not be prudent to take out some insurance against the event?

Kyoto is our insurance. It is clear that the risks of inaction are much higher than the risks of action.

To move forward decisively will require courage, commitment and contribution by all Canadians, but above all it will require leadership. In the real world, people do not undertake great tasks in a mood of cold, ironic realism. People need to have their passions engaged.

Government Orders

Hegel said:

We may affirm absolutely that nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion.

It is the necessary fire that defeats the human inertia that is part of man.

The great French philosopher Blaise Pascal spoke of the essence of human life as a gamble, “un pari”, and so it is in political life. All the great decisions of state are essentially a gamble about the future.

Because we are not divine, we must always decide from a position of imperfect knowledge. We can never have all the facts. We can never be absolutely certain, but when we imperfect, frail mortals make this decision in this month of December, the year of our Lord 2002, surely it is not a lot to ask that we play the odds, that we not go against the 90% probability of the consensus of scientists being right, and that we think not only of ourselves but of our fellow human beings around the world who are far more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than we are.

Above all, as we vote on the Kyoto protocol, let us think of posterity, of our children and their children, and let us imagine ourselves sometime in the future feeling proud that at a moment of supreme, existential choice in our time and in our day we had the vision and the courage to do the right thing.

• (1325)

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, who says that preaching is a lost art? I expected the voice to resonate as those ocean waves lapped up against the Rocky Mountains, and what were we going to do about it? I was not really moved, but I was surprised at the member.

I invite him instead to look at the speech from the member for Stoney Creek on his own side, because he realizes, as we realize, that it is not enough just to care. The member makes a passionate case for why we should care but he does not make a case about why it will work. Caring is easy. Liberals like to think they are the only people who care, but we on this side of the House, and many members on his own side, are saying, “Yes, but will it work?” The answer is, unfortunately, that I do not think this plan will work.

First the member for Stoney Creek pointed out the need to have treaties approved by Parliament before they are ratified, rather than them being just an interesting, little, useless exercise in debate. He talked about the need to have credits for early CO₂ reductions. He talked about the problems in having no specific details, plans and costs. He talked about the timeframes and the fact they are unreasonable. He talked about what financial instruments we were going to use to move the agenda forward, because he wants to move it forward, like many of us do, but finds nothing in the protocol that gives us any confidence that it will be done.

He talked about not contravening the innovation agenda that has already been announced, but he feels that Kyoto will contravene it because the two place one another at odds. He talked about the North American reality and the fact that we do not have a bilateral agreement with the Americans, and if we do not have a bilateral agreement with the Americans we have almost nothing. We are the only country in the western hemisphere signing this deal.

There are things we could do and there are things we should do. Many of them have been listed by the member for Stoney Creek and others. The member across the way should realize that passionate feelings of wanting to do something good for the world do not get the job done.

• (1330)

Mr. John Godfrey: Neither, Mr. Speaker, does delay, delay, delay.

In 1939 members debated a wartime budget in the House. That was the way they expressed their views on the outbreak of the second world war and the decision of the Government of Canada to enter it. Did they know in 1939 that it would work? No. Did they know that they had to do it? Yes. We face from time to time extraordinary historical choices. Either we believe that there is a problem, in which case we have to set the goals and get on with it, or we cannot get on with it until we set the goals and agree that we have a problem.

An hon. member: Where's the plan?

Mr. John Godfrey: In 1939 there was no plan. None. In six years the country mobilized its economic and industrial resources in a way no one could have imagined in 1939. We did it because we recognized the nature of the challenge and we got on with it. The plan developed as we fought the war.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. My friend referred to scientific consensus. I want to point out to him that in past there has been scientific consensus on a number of things that never came to pass.

We know that scientists have repeatedly predicted that the world would be overrun with population, that we would not have food left. Every time they predict that, the numbers come out wrong. There was a consensus on a global ice age not very long ago, a consensus that we were entering a global ice age. They were wrong. There was a consensus that we would run out of fossil fuels in 25 years. They were wrong.

I want to say to my friend that I think his premise is wrong. I think that scientists in this case cannot possibly know exactly what will happen with the weather. They cannot predict the climate to the degree that they would suggest. Therefore, I think it is completely wrong to premise all this type of action on information that, at its very best—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. member for Don Valley West has the last word.

Mr. John Godfrey: Mr. Speaker, what if the hon. member is wrong? What are the consequences of his being wrong? They are far more catastrophic than the consequences of our being wrong. The hon. member being wrong is an attack on the future viability of the planet. The consequence of our being wrong is a more efficient economy.

Government Orders

Mr. Dennis Mills (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I feel privileged to have an opportunity to speak in the debate.

I want to go back to an evening I had 14 months ago. A group of us were in Toronto sitting around and listening to the former president of the United States, Bill Clinton, talk about his life as president. He decided at the end of the evening that he would take questions. A young man in the back of the room stood and asked, "Mr. Clinton, if you had an opportunity to be the president again, what would the number one issue be on your agenda?" Mr. Clinton said, "There is only one issue. It is climate change and, as a North American society, we have to mobilize and get involved in doing what is right for future generations".

When the Prime Minister announced that we as a House of Commons would be voting for the ratification of Kyoto, it will go down as one of his boldest moves as a leader. I will tell members why the Prime Minister has the confidence that he is doing the right thing.

I happened to be around here in 1983 as a young assistant when we had inflation of 13% and unemployment of 12%. It was a very scary time to be in government. At that particular moment in time, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau stood in the House and announced a wage and price restraint program only for the Government of Canada. Over a two year period we were going to lead by example in restraining wages and prices. He appealed to Canadians to join in the exercise on a voluntary basis for the good of the entire country. I remember vividly the opposition at that time saying that this would never happen, that it was just a public relations gimmick. That is what the opposition said.

The people of Canada rallied. Small business, large business and unions from coast to coast involved themselves in the great mobilization of the national will of the country. Within a two and a half year period we reversed the trajectory of wages and prices spiralling out of control, which were causing enormous damage to the economy. It was the public will. It was not through regulation. It was the ingenuity of individual men and women who got involved in this national exercise.

I believe that same quality and capacity of ingenuity exists today. We do not have to have the plan in a definitive way today for what we will be doing for the next 10 years. We never had a perfect plan when we gave the Government of Canada support for Spar Aerospace in 1980 to make a space arm, but through research and ingenuity, two and a half years later we had one of the most proud moments in Canadian technology when that space arm opened in outer space.

Mr. John Herron: What about acid rain?

Mr. Dennis Mills: Let us talk about acid rain, which was a great example. I acknowledge the member for Fundy—Royal and the great work of the Conservative member of Parliament, Stan Darling from Muskoka—Parry Sound, when he almost singularly said that he would lead the way to get the congressmen of the United States to come onboard on the acid rain protocol.

● (1335)

Quite frankly, a lot of us thought that Stan Darling was just going uphill with grease on his shoes but, God bless him, he mobilized Americans. He mobilized the grassroots in the United States to force their congressmen and congresswomen to say, "yes, this acid rain protocol is important". The results are a magnificent achievement for both of our countries together.

I believe there have been ample precedents for the mobilization of not just the will, the activism and the ingenuity of our country to take up this Kyoto challenge, but we have precedents: the 6% and 5% program, Stan Darling's acid rain protocol. I believe Canadians are waiting for us to lead on this in a very direct way. I do not think Canadians support the coalition of the antis, the anti-Kyoto crowd or group, wherever they are. I think they want us to come together and get this done.

A more fundamental issue is at stake here. It has to do with our sovereignty and our own self-confidence. As the House knows, in the last few years the foreign control and foreign infiltration of this country has just gone so high it is right off the Richter scale. If we are not careful there could be a tie-in to sort of slowing us down on this issue. We had better keep our heads up and appeal to Canadians to use their ingenuity.

I want to close by using an example of TeleTrips, a Canadian software that monitors men and women who work at home one day a week. It shows what is saved in terms of travelling on the highways and how it cuts back on waste and emissions. The United States is already doing this in five major cities and it is saving billions and billions of dollars a year in terms of its environmental costs and damage. We have not even started here. Therefore in many respects the Americans are ahead of us in working on some of these targets.

As my colleague from Don Valley West said earlier, we have green technology that is the envy of the world. If there was ever a moment to celebrate and support our technology, it is by getting our technology activated on this particular challenge. We know, from previous experiences, that all Canadians will rally.

● (1340)

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we have heard the Liberals construct these magic carpets to the state of nirvana before. We have seen gun control. The government has no idea how much it will cost. The wheels are coming off. We have the Nisga'a treaty in which aboriginal people are now preparing a suit because of what the federal government did, which was to give major control to a small, select group of people. Now we have the Kyoto protocol which will solve all the problems of the world. At the same time, we have the Romanow report estimating \$15 billion for health care. We have an infrastructure in the country that is worn out. I am wondering if we took all the trucks and cars off the highway if that would forestall the need to rebuild the roads.

Has the government taken into account all of the problems that we have in the country, this horrible mess that has grown since that government came to power? If we were to add up those problems, along with over half a trillion dollars in debt, how in the world will we pay the Russians for credits and still have the money we need so Canadians can live a life here?

Government Orders

Mr. Dennis Mills: Mr. Speaker, I cannot figure out where the member is coming from. The fiscal track record of the government over the last nine years in putting the fiscal trajectory back on track is one of the envies of the world. I think we have been overly obsessed with the fiscal trajectory.

I want to say to the members of the Canadian Alliance that if they get caught on the wrong side of this issue there will be a heavy political price to pay with grassroots Canadians.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address my comments to the member for Toronto—Danforth and to the member for Don Valley West.

Clearly, the consensus from the scientific respect is that climate change is real and that a progressive country like Canada needs to have a progressive climate change strategy, whether or not we are in Kyoto. Even if we did not ratify, Canada would still need a progressive climate change strategy.

What I am saying to both members is that we cannot implement an accord of this nature without the active participation of the provinces. We painstakingly earned their support on a bilateral basis when we implemented the acid rain protocol. Therefore, ratifying an accord without their support means we cannot implement the accord.

Does the hon. member agree, as we agree, that this vote is not about whether Parliament endorses the ratification of the accord, but that it is a guise. It is camouflage for the Prime Minister over of the fact that he does not have provincial consensus and, moreover, that he still does not have a plan.

• (1345)

Mr. Dennis Mills: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has shown repeatedly his capacity to interact and work with the provinces. It has always been a friendly and constructive joust between the provinces and the national government. I think we would be doing something wrong if we did not have a joust with them. That is just the nature of the way we are governed in this country.

However it does not mean we are not listening. It does not mean that we are not taking into consideration all those valid concerns that are being presented to us, by not just the provinces but by all interest groups.

I do not understand where the idea comes from that we are not listening to those valid concerns that we design a pathway to make it better.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will start off with a very bold statement, that Kyoto should not be ratified. It is based on uncertain science with new doubts coming to light almost daily. It is based on poor economic models which hide the serious damage that will occur to Canada's economy. It will direct limited resources away from much more serious, more imminent problems that we need to address now.

The minister likes to feign an intellectual superiority on this topic. In fact, it is merely an empty arrogance hiding the problems with Kyoto that he knows exist. The tale he tells is filled with sound and fury but it still signifies nothing.

How did we get to such a low point in Canadian international relations? Why did Canada sign an agreement that will hurt our

economy and our standard of living but that will not hurt any other country like ours? Part of the answer lies in the Prime Minister's failure to understand the strange combination of political cynicism and environmental idealism that came together in the 1997 Kyoto negotiations.

In short, the only reason Kyoto was started in the first place was that the U.S. failed to stop it. President Clinton, for domestic political calculations, allowed the Kyoto protocol to go forward in 1997 thus trapping Canada into a bizarre economic suicide pact. At least part of the U.S. government had no intention of going along with this scheme.

On July 25, 1997, before the Kyoto protocol was negotiated, the U.S. senate passed by a 95 to zero margin the Byrd-Hagel resolution. This resolution stated the senate would not ratify any protocol to the framework convention that would result in serious harm to the economy of the United States and that did not include binding targets and deadlines for developing countries.

The U.S. never had any intention of signing onto this. Going into Kyoto, the outcome was far from uncertain. No deal would be struck, U.S. negotiator Melinda Kimble was promised, without meaningful participation of key developing countries and realistic emissions targets. Specifically, the U.S. sought only to reduce global emissions to 1990 levels by 2010. The American negotiators initially refused to budge despite a barrage of biased media reports and UN sanctioned lobbying by hundreds of environmental activists. In the midst of the deadlocked negotiations, on December 8, 1997 then Vice-President Al Gore flew to Kyoto.

Here is where we get into the strange combination of political cynicism and environmental idealism. Gore had long demonstrated considerable environmental idealism. Gore had not only environmental interests in getting the U.S. into Kyoto, but also a political one. He was already thinking ahead to the 2000 presidential race. He wanted the U.S. to sign the Kyoto protocol in order to burnish his green friendly credentials as part of his election strategy.

Still, Gore could not agree to the Kyoto protocol without the permission of then President Clinton. Kyoto offered no benefits politically to Clinton. The senate, Republicans and Democrats, rejected outright the European plan even before the conference had begun. Clinton did not need any more fights with Congress.

Political analysts at the time speculated that Clinton and Gore reached the following agreement. Clinton would allow Gore to sign the Kyoto protocol but the protocol would not go to the senate for ratification until Clinton was out of the White House. Gore could not use Kyoto as proof of his green credentials in the 2000 campaign. If successful, he could attempt senate ratification in his own presidential term.

Government Orders

This is what happened. The Clinton administration signed the Kyoto protocol on November 12, 1998 but did not submit it to the senate for ratification. Whatever the reasons, Gore at Kyoto instructed U.S. negotiators to show increased negotiating flexibility. Three more days of protracted negotiations ensued. The delay was needed to allow the U.S., the EU and Japan to broker a deal on their individual allocations. In the end, the countries agreed to a 5.2% global reduction target by 2008 to 2012. Developing countries were exempted from having to make any reductions and only developed countries would have emissions reduction targets imposed.

The EU, however, was allowed to share out its reductions as it pleased among its member countries. Thus some EU members could increase greenhouse gas emissions over 1990 levels while others might have to make larger reductions. As for us, our Prime Minister simply wanted to out-green the Americans. That was the mandate they were sent to Kyoto with. As Gore collapsed on the U.S. position and raised the percentage of emissions cuts below 1990 levels, Canada followed along.

• (1350)

The ultimate irony is in the end, the Prime Minister did not out-green the president. The U.S. settled at a 7% reduction and Canada settled for a 6% reduction. Then, significantly, George Bush was elected as President of the United States in 2000 and in March 2001 he declared the U.S. would not ratify the Kyoto accord. There were no surprises there.

The rejection by the U.S. placed the future of Kyoto in serious doubt. First of all, the Kyoto protocol will only enter into force after it has been ratified by at least 55 members of the United Nations framework convention on climate change, including developed countries representing 55% of the total 1990 carbon dioxide emissions. The U.S. produces 36% of these emissions and its absence may make it difficult to bring the protocol into force.

Why did the Prime Minister make the surprise announcement of a vote on ratification at the Johannesburg summit in September? Here is a speculation. The Prime Minister is attempting to reverse the Clinton manoeuvre. Where Clinton could not ratify Kyoto, the Prime Minister believes he can. Where Clinton used Kyoto to help his potential successor, Al Gore, the Prime Minister seeks the opposite, to place Kyoto as a millstone around the neck of his potential successor.

The Prime Minister may get the last laugh on the member for LaSalle—Émard by taking credit for ratification while leaving the painful details of implementation. It is an entertaining political power play for pundits to comment on, but the Canadian audience has little to applaud about it, for the one simple, stark reason that putting the Canadian economy into the Kyoto straitjacket threatens economic strangulation. With the United States outside of Kyoto, the whole package makes no economic sense. The emissions credit trading scheme starts to unravel.

In a letter leaked to the media, the Minister of Industry acknowledged as much in writing:

When the United States changed their position on ratifying Kyoto, it dramatically changed the playing field for Canada.

Despite the grandiose rhetoric, this debate is something of a farce. Pro-Kyoto members are left with politics of fear to win the day. They would have one believe that the science and economics are clear and we need to move forward at breakneck speed to prevent a global meltdown. However, the facts do not support these doomsday pronouncements.

The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change comes four years after signing Kyoto and still readily admits there are many unknown factors that could significantly affect its conclusion. To suggest pro-Kyoto science is unquestionable is not true. Thousands of scientists have gone on the record expressing their concern with climate science, a far cry from the 10% sliver that the minister alluded to in his speech.

Dr. Khandekar, a former research scientist with Environment Canada who has a Ph.D. in meteorology wrote:

Hundreds of climate scientists in Canada and around the world are now beginning to question the validity of projections made with today's insufficiently verified climate models.

Dr. Pat Michaels, professor of environmental sciences at the University of Virginia wrote:

The Canadian government and pro-Kyoto supporters believe that there is widespread agreement on the science of Kyoto and that Canada should just move on with ratifying the accord. Nothing could be further from the truth.

On November 25, 27 climate specialists sent a letter to the Prime Minister calling on government to delay ratification. In the words of these specialists:

Delaying ratification for a short period so as to allow proper science consultations to take place will do absolutely no damage to Canada or the environment and is unquestionably the prudent and responsible course of action at this time.

The group includes both presenters and reviewers of the 2001 IPCC report.

Does all this evidence mean we should assume global warming, bio-anthropogenic or human intervention is false? Not at all, but we should acknowledge the uncertainties. Given the drastic cost to Canada, we should resolve them before we ratify Kyoto, not after.

As I said earlier, Canada is one country worse off under the accord. Russia will gain credit for closure of factories that have already closed. The EU will jointly benefit from the closure of east German plants that have ceased production post 1990. Economic predictions vary. The federal government admits Canada stands to lose \$15 billion and 250,000 jobs by 2010. The private sector estimates these numbers to be as high as \$40 billion and 450,000 jobs.

The much vaunted IPCC report's economic models are now being seriously questioned. The *National Post* reported that the head of the IPCC will be doing a complete review this month in response to the serious concerns from experts that economic projections used in the IPCC emissions scenario are technically unsound.

S. O. 31

●(1355)

Kyoto is a misallocation of resources. It does not address harmful airborne particulates. It does not safeguard water quality. It will not reduce acid rain or smog. This is where our efforts should be focused, not at some pie in the sky thinking that Kyoto is going to green the earth and save the environment.

Those who oppose Kyoto are branded either as heartless fronts for industry or as those who do not care about the environment, as if they did not have children of their own. Polls show that the more Canadians know about Kyoto, the less they support it. Kyoto proponents resort to tactics which are reminiscent of colonial witch trials. Their minds are made up and woe to anyone who tries to confuse them with the facts.

The Alliance is determined that Canadians hear all the facts prior to ratification. We support a strong economy and a sustainable environment, two things that Kyoto simply cannot deliver. Let us put an end to the rhetoric and deliver a real plan for addressing our environmental needs.

On October 24 members stood in the House and voted that they would not ratify Kyoto until we had a plan that Canadians understood, a plan that showed all the costing, that showed the cost of the Kyoto accord, that showed the cost to the economy. Members voted in the House that we should not ratify this accord until we have that.

The government seems to have total contempt for the Canadian Alliance motion that it supported. It seems to have no desire to present those facts to the House.

The government comes along with its PowerPoint presentations and its slide shows, but there are no details. It is an empty shell and we are supposed to believe the government. It is becoming more clear that the more Canadians learn about the Kyoto accord, the more information they find out about it, the more they learn that it will not plant a tree, that it will not clean the stream, that it will not clean up the air, that it will do none of those things, they start to question why we would sign such a crazy agreement. Why would Canadians ratify such a ridiculous agreement that will cost them thousands and thousands of jobs?

We have to continue to push the Canadian people to make sure they understand that the government is attempting to lead them down the garden path on this, that it is not coming clean. Of course when we ask questions of the minister in question period and he does not have an answer, he resorts to arrogance. He resorts to pretending he has a superiority of knowledge on the subject and that the rest of us know nothing.

Nothing could be further from the truth. When we start digging into the details, we find that this is an absolute economic disaster for Canada. It will only get worse. There is no way we should allow this to proceed.

There are a number of other areas in the Kyoto accord that are important for Canadians to know about. The Canadian negotiators negotiated a bad deal.

We could look at countries such as Australia, which has a larger economy than ours. It negotiated to be 8% above 1990 levels.

Canada negotiated to be 6% below 1990 levels, our own attempt to try to one up the Americans and we failed to do even that.

The economics are not there. It is simply a disaster for Canada. The government is planning on exporting tens of thousands of jobs out of the country on its emissions trading scheme.

When we look at the minister's latest plan, and again I would not call it a plan, it is more of a slide show, the numbers simply do not add up. By the government's own numbers it is up to 30 megatonnes to 60 megatonnes short of reaching what it said it would do. It is almost 25%. How could we possibly believe anything the government presents to us when it is that far off track?

●(1400)

The Speaker: I am afraid the hon. member will have to save the remainder of his speech until after question period. We all will look forward to his remarks then.

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AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Auditor General of Canada for the year 2002.

[*Translation*]

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

QUEEN'S JUBILEE MEDAL

Ms. Hélène Scherrer (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on December 8, I will have the honour of presenting the Queen's Jubilee Medal to 20 of my constituents.

These medals are awarded to Canadians who, in the past 50 years, have helped make Canada the country that it is today.

Each one of these recipients has made an exceptional and exemplary contribution in various areas to the betterment of our community, and their sustained commitment goes beyond what is reasonably expected of paid workers or volunteers.

I am proud to publicly recognize the contribution of these outstanding citizens in the riding of Louis-Hébert and to present them as models for our young people, who will have the responsibility of shaping the future of our country.

Congratulations to all of them.

* * *

[*English*]

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, not giving compensation to hepatitis C victims from tainted blood continues to haunt the Liberal government in Ottawa.

The RCMP has recently charged senior Health Canada bureaucrats with very significant offences. The time period which has been identified by the RCMP for those offences is between 1980 and 1990. That means some alleged activities that resulted in RCMP charges took place before 1986, the artificial date chosen by Liberals for compensation to victims.

One forgotten victim, who is dying from tainted blood related hepatitis C, asked the following question. "Why should I, infected before January 1, 1986, be abandoned when federal officials are now facing prosecution for negligence prior to 1986". What answer can the Liberal government give to her?

* * *

WINNIPEG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 12 my Manitoba caucus colleagues and I met with the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce to discuss its strategic plan for our wonderful city. Its mission is to promote an atmosphere in which Winnipeg business can flourish.

The Winnipeg chamber's strategic plan is comprehensive, including strategies on improving Winnipeg's image, a competitive taxation policy, attracting a skilled workforce, helping the city to become a centre of technology and innovation and attracting investment capital. It proposes a business development initiative through trade, networking, access and engaging in the retail sector. It includes an aboriginal employment initiative, a Manitoba employers council and a military affairs committee.

The strategic plan is built around a long term economic strategy, and I believe the goals can be reached with the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce taking a leadership role for the community.

Public-private partnerships are essential for the economic well-being of a community. I congratulate the Winnipeg chamber on its efforts.

* * *

● (1405)

CHRISTMAS DADDIES TELETHON

Mr. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to pay tribute to one of my constituents. Freddie Lavery is a well known Cape Breton musician and entertainer. He is also a generous and committed man.

In 1977 Mr. Lavery appeared for the first time on the Annual Christmas Daddies Telethon, a telethon dedicated to the less fortunate. Twenty-five years later he continues to play an important part as the telethon's music director.

Each year the Christmas Daddies Telethon raises hundreds of thousands of dollars to help the less fortunate in our society. I might add that this past Sunday, Atlantic Canadians and especially Cape Bretoners once again showed their generosity. This year Atlantic Canadians raised over \$600,000 for Christmas Daddies, with Cape Bretoners raising over \$200,000.

Throughout all the years of the Christmas Daddies Telethon, Freddie Lavery and many other local entertainers and volunteers have devoted their time to this worthy cause.

S. O. 31

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. R. John Efford (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, promoting independent living and sustainable livelihoods, the Canadian inspired theme for this 10th International Day of Disabled Persons, is made possible by the collaborative work of many people, their families, organizations and governments.

