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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, February 11, 2003

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 11, 2003

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1010)

[*English*]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-352, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

He said: Madam Speaker, the idea for the bill comes from people in various areas in Canada who believe that the parole system is very lenient in its conditions of release. They would like to see them tightened up, particularly in the area of those who are addicted to drugs. The bill would simply say that one condition of parole from a penitentiary would be that the person must be totally drug free, free from all addictions to drugs, before parole would be considered.

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

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION ACT

The House resumed from February 5 consideration of Bill C-13, an act respecting assisted human reproduction, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 5.

Mr. Julian Reed (Halton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I move:

That report stage Motion No. 86 be amended by adding in new clause No. 5.1 after the words "licensee to provide" the words "to an independent repository designated by".

That would replace the agency with an independent repository.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I want it on the record that the member for Halton is moving the motion and it is seconded by the member for Miramichi. I will take the amendment under advisement and come back to the House. Resuming debate on Group No. 5.

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance): It is my pleasure to rise again on Bill C-13 as we now debate the Group No. 5 amendments. I believe that the bill is actually one of the most important bills that the House will debate in this session and perhaps in this Parliament.

While the government has been tardy in bringing forward this debate since the 1993 royal commission, I caution the government not to attempt to rush through this legislation without allowing full debate and with every aspect of the bill being carefully looked at.

This legislation will greatly affect the lives of many present and future Canadians. We must take the issue very seriously and fully understand the implications that go with it. We are not discussing the price of a commodity or the engineering of a highway. We are debating legislation that affects the day to day lives and, even more, the very history of individuals. We must not and cannot take this lightly. We must ensure that we get it right.

I currently have some very strong concerns that the government has once again failed in its duty to the Canadian people. For instance, the current wording states that embryonic research can be undertaken "if the Agency is satisfied" that such research is "necessary"

I am very concerned with this wording and what the definition of "necessary" may include. When we permit such subjective language to become legislation that involves an issue such as reproductive technology, I believe that we permit the possibility of abuse and personal hidden agendas. While the health committee recommended that such research should be permitted "only if" researchers can demonstrate that no other category of "biological material can be used for the purpose of the proposed research", the amendment offered by the Canadian Alliance restores the health committee recommendation and specifies that "healing therapies" should be the object of such research.

While I personally do not believe that embryonic research is acceptable at all, when it is being used for the development of cosmetics or drugs I believe that the practice breaches all moral and ethical boundaries.

With regard to the Group No. 5 amendments, I would like to speak to each of them in turn.

Motion No. 6 calls for the replacing of line 31 on page 2 with the following:

> with the applicable law governing consent and that conforms to the provisions of the Human Pluripotent Stem Cell Research Guidelines released by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research in March, 2002, as detailed in the Regulations.

The amendment expands the definition of consent to include provisions made in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research stem cell research guidelines and has my full support. I believe that while Parliament must have the ultimate decision making authority in Canada, we must rely upon the expertise, the advice and the recommendations that professionals truly can provide to us.

Motion No. 80 calls for the replacement of line 5 on page 21 with:

> proposed research and the Agency has, in accordance with the regulations, received approval from a research ethics board and a peer review.

Again I support the motion. The amendment specifies that research using human embryos should be approved not only by the agency but by a research ethics board and a peer review. Even by being as thorough as we possibly can throughout this debate, the technology is developing so quickly that we do not know what issues will arise in the near or long term future. It is therefore imperative that the legislation include the requirement of an ethics review. The seriousness of embryonic stem cell research requires us to support any extra level of oversight or review.

The next amendment proposed, Motion No. 81, specifies that Bill C-13, in clause 40, be amended by adding after line 5 on page 21 the following:

● (1015)

> (2.1) No person may use an in vitro embryo that was in existence before the coming into force of this Act for the purpose of research unless it conforms to the criteria set out in the Human Pluripotent Stem Cell Research Guidelines released by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research in March, 2002, as specified in the Regulations.

Again, as parliamentarians we must review and use the recommendations that come from expert witnesses and groups such as the CIHR. The clause adds further controls on the use of human in vitro embryos for research, namely that those in existence before the coming into force of this act shall not be used unless they conform to Canadian Institutes of Health Research guidelines. Again I fully support the motion.