Indeed, Canadians have witnessed great change since a special parliamentary committee on the disabled and handicapped released a now landmark "Obstacles Report".

I am pleased that the government continues to work with people with disabilities and all Canadians to ensure that obstacles continue to be broken down, particularly in the workplace.

We hope the momentum has been created that will see increased awareness and understanding of the challenges facing people with disabilities, as well as their enormous potential.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to rise on behalf of the Canadian Alliance and as a father of a disabled child to endorse the theme of the United Nations 2002 International Day of Disabled Persons.

This day draws attention to persons with disabilities and serves as a reminder to all parliamentarians that certain laws need to change to ensure that there is a fair and level playing field.

Today I am also pleased to welcome to Parliament Hill Mr. Michael McCulloch and his father Peter. Mike and Peter live in Duncan, B.C., in my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, and are part of the large community of disabled persons and their caregivers from all across Canada.

Today is the day to celebrate the many achievements of persons with disabilities, but more needs to be done. For instance, we need a broad review of the federal tax system, which now gives a greater tax break for business lunches than for the purchase of new wheelchairs.

Federal departments need to be forced to respond to complaints from people such as the one filed two years by disability groups over the VIA Rail purchase of used passenger rail cars that had inadequate access for persons with disabilities.

S. O. 31

These are only two of the many issues which face disabled persons today, yet they still face their futures with great courage and in the face of great odds. I salute them.

* * *

INNU HEALING FOUNDATION

Mr. Lawrence O'Brien (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, in Toronto, Innu nation president Peter Penashue and Inco Limited chairman Scott Hand are hosting a reception in support of the Innu Healing Foundation. Inco is announcing a major contribution to the foundation's "Building Hope" campaign, toward its goal of establishing recreation centres and programming for Innu families.

The Innu Healing Foundation was established to combat the challenges facing the Innu children of Labrador. Under the honorary patronage of Her Excellency the Governor General and the direction of corporate and Innu community leaders, the foundation has been modelled for public-private partnership and is an integral part of the Innu healing framework.

I extend congratulations to the Innu Healing Foundation for its leadership and to Inco for its continuing corporate citizenship in Labrador.

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[*Translation*]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, December 3 is the International Day of Disabled Persons. This day is an opportunity for all to recognize the major challenge that some 4.5 million Canadians and Quebecers face every day.

This year, we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the International Day of Disabled Persons, which was proclaimed by the United Nations in 1992. Its theme, "Independent Living and Sustainable Livelihoods", gives us an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to disabled persons through the implementation of political and economic integration programs and by remembering the fundamental principles that are essential to an egalitarian community and are the very foundations of inclusive reforms.

Society is characterized by its diversity. Each person is part of it, brings something to it and makes it better. The International Day of Disabled Persons is a unique opportunity to publicly recognize the dignity of disabled persons as full fledged citizens.

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●(1410)

[*English*]

QUEEN'S JUBILEE MEDAL

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal was created to celebrate Canada's most extraordinary citizens.

On November 17, I had the honour of presenting this medal to 20 exceptional individuals in the riding of Burlington: Dr. Mo Ali, Lt. N. Stephen Cooper, Richard Dawson, 2nd Lt. Kristopher Elliott, Martin Franchetto, Officer Cadet Sean Frankham, Elizabeth Grandbois, Shirley Harrison, Herb Hilgenberg, James Hornby, Lt. Col.

Cliff Hunt, Mira Khattab, Sgt. Daniel Lauzon, Master Warrant Officer Jim McCoy, Helga McTaggart, Violet Pick, Major Allan Rathbone, Yvonne Roach, Harry Sproule and Garth Webb.

I would like to thank these exemplary citizens of Burlington for their commitment to our community and our country. They make us all proud to be Canadian.

* * *

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the political world of the member for Edmonton West is experiencing its own global warming. The greenhouse gases are getting downright hot.

The health minister knows that her vague, indecisive gaseous emissions on Kyoto will simply no longer do. Within the few days, she will have to either vote for or vote against the Kyoto protocol.

The member knows the terrible damage that the national energy program did to the economy of western Canada 20 years ago and that another discriminatory program like that will create a prairie wildfire that will sweep across the Liberal benches. She knows that the feel-good ads her government is running are misleading and delusional because the Kyoto accord only addresses 3% of greenhouse gases. She knows that a made in Canada plan to reduce emissions and grow the economy is far better than the made in Japan plan.

We will add a little heat to her as well. This morning that member said in the House that her first commitment was to Albertans. If she will not vote for the constituents out west, why should they vote for her?

* * *

79 LYNTON DAVIES SQUADRON

Mr. John Maloney (Erie—Lincoln, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 2002 marks the 60th anniversary of the 79 Lynton Davies Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Cadets in my riding of Erie—Lincoln. The squadron was formed in 1942 and was named after Mr. Lynton Davies, the first Port Colborne resident to join the RCAF at the start of World War II.

The cadet group has been active within the community in numerous ways, participating in Remembrance Day services, highway cleanups, food drives, band concerts, ethnic day parades and many other community events.

This squadron provides excellent training in the fields of discipline, teamwork and many other lifelong skills. Some of these young cadets have learned to fly under cadet programs and have gone on to distinguished military careers.

I would like to thank Mr. Lynton Davies, squadron trainers and all the squadron alumni for serving as great role models for these youths and taking a special part in their lives.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is the United Nations international day for people with disabilities. People with disabilities are able and willing to contribute to their communities with their hearts, their minds and their efforts. They simply need assistance in overcoming barriers to participate to their fullest potential.

Unfortunately, our society, including our governments, remains insensitive to their needs. As a very simple example, the UN still calls today a day for “disabled people”, a phrase that only defines a person by their disability. I call it a day for people with disabilities, because we should always see every person as unique and able in their lives.

This international day should be a reminder that Canadians with disabilities deserve respect and equal citizenship and it is our job as parliamentarians to make that happen. We should be a society that values their contribution, instead of one that throws roadblocks in their way.

Today, let us rededicate ourselves to the goal of equal social, economic and cultural opportunities for these valuable Canadians.

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[*Translation*]

AGRIFOOD PROCESSING

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to denounce the government's doublespeak, with different versions depending on whether there is a by-election going on, as was the case in Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, or whether the speaker is here in the ivory tower of Ottawa.

While the Liberal candidate for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, flanked by the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord and the Secretary of State responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, was voicing his opposition to the region losing its agrifood processing sector, the Minister for International Trade was authorizing new permits for Parmalat and Kraft Canada to import cheddar cheese duty-free.

As a result of that decision, the two companies have each begun to import 250 tonnes of cheddar-type cheese.

Is it not scandalous for the voters of Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay to be told one thing while, at exactly the same time, the very opposite is being done here in Ottawa?

The Liberals ought to—

• (1415)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Shefford.

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PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one disabled child in three lives in a family whose income is below the poverty line. Moreover, the taxation measures currently in place do not benefit families whose incomes are so low that they pay no income tax.

Oral Questions

This government acknowledges that low-income families caring for a severely disabled child face particular financial difficulties because of the special support and special care required by that child.

On this International Day of Disabled Persons, I wish to remind hon. members of the government's expressed intention in the Speech from the Throne to initiate targeted measures for such families.

We all need to continue to work in close collaboration with our partners, that is the provinces and territories and the disabled community, to ensure that these families in need receive better support.

Recognizing the disabled person's need for dignity and independence, we are building a society and a country in which there is a place for all Canadians.

* * *

TOWN OF ASBESTOS

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, the residents of Asbestos have been fighting since September to save their mine and their town.

On Wednesday, close to 3,000 people, or half of the population, took part in a solidarity march.

Today, we are celebrating the temporary reopening of our mine. Thanks to the tenacity of our people, particularly Bernard Coulombe, and thanks also to NASA's space program, the town of Asbestos is breathing a little easier.

But this is no guarantee for the future. The federal government must get involved in a program for our older workers, in maintaining the mining company and getting it back on its feet, in diversifying the economy of the town of Asbestos, and in a real policy promoting the use of asbestos.

The town of Asbestos wants to live and so it shall.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the worst part of the Kyoto accord is the international emissions trading credits scheme, whereby Canada buys credits rather than actually reducing emissions.

Recently members of the government and the Liberal Party have been speaking both for and against these things. They are suggesting that one can be for Kyoto but against this particular part of the accord.

To be clear, when the government ratifies Kyoto does it intend to ratify the whole accord including sections dealing with international emissions trading?

Oral Questions

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we ratify the Kyoto accord we will be ratifying the Kyoto accord.

However, I must tell the hon. member who appears to be in doubt that what we have for implementation is a made in Canada plan. That made in Canada plan has said specifically, as we have said many times in the House, it will not include the incorporation of the so-called Russian hot air; in other words, a reduction which has no impact on the environment by reducing emissions.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that is not what it says in the plan. There is still a gap between the reductions that the government can identify and the Kyoto targets. Kyoto was made in Japan by the way.

The international trading credits scheme is a dollars for jobs scheme. We send our jobs overseas and they get the dollars too. Without an implementation plan we cannot know how many credits the government will buy and we do not know how much they will cost.

Therefore, let me ask the minister, is the government open or not open, under any circumstances, to purchasing emissions credits to meet its Kyoto targets?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will start by correcting the hon. member's preface which led to the inaccuracies in his question. On page 43 of the plan, at the bottom of column one, he will see the reference to the possibility of buying surplus permits from Russia.

He will go on to see that we have no intention of buying any such permits from any country unless in fact it results afterwards in a reduction of emissions. That is what I put to him before. He must understand that if he is to understand the plan.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the plan says they are both open and not open, which I guess does not surprise me.

Let me give an example of what happened when the government set targets without a plan, the gun registry. The Auditor General today said that cost overruns are without precedent. Instead of costing taxpayers \$2 million, the gun registry has now cost \$1 billion.

How can Canadians trust the government on Kyoto or anything else when it is running 500 times over budget on the gun registry?

• (1420)

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General today tabled her report regarding the question of the gun registry. I totally accept her recommendations. We are committed to accountability and we will do our very best to answer her recommendations.

Having said that, what will we do now with the policy? On this side of the House we are strongly committed to the policy which is a sound policy and we will keep proceeding with the policy. At the moment we are starting to see the benefit of it and we are firmly committed more than before.

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General reported today that the justice department knew more than two years ago that it would spend more than \$1 billion on the gun registry. It failed to report the true costs to Parliament as required by its own regulations.

How much is the government willing to pour down the drain before it admits this is a failure, \$1 billion more, \$2 billion more, or \$3 billion more? What will it be?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we totally accept the Auditor General's recommendations. It is sound policy. The question is could we do more, could we do better? Yes, we can do better. We are firmly committed to do so.

With regard to the process, of course, there was a question of accountability and the question of the interpretation of the charter given to the justice department. We intend to ensure that in the future, in the main estimates, we provide Canadians with all the total numbers including those of other departments.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, he has not been accountable to Parliament yet. Why should we believe him now? The Auditor General said the issue is not gun control and not even the astronomical cost overruns. What is really inexcusable is that Parliament was kept in the dark.

Can the justice minister give Parliament one reason why we should believe a single word that comes out of his mouth now when we know that he has been spouting complete and utter nonsense? That includes the industry minister, the health minister, the former finance minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Prime Minister himself. They have all misled Parliament.

Why the cover-up?

The Speaker: I think the hon. member will want to use caution in his words. The hon. Minister of Justice has the floor.

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what has been mentioned is simply not true. All the numbers regarding the gun control registry have been reported through Justice Canada and have been reported as well through other ministries that are involved in the program delivery.

There was some discussion regarding the way we should report, the justice department being the single point of accountability. It is more than a coordinating body. Therefore, in the future we will ensure that the report will be in the estimates, not only for Justice Canada but for all the other stakeholders involved in taking good—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Quebec mentioned creating a health fund into which would be transferred all of the federal money the Romanow report said needed to put back into health care.

Oral Questions

With a guarantee like the health fund, does the Prime Minister realize that the federal government does not need to impose conditions on Quebec to ensure that all of the money goes to patient care?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will meet with the premiers at the end of January or perhaps in early February. We will sit down with them and try to work together on finding a solution that will benefit health care services across Canada.

We managed to come up with an agreement in October 2000. I am confident that everyone will work in the interests of patients, medical service providers and all citizens and will do their best to avoid constitutional squabbles.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I did not mention squabbles, but what other condition does he want on top of the Government of Quebec saying, "All of the money will go toward health care and will be used only for health care"?

What further condition does he want? Why would the federal government need to say exactly where the money will be spent, or even maybe administer it? Should it not be enough for us to say to the government "It will all go toward health care"? This would avoid any squabbles. If the government wants to avoid squabbles, that is the solution.

• (1425)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, sometimes the provinces have found it very useful to have funding earmarked for a specific purpose, such as the purchase of badly needed equipment. The money was earmarked for needed equipment and could not be used for collective bargaining.

Sometimes it is very useful to have funding that is earmarked for a very specific purpose, so that people can have needed equipment. This is what happened with the one billion dollars we provided at the time to help the provinces purchase new equipment.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in no way will it be acceptable for the federal government to take advantage of the needs that it itself created in health in order to become directly involved in an area outside its jurisdiction.

Does the Prime Minister not realize that his proposal to get the federal government involved in the planning of health care only adds yet another layer of officials who will make things even more complicated in the health care sector?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we still have not made any decision. We received the report of Mr. Romanow and that of Senator Kirby. There is Mr. Clair's report. There is the Mazankowski report. Many people have examined these issues. They will all meet. The ministers will meet this week and later in December and in January.

When we will hold our first ministers' meeting, then we will decide what is the best agreement that we can have. However, we will always act in the best interests of those who receive health care, and not with an eye to a future election.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government dares to make provincial governments accountable to its officials for their management of health care.

Does the Prime Minister not realize that provincial governments are directly accountable to the public for their management of health care and that there is no question of their being accountable to federal officials, as proposed in the Romanow report?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the important thing is that they be accountable to everyone. If they are accountable to the federal government and to the public, it is somewhat the same thing. What the public needs to know is what these governments are doing.

Under the October 2000 agreement, we agreed on a mechanism to inform the public. This mechanism was acceptable to the federal and provincial governments. It was signed by all provincial and territorial governments, and by the federal government, in October 2000.

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[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister showed his disdain for Parliament, but he is not the only one. The Auditor General has reminded us for the third time that the \$100 million Parc Downsview Park Inc. was created behind Parliament's back, that the \$1 billion cost of the firearms registry has been concealed from MPs, and that the EI surplus is \$30 billion higher than necessary. Still the government refuses to disclose how premium rates are calculated.

Will the government finally comply with the Auditor General's recommendation for the third year in a row and table the formula used to set EI premiums?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will know that just last week we reduced the premium rate for the coming year by 10¢. That will save Canadian employers and employees more than \$800 million next year alone. It is part of a \$100 billion tax reduction package over five years that was introduced only two years ago. I do not really know what the hon. member is complaining about.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what I am complaining about, and I am not alone, is that the government has skimmed off \$40 billion in the EI surplus belonging to workers and employers.

Simultaneously the government has failed to collect hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenues because of lack of enforcement and loopholes. Canadians are anxious to know how the government plans to finance new investments desperately needed in health care.

Will the government go after tax cheats and tax havens, or will it continue to ignore Parliament and milk the inflated EI surplus? Which will it be?

Oral Questions

●(1430)

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, who does she think the some \$800 million a year goes to except to employers and employees? They are the people who benefit. What about the other \$100 billion in tax reductions? Who does it benefit? It benefits Canadians.

Of course we will do everything we can to enforce our tax laws and try to close any loopholes that exist to collect taxes that are owing. That is the duty of government. That is the job that we have to do, but let us not lose sight of the big picture. This is a government that has cut EI premiums and tax—

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

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, two years ago the Department of Justice told the justice committee that it had spent \$327 million on the firearms registry. That same year the same department told the government the registry would cost \$1 billion by fiscal year 2004-05. The government did not tell Parliament, a \$700 million secret.

My question is to the Prime Minister, what minister in his government authorized the deliberate withholding of this information from Parliament?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a question of accountability. Based on the charter of the program the justice department is accountable, not just for the justice department, but all other departments as well. We will ensure to do an audit, which has been demanded last November. We will be able to come forward with our books in a format that the Auditor General would like to have.

As I said, could we do better? Yes, we can do better, but we must also look at the benefit to society. When we look at the stats they actually show the benefits to society. We have a more secure society and we will keep going—

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

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot get away with saying I am sorry. He broke the law of Parliament and so did his Prime Minister. They knew about a \$700 million overspending. They had an obligation, as he said, to tell the House of Commons. They zipped their lips and did not tell the House of Commons the truth.

My question is to the smiling Prime Minister, who in his government authorized this breaking of the law of Parliament? Was it the Prime Minister himself?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time that we were proceeding with such a program with regard to firearms. It has been a complex program. We started the infrastructure from scratch and we have been facing cost escalations.

For example, we went through a consultation process. We had to adjust the program based on the consultation. Some provinces opted out as well. We have been facing another challenge in terms of

technology, but having said that, we are starting to see the benefits of the program. At this moment we are firmly committed—

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. Albert.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, when the gun registry was introduced Canadians were told that its net cost would be \$2 million, and that is million, not billion. Now the net cost of the registry is \$1 billion and rising.

The Auditor General said today that the government has done everything in its power to hide the cost of the gun registry and its effectiveness, or lack thereof, from Canadian taxpayers while murders by firearms in Toronto continue unabated.

My question for the minister is, how can he justify spending on paperwork \$1 billion which the Auditor General says should have gone to police forces to ensure—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we read the report of the Auditor General it seems clear to me that there is no wrongdoing at all. We have been facing what we call cost escalations and, as I said, it is because of the consultation process. As well, some provinces have opted out, and we have been facing a challenge in terms of technology.

If we look at the stats, for example, we will see that police agencies are accessing the firearms online registry 1,500 times daily. More than 7,000 firearms licences have been refused or revoked since the law came into effect. The—

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, he is just quite wrong. The Auditor General says the government spends so much money on bureaucracy for the gun registry that it does not have the money to stop trafficking in firearms and no money to train police, customs or wildlife officers.

The RCMP has also admitted that its databases for gun crimes are inaccurate and obsolete. The justice minister is clearly more interested in pushing paper than in fighting crime and ensuring the safety of Canadians.

Why does the government insist on sacrificing the safety of Canadians on the altar of a bureaucratic, unworkable gun registry?

●(1435)

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP is aware of the concern about the databases. It has been acting on that. It has been very proactive. Of course we have to understand that the quality of the databases is directly linked to the question of technology. I am told that it has improved the system and it will keep doing that.

Look at what the registration system means. It means fewer firearms on the black market from break-ins. It reduces the unauthorized use of guns. It reduces heat of the moment use of firearms. It also reduces accidents, particularly involving children. These are not my words. These are the words of David Griffin, who represents 28,000—

Oral Questions

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lotbinière—L'Érable.

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[Translation]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report confirms that the federal government no longer has any control over the international transactions of large corporations, depriving the government of millions of dollars in taxes, and that is to say nothing of observations of mismanagement in employment insurance, Indian Affairs, the firearms program, and more.

How dare the federal government interfere in the management of health care across Canada when it is not even able to properly manage what comes directly under its jurisdiction?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I understood the question correctly, some of the Auditor General's recommendations were very similar to the ones made in 1992.

I think that several measures have since been taken to change the procedure for determining sources of international income. I think that the comments should be reviewed; if changes are necessary, we can introduce them.

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, is the federal government's blatant incompetence in looking after its own affairs properly not proof that it is in no position to give lessons to anyone and that, instead of extending its reach into the health care system, it should focus on managing what comes under its responsibility?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I and others on this side of the House have said on a number of occasions, we understand the fact that the provinces are the primary deliverers of health care. We have no intention on this side of the House of micromanaging health care, but what has been successful in this country is working in partnership, in collaboration, with the provinces and territories and front line health care workers. We are committed to continuing to do that.

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KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government has failed to acknowledge that there are penalties when we fail to reach our Kyoto targets. The only way to pay these penalties is by buying carbon credits internationally.

Could the Prime Minister confirm that if we fail to meet our targets we will be forced to buy international carbon credits?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who asked the question is making exactly the same mistake as the leader of the Alliance Party, that is, he is failing to recognize that it is all laid out on page 42 of the plan. Of course these people deny there is a plan, so naturally they are not going to read this document, which I tabled in the House and which has in detail what we might do with respect to overseas purchases. It is under the heading "International Emissions Reductions: Back-

ground and Details...". If they will look at that, they will get the answer to the type of question he is asking.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that sort of arrogant answer is exactly why Canadians do not understand what Kyoto is all about.

If we fail to meet our targets, the Kyoto protocol says that after the completion of an emissions inventory we will have "to make up any shortfall in compliance" mainly "through emissions trading".

How can the Prime Minister and the environment minister continue to say that we will not be sending taxpayers' dollars for the purchase of other countries' hot air?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had taken the three days that he spent in the House talking about the agreement and he had spent that time reading about it and learning about it, we would all be a lot better off. Let me point out to him that it is perfectly clear in the plan what we would do under the circumstances.

In addition, there is the opportunity of course of moving whatever is not done in the first Kyoto period to the second Kyoto period, with an appropriate penalty clause, which is in the plan.

I urge him to read it and cease talking about it because he has talked too much and not read enough.

* * *

● (1440)

[Translation]

ÉCOLE DE MÉDECINE VÉTÉRINAIRE DE SAINT-HYACINTHE

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on December 9, just a few days from now, the École de médecine vétérinaire de Saint-Hyacinthe will have to report to the American Veterinary Association on the major investments required for its full accreditation to be restored.

Does the Prime Minister grasp the urgency of the situation and does he not realize that the Government of Quebec has already put \$41 million into the school and that it is now time he and his government did their share? It is urgent, a matter of days.

[English]

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has been said many times, this side and the government recognize the importance of the veterinary colleges, not only the one in Quebec but in the other three provinces in this country. We will do all we can to ensure that they maintain and continue their accreditation.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would humbly ask the Prime Minister to acknowledge that there is just one veterinary school having problems at this time, and that is the one in Saint-Hyacinthe, that there is reason to be concerned, because the dean has to produce a report next week, and that \$59 million are urgently needed if the school is going to keep its accreditation.

Oral Questions

Is this the legacy the Prime Minister wants to leave behind: the closure of the Collège militaire de Saint-Jean, the only francophone military college in North America, and the closure of the École de médecine vétérinaire de Saint-Hyacinthe, the only francophone school of veterinary medicine in North America?

[English]

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government, with the direction and the encouragement of all the hon. members on this side, certainly, as I say, recognize the importance of the veterinary colleges, whether they are in Quebec, whether they are in Prince Edward Island, whether they are in Ontario, or whether they are in Saskatchewan. They are all of vital importance to the agriculture and agrifood industry and to the health of Canadians, and we will do all we possibly can to ensure that they continue to maintain their accreditation.

* * *

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government supported an Alliance motion calling for an implementation plan prior to the ratification of Kyoto. So far all we have seen is a slide show.

The minister will stand up and tell the world how green he is and wave his plan around, but it is time for the truth of what is in it. It contains one single dollar figure of \$1.6 billion, which he has already spent. There is no reference to legislation. It is silent with respect to the impact on the Canadian economy. The minister should be embarrassed about his little green book.

How can the government allow for a vote on ratification when it has not even begun to comply with what the House passed in its motion?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the third Alliance member who has got to feet and misrepresented this document which I tabled in the House back on November 21. There are no slides in it. It is a detailed plan for implementation of our Kyoto commitment.

I urge him, as I have urged the hon. member for Red Deer, to spend less time on his feet talking about it and more time trying to understand it.

If they did that, we would all be better off.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, sadly we have had to read his little green book, and talk about who is misrepresenting, the government continues to treat motions passed in the House with contempt. The House voted for a motion to provide comprehensive cost estimates and show the targets that are to be reached. There are no cost estimates. Its own numbers are 25% short of reaching its targets. Nothing adds up.

How can the government possibly have a vote on ratification without providing any cost estimates? We do not want the minister to hold up his little green book and resort to arrogance when he does not have an answer, as he usually does.

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member asks questions which he knows are simply inappropriate in the House, he resorts to personal insults.

I urge him to look at this document, look at the figures in this which deal with the impact on the Canadian economy, look at the measures there to protect certain sectors and others, look at the provisions taken to make sure the impact is fair and even across the country, and then come back to the House with sensible questions.

* * *

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently submitted for the third year my private member's bill requiring automatic defibrillators on all commercial air flights in Canada over two hours.

Many international airlines, such as Qantas, British Airways and American, already carry automatic defibrillators on board their flights. This technology is important as an individual suffering from sudden cardiac arrest has a 70% greater chance of survival if he or she is treated within four minutes.

The Minister of Transport has been overseeing a voluntary process for installation of these machines in Canadian airlines for several years now. Could the minister please update us on where this process stands and when we can expect all—

• (1445)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transport.

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain should be congratulated for her private member's bill. I certainly agree with the spirit of that bill.

Happily in this country this is an example of where we do not need legislation or even regulation, because there is voluntary compliance by the large airlines, Air Canada, Air Transat and Skyservice. WestJet will be complete by next summer and the other carriers will certainly be the object of our efforts at persuasion over the coming months. This very valuable device that saves lives in planes is occurring in Canada and will cover the entire industry very soon.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, another study, this one by a former director to the Auditor General, shows that private for profit hospitals actually end up costing taxpayers more. It simply confirms that economics works the same in Canada as it does in Britain, Australia and anywhere else that private for profit and public partnerships have been tried.

Still Senator Kirby is out pushing his open door to profit approach.

Oral Questions

Will the federal government commit to the evidence based Romanow solution and not the costly Kirby recipe for disaster?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is an important question. In fact, as we discussed yesterday, we have two excellent reports. The commissions consulted all Canadians throughout the country. They even drew upon what is being done elsewhere in the world.

This is why I indicated yesterday—and you no doubt understood—that on Friday of this week, the Minister of Health will meet with the provincial ministers to see, in light of these important reports, how the health care system can be improved for Canadians. This is the approach we have taken and will continue to take.

[*English*]

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the finance minister. Under the per capita method of health care funding put in place by the former minister of finance, nearly 90% of the increase in federal transfers in the last three years has gone to Ontario, B.C. and Alberta. The poorer provinces have received almost no increases.

Roy Romanow has called for changes to the federal funding formula to help the poor provinces meet the health care needs of their citizens.

Will the government change this funding formula that discriminates against the citizens of have not provinces like Nova Scotia?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member points out, Mr. Romanow did not precisely recommend a change to this. I would also point out to the hon. member that in a particular advertising campaign which has been supported by the smaller provinces, they continue to only include cash transfers under the CHST despite the fact that it is noticeable that large amounts of money transferred to provinces under equalization also go to expenditures on health care.

I think it would be useful if we had an informed discussion with all of the provinces about the appropriate method of funding the needs of health care.

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, only 30% of the \$1 billion cost of the gun registry has come from the government's main estimates which are approved by Parliament. Seventy per cent of the cost overruns come from the supplementary estimates. Under the government's own rules the supplementary estimates are only to be used for unknown and unexpected expenses.

Why did the government deliberately hide the cost of the gun registry from Canadians?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, we have reported through the main estimates the costs of the gun registry. As I said, it was not reported in a format to the satisfaction of the Auditor General.

As I said many times as well and as I would like to repeat, in the future we will make sure to report in a format that is accepted by the Auditor General, meaning that we have to report for all the other ministries involved in the delivery of the programs.

It does not mean that those numbers were not reported. Those numbers were reported for Justice Canada through the main estimates or the supplementary estimates of the other departments.

• (1450)

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General confirms that the firearms registry database is not only off the rails financially but that it is also inaccurate and untrustworthy. The RCMP made this known in 2001. There are also 900 other police agencies using this database and the Auditor General cannot even examine them.

Clearly, there is no accountability and no ability to do accounting.

When will the Liberal government end this farcical, face saving exercise and cancel the billion dollar bureaucratic blunderbuss?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know that the costs related to the program have started to go down.

With regard to the database, the RCMP is fully aware of the situation. It has been very proactive. Of course when we are talking about the quality of the database we are talking as well about the numbers.

Let me say exactly what we are talking about. It is to increase safety in our society and to have safer communities. We have started to see the benefits from this. For example, if we compared the homicide rate using firearms in the United States and in Canada, it is six to nine times higher in the United States.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday a leading member of the Liberal caucus and a spokeswoman on health issues said, "As a caucus we have decided to hug Romanow". She also said, "We don't have time to consider other health issues".

We all know where Romanow is on a state monopoly. Does this mean that the government will eliminate alternative delivery options in the provinces?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps my hon. colleague would like me to give him a hug. We can do that later in the hall.

The beauty of this Parliament is that people here are entitled to their opinion. We are having debates. On the basis of these debates, we will be able to come up with very meaningful programs for all Canadians.

Oral Questions

With the information available to us and following the debates we are no doubt going to have in this House, we will be able to sit down with our provincial counterparts and develop great programs—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Yellowhead.

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Senator Kirby also noted the rejection of a guaranteed patient time in the government's Romanow commission. The lack of timely access to quality health care services is the number one health care concern of Canadians.

What is the point of having a great system if we cannot access it? Does the minister think that Canadians deserve guarantees of timely access?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am trying to keep the discussion in relatively simple terms, so that everyone can understand. Perhaps I am not making myself clear.

For two days, I have been saying in this House that we have two very interesting reports, namely the Kirby report and the Romanow report. A few moments ago, the Prime Minister mentioned that we had reports, be it the Mazankowski report or the Clair report, that will provide background for the debate. We will have this debate in the House to ensure—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

* * *

ÉCOLE DE MÉDECINE VÉTÉRINAIRE DE SAINT-HYACINTHE

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister says we should not worry, to have faith, to be patient. My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Does he believe that on December 9, the dean of the École de médecine vétérinaire de Saint-Hyacinthe will be able to say to the American association, "Do not worry. There is nothing on the table, but do not worry"? I think it is irresponsible to expect that.

[*English*]

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat it again. The government is fully aware of the situation in Saint-Hyacinthe and at other veterinary colleges in Canada. We will do all we possibly can to make sure they do not lose any accreditation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, the situation is as follows. The École de médecine vétérinaire de Saint-Hyacinthe is the only school that is in danger right now, the only one to have lost its accreditation. For 25 years, the federal government has not put a cent into the school's infrastructure, yet it has provided significant support to the University of Guelph, the University of Saskatoon and the University of Prince Edward Island.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Is it not now time to put an end to the unfair treatment of the École de médecine vétérinaire de

Saint-Hyacinthe? This would be a good opportunity to demonstrate that he thinks it is.

• (1455)

[*English*]

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will remind the hon. member again that the college at Saint-Hyacinthe has applied to the Canada Foundation for Innovation, which is an arm's length foundation. The applications are reviewed by peers. The veterinary college at Saint-Hyacinthe has received approval for money in the past and is at liberty to make further applications as it wishes.

* * *

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in October 2000, the former solicitor general issued a formal response to the justice subcommittee report entitled "A Work in Progress: the Corrections and Conditional Release Act".

Contained within the solicitor general's response was a clear statement that the government intended to take actions on 46 of the committee's 53 recommendations. We know that the government has failed and failed miserably to implement those recommendations.

Why has the government refused to take action on the 46 recommendations?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has not refused to take action. It is the opposite. We are taking action. This is clearly a work in progress.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government has a lot of work in progress but the Canadian public still has yet to see evidence or fruits of that labour.

The failure of the former solicitor general to implement, as promised, the changes to the CCRA effectively dismisses the work of the subcommittee and, in particular, puts Canadians at risk to those who would reoffend on statutory release.

When will the Solicitor General make good on his predecessor's promise? When will the Corrections and Conditional Release Act be amended as recommended?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe if the truth be known, the member opposite should perhaps look in the mirror. I believe he will find that he and his party voted against that particular piece of legislation.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today at one o'clock the disability community held a press conference expressing their concerns about the status of persons with disabilities in this country.

Could the Minister of Human Resources Development share with the House what the Government of Canada has done to recognize Canadians with disabilities on this International Day of Disabled Persons?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, the theme of this year's International Day of Disabled Persons was independent living and sustainable livelihoods, which was proposed by our own Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres and supported by our Prime Minister.

Today, I am pleased to release the first comprehensive report entitled "Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities: A Government of Canada Report", and the preliminary results of the "Participation and Activity Limitation Survey" completed by Statistics Canada. Both of these documents will help Canadians better understand disability issues and help all stakeholders work together to eliminate the barriers, to full inclusions of persons with disabilities.

* * *

ORGANIZED CRIME

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in the past 10 years nearly 70 young members of the Indo-Canadian community in B.C. have died as a result of drug and gang violence. Most of those murders are unsolved.

The problem is so serious that almost every Indo-Canadian family in B.C. knows someone who has been a victim of violence. The public knows and the media report who killed who but still no charges are laid.

When will this weak Liberal government take the Vancouver gang wars seriously and give the police the resources they need to do their job?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last budget there were moneys to give the police more resources to do their job. There is better communication, better infrastructure, better policing and there better cooperation with other police forces across the country. We are doing a better job of challenging organized crime in terms of its criminal activities.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there are still no charges. The gang unit in Vancouver is vastly outnumbered by the criminals it is trying to catch. It is a small, specialized team of eight up against about 1,500 full time gangsters. Those are not very good odds.

Witnesses and people with information are reluctant to go to the police because they are terrified. They have no confidence in the system.

Why does the Solicitor General not lead and coordinate the three levels of government in tackling organized crime?

• (1500)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is what we are doing. At the federal-provincial-territorial meetings we did have a report on how we are doing on organized crime. We also had agreement with the provinces on ways of moving ahead.

Oral Questions

We are in fact doing more and I think the member opposite should be congratulating us for doing that.

* * *

[Translation]

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister for International Trade has just authorized the Canadian Dairy Commission to allow an additional 500 tonnes of cheddar cheese to be imported from the United States, in addition to the amounts already authorized.

How does the minister expect to be taken seriously, when at the very same time that the community is stepping up its efforts to save the Chambord plant, he is opening up the borders even wider to American dairy products?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a decision that I made after consulting with stakeholders here. At the present time, we do not have enough milk to ensure the stability of the processing industry.

I authorized these permits after consulting with the industry, dairy producers and the Canadian Dairy Commission. I provided these permits to allow them to process cheese, because they need some stability in the milk supply.

* * *

[English]

WESTERN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the Secretary of State for Western Economic Diversification tell the House why we need his department when Industry Canada already has a mandate for all of Canada when it comes to the industrial sector?

Hon. Stephen Owen (Secretary of State (Western Economic Diversification) (Indian Affairs and Northern Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Western Economic Diversification complements the work of Industry Canada on the ground in western Canada in implementing Canada's national industrial strategy of diversification and innovation. Western Economic Diversification is a catalyst for collaboration and leverage financing together with other governments, small start up firms, universities, research institutes and large established enterprise.

Innovation drives the new economy—

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Jan O. Karlsson, Minister for International Development Cooperation, Migration and Asylum Policy of the Kingdom of Sweden.

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

NUCLEAR SAFETY AND CONTROL ACT

The House resumed from November 29 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, an act to amend the Nuclear Safety and Control Act, be concurred in at report stage.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the report stage of Bill C-4.

Call in the members.

• (1510)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 22*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Alcock	Allard
Anders	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Anderson (Victoria)	Assadourian
Augustine	Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Bagnell	Bailey
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)	Barnes (London West)
Bélanger	Bellemare
Bennett	Benoit
Bertrand	Bevilacqua
Binet	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Borotsik
Boudria	Bradshaw
Breitkreuz	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Burton	Byrne
Cadman	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carignan	Carroll
Casson	Castonguay
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Charbonneau
Chatters	Clark
Coderre	Collenette
Comuzzi	Copps
Cullen	Cummins
Cuzner	Day
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Discepola
Doyle	Dromisky
Drouin	Duncan
Duplain	Easter
Efford	Eggleton
Elley	Epp
Eyking	Farrah
Fitzpatrick	Fontana
Forseth	Frulla
Fry	Gallant
Galloway	Godfrey
Goldring	Goodale
Graham	Grewal
Grey	Grose
Hanger	Harb
Harvard	Herron
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hill (Macleod)
Hinton	Jackson
Jennings	Johnston
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore)
Keyes	Knutson
Lastewka	Lebel

LeBlanc
Leung
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
MacAulay
Macklin
Maloney
Marcil
Marleau
Matthews
McCallum
McGuire
McTeague
Merrifield
Minna
Moore
Myers
Neville
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly
Pagtakhan
Paradis
Patri
Peric
Phinney
Pratt
Proulx
Redman
Regan
Reynolds
Rock
Savoy
Schmidt
Sgro
Simard
Solberg
Speller
St-Jacques
St. Denis
Stinson
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Toews
Torsney
Valeri
Vellacott
Wappel
Whelan
Wilfert
Yelich — 201

Lee
Longfield
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Mahoney
Manley
Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayfield
McCormick
McKay (Scarborough East)
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Mitchell
Murphy
Nault
Normand
O'Brien (Labrador)
Owen
Pallister
Parrish
Penson
Pettigrew
Pillitteri
Price
Rajotte
Reed (Halton)
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Robillard
Saada
Scherrer
Serré
Shepherd
Skelton
Sorenson
Spencer
St-Julien
Stewart
Strahl
Telegdi
Thibault (Saint-Lambert)
Tirabassi
Tonks
Ur
Vanclief
Volpe
Wayne
White (North Vancouver)
Williams

NAYS

Members

Asselin	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bergeron	Bigras
Bourgeois	Brien
Caccia	Cardin
Comartin	Crête
Dalmond-Guiral	Desjarlais
Desrochers	Dubé
Duceppe	Fournier
Gagnon (Champlain)	Gagnon (Québec)
Gauthier	Girard-Bujold
Godin	Guay
Guimond	Hubbard
Kraft Sloan	Laliberte
Lancôt	Lill
Lincoln	Loubier
Masse	McDonough
Ménard	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Proctor
Robinson	Rocheleau
Roy	Sauvageau
Stoffler	Tremblay
Venne	Wasylycia-Leis — 44

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave now?

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, government orders will be extended by 10 minutes.

● (1515)

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the House on the third reading of Bill C-4, an act to amend the Nuclear Safety and Control Act.

Bill C-4 is a one clause bill which clarifies the wording in subsection 46(3) of the act. Subsection 46(3), as currently worded, has had the consequence of extending the potential obligation for site remediation, in the unlikely event contamination occurs, beyond the owners and managers to private sector lending institutions. This has in turn deterred private sector financial houses from lending to the nuclear industry.

Under the current wording of subsection 46(3), the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has the authority to order the owner or occupant of, or any other person with a right to or interest in, to take prescribed measures to reduce the level of radioactive contamination. The proposed amendment clarifies the subsection by deleting the words "person with a right to or interest in" and replacing them with the words "person who has the management and control of".

Under the amended subsection 46(3), owners, operators or managers of nuclear facilities would still be liable for cleanup.

With regard to lenders, the amendment would quantify their risk. If Bill C-4 is enacted, a lender would stand to lose, at most, no more than the moneys advanced. The lender would not face a potential unlimited liability. However, a lender who went into management and control of a nuclear facility would be within the reach of this subsection. Canadian law generally limits lender liability to those with charge, management or control of secured assets.

Some members of the opposition have alleged that the bill represents a change in government policy. The answer is no. The change contemplated by the amendment would simply put the nuclear industry on an equal footing with other industrial and power generation sectors. No other industrial sector or power generation sector is encumbered by a federal provision of this nature that discourages access to bank lending.

Loans may be needed by the industry to refurbish, modernize and extend the life of nuclear power plants. The nuclear industry must have access to commercial credit to finance its needs, like any other sector. This amendment would allow the nuclear industry to attract market capital.

Bill C-4 is not and should not be misconstrued as a measure to provide favourable treatment to the nuclear industry. As I have already emphasized, there is no similar federal requirement for other industries. Amending subsection 46(3) would remove an anomaly which is keeping banks away from lending to the nuclear sector in order to avoid assuming potentially unlimited liability. Limiting liability to the owner, occupant or those who have management and control is normal practice in federal environmental law. Canadian

law generally limits lender liability to those with management or control of secured assets.

I want to assure the House that Canada has a stringent regulatory regime for the nuclear industry. This would continue to be the case after this amendment. Canada's regulator, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, or CNSC, would retain sufficient authority to protect health, safety, security and the environment.

The regulations of the CNSC require licence applicants to submit information on the effects of their operations on the environment. This information is used by the commission, in consultation with other federal and provincial regulatory bodies, to establish the operating parameters for a nuclear facility. The CNSC has a compliance program in place that confirms that these parameters are observed.

There are tough sanctions for offences under the Nuclear Safety and Control Act. It is an offence to fail to comply with any condition of a licence. The CNSC can also suspend, revoke or amend a licence if conditions are not met. Licences can include the requirement for a financial guarantee to cover contingencies that may arise.

● (1520)

The issue before us is not the safety of Canadian nuclear plants. Canada has in place a stringent safety regime under the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. The Canadian nuclear industry has a very strong safety record.

The issue before us is access to financing, financing that owners and operators of nuclear facilities may wish to seek to retrofit or modernize nuclear facilities and at the same time meet the stringent safety requirements of Canada's nuclear regulator.

I also would like to thank all hon. members and ask them to join me in supporting Bill C-4.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-4, the reincarnation of Bill C-57, an act to amend the Nuclear Safety and Control Act. The bill is necessary to correct a clause that prevents a debt financing by the private sector for the nuclear industry.

Lenders such as banks and other financial institutions are refusing to consider approval for loans to the nuclear industry because the section in the current act makes the lenders liable in the instance of a nuclear spill.

The passage of Bill C-4 is critical to addressing concerns over greenhouse gas emissions, that is if the concern on the part of the NDP and Bloc are genuine.

Opposition to the nuclear energy system stems largely from the lack of understanding of how it works. I shall do my best to demystify the technology.

Government Orders

In 1905 the great physicist, Albert Einstein, showed theoretically that mass and energy were equivalent. It was more than 30 years however before scientists discovered the immense energy that could be released by transforming matter into the fission process. A Hungarian physicist, Leo Szilard, took out a patent on a device that would develop enormous energy from the nucleus from a chain reaction based on a neutron capture process involving the release of more than two neutrons. Although he had no idea of whether this would work in practice, the concept was exactly how a nuclear reactor works.

Next came the discovery of the fission process itself. In 1938 two Germans, Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassman, reported the puzzling result that when they bombarded uranium with neutrons, barium and krypton were always produced.

Shortly after, Lise Meitner and her nephew Otto Firsch noted that barium has 56 protons and krypton has 36, yielding a total of 92 protons, the same as uranium. This clue led them to deduce that the uranium atom had been split or had undergone a process known today as fission.

However there was something even more astonishing. In splitting the uranium atom, there was an enormous release of energy.

Hon. Charles Caccia: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. While I do not dispute the profound knowledge and learned dissertation on the part of the hon. member, I doubt very much that the hon. member is addressing the bill before us.

The Speaker: While certainly the Speaker is not an expert in nuclear matters, but since the title of the bill is the Nuclear Safety and Control Act and the hon. member seems to be discussing something about nuclear fission or nuclear materials, I thought she was somehow hitting the mark. However perhaps she will draw the relevance of her remarks to the bill before us in a way that makes it apparent to the Chair that in fact her remarks are relevant, and of course to the hon. member for Davenport.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, part of the opposition to Bill C-4 stems from the lack of knowledge behind how the process works. That is why I am explaining it.

As I was saying, in splitting the uranium atom, an enormous amount of energy is released. In fact the splitting of one uranium atom releases seven million times the energy produced by burning one atom of carbon. The potential for creating energy from fission was immediately recognized then. The clues all came together, including Einstein's earlier theory of mass and energy equivalence.

The expression "splitting the atom" is a technical misnomer. What is actually being split or fissioned is the nucleus, not the atom. The total number of protons plus neutrons stays the same. That is both sides of the equation have the same number of nucleons. There are many different fission reactions for uranium-235. The material we start with is always the same but a range of elements can be produced.

• (1525)

The neutrons being liberated generally have high energy; that is, they are being released at a very high speed and considerable energy is released. This is accompanied by a small loss of mass in the

system. This is in accordance with Einstein's famous equation which states that mass is a very concentrated form of energy.

Early scientists noted the neutron was what caused the fission in the uranium nucleus. They also noted that several neutrons were released during fission. If one of those neutrons could be made to hit another uranium nucleus, it could cause that nucleus to also fission. Then several more neutrons would be admitted that could cause more uranium atoms to fission and so on. This is called a chain reaction.

If fewer neutrons are being generated by fission than are being used to initiate fission reactions, the process is not self-sustaining, and is termed subcritical. This is the case with ore bodies. That is why we do not have nuclear reactions happening in nature. If exactly the same number of neutrons are being generated as are being used to split the nuclei, the nuclear reaction is said to be critical. In this case, a controlled amount of energy is constantly being released in a sustained chain reaction.

This is the process that nuclear reactors use. The energy is released in the form of heat which heats the cooling moderator and then generates steam which in turn turns the turbines which go to the grid which provides us with power to our homes.

One problem is that most nuclei absorb neutrons and this absorption removes them from sustaining a chain reaction. Thus any attempt to create a chain reaction must minimize the presence of neutron absorbers.

Chain reactions do not happen in ore bodies, for example, because the uranium in the ore bodies consists mostly of uranium-238 and that only has a low concentration of uranium-235. The ore body also contains too many neutron absorbing impurities.

It took large teams of scientists many years to discover how to achieve exactly the right conditions.

First, there needs to be a core of fission material, that is material that will fission. Uranium-235 is currently the primary material used. By a quirk of physics, the fission atom splits most readily if the bombarding neutrons are going quite slowly. As neutrons emitted by the fission process are going fast, the core needs to be surrounded by a material called a moderator that slows the neutrons down. Only a few materials are good at moderating neutrons without absorbing them. The more equal the nuclear mass of the moderating material—

Mr. Charles Hubbard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I fail to recognize the significance of what the hon. member is saying to the House because Bill C-4 deals with the financial aspect of the nuclear energy program. She should relate her speech to Bill C-4.

The Speaker: I have urged the hon. member to do that. On the same point of order the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, the member for the opposition has suggested that people who are against Bill C-4 do not understand the bill. She is giving us a lecture on neutrons and protons, when the object of the bill is to absolve financial companies from liability for investing in the nuclear industry. The bill has nothing to do with neutrons, protons and Einstein. It has to do with the financial implications of investing in the nuclear industry. She is completely off track. She has not read the bill.

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The Speaker: Maybe, but I suspect that one of the nuclear risks of investing in the industry, from which the bills seeks to protect people, is nuclear damage. To that extent, but I do not know, it might become relevant at some point.

• (1530)

I would urge the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke once again to indicate how her remarks about fission are relevant to the financial liability aspects that are, as the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis has pointed out, as has the hon. member for Davenport and the hon. member for Miramichi, the salient parts of the bills. I am sure she will do that in the next minute or two.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I intend to go over a couple of nuclear accidents, but to understand what was behind the accidents, the basics of the physics behind it has to be explained. The potential for a nuclear accident is what is preventing the financial system from lending to the nuclear industry.

It was discovered that heavy water, water with a hydrogen atom replaced by isotope deuterium, was about 10% heavier than normal water. Carbons, usually in the form of graphite, are the usual moderators. Ordinary water also moderates neutrons but because of its relatively high absorption, it is not as effective as heavy water.

The presence of neutron absorbing materials should be minimized in a reactor. They can however be used to stop or control the nuclear fission process. For example, neutron absorbing control rods can be moved into and out of the core to control the reaction and they form some of the safety mechanisms.

Nuclear technology and the science behind it are difficult to comprehend and therefore are frightening. However nuclear technology is not alone in this regard. We live in a technological age. Our modern world is full of scientific marvels that are difficult to understand and the boundaries of science and technology are constantly being expanded.