Motion No. 82 calls for an amendment to clause 40 by adding after line 5 on page 21 the following. Again this is referred to as subclause 40(2.1):

> A person who wishes to undertake research involving stem cells from in vitro embryos must provide the Agency with the reasons why embryonic stem cells are to be used instead of stem cells from other sources.

This amendment places the onus on researchers to explain to the agency the reasons why embryonic stem cells are to be used instead of those from other sources. This is similar to the original recommendation of the Standing Committee on Health that research on human embryos be permitted only if no other biological material is available.

Once again I want to remind the House how very frustrating it is for members of committees to do a thorough job, to make almost unanimous recommendations that are sent on to the minister, and then to have many of those recommendations and amendments simply thrown out. It thwarts the democratic situation in the House and once again adds to the democratic deficit that we have in this country.

I wish to remind the House that adult stem cell research is much more promising and does not involve the ethical problems that surround embryonic stem cells. I remind hon. members that adult stem cells are being used today to treat Parkinson's, leukemia, multiple sclerosis and many other ailments. The results from adult stem cells have been very positive, whereas the use of embryonic stem cells has been very problematic and has not shown the same process.

Of course we also have the problem of rejection. The use of embryonic stem cells requires the use of massive doses of anti-rejection drugs. That is not the case, of course, for adult stem cells. We often can use our own adult stem cells and bank them accordingly. I strongly recommend that researchers should focus their efforts on adult stem cell research and avoid the ethical and moral dilemmas that can arise from using embryonic stem cells.

In the same vein, Motion No. 83 calls for the following amendment:

> The Agency shall not issue a licence under subsection (1) for embryonic stem cell research if there are an insufficient number of in vitro embryos available for that research.

Embryos should be used for the creation of life, not destroyed in the process. I support the amendment.

I support Motion No. 86, which states that clause 40 should be amended by adding after line 21 on page 21 the following:

> Every licence involving deriving stem cell lines from in vitro embryos must include, in the prescribed form, the obligation on the licensee to provide the Agency with samples of the resulting stem cell lines.

This amendment attempts to control potential co-modification of human life or stem cell lines by requiring licensees to submit samples of derived stem cell lines to the agency.

Motion No. 88 calls for a series of additional clauses relevant to in vitro fertilization procedures. This amendment recognizes abuses and the potential for abuse that can and does occur in some fertility clinics.

● (1020)

In turn it would require the agency to establish limits for IVF procedures on: the number of ova that can be harvested or fertilized, the number of IVF embryos that can be implanted at any one time, the number of embryos that can be stored for later use, and the length of time that an embryo can be preserved.

I note that the Standing Committee on Health did recommend that limits be placed on these activities. Furthermore, the amendment seeks to protect the health and well-being of women and children. That certainly has my full support.

Motion No. 89 would revise clause 42 to be amended from "the agency may" to say "the agency shall". The remainder of clause 42 reads:

> ...in accordance with the regulations, amend, suspend or revoke the licence of a licensee who contravenes this Act or the regulations or the terms and conditions of the licence or who fails to comply with any measures ordered to be taken under this Act, and may prescribe conditions for the restoration of a suspended licence.

I believe that this amendment has merit and is relative to the issue at hand. Given the gravity of assisted human reproduction it seems appropriate that licensees found guilty of contravening the act should have their privileges suspended.

Lastly, I support Motion No. 90 that adds a right of appeal to licensees who have had licences suspended for alleged violations to the act. If the regulation has the right to suspend, it is appropriate that the right to appeal is equally available.

The amendments that we are discussing today make up an integral part of the total package concerning reproductive technology. I believe they are reasonable and worthy of serious consideration by all members of the House.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is good to be here addressing Bill C-13 and in particular the Group No. 5 amendments. I will begin by speaking generally about the bill and then come back to the amendments as my colleague has just done.

This is one of the most important bills that has come forward in the House since I was elected. It is also the most important that has come forward in a long time because of the potential it has to affect our society and our culture over the next decades.

It is important to note that there are a number of aspects of the bill that are worthy of support in the bill. We support the ban on therapeutic cloning. It is important to have restrictions immediately. We support the ban on chimeras, animal-human hybrids, and sex selection that would be done deliberately. We support the ban on germ line alteration. We support the ban on buying and selling embryos. We think those kinds of things need to be prevented in Canada.