How many people can comprehend how tiny, barely visible slivers of semi-conductor chips can store millions of bits of data or compute millions of calculations per second? For those who are frightened of nuclear technology and its complexity and who are therefore reluctant to vote in favour of Bill C-4, it may be reassuring to know that radioactivity is something natural.

Many people do not realize it, but radiation is everywhere around us. Radioactivity is a natural and integral part of our earth. It is as common and necessary as the oxygen we breathe and the sunlight that brings life to our planet. Not only does the sun create the light and heat upon which our world depends, but the giant inferno inside the sun constantly ejects a stream of energy and particles called the solar wind into space. The particles and the solar wind travel through space and react with the earth's atmosphere, creating cosmic radiation that constantly rains down on us.

All living beings are constantly bombarded by millions of particles of cosmic nuclear radiation each second. The amount of cosmic radiation is at least at sea level because of the shielding provided by the atmosphere. It increases progressively as the height

above sea level increases. Residents of Banff, for example, receive .2 millisieverts per year more radiation than the inhabitants of Halifax. Flights in airplanes yield more radiation than staying on the ground.

Since there is so much radiation in the environment, it is not surprising that there is a substantial amount of radiation in our bodies. It comes into our bodies directly when we eat fruit and vegetables and indirectly when we eat the meat of animals who eat root crops. The radioactive potassium is then deposited in parts of our bodies, such as bones, and potassium helps maintain fluid pressure and balance within cells.

Combined with other natural radioisotopes inside and outside our bodies, a person is struck by radiation about 54 million times in a single hour. Every day of our existence, over a billion radioactive particles are passing through our bodies.

Through the long evolution of humans, our bodies have learned how to live with this radioactivity, but not all radiation in the environment is natural. Some arises from human activities, some of which have given rise to Bill C-4.

The largest human made source of radiation is from medical applications. Other very small contributors are the nuclear laboratories, industrial and consumer sources such as smoke detectors. Ninety per cent of the medical radiation dose comes from X-rays. Other medical radiation comes from radioactive isotopes used in various diagnostic tracer tests. Coal fired plants release radiation in their emissions due to the radioactive elements in coal. Radiation can arise from the release of radon from disturbing the earth during construction and road building projects and from the use of phosphate fertilizers which contain relatively high concentrations of natural radioactive elements.

• (1535)

When the subject of nuclear power is raised, two incidents come to the minds of the uninformed, Chernobyl and Three Mile Island. There has only been one accident involving a reactor with a large radiation release to the public, namely, the one in 1986 in Chernobyl. Scientists were conducting an experiment involving shutting off the safety systems and running the reactor at a very low power, which was difficult to control. A sudden huge increase in power caused a steam explosion that destroyed the reactor. The Russian reactor used graphite, a combustible moderator, which caught fire and released radioactive smoke into the air. In contrast, Canadian reactor safety systems cannot be turned off and heavy water is used as the moderator as opposed to graphite.

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The Three Mile Island situation arose from a loss of coolant and subsequent operator error. A faulty valve in the cooling system stayed open when it should have closed. A flaw in the American design system did not alert the control room that the valve was open, so the emergency core cooling system was manually turned off, which prevented the core from being adequately cooled, and a substantial part of the core melted. The radiation was almost all confined to the reactor containment, with the public in the immediate area being exposed to the equivalent of a small fraction of the yearly background dose of radiation. The plant lacked a proper communication protocol and the state authorities, who were unaware of the facts of the moment, panicked and evacuated the region unnecessarily, which led to the worldwide concentration on Three Mile Island.

Our Candu reactors use a different safety system, a different moderator and an entirely different cooling system. In addition, there is a clear protocol for advising the first responders and all levels of government should an incident occur.

As recently as last week, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Council gathered stakeholders together to review emergency preparedness and response arrangements across jurisdictions. Unfortunately, the Emergency Preparedness College in Arnprior has been reduced to poker chip status in the Prime Minister's desperate attempt to maintain his grip on power. The Minister of National Defence has had the directors there turning away groups that have been attracted to the institution's reputation.

Other government departments have been informed that the Arnprior centre will be closed, only to be temporarily relocated to the finance minister's riding. Three hundred and ninety-six million dollars have been earmarked for emergency preparedness, and the Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness, OCIPEP, is more preoccupied with empire building than the safety and security of Canadians at this point. The Minister of National Defence is responsible for OCIPEP, yet he did not know of its existence until questioned about it here in the House less than two months ago.

The minister says that no decision has been made on the college's future, yet air conditioning units were seen being installed just weeks ago in the building which formerly housed the GST processing centre before it was moved to Shawinigan. In fact, a few days ago the minister said he had not even read the report justifying its relocation at all.

• (1540)

Hon. Charles Caccia: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is becoming more and more obvious that the hon. member is smuggling into the debate observations and items that have nothing to do with the bill before us, which as the House knows is on liability in the nuclear industry. It would be highly welcome by I think everybody in the House if finally, after 20 minutes, the member would focus on the bill before us, namely Bill C-4, rather than using the time to engage in political shots that have nothing to do with the bill before us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): This is not really a point of order. I guess it is a reminder to the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to ensure that at some point in time there will

be more relevance in her speech to the matter that is at hand, and that is the control and safety of nuclear emergencies.

The hon. member has the floor.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness is supposed to work hand in hand with the Nuclear Safety Commission of Canada. The safety commission and the nuclear safety act are what we are talking about today in Bill C-4.

What we have is a situation where the training for this nuclear protection is in a state of flux at the Arnprior college when we need it most. We have been asking for weeks to see the report that justifies moving the college from Arnprior to a temporary place and now we question whether or not the report even exists.

The successful passage of Bill C-4 is not the only potential impediment to producing safe, clean, cost effective electricity. Municipalities on both sides of the Ottawa River need to have a coordinated preparedness plan. Again, this is the fear people have and is the reason they do not want to vote in favour of Bill C-4.

For example, Mayor Denzil Spence of the Pontiac has been calling for a coordinated system of response, but because the college is no longer in the process of taking trainees for the programs he cannot get that preparedness to counter the fears of his people. So the games are putting this constituency into a state of limbo as well.

Let us talk about another potential benefit of Bill C-4 when it is passed. Hydrogen fuel cells are replacing the internal combustion engine in the transportation sector, the major emitter of greenhouse gases in Canada and in many other countries. It has been determined that no overall reduction but actually an increase in greenhouse gas emissions will occur if the hydrogen produced for these cells by the conventional steam methane reforming process is used. To achieve the desired reduction, the hydrogen would have to be produced by the electrolysis of water from non-greenhouse gas emitting electricity sources, with nuclear power being the only practical large scale source. Electrolytic hydrogen, produced by Candu generated electricity, can also be used to upgrade the heavy oils from the Alberta oil sands.

Conversion of Canada's transportation systems from the fossil fuel base to an electrolytic hydrogen base will provide opportunities for Canadian industries as well. Companies like Stuart Energy Systems electrolyzers and Ballard Power Systems fuel cells add hydrogen storage in low weight, high pressure cylinders produced by another Canadian company, Dynatek. Even under the assumptions of a high rate of substitution of coal by natural gas, aggressive energy demand management and an increase in renewable resources of energy, projections have carbon dioxide emissions increasing by about 7% by 2010 compared to Europe's Kyoto protocol target of 8% reduction below 1990 levels by 2010. Increases of 14% of CO₂ by 2020 are estimated. Alternatives proposed include a high carbon tax plus the replacement of the retiring nuclear plants by nuclear capacity or construction of new nuclear capacity.

What I am talking about is the relationship of the passage of Bill C-4 with the attainment of targets of reducing our carbon dioxide emissions, something which is very much the topic of the day as well. Bill C-4 and our emission reduction targets are closely linked.

The percentage of nuclear electricity generation has to increase today from 21% to 26% by 2020, and to 28% by 2030, so we must have the financing available to build more nuclear power plants. The government alone should not be the financier of these capital costs.

• (1545)

Replacement of the now 45-year-old NRU, the reactor at Chalk River, with a vital new reactor, the Canadian Neutron Facility, by the year 2005 was a vital element in the continued support of nuclear R and D. While the project has been approved by cabinet and was an election 2000 commitment, as of yet no money has been committed. Part of that stems from the problems that the act, before Bill C-4 is passed, poses. The ability to borrow from the private sector is needed. In order for that to happen, Bill C-4 must be passed. The Canadian Neutron Facility is essential for the ongoing support and the life extension of the current Candu reactors and the development of future Candu designs. It will also provide an indispensable tool for probing the nature of materials.

To ensure that Canada has adequate energy in the 21st century will require new thinking about traditional means of meeting the various demands of energy. With the help of federal funding and other public sector and private sector investments, Canada is now well positioned to play a major role, both technical and economic, in a world revolution in greenhouse gas free and pollution free transportation fuels.

Candu reactors could produce the electricity for the Canadian developed high efficiency electrolysis cells to provide hydrogen for Canada's world leading fuel cell technology, to power the cars, buses and trucks we were talking about before. Intercity travel is very much on the minds of people today. For example, today in the international news we saw the Prime Minister of Japan riding in a new car fuelled by hydrogen with just water vapour as its emission. For this to proceed on a larger scale, it will be necessary to build the additional Candu reactors and develop the necessary infrastructure.

This revolution would also help Canada to again reduce both greenhouse gases and pollution. I make the distinction because greenhouse gas emissions and smog are two different things.

To ensure that Canadians continue to enjoy the many benefits of nuclear technology, government investment in nuclear science and the engineering of R and D must be maintained as well. Again, if we want the private sector to invest in the research and development of nuclear technology, we have to release it from the liabilities involved in the case of a nuclear accident.

There is ample evidence to show that the benefits to be realized are at least as great as those that have already been achieved through nuclear power. The generation of nuclear electricity will continue to be economically viable and it will play an essential role in driving the nation's economy while protecting the environment by avoiding greenhouse gases and other pollutants.

Continuing research is needed to support and extend the productive lifetime of the existing Candu reactors in Canada and

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abroad and to develop competitive, advanced reactor designs. Canada's nuclear expertise supports the nation's strategic and diplomatic initiatives, including the safeguarding of nuclear material and the possibility of destroying weapons, like plutonium, made in the different reactors. It could also support other initiatives by providing greenhouse gas free electricity and fresh water to developing regions of the world. The capacity that Bill C-4 will give for the development of nuclear reactors can also play a vital role in providing water to our world's most needy people.

There is an immediate requirement for the Canadian Neutron Facility, a dual purpose facility that will support both Candu related research and the study of advanced industrial and material biological science research. The use of nuclear power to generate hydrogen fuel will revolutionize transportation and will dramatically curtail the emissions of greenhouse gases.

• (1550)

Nuclear power is necessary to meet our growing dependence on electricity. Our worst nightmare is to have power failures or to suffer brownouts. We need only look at the human suffering and devastation caused by the ice storm of 1998 in eastern Canada that resulted from the lack of enough power at the time.

In addition to meeting exponentially increasing demands for electricity the passing of Bill C-4 would allow for the generation of clean, cost efficient electricity which would have positive environmental impacts as well.

The international response to the issue of carbon dioxide emissions led to a conference in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997 where the developed countries pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions below the 1990 levels by given amounts by the period 2008-2012.

Under the Kyoto protocol Canada has undertaken to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions by 6% below 1990 emissions, nominally by 2010. Since nuclear power plant operation, unlike fossil fuel plant operation, produces neither greenhouse gas emissions nor pollution, nuclear energy provides an important means of meeting the Kyoto commitments. We are also meeting the world's energy needs. Thus the greenhouse gas emissions and pollution issues require the maintenance and growth of nuclear energy to meet the increasing needs of the world. In order for this to happen we need Bill C-4 to pass.

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If the Prime Minister is successful in getting his caucus to submit and ratify the Kyoto protocol, Canada would have to reduce the total annual greenhouse gas emissions by 199 million tonnes and carbon dioxide emissions by about 160 million tonnes below the business as usual scenario by 2010.

Using Candu power plants instead of fossil fuel plants Canada has already avoided significant emissions of carbon dioxide over the years, since the first Candu plant came into line in 1962.

Natural Resources Canada has calculated the emissions avoided by the use of nuclear energy in Canada and has concluded that about 1,440 million tonnes have been avoided up to the end of 1999 which is significantly higher than previously estimated. Furthermore, about 67 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions were avoided by nuclear power generation in 1999.

Canada would face an even more difficult task in meeting its Kyoto commitments without the continuing contribution of nuclear power. It has been calculated that the carbon dioxide emissions from electrical generation in Canada for recent years were about 129 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. That is considerably higher than the 98 million tonnes estimated for 1996. Half of this 32% increase in only two years resulted from the increase of coal fired generation to replace generation from the laid up Ontario power generation reactors. This is why the funding is needed in the passage of Bill C-4.

In addition, significant increases in pollutants that contribute to acid rain and smog, like sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide, have also occurred because of the lay up of the OPG reactors and they were laid up because of the lack of financing available to get them up and running again.

It is also important to recognize that estimates of carbon dioxide emissions from electrical generation in 1998, 129 million tonnes, are already 10% higher than the projected carbon dioxide emissions, 117 million tonnes, from this sector in 2010.

The business as usual case assumed that electricity demand would increase by about 1% per year and that the Pickering A, but not the Bruce A, units would return to service and it predicted that the existing reactors would not be replaced at the end of their lives and that no nuclear plants would be built. Nuclear generating capacity in Canada would decrease from about 16,000 megawatts in 2000 to about 3,500 megawatts in 2030.

• (1555)

The medium case scenario electricity demand would increase by about 1.3% a year, with both the Pickering A and Bruce A units returning to service, the lives of the existing reactors would be extended, some coal fired capacity in Ontario would be replaced by nuclear, and some of the increasing demand there would be met by nuclear.

If nuclear were to return to its 1995 share of the generation in Canada of about 18%, 10 new new-generation Candu 6 reactors would need to be built for the period of 2030.

The government alone cannot provide the funding for the capital expenditures that would be required to build this many reactors. We need the involvement of the private sector and the financial

institutions in the private sectors. The taxpayers alone cannot bear this burden. In order for them to want to even be involved we must release them of this liability so that there would be some incentive to make a profit and help fund our energy plans for the future.

In the high case scenario, all of the coal fired capacity in Ontario would be replaced by nuclear and all of the increasing demands would be met by nuclear. In that case, 22 new new-generation Candu 6 reactors would be required by the period 2030.

I have talked about requirements and demands for power. Hand in hand are the requirements to reduce emissions. Under the Kyoto protocol Canada has tried to obtain greenhouse gas reduction credits for Candu exports to be shared with the customer country.

OPEC, whose countries did not even sign on to Kyoto, opposed any recognition of nuclear energy for this purpose and resulted in the Canadian government's failure to ensure that nuclear energy and the export of its technology was excluded as qualification for carbon credits. So here again because we do not have the money coming in from carbon credits we are relying more on the private sector which today does not exist to a large extent because we do not have the passage of Bill C-4, the clause that prevents the financial institutions from investing.

On the other hand, Australia negotiated an 8% increase in credits for its long distances and the European Union countries received credit for their use of nuclear power plants to produce electricity. We have come up short there.

Canada would receive no credit whatsoever for its vast forests which sequester huge amounts of carbon.

Countries representing 5 billion of the 6 billion inhabitants on earth are exempted from having limits on greenhouse gas emissions and can pollute as much as they want. The United States, the biggest economy in the world, is not signing the accord. Canada would receive no credits for energy usage due to cold winters and long distance transportation requirements. Canada would not get carbon credits if our coal, oil or gas burning industries reduce emissions. Canada would receive no credit for exporting electricity from hydro dams. Thus, we need the money to come from somewhere.

The application of a new-generation Candu 6 reactor to bitumen recovery from the Alberta oil sands is being considered as well. This is being made possible for the development of the steam assisted gravity drainage process, the SAGD. The steam heats the heavy oil that drains down by gravity to a lower horizontal pipe from which the oil-steam mixture is recovered. We can see that the passage of Bill C-4 would also have an impact on our oil industries in the west.

The SAGD process has been demonstrated and it would open up the potential for the production of 88% of the oil sands not accessible by the current conventional methods, that is open pit technology, making an estimated extra 330 billion barrels recoverable.

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•(1600)

Co-generation new-generation Candu 6 reactors would provide both the steam and the electricity needed for the operation of the plant, as well as the electrolytic production, from water, of hydrogen required for upgrading the recovered heavy oil, with oxygen and heavy water as the by-products.

Based on the 30% reduction of capital costs for the new-generation Candu reactor design, when compared with a natural gas fired steam plant with natural gas at \$4 US per gigajoule, the economics for nuclear energy are promising. The new-generation Candu reactor design has the added advantage of addressing greenhouse gas emissions that may be otherwise incurred.

The Canadian Alliance is committed to reducing pollution.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am going to keep you company for the next 40 minutes. I hope that I will make my point clearly, and that the hon. members and the public will agree with me.

First, I want to thank the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for her Physics 101 lesson which, in my opinion, digressed somewhat from the main point, and may have even discouraged people from thinking more about the nuclear power industry. A history lesson on Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Chernobyl or Three Mile Island might have been better. It would have been more useful to the debate.

Nuclear energy is both a good thing and a bad thing. Everyone believes that the electricity produced by nuclear energy is good. But nobody talks about the negative aspects, such as the risks associated with nuclear energy or the waste it produces. Given the significant risks and waste involved, no one wants to enjoy this energy or the electricity generated by nuclear power today at the expense of future generations. We know that we will be dealing with nuclear waste for many years to come.

What is odd is the seeming simplicity of this bill. It could not be any simpler. This amendment has to do with decontamination and is strictly financial in nature.

As regards regulatory measures on decontamination, the legislation used to say that “the owner or occupant of, or any other person with a right to or interest in” could be held responsible.

This provision is not new. It existed when the act was amended in 1997, which means that it is at least five years old. Until now, no one had asked for any amendments. This begs the question: why, until now, has no one asked for amendments to eliminate the responsibility of financial institutions or lenders? Today, this provision is being replaced by one saying that it will be “the occupant of, or any other person who has the management and control of” who will be responsible for reducing the level of contamination.

For all intents and purposes, the government is telling lenders, “You can lend a lot of money to the company to manage, operate and possibly own nuclear facilities to produce electricity”. The bill refers to the nuclear industry in general terms. It includes much more than

just nuclear plants. My comments today primarily relate to nuclear plants that produce electricity.

This strictly administrative amendment clarifies one aspect of the obligations regarding the decontamination of sites. At the time, this provision had the effect of deterring the private sector from lending money. No one had raised this issue in the past five years. The other nuclear operations never experienced this problem.

•(1605)

Not too long ago, Ontario Power Generation Inc. decided to rent out two nuclear plants to Bruce Power, or to have them operated by it. In order to facilitate financing, the need or obligation comes from a specific application from a company that wants to manage, operate and, perhaps, own nuclear plants, with the support of Ontario Power Generation. In this sense, it is Ontario Power Generation that rented out these nuclear plants and asked Bruce Power to manage them.

In concrete terms, the amendment to subsection 46(3) of the act will make it easier to get financing from banks, in this case by Bruce Power, to manage and operate the nuclear facilities owned by Ontario Power Generation. Bruce Power is a private consortium in which British Energy has a 78% interest, and which also includes Cameco Corporation, the Power Workers Union and the Society of Energy Professionals.

Bruce Power is supposed to operate the Bruce A and B facilities for the next 18 years and might have its contract renewed for another 25 years. However, we are all aware of the financial problems that are plaguing Bruce Power, and more particularly its parent company, British Energy. The corporation was planning to invest a lot of money, some \$1.8 billion over three years, to upgrade and improve the facilities. Those who are listening will understand that cheap power is a pipe dream.

When we talk about \$1.8 billion to reopen various facilities, we know full well that privatization and giving Ontario firms such as Ontario Power Generation responsibility for their management is part and parcel of the deregulation of the energy sector. Recently, we saw what happened when prices escalated. When this happens, the whole scheme is called into question.

On the same topic of facilitating privatization, it has been pointed out that when the time comes to retrofit the Point Lepreau facilities—plans are being made and already the costs are higher than forecasted—it could probably all be done by the private sector with the help of financial institutions.

As for the nuclear industry, it is a well-known fact that it seems unanimous in its support of the proposed change. However, those who are opposed to nuclear power are also unanimous in their statement that the amendment will only facilitate the privatization of existing nuclear plants. It will not only facilitate it, but it will lead to the proliferation of nuclear plants and, for all intent and purposes, it will put every Canadian on the hook should a disaster happen.

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I would like to get back to the fact that it is the department that initiated this change. The department's position is well known. It said, "We simply want to correct an anomaly created in 1997". The way the department is proceeding leads me to believe it is not taking the current context into consideration. I will remind members that since 1997 the situation has evolved greatly in the nuclear industry. The government's arguments are mainly that the nuclear industry was at a disadvantage compared to other forms of energy.

It stands to reason that we ought to deal differently with the nuclear industry, since the scope of cleaning up after an accident at a nuclear plant is huge both in terms of its impact on the environment and of its long-lasting effects.

• (1610)

The explosion at Chernobyl contaminated the land all the way to the south of France, and numerous cases of cancer resulting from this accident still surface every day and will continue to do so for decades to come. Therefore, it is normal to be much more demanding with this form of energy.

Another argument put forward is that this puts Canadian industries at a disadvantage compared to their international competitors. What industries? Nuclear power plant construction is totally under the control of the federal government, Atomic Energy of Canada being the sole Canadian supplier; as for the operation of these plants, it has been totally under the control of the provinces, and this standard also applies to a foreign private operator wanting to invest in a plant here. That foreign operator is treated the same way as any local private operator.

The government also said this was an exceptional measure. When dealing with an industry that produces extremely hazardous waste that will remain hazardous for thousands of years, for which there exists no solution that would be safe in the long term, and whose waste includes plutonium and a few other components that can be used and have been used to build nuclear weapons of mass destruction, it is normal that such an industry should be subjected to stricter rules than those that apply to an oil well or a hydroelectric dam.

The government also argued that the general power of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission was sufficient. Given the commission's lack of independence, it is preferable to keep this specific power, rather than to rely solely on the regulatory power provided under section 24 of the act. I should first point out that this commission did not exist in 1997. Until 2000, it was the former Atomic Energy Control Board.

Like their predecessors, the members of this commission are appointed by the government, which also owns Atomic Energy of Canada and has an obvious business interest in the development of the nuclear industry. This explains why it has never refused or withdrawn a licence to operate a nuclear plant, despite the many dangerous incidents that occur on a regular basis. It took a report from American consultants, in 1998, to convince Ontario to shut down half of its reactors, which had become too unsafe after just some 20 years of operation.

In addition to the arguments made by the department, we must look at what has occurred in the nuclear power industry since 1997.

In Canada alone, there was the shutdown in 1998 of half the reactors in Ontario, forcing Ontario Hydro to incur a loss of \$10 billion, which led to a negative net worth and restructuring that divided the company in three, leaving a huge debt to be covered by the taxpayers. This shutdown was due to the premature aging of the equipment and the inability of the staff to manage an environment that had become so difficult and dangerous.

There was also the publication of the Seaborn report. Here, as everywhere else in the western world, after ten years of work, the commission found that the general public strongly opposed the solution of burying irradiated fuel and that there was no other long-term solution in sight. To avoid having to shut down the plants whose cooling pools were full to capacity, the number of temporary on-site dry storage facilities was therefore increased.

No new plant has been built in Canada in 20 years, no more are planned for several decades and none of the plants shut down in 1998 have been re-opened.

We know that the only plant in New Brunswick, which is 20 years old, is showing signs of premature aging, having had to be closed repeatedly for long periods of time in the past two years. A preliminary study estimates that \$850 million will be needed to extend its life beyond 2006, if it lasts that long. The astronomical cost of operating these aging plants is very significant and yet there are choices that are somewhat more ecological and sustainable.

• (1615)

Take the example of the 133 wind turbines erected in Quebec; they produce more than 100 megawatts at a total cost of just over \$160 million. If we invested that \$850 million in wind power generation or in other renewable energy sources, then they would be more profitable.

The situation abroad has changed dramatically since 1997. In proposing this amendment, the department is totally ignoring this fact. Most western European countries using nuclear power, except France, have decided to stop doing so, mainly due to an inability to dispose of spent nuclear fuel containing 1% plutonium, even for nations quite dependent on nuclear energy, such as Belgium, where dependency is 50%, and Germany, where it is 30%.

Pressure came mainly from each nation's citizens, who refused to allow plutonium through their towns and villages on its way to or from MOX reprocessing facilities. We cannot blame them for feeling this way, given that a single microgram of this substance can kill in no time when inhaled.

Canada has been unsuccessful in all of its attempts to market Candu to other countries since the China contract. After a long process, Turkey has deferred for another 30 plus years its decision on the advisability of using atomic energy. As for Korea, having had a lot of problems with its Candu reactors, it has decided not to use Canada to supply its needs in future.

Atomic Energy of Canada therefore needs to convert to the service sector, since it does not have a single contract for new power plants. Even the completion of the long-suspended Romanian plant, which has been on hold for years due to lack of funds, has not yet been approved, and private funding is no more easily obtained.

Government Orders

An examination of the situation makes it clear that the purpose is to encourage private investment, intervention by the private sector, and in my opinion the proliferation of nuclear plants. Moreover, last week Atomic Energy Canada spoke of its new Candu reactor and referred to medium-term sales prospects of over 100 reactors.

There is thought being given to reactor sales, to getting the private sector involved, and thus to creating new plants, but no questions are being asked. I know there is nuclear waste management legislation, but we are not at that stage yet. It will cost billions of dollars and we do not even know what the conclusion will be. There is still thought of using nuclear power plants to produce electricity.

They have also lost sight of the accident in 1999 at a Japanese reprocessing centre under construction, which shook up the entire world nuclear industry and forced it to re-examine its standards and risk assessments for this technology. This accident, following the Chernobyl disaster, was the catalyst for a number of countries going off nuclear power. Even highly nuclear dependent Japan has re-examined its investments. As for France, it halted operations in its breeder reactor, since these were unjustified in a shrinking market context, which ought to lead in the medium term to reprocessing plants, and possibly the nuclear plants themselves, being closed down.

They are losing sight of the hazards and waste involved. It is clear that Ontario decided to hand over the ownership and management of a nuclear generating station that is currently closed to the private sector, in order to avoid having to make the major investments required and so that it could be reopened by the qualified staff of a foreign company, weaknesses among its own personnel having been a determining factor in the forced closure in 1998.

● (1620)

In terms of environmental risks, obviously in the event of a major contamination that bankrupted the local subsidiary, a mortgage lender that had the benefit of a guarantee from the foreign head office in addition to the mortgage guarantee, would exercise the former rather than seize the property, which would make it liable for any damage to the environment. As often happens in such cases, the head office would cut loose its subsidiary and nobody would take responsibility for the contaminated site.

There are also security risks. Again, it is clear that putting the private sector in charge of any part of the operation or decontamination of sites containing nuclear material increases the risk of nuclear proliferation through the infiltration of individuals working for terrorist states or cells. That is why, since 1980, the United States has prohibited the private reprocessing of any nuclear matter within its jurisdiction to prevent even the smallest amount of plutonium from finding its way into the hands of individuals over whom it has absolutely no control.

Obviously, this will encourage the development of nuclear energy in Canada, while facilitating privatization, reopening plants that were closed down in Ontario and increasing environmental and security risks.

I am not the only one who says this. One has only to read the documents that were given to us by the various stakeholders, including Bruce Power. Here is what Bruce Power said:

Generally, the legislation has a negative impact on the capacity of private corporations to invest in nuclear plants, and this is detrimental to the future development of the Canadian nuclear industry.

The comments from private business could not be any clearer. During committee discussions, everyone said, "No, it is not necessarily so that nuclear plants would proliferate". However, here they said:

—to the future development of the Canadian nuclear industry.

Members may have noticed that often, the words "nuclear generating station" are not used when referring to the generation of electric power. That is the difference. Globally, the nuclear industry has several applications, one of which is nuclear power plants to generate electricity. In practical terms, this is the application that produces the most waste and that will benefit the most in terms of funding. Since 1997, no one other than those operating nuclear power plants generating electric power has ever seen any problem with the legislation, with the existing clause in the legislation.

● (1625)

Furthermore, I would like to quote what representatives of the Canadian Nuclear Association said in committee:

The present wording of the subsection limits investments. Under the current wording, subsection 46(3) of the act unintentionally prevents private companies in the nuclear industry from obtaining loans, since banks refuse to assume the exceptional statutory responsibility.

I draw your attention to the term "unintentionally". I find it difficult to believe that, in 1997, when this section of the act was written down in black and white, experts were not able to easily see the significant risk related to decontamination. Everyone without exception, including financial backers, would have easily seen the risk and responsibility related to the decontamination costs, especially at the clause by clause study stage.

So, it seems very clear to me that, at the time, the lawmaker's intention was to limit the role of the private sector in the most expensive activities of the nuclear industry, in other words, in the operation of nuclear power plants, and the costs related to rebuilding or dismantling such plants. So, when I am told that this was not done intentionally in 1997, I refuse to believe it. Believe me, the lawmaker had no intention of watching the private sector get involved in operating nuclear power plants, and this was the only way to prevent the private sector from investing in this area.

There are also all the other operations, because, as we know, nuclear plants do not exist just to produce electricity. There are many other uses and I will mention some of them.

There are several nuclear plants, but there are also 22 reactors: twenty in Ontario, one in Quebec and one in New Brunswick. There are uranium mines and mills; uranium processing facilities and fuel production facilities; nuclear materials and radiation devices; packaging and transportation; non-power reactors that can be useful for research and medical applications; research and nuclear testing facilities; large irradiators; particle acceleration; radioactive waste management; decommissioning and financial security; safe operations and professional skills; and, finally, international affairs.

Government Orders

So, all those who were involved in other activities relating to nuclear energy never told the government or the department that subsection 46(3) prevented them from operating and getting money from financial institutions to invest and operate their industries.

Again, if we go back to the Canadian Nuclear Association, we have, for all intents and purposes, proof that the intention is to privatize. The association said:

The current wording is an anomaly. In no other Canadian act relating to the environment do we find a wording similar to the current wording of this subsection. The result is that this subsection is a major obstacle to investments in the nuclear industry, and it puts nuclear energy in an unfavourable position, in relation to the other means used to produce electricity.

We see, therefore, that it was clearly specified that they were referring to nuclear plants used to produce electricity, and most nuclear plants and reactors are located in Ontario. As we know, the energy sector was deregulated and there was a significant increase in the cost of electricity and in the retrofitting costs of plants. I will list a few examples and mention the costs involved.

Moreover, since basically it is at the request of this private firm that the department introduced this amendment, it is the key player in this file and yet it did not appear before the committee. It was asked to appear as a witness. So if the key player did not bother to appear before the committee to debate the amendment or express its views, it raises serious questions.

There is another player. We now know that this involves hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars in investments. Therefore, the funding which used to be supplied by institutions and the government is now provided by the banks, which would loan money directly to private firms willing to take the risk.

As for the Canadian Bankers Association, it did not appear before us to let us know what its position was. Obviously it is not opposed; it will be able to lend phenomenal amounts of money at rates which, I imagine, will be commensurate with the potential risk, without assuming any responsibility for cleaning up. The Bankers Association could not appear due to a scheduling conflict.

Now, the department is telling us "There is no problem. The private sector will be able to invest, get involved, operate nuclear plants, and also build new ones. There is no problem". Moreover, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission is here to oversee everything, to enforce the Nuclear Safety and Control Act. There is no problem. It is obvious. As a matter of fact, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission said and I quote:

Financial considerations are only taken into account by the commission if they affect its mandate. The commission is convinced that the revised version of subsection 46(3) provides sufficient ways to allow it to order the owner or occupant of, or any other person with an interest in, the affected land or place to take the prescribed measures to reduce the level of contamination beyond the required limit. Consequently, the commission is not opposed to the bill.

• (1630)

Clearly, it was foreseeable that the commission would not oppose this bill because it must enforce the Nuclear Safety and Control Act. Whether it deals with a private company or not, the fact remains that it must work with the existing regulations and controls, with all of the shortcomings therein. As a result, it cannot go beyond its mandate, regardless of who is providing loans or financing. The fact

remains that the risks and waste associated with electricity-producing nuclear generating stations are far greater.

We also find the situation somewhat disappointing, particularly since no heed is being paid to all that has happened since 1997. The context has completely changed and this is not taken into consideration. The world nuclear industry is no longer the same. It is no longer necessary to privatize some nuclear plants and create new ones.

Back then, the Seaborn commission said that we had to explain the potential consequences and effects of nuclear power in order to get the public on board. Again, the changes to legislation would facilitate the privatization and proliferation of nuclear power plants. It also places the burden of decontamination on the public sector, rather than the private sector.

I think it would have been appropriate to have a debate on the nuclear industry before going as far as making this slight change that could have enormous consequences. Why did the government not agree to consultations? Probably because it had a good idea of what could happen during these consultations.

I have before me the results of a poll done by Léger Marketing on July 13, 2001. According to the poll, two thirds of Canadians are opposed to constructing new nuclear plants in Canada. The question was simply, "Do you support or oppose the construction of new generating stations in Canada"? Apparently, 66.1% of respondents were against the idea.

Given this situation, it was not in the interests of the government to hold consultations, because it wanted to make an amendment specifically to help the private sector. The private sector will not be satisfied with simply operating a nuclear plant by subcontracting to another company that sells the electricity directly. Instead, it will want to increase its ability to generate profits. It will no doubt try to build new nuclear reactors. We know that Atomic Energy Canada has a new product it is trying to sell.

Those who are watching us can see that what we have here is a circle, that is the nuclear industry and the electricity industry produced mainly in Ontario. It is a tight community to the point where we do not know exactly who will reap the benefits in the end, but it will always be despite the risk and despite nuclear waste.

Earlier, I mentioned that this was somewhat contrary to what we are seeing in terms of development throughout the world. Moreover, speaking of surveys and public consultations, several countries are now holding referendums or public consultations on nuclear energy.

Government Orders

●(1635)

I will remind members that, in 1978, in a referendum, Austrians voted against the use of nuclear energy to produce electricity. That is why no nuclear generating station was ever built in Austria.

In 1987, Italians decided by referendum to close three nuclear reactors in their country and to prohibit the construction of any more such reactors. The three reactors were decommissioned in 1990.

As for the Swedes, they decided by referendum, in 1980, to keep their reactors in operation but to decommission them gradually as alternative production facilities became operational. All reactors should be decommissioned by 2010.

Switzerland held referendums on the gradual abandonment of nuclear energy in 1979, 1984 and 1990, but people voted against it each time. However, in the 1990 referendum, it was agreed that no new nuclear generating station would be built for at least ten years. In 2000, the ten-year moratorium was extended.

In a number of other countries, the gradual abandonment of nuclear energy was the subject of a broad political and public debate, which we have not had here, in Canada. For example, Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands and Germany all adopted policies or legislation providing for the gradual abandonment of nuclear energy or preventing the expansion of nuclear generating stations.

The deadline varies from one country to the next. Some countries, such as Sweden, Belgium and Germany, for instance, have already had to extend it. They have difficulty replacing nuclear electricity with electricity from other sources that will not increase greenhouse gas emissions overly, which would compromise their ability to meet the reduction objectives in the Kyoto protocol.

That leads me, with what is being read, to talk about the importance of consulting the public so that people can give their opinion on relying on the nuclear power industry for electricity production. I think this would have been the best opportunity for the government to do so before allowing privatization, and especially the proliferation of nuclear power plants.

I just explained that we are talking about Kyoto. Several people claim that, indeed, nuclear energy for producing electricity does not emit greenhouse gases, or very little, in minimal quantities. However, there are other energies that, in addition to not emitting greenhouse gases, do not create dangerous waste, as I already explained in previous speeches.

The Canadian Alliance member told us earlier that uranium 238 was less dangerous than uranium 235. However, we know that the half-life of uranium 238 is 4.5 billion years. We will not be around to see the decrease in radioactivity.

I believe that it would be in the government's best interest to consult the public before voting on this bill. Naturally, the Bloc Québécois is against this bill. There are dangers to future generations. There are significant risks. Waste will likely threaten the entire planet.

●(1640)

[English]

Mr. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Following consultations among the parties, I think you would find unanimous consent for the following: That members of the Special Committee on Non-medical Use of Drugs be authorized to travel to Vancouver, Montreal and Halifax from Sunday, December 8 to Monday, December 9 in relation to its mandate and to publicize the release of its interim report across the country, and that the necessary staff accompany the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent to table the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): 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 Terrebonne—Blainville, Social Housing; the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ferries; and the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, the Environment.

Mr. Svend Robinson: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, I want to congratulate the hon. member from the Bloc Québécois for his excellent speech on Bill C-4. I am quite pleased that the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party oppose this bill.

The hon. member raised some very strong points against the bill. I am thinking in particular of his suggestion that an indepth study of the impact on industry be undertaken before further subsidies are granted.

[English]

It is important that we recognize the real objective of the bill as my colleague from Windsor—St. Clair has pointed out so eloquently in his interventions both in the House and in the standing committee on the environment.

The bill is effectively a gift to the Ontario Conservative government and it responds very specifically to the Bruce Power situation. It enhances the privatization of the nuclear industry. For that reason alone my colleagues and I in the New Democratic Party strongly oppose this amendment.

The objective of the amendment is effectively to narrow the scope of liability for those who are involved in the nuclear power industry. I would point out that under the provisions of the 1976 Nuclear Liability Act, that liability is already limited to \$75 million. This is an industry that is already well protected by legislation. It needs tougher liability laws, not weaker ones.

I strongly support the work that is being done by Campaign for Nuclear Phase Out which is calling for a phase-out of the nuclear industry. I intend to speak to that later in my comments before the House.

Government Orders

I see the hon. member for Davenport in the chamber today. He is the very distinguished chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development. I want to pay tribute to that member and to the vice-chair of the environment committee, the member for York North, as well as the hon. member for Churchill River and the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

Those members had the courage to stand up in the House a short time ago and vote against the bill at report stage. I want to salute them for their courage and for their continuing leadership on the fundamentally important issues of the protection of the environment. I certainly hope that upon reflection, the colleagues of my friend from Davenport, when it comes to the final vote on this bill, may see the light and will vote against the legislation as well.

The history of this legislation is deeply disturbing for many of us. In fact, there was an almost unprecedented action in the standing committee on the environment to shut down, muzzle and silence debate in a very shameful way on this issue.

My colleague from Windsor—St. Clair had the floor in the standing committee on the environment. I believe he was speaking to a motion that would have subpoenaed witnesses from the nuclear industry. It was essential that those witnesses be heard with respect to this important legislation.

My colleague from Windsor—St. Clair, our environment critic who has been doing such a fine job on this and other bills, was interrupted on a point of order by another member in that committee. At that point the chair of the committee indicated that he was prepared to put the question on a motion to shut down the member for Windsor—St. Clair and to call a vote. This was blatantly out of order and unprecedented. I deeply regret that the appeal that was made to the Speaker in this House to ensure that this kind of very dangerous precedent would not stand unfortunately was not successful.

That is some indication of what is happening with this legislation. Liberal members on the standing committee on the environment were prepared to shut down democratic debate which is the lifeblood of democracy in order to silence the member for Windsor—St. Clair and prevent him from speaking to a motion to hear from the industry.

While industry was not heard from during the course of those committee hearings, there were a number of very important witnesses. One of those witnesses was the Campaign for Nuclear Phase Out.

The Campaign for Nuclear Phase Out was founded in 1989. It is a broadly based Canadian coalition of organizations working to phase out nuclear energy in Canada. I might note parenthetically that a former colleague from Broadview—Greenwood, Lynn McDonald, for some time has been one of the driving forces in the Campaign for Nuclear Phase Out. She has been doing fine work on this issue. I only regret that she is not still with us in the House to continue speaking out on this.

•(1645)

During the 13 years the Campaign for Nuclear Phase Out has been in existence in Canada, it has done very important work. It has pointed out the tremendously obscene level of subsidies to the

nuclear industry in Canada. It has worked on MOX shipments into Canada. It developed the first atomic map of Canada. It was never mapped before. It included all the nuclear sites in Canada.

The objective of the Campaign for Nuclear Phase Out is to phase out nuclear energy in Canada. It points out that across the world people are moving out of nuclear energy. I want to say very clearly that I strongly support the objectives of the Campaign for Nuclear Phase Out.

It is interesting to note that the Kyoto accord made absolutely no reference to nuclear energy as being a component of the drive to respond to the crisis of climate change in Canada and globally. Indeed, the draft implementation plan, Canada's federal draft plan for Kyoto, had not a word about nuclear energy as well.

In fact, I think it is essential that we recognize that the nuclear industry is a dinosaur industry. It is a dying industry which is on its way out. Within a very short time, it may very well be that the only location of that industry will be Ontario. I believe that in Quebec and in New Brunswick the industry is being phased out.

There is a web of subsidies and legislative crutches as the Campaign for Nuclear Phase Out pointed out that has held up the industry so far, without which it just would not be sustainable at all. In 2002 the subsidies for Atomic Energy of Canada Limited reached \$210 million, the highest amount since 1987. The fact of the matter is that clearly this is an industry that has to be propped up by the federal government.

I note that my friend from Port Moody is in the House. I know that as a hardworking member of the Canadian Alliance, he would be deeply concerned about this kind of government handout to the nuclear industry. I know that he would want to rise in his place to speak out in anger and indignation against this handout to the dying nuclear industry in Canada.

The tragic irony is that the funding for renewable energy in 2000 was some 17 times less than the funding for nuclear energy. Those priorities are completely skewed.

We oppose the bill because we think that any attempt to limit the liability in this way, any kind of gift to the nuclear industry and to Bruce Power in Ontario, is completely unacceptable.

We have to ask as well, who exactly owns this company? Right now it appears that British Energy has the major stake in Bruce Power but guess who is looking at possibly buying it according to a news story today. Warren Buffett, the U.S. investment billionaire may be interested in buying a piece of Bruce Power. Of course, unless this legislation gets through, they say there may be some problem in financing this cozy little deal. We say that we want no part of this offensive transaction.

There has been a lot of baffle-gab, distortion and misleading information about the real objectives of the bill.

Government Orders

I want to pay tribute to the work done on this issue by the Sierra Club of Canada, in particular its distinguished executive director, Elizabeth May. Miss May appeared before the standing committee on the environment. She pointed out that there were a lot of distortions about the bill. As she said, the bill does not create any kind of automatic liability for banks or other investors in the nuclear industry. This is what we are being told by the government; it is not fair to create this automatic liability.

The reality is very different, as she pointed out. The current Nuclear Safety and Control Act does not create any automatic liability nor does subsection 46(3) as rewritten to remove what are apparently offensive words. The offence is to the bankers and financiers. Let us be clear on what actually is the current state of the law.

The bill is a blatant attempt to make the nuclear industry even more immune from the impact of its actions. When we look at some of the very serious accidents, whether it is Chernobyl, Three Mile Island or elsewhere, we should be deeply concerned about any attempt to weaken the accountability, responsibility and liability of the nuclear industry. All we have to do is read the report of the environmental auditor about the terrible impact of abandoned nuclear mines in northern Saskatchewan and elsewhere to know that this is a problem.

Let us look at what this issue of liability is actually about. In fact, subsection 46(3) creates a discretion, not any kind of automatic obligation, it creates a discretion for the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, following a hearing, to file a notice. It may then order that the owner, or yet another level of discretion as the investors are again one step away, occupant or any other person with a right to or interest in the affected land, take prescribed measures to reduce the level of contamination.

It is obvious that this is not automatic in any way. It does not mean that everybody attached to the project is liable for millions and millions of dollars in potential financial commitment. They may have killed people or there may have been serious environmental impact on adjacent lands. It means that there is an obligation to clean up. The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission may, it does not have to, but may, following a public hearing, decide that the clean up of the contaminated site and reducing the level of contamination requires actions by a number of people and within that current list, should this amendment not pass, are those who have a right to or interest in the land or place that requires cleaning up.

I also want to point out that far from moving ahead on this legislation, what we should be doing is having a comprehensive public inquiry and debate on the nuclear industry in Canada. There has never been any kind of a commission or debate or any kind of a public hearing on the desirability of having a nuclear industry.

• (1655)

Elizabeth May pointed out in the environment committee that there was one brief attempt by a former minister of energy, mines and resources, Ray Hnatyshyn, to move ahead on this but that of course did not go anywhere because that government did not last very long. However we certainly do not need to be moving in the direction of this particular proposed amendment.

What are the alternatives that we should be looking at? We should be looking at phasing out this industry and recognizing that nuclear waste is a major threat to human health and the environment.

As of 1992 Canada had accumulated over 200 million tonnes of low level radioactive tailings from uranium mining, over 1 million cubic metres of contaminated soil and 900,000 bundles of nuclear fuel waste, and nobody has any notion of what to do with these wastes at all. We are just passing them on to future generations.

There has been a huge increase in the annual production of nuclear waste in Canada. It grew by 76% between 1982 and 1998.

I see the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the House. I know he shares my concern about this staggering increase in the level of nuclear waste. I am sure he would share with me the concern that the Canadian public has a right to get at the truth about the nuclear industry and the extent to which it is so heavily subsidized by Canadian taxpayers. In fact, Canada today is the highest per capita user of nuclear energy in the world.

What should we be doing instead of handing out even more exemptions and extending the absence from any liability for the nuclear industry? We should be looking at alternatives, as my colleague from Windsor—St. Clair and witnesses who appeared before the committee pointed out.

We do not support Bill C-4 because it weakens the liability provisions of the Nuclear Safety and Control Act and it could facilitate an expansion of nuclear power production in Canada and its continued privatization. Privatization in this industry is the last thing we need, as we have seen from the disastrous example of the privatization of Ontario Hydro. Even the ultra right wing government in British Columbia of Gordon Campbell is now recognizing that this not the direction that it should be moving toward.

Far from strengthening our support for the nuclear industry, we should be looking at the example of nations like Germany and others, and phasing out nuclear power production and investing in alternative renewable energy resources.

We fall far behind in those sectors, particularly behind countries like Denmark. Denmark is currently meeting 16% of its electricity needs from wind. The Canadian Wind Energy Association has an excellent proposal that would see billions of dollars of capital investment in rural communities that would result in many quality jobs in Canada and the reduction of 15 million to 20 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions a year. It would be a tremendous contribution to meeting our Kyoto targets.

Instead of propping up this dying nuclear industry, why are we not putting far more resources into renewable energy, particularly into the kind of proposal that the Canadian Wind Energy Association is putting forward? If we were to accept its proposal we would achieve the goal of installing more than 10,000 megawatts of wind power capacity and would be providing 5% of our electricity from wind power by 2010. That is still far less than the proportion that Denmark is providing.

Government Orders

We have to do much more to level the playing field for renewable energy sources and expand efficiency and conservation programs. Important recommendations have been put forward by groups, such as the David Suzuki Foundation and the Pembina Institute, which called for the removal of unfair competitive advantages to fossil fuels and the nuclear industry. This includes removing royalty structures, capital cost subsidies and lax emission standards that favour coal-fired plants.

As well, we should be looking at legislating improved fuel efficiency standards for motor vehicles, increasing oxidation levels in gasoline and diesel fuel, and promoting the use of alternatives like ethanol and hybrid vehicles. With all of these we could significantly reduce our dependency on fossil fuels and the harmful emissions that they produce.

Those are real and achievable goals that our government could and should commit to for the benefit of all Canadians. Instead of expanding nuclear power, we should be moving in the opposite direction: phasing it out and investing in cleaner energy resources.

I am pleased to see my colleague, my friend from Lac-Saint-Louis in the House. I want to salute him for the leadership he has shown over the years on these issues, right up to as recently as just a few hours ago when he had the courage to speak out and to vote against this destructive piece of legislation, Bill C-4, along with, I believe, three of his colleagues, including the member for Davenport, the chair of the environment committee.

I would hope that if we are not prepared to reject the bill at third reading, which is the stage that we are at now, that we would at least be prepared to send the legislation back to the environment committee and ask it to give witnesses an opportunity to be heard as to why the legislation is so destructive.