We support the idea of an agency which would regulate this sector. We want changes to the type of agency that has been presented, but it is essential that there be an agency that oversees this sector and what would become this industry.

It is important that the agency be directly accountable to Parliament. I had the opportunity to sit in on a couple of health committee meetings. The director for the Canadian Institute for Health Information appeared before the committee. It seemed that he really felt that he was allowed to run ahead of the legislation. The attitude that I saw that day was that the scientists should be making the decisions and the legislators should be sitting aside. I disagree with that. We have been given the responsibility to oversee legislation and to oversee what is going on in the country.

The preamble of the bill highlights a couple of things. First, it talks about the health and well-being of children, in particular the children that will be born through assisted human reproduction and the fact that those children must be given priority. The second point highlights that human individuality and diversity, and the integrity of the human genome must be preserved and protected. We agree with those concepts, but we also have concerns in those areas.

We support the recognition that the health and well-being of children born through assisted human reproductive technology should be given priority. In fact, the health committee in its deliberations came up with the ranking of priorities for the decision making around this technology. It stated: first, that children born through AHR need to be considered; second, that adults participating in these procedures need to be considered; and third, that the priorities of researchers and physicians that conduct AHR must be subject to both the children who are born and the adults who are participating in those procedures.

We realize that the preamble recognizes the priority of assisted human reproductive offspring. Other clauses of the bill fail to meet the same standards, the standard of children born through donor insemination or through donor eggs are not given the right to know the identity of their biological parents. There was a discussion in the chamber last week about the importance of those children who are born through reproductive technology needing to have some connection to their biological parents. The bill does not address that.

The bill's preamble does not provide an acknowledgement of human dignity or a respect for human life. I think it is important for that to be in the bill.

In my last speech on the bill I spoke about human life and that generally scientists have come to the conclusion and agree that life begins at conception. It really begins when the DNA package is created and there is little disagreement about that. The disagreement is in what value we give to that life once it is created.

I spent some time speaking about how important it is that we give value to human life and that we see it as valuable from conception right through to the end of natural life. The bill's preamble does not acknowledge human dignity or the specific respect for human life.

● (1025)

It is interesting that it is intimately connected with human life and the creation of it. Yet there is no overarching principle of the recognition of the value of human life. As I pointed out in a speech the other day this is a grave deficiency in the bill.

In our minority report from this side of the House we recommended that the final legislation clearly recognize that the human embryo is a human life and that the statutory declaration include the phrase "respect for human life". We would say it is important that it be legislatively defined. We need to make an amendment to the bill. The preamble and the mandate of the agency should also be amended to include a reference to the principle of respect for human life.

In our motions today we are talking about research using human embryos. The bill would allow a number of things with human embryos. It would allow experiments on human embryos under five different conditions. First, only in vitro leftover embryos from the IVF process could be used for research; and second, embryos could not be created for research, with one exception: they can be created for purposes of improving or providing instruction in AHR processes. I would think that exception is too broad as it really does open up the door to almost anything.

Third, written permission for experimentation on human embryos must be given by the donor, although in this case the donor is singular, not plural, and it should be plural; and fourth, research on human embryos is permitted if the use is necessary. Again, necessary is undefined.

This takes me back to the problem the government seems to have in defining legislation. I think back to the debate that we had on child pornography where the courts ruled that artistic merit was allowed and in John Robin Sharpe's case it was a good enough defence for his material. The government came back in response to that and suggested that we need to replace the defence of artistic merit with the public good. The member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam pointed out the other day that the definition of public good would broaden the allowance for child pornography rather than narrow it. We have a number of situations in places where the government is unable to make the definitions necessary to put boundaries in these situations.

The research on human embryos is allowed if the use is necessary, whatever that means. The bill would also allow for experiments on human embryos if those human embryos were destroyed after 14 days.

We have some concerns about embryonic research. I have some concerns personally as well. The research is definitely controversial as it divides Canadians. There are numerous petitions being tabled in the House weekly regarding the situation. Clearly, it is an issue that is very important to Canadians.

The embryonic stem cell research inevitably would result in the death of the embryo. Life would not go on. For many Canadians this would violate the commitment to respect human dignity, to respect integrity, and to respect human life.