We heard in the environment committee from the Sierra Club, from Energy Probe and a number of others. I think that before extending the exemptions from liability for this industry, far more background work needs to be done.

The bill is fundamentally about privatization. It is about facilitating the privatization of the nuclear industry and particularly in the context of Ontario and what is happening with Bruce Power.

As I said, this is an industry that far from being propped up through massive subsidies, which is the case so far, should be phased out. When one looks at the record of Candu reactors for example and the sales of Candu reactors, where have these reactors been sold? They have not been sold at all in recent years, but they have been sold to repressive dictatorships. They were sold to Ceausescu in Romania. They were sold to the dictators in South Korea. They were sold to the dictators in Argentina. However that surely is not the kind of energy that we should be promoting in Canada.

• (1700)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for his speech which I found very well documented and excellent, as well as my colleague from the New Democratic Party who just spoke.

The NDP member talked about wind energy and investments in nuclear energy. I will remind him of a few numbers. The nuclear program alone accounts for investments on the order of \$6 billion.

As for wind energy, the federal government is only committed to investing \$17 million a year over 15 years, for a total of approximately \$260 million. There is no comparison between investments in nuclear energy and those in clean energies such as wind energy.

I would just like to read to the member what the former Minister of Natural Resources said when this bill was introduced for the first time. It was then Bill C-57. In a press release the minister said:

These companies must have access to commercial credit to finance their needs—

This amendment will allow the nuclear industry to attract market capital and equity.

The minister went on and mentioned lenders. Previously, there were obligations regarding site remediation and the act made it possible to involve lenders in remedial actions.

The news release also said:

Lenders were faced with unknown financial obligations that might have exceeded by far their commercial interest.

The minister himself is stating that investment in nuclear energy is an unknown risk. Not only is it an unknown risk, but we know full well that we cannot get rid of nuclear waste.

Could my colleague explain to me how the government, which itself recognizes that nuclear energy is an unknown risk, can grant such a privilege to lenders. The government is saying: "We will not loan money to the nuclear sector because it cannot be trusted. Should a disaster occur, the risk is way too high for us".

When the minister responsible makes such a statement, how can the government commit to investing in nuclear energy and granting privileges to lenders?

• (1705)

Mr. Svend Robinson: Madam Speaker, it is an excellent question. Of course, there is no answer to that question. The lack of responsibility shown by the minister sponsoring this bill is unbelievable.

We do not know anything about the costs. We already know about the very serious impact of nuclear waste.

[English]

In a report prepared by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development it was pointed out that Canada faced a toxic legacy of abandoned uranium mines in Saskatchewan and toxic waste sites on federal sites.

Government Orders

There is still no technology whatsoever to deal with the issue of nuclear waste. Some suggestions have been made that we can fire them into space or bury them deep in the Canadian shield, but that is simply irresponsible speculation. The fact is that we are leaving this legacy for our children and our children's children, without any assurance whatsoever as to the long term impact on their health or, indeed, on the environment.

As my colleague from the Bloc Québécois has pointed out, we cannot even begin to know the costs of a potential accident and yet we are saying that will take the banks off the hook. This is a gift to the banks and to financial institutions to prop up the nuclear industry. It is like writing a blank cheque. It literally gives these people a cheque and says, "Okay, here you are. Even though we have no idea what the implications may be, we are prepared to absolve you of any responsibility for that".

This is the worst kind of fiscal and environmental lack of responsibility and, for that reason alone, the legislation should be vigorously and strongly opposed.

[*Translation*]

The "Sortir du nucléaire" group appeared before the Standing Committee on the Environment. Its representatives spoke eloquently about the subsidies that have long been granted to the nuclear industry. In fact, this is a new handout to that industry.

We in the NDP say no to this measure, and I am glad to see that the Bloc Québécois is also saying no. We think that there have been enough subsidies. We must stop subsidizing this industry and start supporting renewable energy sources.

[*English*]

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it has been a very interesting day as we have spoken about Kyoto first and now we are speaking about the bill to amend the Nuclear Safety and Control Act.

I guess from my perspective it has been a day of extremism. I am familiar with the environment. I farmed for 25 years. I live in a rural area. I live on the land. Today I have seen a new side of what I would call environmentalism, almost a religious fascination with the environment that goes far beyond what I would consider to be a practical or really sensible approach to it.

I find this bill particularly interesting because countries, like France, have 80% of their power that is being supplied by the nuclear industry. They have used that to begin to try to meet their Kyoto standards. If we are against nuclear power in this country that only leaves us a couple of other choices to find our power requirements. One of them is hydro energy. Often we hear that the same people who oppose nuclear energy are against hydroelectric dams as well because we cannot be damming our rivers. Then we are back to using coal powered generators and those kinds of things, back to greenhouse gas emissions and the problems that come with those.

The member talked a bit about some of the renewable energy sources, the bio-fuels. At this point in their development I really call those boutique energy sources. We are not able to rely on a major part of our energy from them. I live in an area where wind energy is being developed.

I heard what the member is against but I would like to hear what he is for in terms of a large scale power supply for our economy and for our country.

● (1710)

Mr. Svend Robinson: Madam Speaker, I would note that when the hon. member talks about nuclear energy contributing to meeting the targets under the Kyoto protocol, the fact is that the Kyoto protocol is totally silent with respect to nuclear power. There was no recognition whatsoever by those who were responsible for the Kyoto protocol that in any way this dying nuclear industry should be a part of that. They called on countries to take a whole range of steps, but even the Canadian implementation plan for Kyoto makes no reference whatsoever to nuclear energy.

My friend from the Alliance wants to know the alternatives. There are many alternatives to nuclear energy. One of the most important is recognizing that we should be moving to do far more in the area of conservation, conservation of energy at both the business level and at the individual level. Most European countries are lightyears ahead of us in terms of saving energy and in terms of emissions standards.

Germany and Sweden have already moved to phase out the nuclear industry. They are on the forefront economically of very successfully taking advantage of new environmental technologies; wind energy, for example. They are exporting energy that is obtained through wind sources. There are tremendous opportunities there as well.

Renewable energy sources, whether it is wind or solar energy, conservation clearly has to be at the heart of our strategy for the future. To suggest that we have to rely on this nuclear industry when we know full well that it produces waste that we have no way of disposing of safely is to leave a legacy to our children and to our children's children that is totally unacceptable.

Finally, I would note that when the hon. member talks about environmentalists taking extreme positions, the reality is that it is environmentalists who have warned us that unless we take strong action to fight pollution and to protect this endangered planet, we risk environmental catastrophe in the future. To ignore that would be the height of irresponsibility.

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the beginning of the third reading debate a couple of hours ago, the Minister of Natural Resources made a statement which was intended to give reassurance about the purpose and the intent of this bill. It seems to me that the statement has raised more questions than answers.

Take for instance the reference by the minister to the fact that this bill would amend subsection 46(3), removing what is being called by the minister an anomaly which is keeping banks away from lending to the nuclear sector to avoid assuming potentially unlimited liability, which is the essence of this bill.

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However what the minister calls an anomaly, is actually a practice which has proved to be a good one over the past few decades. Here we are instead told that what this bill intends to do is to remove the responsibility of the investor who decides to make funds available to a nuclear facility. I submit that this is not an anomaly. Actually what this bill intends to remove is a highly desirable measure that should be kept and not removed.

The minister has said, "Limiting liability to the owner, occupant or those who have management and control is normal practice in the federal government environmental law. Canadian law generally limits lender liability to those with management or control of secured assets". The statement would be quite right if the investment were to be in a water bottling company or in a chain of food retailers, but not when it comes to the nuclear energy industry. We are in a completely differently field which requires a lot of careful thinking and certainly not a measure of this kind.

Then the minister went on to say that the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission would retain sufficient authority to protect health, safety, security and the environment. This statement would be reassuring, if there were a parallel or an insertion in the bill before us to that effect. Unfortunately though, Bill C-4 does not contain this kind of reinforcement of sufficient authority. One wonders on the strength of what knowledge the minister can make a statement of that nature.

Finally, the minister concluded by saying that the issue before us was not the safety of Canadian nuclear plants. I find a statement like that intellectually offensive because that is exactly what is before us. If we remove the liability of the investor in a nuclear plant, we certainly are toying with and raising some very serious questions about the safety of the nuclear plant itself.

Up until now, we have had legislation which says that the investor and the operator have a liability responsibility in the nuclear industry. This bill instead would remove that liability responsibility from the investor. It could be a bank or it could be anything. The question therefore is whether we are acting in the interests of the public by moving ahead with a bill of this nature.

One wonders whether the minister realizes that this bill is about liability. It is about public safety. It is about the inability of operators to become fully liable in case of an accident. What we should be discussing is not the removal of a liability responsibility from the investor. We should be discussing increasing the amount of liability. Our present legislation provides only \$75 million. This is a very modest amount compared to the liability levels that are imposed by governments in Europe and in other jurisdictions, which are sometimes 10 times higher than ours.

For years parliamentarians have raised this issue in Parliament, drawing the attention of the minister to the fact that this level of liability ought to be increased. Instead we are moving in the opposite direction. We are doing that because we are under pressure from the Ontario government and investors, probably British Energy although I cannot prove it, and by investors in general who see probably an opportunity for investment in the nuclear industry and want to be absolved of their responsibility in case of an accident. I submit this is wrong. It is counter to the public interest and we should not proceed with the bill.

●(1715)

One wonders whether the minister himself realizes with this one page bill that he is absolving, with this measure before Parliament, investors from liability. One wonders whether the minister realizes that it is urgent that the matter of liability levels, the amount namely to which I referred before of \$75 million, ought not to be addressed as a matter of urgency and within an approach to the entire management and legislation covering the nuclear industry.

Members are also aware of the fact that over the last three or four decades the nuclear industry has received yearly subsidies which now amount to over \$5 billion. It is an industry that is constantly in need of public funds. Again, why should an industry which is chronically in need of public support now receive relief from a responsibility on liability for investors in this instance? We are obviously moving in the wrong direction.

I suppose Bill C-4 is before us because someone has concluded that the Bruce and the Pickering plants, which are being plagued by problems, need a considerable injection of capital. That is quite possible. I refer to plants A and B in Bruce, Ontario.

In addition to that, the investing company that has purchased this facility from the Ontario government and privatized it, namely British Energy to which other members have already made reference, is in trouble and has asked the Ontario government for some assistance. Since provincial governments do not have jurisdiction over nuclear matters, for which we must be profoundly grateful, then the Ontario government has to turn to the federal government for assistance.

According to a clipping, which appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen*, British Energy is:

—is in imminent danger of bankruptcy and is seeking to borrow \$3.9 billion, in addition to a \$1.5-billion loan from the British government, to stay in business.

In addition it says that Bruce Power must put up something like \$220 million in financial guarantees to renew its licence to operate with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission.

This tells us that there is a problem that ought to be examined in the broadest possible context and not by a six line amendment, which looks so innocent and harmless, in a one page bill. There is deep trouble and it needs to be addressed.

One day in the hearings before the standing committee on natural resources, the member from Windsor made a memorable intervention on this subject. We heard an NGO, called Energy Probe, say that in its estimates at least no private company could make a profit in nuclear energy, "without massive public subsidies and protection from environmental liability". Bill C-4 asks us to go in the opposite direction. It does not make sense.

●(1720)

Then we have the report of the former auditor general of a couple of years ago warning Parliament that the costs of commissioning are not reflected or incorporated in electricity rates. This is a warning and an interesting message to all those who think that electricity generated by nuclear power is the cheapest on the market.

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In addition to the issue of the commissioning raised by the auditor general, the fairly old and unresolved issue of storage. It is an item that has been the subject of panels established under the Environmental Assessment Act, if I remember correctly, and a study conducted by a former deputy minister, Mr. Seaborn, which made a specific recommendation. Yet 10 years later, the issue of storage has not been resolved.

I do not think I have much more to say on this except to express a certain degree of indignation, which I am not usually inclined to express. However, I find this measure very disturbing.

Therefore I concur with those who have said before me that this bill should be suspended. It should instead be replaced by an overall type of legislation that deals with the governance of the entire nuclear industry so as to bring the legislation up to date. Then we can examine also the facets and difficulties, including the ones brought forward and pointed to by the auditor general, and bring order to a rather messy situation rather than proceed with a measure that does not stand up to close scrutiny. This measure should be suspended.

● (1725)

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, the bill is not the be all and end all of the nuclear energy industry in Canada. All it does is correct a clause in the Nuclear Safety and Control Act that prevents debt financing in the nuclear power sector. Only the government has been involved in this up to this point and the amendment is to remedy that.

Lenders such as banks and other financial institutions are refusing to consider investing in the nuclear power sector due to a clause in the act, the clause which we are talking about today. The clause would make lenders liable in the case of a nuclear spill. The clause is not contained in other Canadian environmental legislation. That is an important point.

Subsection 46(3) currently says that anyone with an interest in contaminated land or facilities viable for environmental remediation and mortgage lenders and persons advancing funds and taking security on land are deemed to be persons of interest.

Those of us who have businesses, farms, et cetera things and who have had to go to the banks and financial institutions for money quickly realize that the banks and financial institutions do not take liability for the way we run our businesses or for the decisions we make in that sense. I understand that the member is strongly against the nuclear industry. That is fine. However I do not think this place or this bill is where we should solve that problem.

Normally Canadian law generally limits lender liability to the people who are in charge or in control of the secured assets. Investors regularly factor this into their liability. They put it into their agreements when they make them. Due to the unusual amount of liability that is contained in section 46(3), investors in the nuclear power sector are refusing to provide debt financing.

It is interesting that the government then has to become the investor. The way the amendment is presently written, the only the government can put money into this industry. That may be good or bad but I do not agree with the government financing this. At the same time, why should the Canadian public be liable? If the government puts money in and this section remains as is, the

Canadian public then becomes liable for any problems that are found in these institutions.

The amendment simply limits the liability to owners, occupants or persons who have the management or control of these facilities. That is an appropriate.

We support the removal of government funding from the nuclear sector. However without this amendment, according to the current legislation, the only qualified investor foolish enough to be invest in that is the government. That leaves Canadians liable.

First, why would the member be satisfied with leaving the Canadian taxpayer liable for whatever charges that might arise from a situation that might occur within a nuclear power plant? Second, why does he feel that it is inappropriate to make the people who manage or control those facilities liable for problems within them, rather than throwing it back on to the government thus back on to the Canadian taxpayer?

● (1730)

Hon. Charles Caccia: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands. He seems to have somehow not caught the rationale I gave earlier in my intervention, which was simply along these lines: that the investment in nuclear cannot be compared to the investment in an industrial plant or a chain of food retailers or, as he put forward in his intervention, investments in the farming economy.

Nuclear is a field that is a very delicate area. Also, it is possibly prone to accidents. It is highly regulated. It is constantly subsidized by Canadian taxpayers. Over the last 45 or 50 years, over \$5 billion has been made available to the industry in order for it to survive. If it were not to be subsidized by the government on behalf of Canadian taxpayers, it would simply not be able to function.

Now we come to the second part of his analysis, that is to say, as the bill does, why should the liability not be shouldered only by the operator? The reason is very simple. The operator would not have the funds available, in the case of a grave accident, to cover the liability. If anybody has those funds it would be the investor.

My objection is not whether it is a matter of public versus private. No, the objection that needs to be made in the interest of the public is that the investor is being absolved by the bill from his or her responsibility in the case of an accident. This is the investor that is being absolved. Until now, in the last 30 or 40 years the law as it stands has served us well and it should not be changed, because the shoulders of the operators are much weaker and smaller than the shoulders of the investor. That is the answer.

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Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague from Davenport, all of us having listened to both sides of the story, if he does not find it really ironic that the proponents of the bill, including the last member, from the Canadian Alliance, are saying to let us protect the investors because the risk is so great that otherwise if we do not absolve them from liability they will not invest. This is really proving our point: that this industry is far too risky for the average investor to invest in unless there is protection from the government.

Also, does he not also find it ironic that the proponents would say they do not want to leave the liability to the government, that this is why they protect the investor? If the investor does not cover the liability and we leave it to the owner, and goodness knows how many of these owners have failed in the past in so many circumstances, who is going to be left holding the baby?

Perhaps my colleague would comment on all the cases such as the Giant gold mine and all the various mining institutions that have left scars on the landscape and the uranium plants that have been left there to fester after the owners and investors have left. Who is left with the liability? Is it not the government? Is it not in the government's favour to insist on the financial investor holding liability? Surely this would protect the taxpayer and the government far better than they are protected right now with the bill.

Hon. Charles Caccia: Madam Speaker, it would be impossible for me to improve on the subtlety and the observations made by my colleague.

Therefore, I will only comment in addition to what he said by saying that this measure, this particular bill, is supported by the official opposition, which is opposing Kyoto. It is the same official opposition that now finds it desirable to support investments in nuclear by absolving the investor from any responsibility.

Whenever the official opposition supports the government I feel very uneasy, and I know we are on the right track in saying that this measure is not one that we ought to support, but the matter is much more serious than political considerations of this nature. The point that should be guiding us is what is in the public interest. Absolving the investor from responsibility in liability terms in the case of an accident at a nuclear plant is wrong. That is the main point, regardless of party affiliation.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Madam Speaker, first, I want to congratulate the hon. members for Davenport and Lac-Saint-Louis, because we share many concerns about this issue. However, the member for Davenport spent a bit more time on one specific aspect of this matter, namely security, than I was able to do, although I did get 40 minutes.

This measure was taken at the express request of the Government of Ontario, because it has 20 nuclear reactors in its province, and Bruce Power, a private company with two nuclear plants. Of course, when private corporations run into serious financial problems, like British Energy, and ultimately Bruce Power because of major investments it needs to make, security is one of the first things to be overlooked in the nuclear sector and all environmental industries.

When there are money or financial troubles, we ought to be concerned about how the security measures are applied.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The time of the hon. member for Davenport has run out. I would ask him to give a brief answer.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Charles Caccia: Madam Speaker, I am in full agreement with my hon. colleague from the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I want to ask a question of the hon. member from the Alliance who has spoken often in this debate. The subject is nuclear energy, but there are also energy alternatives.

I would like to know if he understands the difference when wind power is discussed, for example. Does he understand that it is the wind that turns the turbines and not the turbines that create the wind? I do not think that he truly grasps the meaning of this bill, which takes the responsibility away from lenders with regard to the nuclear industry.

This bill is saying to lenders, "You can support nuclear energy. No matter what happens, you are not responsible. You will not be responsible if there is an accident or if a site becomes contaminated".

By doing this, we are telling lenders to the nuclear industry, who refuse to invest in this energy because they think it is too risky and too dangerous, "No problem, you can invest with no problems; we guarantee that, from now on, you are not responsible". So we are taking responsibility away from the private sector.

My hon. colleague from the Alliance claimed earlier that the private sector was currently being granted privileges because in comparison to the public sector, the government invested \$6 billion in the atomic energy program alone. It is like saying that the private sector does not want to invest because the risks are too great and, therefore the government has to invest.

In my opinion, neither the private sector nor the government should invest in nuclear energy. It is a form of energy that should disappear. There should perhaps be investment in an area that aims at finding a way to get rid of nuclear energy, to eliminate it and replace it as soon as possible. It is especially important to find ways to dispose of nuclear waste and to treat it in such a way that this type of waste will not have to be dealt with for centuries to come, so that our children and grandchildren, and their grandchildren, will not be forced to solve this problem.

You will understand that we are completely opposed to the bill before us today. I would like to remind the hon. members that this bill was called Bill C-57 prior to prorogation of the House and that it is now called Bill C-4. Nonetheless, it is exactly the same bill and it conveys the exact same intention by the government.

The government's intention is simple, as I mentioned earlier. In fact, it is giving the green light to backers by saying, "Henceforth, you will no longer be responsible". This is unacceptable to me.

The government has a very bad record in terms of investment in fossil fuels or nuclear energy. Why did it invest—

• (1740)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I am sorry to have to interrupt the hon. member, but he will have 17 minutes remaining to finish his speech when Bill C-4 comes back to the House.

It being 5:40 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*]

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should introduce legislation to grant the Inuit of Nunavik a federal electoral constituency within the province of Quebec.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is a great honour for me this evening to speak on behalf of our Inuit friends in Nunavik, and I say to them:

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

I thank the Liberal member for Lac-Saint-Louis for supporting my motion. I will not name him, but I know that he is remotely related to Abraham Lincoln.

The Makivik Corporation was created in 1978, following the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. The Makivik Corporation represents the Inuit under the agreement.

Its primary mandate is to protect the integrity of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. It emphasizes the political, social and economic development of the Nunavik region. Its president is Pita Aatami.

Similarly, in 1978, under the Act respecting Northern Villages and the Kativik Regional Government, and following the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, the Kativik regional government was created. This is a non-ethnic public organization whose jurisdiction extends over practically the whole part of Quebec that is located north of the 55th parallel. Its president is Johnny Adams.

Currently, the 14 municipalities inhabited by Nunavik people, and the vast arctic region off which they live, are part of the federal riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, and the majority of voters live south of the 55th parallel. Nunavummiut differ from other voters in the riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik living south of the 55th parallel, because of their history and because of the environment of these regions.

Some of them, who know little about the issues discussed during election campaigns, do not even know all the political parties and the candidates who represent them. A large number of voters are

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unilingual. They only speak Inuktitut, and they only read the Inuit alphabet, which is syllabic.

The land is clearly defined under the Act respecting Northern Villages and the Kativik Regional Government. Nunavik is primarily located north of the tree line. Because of its geography, climate, culture and the language spoken, it is considered an arctic region, the only one in Quebec. From south to north, it extends from the 55th parallel, to the most northerly tip of the province, Ivujivik, at a latitude of 62°25'37" north, and from east to west, from Labrador to Hudson Bay.

There is no road linking the 14 villages of Nunavik to one another or to the southern part of the province. Nunavik is isolated from the rest of Quebec. The distance that separates those villages from Montreal ranges from 1,500 to 2,500 kilometres. Nunavik's coast extends over 2,500 kilometres and this territory will soon have control over more than 250,000 km² of coastal lands.

There are some 11,000 permanent residents in Nunavik. As of April 1, 2001, Nunavik had 9,398 Inuit who were beneficiaries of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. The Inuit account for 90% of the population in the following 14 municipalities: Akulivik, Aupaluk, Inukjuak, Ivujivik, Kangiqsualujjuaq, Kangiqsujuaq, Kangirsuk, Kuujjuaq, Kuujuarapik, Puvimituq, Quaqtaq, Salluit, Tasiujaq and Umiujaq, which are located along the coast of Ungava Bay, Hudson Strait and Hudson Bay.

The population growth rate is 2.6% a year. The population is very young, with 41% under 15 years of age, 60% under 25 and 75% under 35. A family is made up of 4.6 people on average in Nunavik, compared to 2.6 elsewhere in Quebec. Inuktitut is the native language that is most used in Quebec and in Nunavik, and 99% of Inuit use it as their first language.

The Inuit of Nunavik never transferred their aboriginal rights over the territories of Labrador and the coastal islands around Nunavik. For several years, the Inuit have been negotiating with the Inuit from Nunavut and the Government of Canada to share the coastal islands that are near the coast of Quebec and that are used for sustenance purposes. An agreement in principle was signed recently, in October 2002, between the Makivik Corporation and the Government of Canada.

Similar negotiations will probably be undertaken in the near future between the Inuit of Labrador and the Newfoundland and Canadian governments regarding the territory of Labrador.

• (1745)

Over and above the visible physical characteristics that distinguish Nunavik from other regions of Quebec, there is one still more basic characteristic that directly affects law and order as experienced in Nunavik. Although all Quebec statutes apply in principle to the territory, they need to be analyzed in light of the legislative interpretation arising out of the signature of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. On November 11, 1975, the governments of Canada and of Quebec, as well as the Inuit of northern Quebec agreed to modify the Quebec legal system and to make a treaty the pivotal point of interpretation for all legislation addressing certain specific areas of jurisdiction.

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Nowhere else in Quebec is a convention between several peoples, or a treaty through which such issues as ethnicity and cohabitation are administered, applied so specifically.