Embryonic research would constitute an objectification of human life. It is very important that we do no move into that direction. Life cannot become a tool which can be manipulated and destroyed for other ends.

The amendments today deal with a number of those things, but we have great and grave concerns about the movement toward embryonic stem cell research, particularly when adult stem cells provide far better means and opportunities for scientists to do their research.

In fact, a lot of the embryonic stem cell research has had some terrible results where cells have begun to grow out of control. People have had tumours where operations have been done in which embryonic stem cells have been inserted. Operations have had to be performed to reverse the effects of what had been done.

In conclusion, I would say there are some things that are good about Bill C-13 that we would support, but there are many areas in which the bill needs to be improved, particularly in the area of embryonic stem cell research.

● (1030)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Before we resume debate, the Chair is ready to rule on an earlier motion moved by the member for Halton. After careful analysis the amendment to Motion No. 86 is acceptable.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to join my colleagues in speaking to Bill C-13 on human reproductive technologies. It is one of the most controversial pieces of legislation that we will deal with in this session of Parliament, and my colleagues have touched on that point. It really does divide Canadians on the direction we should take. What can be more important than how Parliament approaches the subject of science and human reproduction on behalf of our constituents, Canadian society as a whole? There is a fine line between those.

The Alliance supports some of the aspects of the bill. As in any Liberal legislation that I have seen in the two terms I have been here, there is always a bit of good mixed in with a lot of bad. The trick always is to try to separate the wheat from the chaff and come up with legislation that is in the best interest of Canadians.

We fully support, for example, the ban on human and therapeutic cloning. I think everyone across the country wants feels the same. On animal-human hybrids, why would anyone want to go there? Sex selection, germ line alteration, buying and selling of embryos and paid surrogacy are the types of things that people are e-mailing my office about, by the hundreds. Our e-mails are lighting up.

The petitions I have seen tabled in the House in regard to this legislation rival other issues such as the young offenders bill and things like that when Canadians leapt to their feet and said that they wanted changes. They are trying to get changes to this legislation before it becomes law.

Work has been done with non-embryonic adult stem cells. When we talk about adult stem cells, we are even talk about cells from an umbilical cord. A lot of people would think that it is part and parcel of the embryo but it is not. It is considered to contain adult stem cells. There have been tremendous advances made in research along that line and tremendous good has been done. They are finding less rejection with adult stem cells as opposed to embryonic cells. It is a tremendous dilemma.

We also see in the legislation a huge flaw. We see it again and again in some of the legislation that the government brings down. It is a failure to look after the best interests of children as its first priority. The government talks the talk but it does not walk the walk. We saw that in Bill C-20 that was tabled recently. The legislation is meant to protect children but a clause on artistic merit on child pornography has been left in the legislation and the age of consent has been left at 14 of age.

We see the same theme coming through in this bill where the best interests of our kids are not looked after. Under the bill, children conceived through donated sperm or eggs do not have the right to know the identity of their biological parents. We see that as a huge loophole. The donor offspring community gave moving testimony at the Commons' health committee on the need to fill in the missing gaps of their lives. People need to know their history. All of us use that as a foundation. That is what defines us as individuals in society. To leave that out is a huge and glaring hole.

We also have grave concerns over the accountability. The bill allows the minister to give any policy direction she likes to the agency, which she hand picks, and it must follow without question. We have seen that in other legislation where order in council does this, the minister has the right to do that and there is no overview. As parliamentarians, we represent our constituents.

All Canadians are represented by an MP whether they like it or not. We have seen things go astray when ministers have that type of power. We have seen that with the gun registry and in other failed ambitious legislation that those guys take on, where they give ministers sole discrepancy and they hand pick folks they like. We have seen things go off the rails in no time at all. We see that as a huge stumbling block. Whether one likes the legislation, that would be grounds enough to say "Wait a minute, let us take another look at this", and we should.

Making the agency fully independent and accountable to Parliament as a whole would curb the political appetite that seems to permeate a lot of these things. It would ensure in the long run that it would serve the needs, aspirations and desires of Canadians.

Those two points alone would be enough for anyone of conscience to say that we have to step back and take a look at this.

Having scientists study and propose experimental methods for creating human life disturbs many Canadians. That has been shown in the petitions, e-mails and letters which we have all received. I know we are in the neighbourhood of approaching a thousand hits on this, just since the bill was tabled.

● (1035)

The problem with this legislation is it lets the genie out of the bottle. It is a reality with which we have to deal. The rest of the world is taking steps and moving in certain directions. The Americans have taken a certain direction as have the Europeans. As I pointed out, our Canadian legislation has some large flaws in it. We have problems and concerns with it.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops sent a memorandum to every MP. In its presentation to the Standing Committee on Health the conference outlined its vision of a human embryo as a human being who should be protected as a person.

The bishops are of the mindset, and always have been, that an embryo from the point of conception is a human being. Many people would argue this but that is a reality. Even the scientists who came before the health committee said that. An embryo is of no use to them if it is not alive.

By giving the green light to research on embryos that remain after fertility treatments, Bill C-13 fails to protect the human embryo. We see that as a huge flaw.

The Canadian Conference of Bishops is urging members of Parliament to strengthen Bill C-13 by amending it to prohibit research on embryos. We have had tremendous inroads and great gains on adult stem cell research. We do not have to use embryos. It is just that it is easy.

The conference of bishops made several points and I would like to review a couple more. Some argue that the embryos that remain after fertility treatments will die anyway, so why not do some good. We have heard that line from several different sources.

It is not necessary that we do something with these embryos so that some good or meaning will be given to their lives. They have already had meaning in their lives simply because they are intrinsically human, which also means from a faith perspective that they are known and loved by God. That is what the Catholic bishops said. I cannot disagree with that and I do not think anybody can.

It is unnecessary to search for meaning on their behalf, especially when such a search is really nothing more than a way of justifying the decision to release human embryos for research purposes. The bishops are saying that it is not required and that there is no need for embryonic stem cell research.

The Minister of Health, in speaking to the bill at second reading, said, "outlaw the creation of human clones whether for purposes of reproduction or research".

Some questions have been raised as to whether the bill does exactly that. Does the bill go where she intends it to go? Are there some weasel words in there and some wiggle room that again we will see this challenged in the courts? We seem to be making laws for lawyers again and again. At the end of the day does this serve Canadians well? The Alliance does not think so.

The bishops are urging members of Parliament to ensure that the bill captures all forms and possibilities of cloning. Do not leave any wiggle room is what the Catholic bishops are saying. I do not think anybody can argue with that. They have put a lot of study and a lot of time into that.

I have an article that was in the *Ottawa Citizen* on February 10. Françoise Baylis, a medical ethics and philosophy professor, says that she has done some study on that. She suggests that the federal government could face a possible shortage from heavy pressure from Canadian researchers to remove any ban on the creation of human embryos for research purposes. She is saying that there will not be enough embryos.

At the end of the day her argument is a little self-serving. She is looking for a cash grant from the federal government to study this. It is a little bit more self-serving. She is raising the alarm so that she can go in and fill the void. We have certainly seen that done at government levels for that matter. They create a crisis and then they rush in as the white knights saying that they are there to help. It is a cause and effect situation. I do not think there is a lot of credibility in that treatise which was put forward.

Part of the situation we find ourselves in with a lot of what it out there is that we have been talking about this for 10 years. In that 10 years a lot of people have questioned if we have we got it right. I quoted some of the comments of the Catholic bishops. Many people from my riding and across the country have written me and have said the very same thing. They have asked if we have got it right? I guess at this point I would have to say we do not.

When we look at the number of amendments that have come forward on the bill, and a lot of good points in those amendments, will they be taken seriously? Will the minister, in her monopoly on handling this, take a look at those amendments? Will the minister agree that they strengthen the bill and make the bill better? Will she agree to vote those amendments through?

● (1040)

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the late 19th century, H.G. Wells wrote a book called *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, which is largely forgotten now I suppose. However it dealt with was a mad scientist who occupied an isolated island and he experimented with humans and animals. The technology of the 19th century was pretty primitive, so the scientific story is relatively primitive. The impact of it was that Doctor Moreau was taking parts of animals and attaching them to humans, and vice versa. In the end he created, out of animals, semi-humans.

This novel had a huge impact in the 19th century because the message, and why Doctor Moreau came to an untimely end, was that he was playing God. Even in the late 19th century it was appreciated that scientific advances were going forward so quickly that it would not be too long before man would be able to act as God and create human life.