This distinction is probably what explains a number of the differences observed in this region compared to the rest of Quebec. We feel that this is an important point for reflection by the elected representatives of Canada when it comes to reorganizing electoral districts in Quebec for 2004.

The Inuit are subject to the legal, administrative and taxation systems of Quebec and of Canada. Unlike all other aboriginal groups living in Quebec, the Inuit of Nunavik pay all income and sales taxes that are paid by other citizens in Quebec and in Canada, and indeed all the members of this House. We are therefore entitled to call upon governments for the same services as those provided to citizens of other regions of Quebec and of Canada.

Despite their proximity to major hydroelectric generating stations, no community is connected to the Hydro-Québec power distribution grid. Northern electricity is supplied by diesel powered generators, which places limits on the development of business and on homeowners, who may not use electricity to heat their residence or their water. Municipal operating costs are extremely high.

There is no piped-in water supply in Nunavik. Water from the municipal water treatment plant is delivered door to door every day by tanker truck. Waste water is also trucked away.

There is no public transit system.

There is no Internet service provider in Nunavik. Residents have to pay long distance charges to use a service provider in Montreal or Quebec City. Banking services are non-existent in 13 of the 14 Nunavik municipalities as well.

The cost of living in Nunavik can in no way be compared to the cost elsewhere in Quebec and Canada. A recent study carried out by the Groupe d'études inuit et circumpolaire at Laval University showed that food costs 69% more in Nunavik than elsewhere in Canada. Household cleaning products cost 78% more and personal care products, 79% more. In fact, households in Nunavik spend 44% of their income on groceries—not unlike households in developing countries—compared to 12% by other people in Quebec.

Gasoline, which costs 60% more in Nunavik, is a major impediment to the Inuit traditional activities in terms of subsistence fishing and hunting, to the economic development of the region and to everyday life in northern communities. Fuel oil and diesel also cost a lot more than anywhere else in Quebec.

Building a 1,500 square foot house costs on average \$195,000 because of the high transportation costs and also the cost of building a service room with a fuel oil heating system, a fuel oil water heater, a waste tank and a potable water tank. It costs between \$17,000 and \$25,000 to transport building material and furniture. Electrical heating systems are prohibited.

Let us come back to the decision made by the Quebec Toponymy Commission on April 24, 1988, that the New Quebec territory located north of the 55th parallel be designated from now on by the name of "Nunavik".

The commission's decision described Nunavik as follows:

Covering an area of approximately 500,000 square kilometres, Nunavik is located in northern Quebec and designates a social and cultural region inhabited primarily by Inuit living in 14 villages along the coastline. Nunavik is a little larger than the administrative region of Kativik, which was created in 1975 by the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement and lies north of the 55th parallel. It is situated on the bare or partially shrub-covered Canadian Shield and is crossed, in the Ungava Peninsula, by the northern treeline and the permafrost line. It has an abundance of lakes and rivers that flow either into Ungava Bay or Hudson Bay—. Made up of the words "nuna" and "vik", it means "a place to live".

● (1750)

These are briefly some characteristics that explain why I believe Canada should recognize Nunavik as a distinct natural community that has the right to be represented in the House of Commons.

In every respect, whether we talk about people, culture, climate, geography, vegetation, transportation, social life, economic activities or the cost of living, constituents who live south of the 55th parallel and those of Nunavik have little in common. With regard to distance, transportation costs from Val-d'Or to Kuujuaq, the main administrative centre of Nunavik, are about \$2,800 for a round trip. If someone must then travel to one of the communities of Ungava and Hudson Bay, he or she will have to spend several hundreds of dollars more. Air transportation—which is very expensive—for perishable food and Canada Post delivery is provided by the Inuit airline First Air, from regional airports in Val-d'Or, Kuujuaq and Iqaluit.

The Inuit of Nunavik do not have an electoral riding nor representation in the House of Commons even though they have been working for this since 1973. They have appeared before the federal electoral boundaries commission on numerous occasions. Each time, the Inuit pointed out that the agreement in principle signed in the context of the James Bay Agreement negotiations stipulated that Quebec and Canada would undertake to study the need to review the federal and provincial electoral boundaries north of the 55th parallel.

The Inuit want to participate fully in Canada's political life. However, in the current context, it is unlikely that an Inuk from Nunavik could be elected to the House of Commons, and this is not likely to change.

With the exception of myself, candidates do not visit Nunavik, perhaps because of the prohibitive costs of transportation and lodging, the distances involved, the time needed to tour communities, the problems communicating because of the widespread use of Inuktitut and perhaps mostly because of the small number of voters. The proposal to increase the number of voters will certainly not encourage candidates from political parties to change their habits.

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The Inuit of Nunavut do have a representative in the House of Commons even though, relatively speaking, they represent a smaller proportion of voters as a proportion of Canadian voters than the residents of Nunavik as a proportion of Quebec voters. Indeed, out of Canada's 30 million residents, the 22,000 Inuit in Nunavut elect one member while out of a total of 7.4 million residents of Quebec, the 11,000 residents of Nunavik have no riding in which to run for the House of Commons.

Knowing that members everywhere else spend at least one day a week in their ridings, that members sit on standing committees, take part in conferences, represent the interests of their voters, it seems reasonable that the residents of Nunavik, who are Inuit, francophone and anglophone, have this same right to representation.

In its report entitled "Let Us Share", the Nunavik Commission, formed through an initiative of the Makivik Corporation, the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec, recommends that the Nunavimmiut be able to elect their own member to the House of Commons in Ottawa and the National Assembly of Quebec. The report adds that such representation would allow the Nunavimmiut to better participate in the political life of Quebec and Canada.

Today, Nunavik is the most underdeveloped region in Quebec in terms of infrastructure and economic development. With its rich culture, its tradition of hospitality and its potential for hydroelectricity, mining and tourism, it should be at the centre of Canada's and Quebec's economic development over the next decades.

The Inuit want to be represented in the House of Commons by one of their own and take part in Canada's political life.

In 1975, by signing the James Bay and Northern Quebec agreement, the Nunavik Inuit agreed to create institutions that existed elsewhere in Canada and in Quebec, including Makivik Corporation, northern villages, the Nunavik Health and Social Services Board, the Kativik School Board, the Kativik Regional Government, the Northern Quebec Regional Development Council, the Nunavik mining fund, the Fédération des coopératives du Nouveau-Québec, airlines like Air Inuit and First Air, and others.

• (1755)

In 1974, the Inuit insisted that the agreement in principle of November 15, which led to the James Bay Agreement, contain a chapter on commitments on the part of the Quebec and Canadian governments with regard to electoral boundaries. Quebec decided to go ahead. But here, we have to go ahead to obtain a riding for our Inuit friends in the next redistribution of seats.

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

[*English*]

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the motion brought forward by the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, that the government should introduce legislation granting a separate federal electoral constituency within the province of Quebec.

I read the member's brief with interest and listened to his speech. He has enumerated many of the unique difficulties people living in that area have in accessing facilities and services that we in the area

nearer the 49th parallel take for granted. I can only imagine the difficulties they face in everything from getting around in their communities to the expense of living day by day. He has portrayed the issue well and has made it better understood by members here in the House and people across the country.

I am sure the member also understands the difficulty we face in a system that is based on representation by population to carve out individual ridings based on the uniqueness or the difficulty of getting around in those ridings or at least making a decision based on that alone. I must point out to him that although this is obviously a serious problem as far as accessing voting booths and for political parties accessing things that they need to do to get their message out, I do not think there is a case to create a new riding.

There are other examples of this problem in Canada. The member for Cariboo—Chilcotin has a riding that spans 120,000 square kilometres. That is a problem for him. The member for Prince George—Peace River has 217,000 square kilometres in his riding. The member for Skeena has 250,000 square kilometres. In Manitoba, the riding of Churchill is 460,000 square kilometres. There are some huge ridings. Every one of them has unique problems and unique opportunities. It is also a unique privilege to represent them.

We cannot solve this issue in a representation by population system by simply carving out a new riding whenever people feel that they do not have good enough representation here in the House of Commons. There are things that can and should be done to increase the feeling of inclusion by the Inuit of that region. I hope that many of the suggestions made by the member will be listened to by Elections Canada and that it will take into account ways to increase communication so the people there can feel more fully involved in Canada's political mosaic.

I do not think the House of Commons is the place to go about drafting those boundaries. There are other things that we can do, such as education programs and access via the Internet which is something I have encouraged Mr. Kingsley to consider in times past. There has to be a way to get the message out into the riding that a person's vote is important and that every person's vote counts. I can only imagine that people in many of those towns wonder what is the point and why bother because they are just part of a small town in the overall scheme of things.

There are 11,000 people of Inuit descent there. In any election that is a lot of votes. If they directed their votes in a certain way to ensure they had good representation, as I am sure they have from the member already, they could influence the next election. That is a lot of votes, and in a close election they could turn the tide.

Private Members' Business

As has happened in many other ridings, I hope the Inuit people themselves will feel free to stand as candidates. I hope they will be encouraged by all political parties to run as candidates in the region and will be given support from whatever party to give them a good shot at winning in an election.

• (1800)

We have several examples of people of aboriginal and Inuit descent that are able to bring a unique perspective in the House. They bring a lot of value to those discussions. They would do the same if we could get that kind of influence either as elected members, members of political boards, policy advisors to members or parties, and so on. All of them are ways to influence the political process. We encourage that, and hope Elections Canada and all political parties would take advantage of that.

I want to close with a quote from Mr. Kingsley who said:

Our representative democracy and the guarantees it offers citizens are the envy of many peoples. No system is perfect, however, and ours is no exception. The under-representation of women and minorities in the federal Parliament is a gap that we all want to fill.

Mr. Kingsley was right. There are gaps that we need to fill. There are people that we wish were here in bigger numbers. I hope all political parties, because that is where a lot of this emphasis would come, would ensure that the welcome mat is not only out, but that people understand that their influence is welcome, their words would be listened to, and their unique perspectives would have weight within the party and eventually here in the House of Commons.

I understand why the member wants this special riding. I do not believe it is the proper role of the House of Commons to carve that out. We cannot start heading down that road. It would be politicized in short order. I do not believe we can do that.

I would hope that Elections Canada would come back to the member and perhaps to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to talk about ways to increase the presence of Canada in those regions and towns, and eventually come up with ideas on how to increase the participation rate and inclusiveness in the political process in those isolated areas. I would ask Mr. Kingsley and Elections Canada to do that.

I thank the member for his concern. I think his heart is in the right place, however our role in the House of Commons is not to designate electoral boundaries, but to talk about the bigger principles of how we guide Elections Canada, which in turn must do a non-partisan job.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to address the motion of the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, asking for a federal electoral constituency for northern Quebec.

The hon. member described in some detail what those who live on this territory go through. Theirs is a rather special way of life that is difficult for us to imagine, because we do not live on this huge territory. The conditions there are rather unusual, and the way of life is very different from the one we know.

I am well aware of this whole situation. However, we must take into consideration what the creation of an electoral constituency for

northern Quebec implies. When I say northern, I mean far north. This region is north of the Abitibi, even further north of the Abitibi than the Abitibi is from Montreal. This is a very remote region and there is a domino effect.

The establishment of constituencies is a process based on vested rights and the Constitution. There is a mathematical formula and, currently, it provides that there must be 75 ridings in Quebec. Generally speaking, there is a principle to the effect that ridings must have a similar number of voters, give or take 25%. However, it is possible to make exceptions for certain territories.

In the case of Quebec, it seems rather obvious to me that the whole region located further north, from east to west, is a special case, just like a region such as the Magdalen Islands, where they also have a very distinctive population that is concentrated on a territory with its own specific realities. I am not saying that other regions do not have specific realities. We all have some in our various ridings.

Making an exception for this region would create a domino effect; there are 74 ridings left in the rest of Quebec. This raises questions, such as how to strike a balance.

For the Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik region, there are currently two ridings. I represent part of the Abitibi and the whole Témiscamingue region, while the hon. member opposite represents another part of the Abitibi and northern Quebec. Would this mean that we would have one riding for Abitibi—Témiscamingue and another one for northern Quebec? That is a possibility.

Otherwise, this creates a domino effect that would, and this is something I do not wish for, create rather arbitrary electoral boundaries, such as merging the Témiscamingue with the Outaouais. I would have a problem with that.

This may result in us having the Abitibi—Témiscamingue in one riding and northern Quebec in another, given the current number of ridings. Perhaps the debate must begin with a prior discussion on the number of ridings allocated to Quebec. This is a possibility that must not be ignored either, if we want to consider a number of characteristics.

Let us see the average number of constituents in Quebec. It is obvious that there are provinces where the number of constituents is higher; I am thinking of Ontario, for instance. But there are provinces where the average number of constituents is much lower than ours, such as Prince Edward Island, where the population is approximately the same as the RCM of Témiscamingue alone, which represents 20 to 25% of my riding.

I think that we have to be open-minded about such a proposal, while being aware of the domino effect. Within the current parameters, it would imply many changes elsewhere. Commissions were created to establish the new electoral map and are holding consultations; they will be in the Abitibi—Témiscamingue soon.

Private Members' Business

Unfortunately, I do not think that these commissions will go further north. I do not know if the member mentioned this in his speech, but I know that he talked about it to the chief electoral officer personally and even publicly, in committee. This has given rise to some questions in the rest of the Abitibi—Témiscamingue, that is whether we will have only one member of Parliament instead of two with such a proposal.

• (1805)

Personally, at first glance, I have nothing against it, but it deserves to be looked at more thoroughly, and I am convinced that he will present his arguments to the commission. However, I cannot help but criticize him a bit.

As we are debating this motion, he is publicly proposing to create four ridings in the area; I am now told it is three ridings. I do not know how we will bring all this together later on. We now are in the last straightaway and we will not be able to change position very often. The region will have to reach a consensus before the commission; failing that, the commission will impose its own. If there is no consensus, the commission will impose a new map. So there is a challenge to be met here.

I agree with the idea that the commissionaires may make exceptions for certain areas instead of them having to justify their exceptional character every time.

In Quebec, where are these areas? I am not sufficiently aware of the reality in other places in Canada to be able to engage in an exercise. However in Quebec, at first glance, the area that comes to mind is Bas-Saint-Laurent—Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine where there is a particular dynamic; it is a riding which deserves to be categorized as exceptional. The same goes for northern Quebec, and we should look into this.

Maybe we should build on this exercise, namely take two or three places that need to develop their specific characteristics and then we could work at creating ridings with the best possible average, taking into account regional realities, areas bounded by a traditional sense of community, areas defined by the boundaries of MRCs.

True enough, exercises are never perfect and we must take into account our political system since, for citizens to be equal, their votes must be more or less equivalent. So there should not be too many exceptions, but in some areas it is necessary.

Where more internal debate is needed, when there are territorial realities such as may be seen in large ridings, is when what is involved is the means at our disposal to do our jobs as MPs. For the voters, this is what counts, the services he or she gets from the MP's office in real life. And those services are many, in our area.

For those who may not know this, in the real world, passport services are provided through the MPs' constituency offices, in regions such as ours. In the peak periods from now through January, there is one person in each office who deals almost full time with passport applications and issuing passports.

Someone may point out that immigration business is done in Montreal. That may be true, but a lot of services are provided by the constituency office when there is no departmental office in the region. We are therefore the federal presence to many citizens.

For us, then, this is a more administrative, internal debate on the means available to us for doing our job. I remain convinced that the way budgets are distributed at this time does not reflect that reality properly.

In my case, for example, I should have had three constituency offices to start with. This was a campaign promise, but unfortunately I came face to face with reality once I got to Ottawa. I was unable to keep them operating that way, which caused a problem. I did, of course, manage to reach agreement with the municipalities to have their cooperation in providing services, but this is not sufficient to provide proper service.

At the same time, if funding cannot be allocated as we would like, we must at least have the means to do our jobs properly. There is no perfect indicator for that, but I am convinced that there is not such a great gap between MPs' current operating budgets, at any rate not as wide a gap as there is between citizens' expectations of us and what we can actually provide.

These are the aspects that I wanted to raise at this stage of the debate. It is not really in this House that this matter will be pursued, but rather before the electoral commission. That is where the decision will be made. Members of this commission will make their recommendations, which will then be reviewed by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Ultimately, the commissioners will determine what the new electoral map will look like.

When the commission comes to my area, I will certainly appear before it. I will also raise the matter that is before us today. I will also have the opportunity to appear on behalf of my party by submitting a national brief to the commission in which I will talk about the special ridings that could be created throughout Quebec.

That is where we are at now. I hope that this new map will be drawn in a way that reflects everyone's needs and everyone's reality. We must show some openness with regard to those people whose living conditions are very unique. I think that we have heard about that earlier. Northern Quebec deserves special attention, as do certain other regions to which I referred.

• (1810)

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on this motion.

The motion addresses issues that are very important in our system of representative government, that is, fair and reasonable boundaries for the federal ridings; the distribution of ridings in each region, province and territory in such a way that all Canadians can be sure that their opinions will be carefully considered in the House of Commons.

Private Members' Business

We must recognize, first, that the current system is working well. There may be disagreements from time to time about the exact size of some ridings, but Canadians generally agree that the system is fair and does an excellent job, given the size and diversity of our country.

• (1815)

[*English*]

The distribution of ridings in Canada is governed by the Constitution and laws established by Parliament. For example, section 51 of the Constitution Act of 1867 is used to calculate the number of House of Commons seats to be allocated to each province. Another example is the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, which establishes the process and principles to be followed by electoral commissions in defining the boundaries of federal electoral districts in each province.

From the very beginning, this system has sought to provide equitable representation while guaranteeing that each region has a say in the government of this country. Of course this has not always been easy, for while successive parliaments have recognized the importance of representation by population, they also have recognized the need to reflect the geographic, cultural and demographic diversity of our country and give voice to both urban and rural Canadians.

To address this we have a compromise that provides representation by population while avoiding the tyranny of the majority, but as we know, democratic government is a work in progress and so this compromise has changed from time to time to keep pace with economic, social and demographic changes in our very dynamic country. The most recent example of this involved the adoption in 1985 of the Representation Act, which simplified the formula contained in section 51 of the Constitution and provided clear and simple procedures for calculating the seats for each province and territory.

Under this act, each territory gets one seat. The total population of the provinces is then divided by the remaining number of seats to obtain an electoral quotient used in determining the theoretical number of seats for each province. This number is then adjusted using the senatorial clause, under which provinces cannot have fewer seats in the House of Commons than they do in the Senate of Canada, and a grandfather clause which guarantees that the provinces will not have fewer seats than they did in 1986.

This provides the number of seats for each province, but this is just the start of it, for each province must also create a commission every 10 years to determine the size, shape and composition of each riding to reflect changes and movements in the population. Each commission is chaired by a judge appointed by the chief justice of that province or by a resident of the province appointed by the Chief Justice of Canada, with two other members being appointed by the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Using input from public hearings and members of Parliament, these commissions prepare and forward reports to the Speaker of the House of Commons that form the basis of an order specifying the number and character of ridings in each province. The most recent review began March 12 and is well under way, as members of the House will know.

This, then, is our current system, one which has served us well and continues to do so.

Given that it is working well, we need to think carefully before undertaking ad hoc changes such as that contained in today's motion, for making such an exceptional change might well create a precedent that would make it difficult to resist future calls for ad hoc changes. Should this happen, the result might eventually be a large number of special situations, which would lead to an electoral map that more closely resembles a crazy quilt than a carefully thought out master plan.

Supporters of the motion will no doubt point to the large land mass of the region, not unlike that of the existing three territories, which are assigned one seat each. In response, I want to remind members that Nunavik differs from the territories in one very important respect. It is not a separate jurisdiction but is rather an integral part of the Province of Quebec, and as such must abide by the rules that govern every other region of that province. Then, too, establishing an exception to the way we assign seats would conflict with the principle of proportional representation of the provinces in the House of Commons and could require a total rethinking of our system.

Finally, such a change would not be a trivial matter, for it would require a modification of article 51 of the Constitution Act, an exercise few of us, I would say, would relish.

In conclusion, the motion involves important constitutional questions that would have to be resolved before we could consider such a change. Approving it could create a precedent for other ad hoc changes to our electoral system that could damage or distort our system of representative government.

• (1820)

I do want to commend the member for his commitment to strengthening democratic government in his province, a commitment the government shares.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Motion No. 10, moved by our colleague, the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik.

First, in terms of the problem raised by the member, I can understand. Being a member of Parliament is not always an easy job. For example, if a member says that a certain group of people should not be a part of the riding, it is interpreted as though the member really does not want them. Obviously, this is not what the member means here. He wants to focus on the services for people in the north. We could even call it the far north. This is north north. This is not northern New Brunswick we are talking about. This is really far north. It is far.

In fact, the people there lack services not because of the member, but as a result of the way the system works and because of the riding boundaries. That is the problem. I would like to congratulate the member for having brought this to the attention of the House of Commons.

Private Members' Business

After giving the matter some thought and after listening to the member, I learned that the commission itself refused to visit the region. One has to wonder if it is because it was too far. Is the commission not able to do its work? Is that the problem? It is shameful that the commission did not travel to the region. If the problem was that it is too far, then the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik is right, this is a major problem for these regions.

I understand the member, because I have a problem with the commissions. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the member for Halifax West, said that we have a good system in Canada. If we had a good system in Canada, we would not be having all of the hearings that we are, and we would not have asked the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Kingsley, to appear before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs so that we could explain how dissatisfied people are with the process used by the commission. We are told that it is the Speaker of the House of Commons that names the two other members of the commission.

However, for New Brunswick, it is the minister in charge of New Brunswick who suggested the names of people to be appointed to the commission, and they were chosen. For Saskatchewan, it is the minister in charge of Saskatchewan who suggested names to the Speaker, and they were picked too. We could name others. We are not happy about this.

I can say loud and clear that I am not happy with the way the members of commission are chosen. Moreover, I am not happy to know that the minister in charge of a given province can suggest names to the Speaker of the House. The Speaker of the House was elected by all the members of this house in a secret ballot. He must be totally independent. This is why he was chosen, to appoint people to the commission.

I can understand the member and the people in that area. They want to send someone to Ottawa—and this takes nothing away from the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, who not only is aware of their problems, but who is experiencing the same problems as they are. They want to send someone who is able to articulate these very real problems in the House of Commons and take part in the debates in the House as a Canadian.

It is the same back home. I was disappointed when the commission decided a number of francophones in our area were to be included in the Miramichi area. As far as I know, the riding of Miramichi has never elected a bilingual member, with all due respect. Even people in the Miramichi do not understand why people from Acadie—Bathurst should be part of the riding of Miramichi.

This is when one must think about common interest. This is what is important. We cannot just look at numbers. Numbers are not human, but humans are humans. They are the ones we are representing here, in the House of Commons. We have been elected to represent people, not numbers.

In every system and in everything, there are exceptions to the rule, and this is a case in point.

• (1825)

The hon. member himself says that he has a hard time doing his job, representing the people from that region. Evidence of that is the

fact that the commission has refused to visit the people in that region. This is a disgrace.

I am saying in the House of Commons that it is a disgrace that a commission, which the hon. member himself asked to pay a visit to these people in the far north to discuss the issue, would refuse to go. It may cost these people in excess of \$2,400, out of their own pocket, to come before the commission, and this is supposed to be a democratic country. In this democratic country, we prevent our own people from appearing before the commission to explain their problems.

The commission came to Caraquet, in northeastern New Brunswick; it travelled to northwestern New Brunswick, to Fredericton and Saint-John. It held hearings everywhere. People only had to make a short trip to appear before the commission.

We are talking about people who do not even have the option of travelling by car; they must fly. This represents extraordinary and unacceptable costs. I say that the commission has demonstrated that there is a problem in that region. This is unacceptable.

I will give an example. The commissions that were established in each province came back saying that an average of 10% should be used as a basis. We can be off the mark by 10%, because the act says 25%.

I wonder. Frankly, they know my opinion. I am rather insulted by this and I myself asked for the resignation of the commission. It is not doing its job. The act is clear. The commission should use a 25% margin to protect the common interests of people. This is what the act provides. We cannot let the commission make its own rules and say that this will be brought back to 5% or 10%.

The commission is telling us, "This does not bother us. We will decide what is good for them". This is not what the act provides. The act says that we must take into account the public interest and allow a 25% margin to protect the best interests of our fellow citizens, of Canadians. I deplore what the commission is doing, and I have said so publicly.

When I appeared before the commission at Caraquet, New Brunswick, I pointed out to it that it was a bit odd for me to be appearing before a commission at a time when the newspapers were reporting I was calling upon that same commission to step down. To me, it did not reflect the content of the law.

My complaint has been registered, and they know what it is. It is not because I do not respect the people on the commission, not that at all. It is simply that they have got it into their heads that they are going to be the ones to decide how Elections Canada ought to operate throughout the country, and that is how it will be. In my opinion, this is not in keeping with the legislation.

If one starts by looking at the figures, then automatically all other criteria fall by the wayside. The common interest no longer counts. Nothing counts but the numbers. Numbers are not what ought to come first. Looking after people must come first. That is what matters. The 25% figure needs to be looked at.

Private Members' Business

To go even further, as the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik does, he says that specific cases must be recognized, that there must be exceptions to the rule. In this case, I think that there must be exceptions. These people must have a chance to be represented by those who want to represent them. I do not fault the member who introduced the motion in any way. He is, I believe, sincere, and it is not a simple matter.

Elections Canada is one big machine. However, if one believes in democracy, believes in something, one must put that belief into words. Otherwise, we no longer have a democracy, no longer have the country we thought we had, the country we want to live in. That is why I have decided to speak my mind.

I find this totally unfair. I find it worth repeating. When the member says he is unable to do his job, that he cannot represent these Canadians, when he says he cannot and the commission itself says it cannot even go there to meet with them, that is proof that there is a problem. There must be an exception to the rule.

If the commission members are listening, or read the blues afterward, I am recommending that they rethink their decision.

• (1830)

[English]

Mr. Rex Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls, PC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member who spoke before me said a lot of things that I wanted to say. I have read the hon. member's brief about the creation of this new constituency. Politicians always look at this as votes and more votes. It is important that we look at the people and their needs and if we did so, I think we would agree 100% with the hon. member from across the floor.

If we take a serious look, we would see that we have groups of people in society today that are not represented because of the geographics and the limitations of people to represent them in the way they would like to be represented. As a result, creating a new constituency would do justice for these groups of people.

I have heard it said that electoral boundaries are impartial and that the government does not have a say. I would suggest that the government always has a say in the constituencies it creates. I firmly believe that by not making changes that are beneficial for the people of the north, we are doing an injustice to the hon. member from across the House. People in the north would like to have a person in the House to tell their stories of how they live.

I could not tell the story of an hon. member from somewhere in Quebec because I do not live there. Only that person can tell that story. It is the same for those persons living in the north. Only a representative from that area could tell us of their struggles, of their problems of going back and forth and of trying to live as the rest of Canadians live.

We have to recognize that these individuals need our support. They need a representative in the House to express their views, and we are not giving this to them. The governing Liberals have the power to make the change now. We must do it correctly and bring these groups to the House of Commons. By doing that, we will have a better Canada. They can make a difference for all of us. They can help us understand.

We talk about spending all kinds of money on different groups of people to take care of them. The care they require is to have their voices heard in the House of Commons. That is the way it must be done.

I support the efforts of the hon. member and more members should support him as well. We have to forget about party politics and votes. These are people. We are here to represent the people. We must give them the best representation we can. Let us not make it difficult. At times, the boundary commission makes it difficult to represent people. It is all right when we live in big cities, but we have to look at the remote areas such as my area.

Let us support this private member's bill. Let us do it right and do it for the people in the north. Let us do what is right for the people of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, I want to thank the hon. members from the Canadian Alliance, the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Progressive Conservative Party, who took part in this debate. I listened carefully to what they had to say.

The government argues that the problem is being addressed by the system, but I want to show you why this is not so.

First, the commission refused to go to Nunavik to listen to the Inuit who live 2,500 kilometres from Montreal. The worst thing about the attitude of the commission and Elections Canada is that in the *Canada Gazette* for the current year, on the issue of electoral boundaries, it says on page 27, with respect to Nunavik and James Bay, in section (e) concerning the territory and the regional government of Kativik that the Kativik regional government represents no one. It is only a government. There is no resident.

What Elections Canada forgot to include in the *Canada Gazette* is the northern communities of Nunavik where 9,632 people live. It means that they are not recognized in the *Canada Gazette*. They only exist virtually on the Internet. It is a disgrace.

Today I would like to say something to the commission and to the public. Listen carefully to what I have to say. I won one of the strongest majorities as the member for Nunavik. I received more than 90% of the votes. But I want those votes to belong to the people of Nunavik. I want it to be an Inuk who represents them in the House of Commons, who comes here on behalf of the entire population. It is not that I do not like them. I hold them near and dear to me, but when I go to Nunavik, I am just visiting. I come from the south, 2,000 kilometres away. I stay for two or three days. There should be a member from Nunavik. It needs to be said. The commission can, as an exception and as a special measure, decide to make a riding for Nunavik. It is able to do the right thing.

We know that there are two ways of approaching the matter. The commission could do the right thing. One approach involves referring to the domino effect, and the other approach would have ridings based on the MRCs. What is most important is the people of Nunavik, our Inuit friends.

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut]

Adjournment Debate

What is important is friends. Everything comes from the south. Everything that is bought comes from the south. They take part in the economy. They are involved in a number of issues with the Province of Quebec, with Canada and with the other provinces.

Nunavut covers three million square kilometres and has a population of 25,000. The populations of the other territories, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories is no more than 26,000 residents. The riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik covers 802,000 square kilometres and includes 94,000 residents. There are 63 mayors, including Inuit, Cree and Algonquin leaders. There are four members at the provincial level for same territory. In Parliament, there is one single member.

I am asking the government to intervene with the commission and to make an exception to help our Inuit friends, so that they can have a federal riding for Nunavik for the next federal election. That is my wish before I retire in a few years.

• (1835)

[*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, the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

SOCIAL HOUSING

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, my November 4 question was about establishing standards and policies for federally regulated crown corporations, and more particularly about the decision by the management of the Société Radio-Canada to sell a part of its south central parking lot to a private developer for the construction of 140 condominiums at an average cost of \$150,000, which is a disgrace.

The crown corporation leaders did not even see fit to offer local community organizations an opportunity to acquire this surplus land to build social housing.

Instead of investing in social housing, they preferred to plough their net profits back into programming. Yet, almost 800 units were demolished when the federal government decided to build the Maison de Radio-Canada. The sale of the Radio-Canada land to the private sector shows once again the lack of consistency in the government's own policies.

Affordable housing at 5% lower than the average market rate is unavailable to people who must pay between 30% and 90% of their income for housing. With percentages like these, it is obvious that putting a roof over their heads means that these people can no longer eat properly, they experience anxiety and they can no longer buy essential items, and the negative effects on health and pocketbook are serious.

According to the human rights commission, discrimination against very low income tenants increased by 61% in two years and this type of discrimination affects mainly single-parent families, young adults under 25 years of age and families with young children.

With their ability to pay diminishing, several of these families find themselves in a situation that is unacceptable for a country such as ours. The insolvency of the poorest households adds to the difficulty of finding decent housing. And one can add to that the extra obstacles involved in gaining access to what would be considered standard housing.

Experience has shown that the creation of new rental housing units by private developers had repercussions that were totally opposite to the creation of social housing units. Contrary to the private market, social housing developers have the advantage of responding to specific social needs, to favour empowerment and independence, thus enabling very low income tenants to have greater control over their living conditions, and to play a vital role in neighbourhood revitalization.

Quebec has 29% of Canadian households in dire need of housing and receives only 19% of federal transfers for housing. The fact that the federal government has backed out of its involvement in Quebec's social development has made children and families even poorer and has excluded the disadvantaged.

I asked the minister this question. In light of this situation and in light of the fact that the federal government is well aware of the operation Solidarité 5 000 logements since it is a partner in this operation, could it not establish standards for crown corporations that come under its jurisdiction, such as the CBC, so that these corporations can take into account government policies, including in the area of housing, when they divest themselves of land that they no longer need?

• (1840)

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to have the opportunity to talk a little bit about the Government of Canada's affordable housing program.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, our national housing agency, is responsible for carrying out the government's housing policy and national housing strategy which involves improving housing affordability, accessibility and choice in housing for all Canadians.

The Government of Canada works in close collaboration with the Government of Quebec on housing issues. In fact, contrary to statements that have been made, last December an agreement on affordable housing was reached between CMHC and the Société d'habitation du Québec. The agreement foresees a total contribution of \$323.3 million in order to increase the availability of affordable housing in the province of Quebec; \$161.65 million from the Government of Canada, \$104 million from the Government of Quebec, and \$57 million from the municipalities that will benefit. Obviously it is a true partnership. The program was officially launched in March and means that 6,500 new affordable rental housing units will be produced in Quebec.

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Furthermore, to improve service to clients and make more efficient use of resources, the government has offered to transfer its remaining responsibilities in social housing administration to the province of Quebec with financial compensation. This also means that Quebec would then be allowed to retain the \$30 million a year, estimated to be the amount in annual savings for investment in existing social housing stock, or, if it chooses, in new housing stock.

This is part of the Government of Canada's overall commitment to the affordable housing initiative. We are offering a total of \$680 million to help Canadians across the country with affordable housing and, with matching contributions from provinces and territories, the total investment exceeds \$1.36 billion in affordable housing. The recent Speech from the Throne committed to expanding on that initiative.

I would like to highlight a few other existing initiatives. For example, our government provides \$1.9 billion in housing assistance to support some 640,000 community based housing units for seniors, people with disabilities and lower income households across the country. This includes supports for non-profit and co-op housing projects in every community as well as support for low income aboriginal people in cities and on reserve. The member is probably familiar with some of that in his own riding.

Our government also accommodates provincial program designs that address particular needs. In Quebec we provide over \$26 million per year in housing renovation, including several existing provincial programs which are compatible with the national program.

Furthermore, the mortgage loan insurance from CMHC helps Canadian homebuyers gain access to affordable financing choices and facilitates low cost financing for rental investors.

Through its research activities, CMHC has reached out and encourages innovation in housing design and technology, community planning, housing choice and finance to improve the quality, affordability and choice of housing availability throughout Canada.

Madam Speaker, I want to assure you and the member opposite, the government and CMHC, as the crown agency involved, have a very strong working relationship with the province of Quebec and will continue to work with them to deliver affordable housing to the people of that province.

• (1845)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Madam Speaker, I find it odd this evening that the current government does not know what social housing means. When I asked my question, on November 4, the Minister of Transport talked about affordable housing. Tonight, they are again talking about affordable housing.

Affordable housing is a concept the former infrastructure minister, Mr. Gagliano, came up with to build housing for the middle class. Tonight, I am talking about social housing. Real social housing is for people with a very low income. I do not want to hear about the \$680 million spent on affordable housing; that is not what I am talking about.

Every time I mention this, they do not know what it means. Will they go to the streets to meet the real people who have fallen into

deep poverty and find out what they truly want in terms of social housing?

The current federal contribution is far from enough to reduce the social imbalance created by the huge housing crisis. Two million dollars are needed to build real social housing. I do not mean affordable housing for middle income taxpayers or apartment buildings for developers. I am talking about housing for those who are dirt poor.

Last summer, cities in cooperation with the Quebec government had to set up an emergency assistance program to provide temporary housing for hundreds of families left out on the street. Radio-Canada should be ashamed of selling land it took away from the poor a few years ago back to real estate developers.

I want to ask the parliamentary secretary who is speaking on behalf of the minister the following: will the government introduce policies to ensure that such things do not recur? Since the federal government is a partner in operation Solidarité 5 000 logements—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport.

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Madam Speaker, the hon. member appears to be mixing apples and oranges. I heard reference to people who do not have homes, who generally are referred to as the homeless in this country, and that is a different issue than building affordable housing in partnership with the province.

In the homeless file, our Minister of Labour has been designated as the minister responsible for homelessness and, frankly, has done a marvellous job across the country in working with local communities to identify areas where shelters need to be developed and transitional housing needs to be built so that the people I believe the member is referring to, the people on the street and the homeless, have somewhere to go for shelter, such as on a terribly cold night like tonight.

However, if we are talking about affordable housing, it must be recognized, in spite of the constant chirping that is going on over on the other side of the House, that CMHC and the Government of Canada have invested \$680 million, and it goes up to \$1.36 million. In the province of Quebec alone it will generate 6,500 affordable housing units.

I recommend that the member talk to her counterparts, her colleagues in the province of Quebec. If indeed it is necessary for the province to provide shelter allowances to help the people she is talking about, then I think that perhaps the province of Quebec would entertain such a request, and it is appropriate that it does.

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To say that the government has done nothing for either homelessness or affordable housing is a misrepresentation of the facts. The facts are clear. CMHC and this government are committed to a long term national strategy in the province of Quebec as well as across the entire nation.

•(1850)

[*Translation*]

FERRIES

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am proud to take part in the debate on the adjournment motion. Following the question that I asked on November 26, concerning the future of the wharf for the Trois-Pistoles—Les Escoumins ferry service, the minister said, and I quote:

There will be improvements made to the Trois-Pistoles harbour and the service will resume next summer.

The minister was mistaken. It is at Les Escoumins. Still, the intention is there, and I am very pleased that he confirmed that the service would resume next summer.

Following multiple questions and letters addressed not only to the Minister of Transport, but also to the Minister of Justice, who is responsible for Quebec, December 15 was the deadline to ensure that there would be a tourism season next summer, to ensure that tourists would be able to get services from stakeholders and wholesalers in the tourism industry.

We received confirmation that a ferry service will be provided next summer, after the 2002 season was lost, which resulted in significant losses for the tourism industry and for the Compagnie de navigation Les Basques, which operates the ferry.

Indeed, this ferry service provides \$5 million in economic spinoffs for the region, every year. It goes without saying that early in the season, in May and June, and at the end of the season, when things are quieter, there is a significant loss of revenues if there is no ferry. This is why, I am taking the minister's word, following his confirmation that the ferry service would be in operation next summer.

Of course, we will follow up on this issue, because Transport Canada has not been really effective on this issue. They were rather negligent. For months, we did not know whether there would be a ferry service next year. We found out at the very last minute that the 2002 season was cancelled. Now, at least we have some good news.

Today what I want the minister's representative to tell me is whether there will indeed be compensation for the losses sustained by Navigation des Basques, the ferry owners, and whether there will be compensation for the tourism operators who lost money during that time.

A class action has been launched and is before the courts. It would be far preferable, however, for the tourism operators, and for the ferry company, if Transport Canada assumed its responsibilities and compensated them for their losses, so that the costs of this unacceptable situation are, in the end, borne by the party responsible for it, which is Transport Canada.

Can I have confirmation today that, in addition to the work being done as confirmed by the minister, there will indeed be compensation for those who have been the victims of this situation?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the minister has asked me to inform my hon. colleague that the transport department is indeed continuing to work closely with the ferry's representatives. At the meeting in Les Escoumins on June 19 all the stakeholders unanimously agreed that all options for resumption of this service for the 2002 season had been explored by the engineers and there was no short term solution applicable to control the risks and ensure the safety of operations.

The status of the wharf has always been precarious, and the local stakeholders were regularly informed of this fact. Indeed, since 1998 some \$1.5 million has been invested at each of these locations to keep the service running.

In the middle of November, the department's engineers met again with the representatives of the Trois-Pistoles—Les Escoumins ferry to outline the work done to date on analyzing the options for allowing short term operations at the wharf.

One of the priorities of the department obviously is safety and I am sure that my hon. colleague will agree with me that there can be no compromising on the safety of the public.

The minister and I are aware that the cessation of the operations of the ferry in 2002 has had impacts on the communities concerned and that users, mostly tourists, will among other things have to use the alternative ferries at Rivière-du-Loup—Saint-Siméon and Rimouski—Forestville, respectively about 50 kilometres west and east of the Trois-Pistoles—Les Escoumins route.

We have to assess the alternatives available to us in this case from the point of view of Transport Canada's port management policies. We are continuing to work closely with the representatives of the ferry. The department's engineers are meeting with the stakeholders on December 5 to obtain their comments on final designs for the temporary facilities.

The House and the member will understand that seeking options for such an exposed environment is very complicated and requires many analyses and checks by professionals in this field.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Minister of Transport, I want to thank the local stakeholders for their outstanding cooperation in this matter.

•(1855)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see that the minister's representative is confirming that the Department of Transport was negligent. We know that there has been a policy of divestiture of ports since 1996. Since that time, the federal government has been a bad owner. It has left the sites to deteriorate.

A year and a half ago, a notice was signed by 50 municipalities in my riding in support of the people of Trois-Pistoles. They were calling on the federal government to invest. It did not do so and this led to the situation that we have experienced.

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We are very pleased today that the wharves can be repaired, but there must also be compensation for tourism operators. As my colleague has acknowledged, there were major financial losses. It is true that tourists could use other ferries. However, then they did not stay in bed and breakfasts in the region, they did not stay in hotels or motels in the region and they did not eat in restaurants in the region. Some tourist sites lost many clients.

Can my colleague confirm whether wharves will be completely repaired? This is a \$7 million project that is important. There are economic spin-offs of \$5 million for the region.

Indeed, on top of wharf repairs, will there be compensation for those who lost money because of Transport Canada's negligence?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Madam Speaker, the department officials are looking very closely at this issue.

I think the member would agree that the key principle of safety is one which cannot be put at risk and must not be ignored. Considering the conditions around the site of the wharf, the engineers cannot guarantee at this stage how long the temporary works can be kept in place. Carrying out work near these structures might also cause some sections of the wharf to collapse. One can appreciate that for every action, there is a potential reaction.

All the stakeholders in the area, as I said earlier, are cooperating with our officials and our representatives. We very much appreciate the attitude that they are taking in trying to work out a solution with the engineers.

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to a question I asked on October 11. I asked the Minister of the Environment a question about pollution in the bay of Lamèque, where the smell of gas is making children sick and people feel unwell. It is a serious problem. The Conservation Council of New Brunswick has called on the federal government to investigate.

I asked the Minister of the Environment what he would do. I would like to read his answer:

Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Acadie-Bathurst for his question.

Last December, we sent out a letter advising the company in question that it was violating the law. Since then, we have been working together with provincial authorities, the other federal departments and the company to remedy the situation. But, as the hon. member pointed out, the problem is continuing, and it is clear that we must intensify our efforts.

Today, one month later, my question is the following. How has the federal Liberal government intensified its efforts? What has it done since then to change the situation?

Today is December 3. We know that after the winter, comes spring. What is the government planning on doing this winter?

It is important to look at the situation at Lamèque. In that area, 20% of people are on employment insurance. They do not have a job. The company in question employees 600 people. Clearly, we do not want them to lose their job.

Pollution in the bay of Lamèque is not caused solely by this company. I believe it is a by-product of the fisheries and it did not start yesterday. It has been going on for 20 years and is the result of work habits in this area. I talked to officials in the fisheries department and I was told that this occurs everywhere in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, where there is dumping into the sea.

What is the government planning to do to deal with the situation? Is it willing to cooperate with the province to establish a program to improve the environmental protection system and clean up the environment in that area? This is unacceptable. I can guarantee that anyone in that area in the summer who got a whiff of the odour there, compared to that produced by hog farms, would say as I do that it is one heck of a problem.

But this is not all; it makes people sick. It is recognized that gases make people sick. There is a responsibility and the minister recognized it. The minister said he recognized there was a problem.

Since the company employees 600 people, the whole community will be affected. I do not believe that closing the plant would be a solution. Rather, we should look at how the environment in that area can be cleaned up, how to help improve the system so as not to pollute the bay and the sea that have provided a livelihood for people for years and years. People have worked in the fishing industry for many many years.

The municipality of Lamèque is also in trouble. It had given the order to dump earth at the water's edge. Now it might be charged. Pressure from citizens is strong and the municipality must act.

I would like to hear from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment what the department is doing and what it is planning to do.

• (1900)

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Redman (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Madam Speaker, many questions have arisen regarding odours in the town of Lamèque, New Brunswick. Environment Canada is aware of these concerns and takes them very seriously.

The odours in Lamèque appear to be the indirect result of nutrient and organic matter being discharged into the Bay of Lamèque from a variety of sources over a period of many years. Furthermore, these nutrients, acting like a fertilizer, promote the growth of algae and other marine plants. Eventually, bacteria and organisms responsible for decomposing sediment and organic matter cause a reduction in the oxygen in the receiving waters and create odorous gases. This process is further enhanced when tides and currents are not strong enough to promote adequate flushing.

This problem appears to have intensified over the past few years due in part to warm temperatures and a lack of precipitation during the summers. Algae blooms and odours intensify with the increasing ambient temperature.

In the late 1980s it was believed that the odours were being generated by two main sources: odours from the decaying algae and exposed mud flats as described above; and odours resulting from the operation of a local fish meal plant, known as l'Association Coopérative des Pêcheurs de l'Île.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the fish meal plant installed new scrubbing equipment. Shortly after that, concerns from the public about the odours decreased significantly.

However, there was a complaint in the summer of 2001 and it was followed up by Environment Canada along with the New Brunswick department of environment as well as the local government. There was a joint survey in late September of that year. The survey confirmed a high level of organic matter and nutrients, nitrogen and phosphorus, in the bay along with low dissolved oxygen levels in the receiving waters. This indicated a stressed ecosystem.

The fish plant effluent analysis, although in compliance with federal guidelines insofar as screening criteria, was found to be acutely lethal to fish. Based on that information, Environment Canada took action by issuing a Fisheries Act warning letter to the company on December 7, 2001. The company was put on notice that it was in violation of the Fisheries Act.

L'Association Coopérative des Pêcheurs de l'Île acknowledged that it was discharging effluent from its fishing processing operations. The company acknowledged that it may be a contributor to the nutrient and organic loading to the bay but pointed out that other local sources were also responsible.

Nevertheless the company took steps in cooperation with our department and provincial authorities to reduce its discharge into the bay. To date, the company has carried out some in plant process changes. These pollution prevention measures include reducing water consumption, recycling water within the plant, separating solids and wastes in the processing tables rather than flushing them down the drains, and installing new screens and removal systems for fish wastes.

In the interim, the town of Lamèque is working with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on proposed projects to help minimize the odour problem. A working group with members from Environment Canada, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the New Brunswick environment, agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture departments and local government has been formed to assess the issues of effluent quality, odour control and algae growth in Lamèque Bay. It is normal procedure to follow up and monitor actions taken to correct a problem that has been identified.

Even though Environment Canada is working with the company to encourage a solution, this does not preclude enforcement action. Environment Canada will continue to work diligently with the

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province of New Brunswick to secure improved conditions in Lamèque Bay in compliance with the Fisheries Act.

● (1905)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Madam Speaker, as the parliamentary secretary stated on behalf of the government, they recognize that a problem exists, that there is pollution, and that there is a gas which could affect the people of Lamèque.

Therefore, my question is quite clear. Will they do something about it? It is all very nice to observe and monitor, but I think we are past that. They now recognize that there is a problem and that there is some equipment that could be used.

I am told, for instance, that new equipment is being used in a fish plant in Prince Edward Island to help with the cleanup and that it will not pollute the bay. But what else will the government do to clean up this mess?

Right now, nature does not seem to be doing the job. There is a problem which I think the parliamentary secretary also explained. The bay is not promoting adequate flushing. It is not flushing the waste away. Gases are created, matter has decomposed and is not being carried away.

What is the government going to do to help the residents of this municipality and, at the same time, solve this problem? The onus is not only on the Coopérative de Lamèque, but on all fish plants, and that is a well known fact.

What is the government going to do to clean up the bay so that the fishermen and everyone can enjoy a better environment?

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Redman: Madam Speaker, Environment Canada recently received a formal complaint about the fish plant from the Conservation Council of New Brunswick. Environment Canada's policy is to follow up automatically when a formal complaint is received. A re-inspection has already been carried out.

A range of options is available to enforce subsection 36(3) of the Fisheries Act. The goal is to solve the problem. In this case a decision was made to warn the company and then work with the company and the provincial government to find a solution, but this is a first step and does not preclude other action.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:08 p.m.)

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