That sort of concept is like a pebble in a pond. That novel sent a shiver through western society and faith-based groups, and we still feel the repercussions now. One reason why this debate we are having on reproductive technology is so sensitive is because instinctively, all of us, regardless of what faith we practice or indeed regardless of whether we are practising a faith, realize that when one starts tampering with life at the embryonic stage in any sense, man is playing God. Of course we feel that this is a very dangerous thing to do.

Yet science has advanced so much that we see almost unlimited opportunities to save lives. Scientists, with gene research, particularly the various research that has advanced medicine so enormously in the 20th century, see enormous opportunities to save human lives. We have seen advances in vaccines and antibiotics that have pushed into retreat many diseases.

Now with stem cell research, scientists are seeing an enormous opportunity to address diseases that are primarily genetic in origin. Anyone who knows someone who is suffering from Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis or any of these diseases, which would appear to have their basis in original genes, would only want science to advance quickly to save those people.

Even though we look to science with a great deal of caution, because science is always a two-edged sword that can save lives but can also take lives, any time we look at somebody close to us who is suffering from one of these terrible genetic diseases, particularly children, our hearts go out to them and we want scientific research to proceed and help these people and save them.

Therefore we find ourselves in this debate in the House of Commons now where we realize that scientists have advanced to the point where they see enormous opportunities in stem cell research. They see those opportunities, in particular, with the possibilities that are attached to embryonic stem cells. Science is not entirely sure that ordinary adult stem cells cannot provide all the information and opportunities that they might want in order to do the research that may address these genetic diseases. However, from the stated knowledge now, it appears apparent that embryonic stem cells also offer great hope for researchers to make breakthroughs to address some of these terrible diseases like Parkinson's.

● (1045)

We find ourselves in the situation where, despite the fact that many faith based groups are very strongly against the use of embryos in any kind of research, we are torn by the prospect that these embryos may shorten the time if we are able to use these embryonic cells. I should make it very clear that we are talking about embryonic cells. Should these embryonic cells shorten the time that it takes to find cures for these terrible genetic diseases, then many lives will be saved.

We have a moral dilemma in which we now have a bill before the House that seeks to give opportunities to researchers to access embryonic stem cells, while, at the same time, putting real limitations on how they might be collected and how they might be used.

This is very important because, as in the case of the famous story of Dr. Moreau creating human beings out of animals, science always has the temptation of going too far. This is where Parliament comes in. It is up to us as parliamentarians to define the limits, and this is what Bill C-13 would do. It makes it very clear that embryonic stem cells are not to be deliberately created for research purposes. It makes it very clear that embryonic stem cells are to be used for research only if they are to be discarded otherwise.

I submit that there are those of some faiths who feel that embryos are human beings from the moment of conception. If that is the case, and one has that view, then surely an embryo is the most innocent of individuals, and that most innocent of individuals would surely want to see its short time on earth being used to save lives rather than being merely discarded.

I support, in principle, the idea that if embryonic stem cells are going to be discarded and can be offered to researchers who in turn can turn the information gained from them into saving lives, then I do not see, morally, how any of us should stand in the way of that very fine principle.

The bill does have problems and this is one of the reasons that we have to debate it so carefully. I support some of the motions that are before the House now which suggest that the assisted human reproduction agency, which oversees fertility clinics, should set very tight standards in how eggs might be created in these fertility clinics so that surplus eggs will not be deliberately created in order to provide material for research. Very high standards should be spelled out in the legislation, in my view, that sets the parameters on the oversight procedures that the assisted human reproduction agency should follow.

I draw the House's attention particularly to Motion No. 88. Motion No. 88 very emphatically and effectively states that the agency should be required to set standards that Parliament approves when it comes to the methods of encouraging egg production in women and how they are harvested. It is that kind of thing, I think, that is the role of parliamentarians, to take the legislation when it comes before the House after committee and to move this kind of motion. I urge all members to support Motion No. 88 when it comes up for a vote.

● (1050)

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The question is on the Motion No. 6. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on Motion No. 6 stands deferred. The recorded division will also apply to Motion No. 84.

The next question is on the Motion No. 80. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on Motion No. 80 stands deferred.

● (1055)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard: Madam Speaker, may I just request that the Chair clearly indicate the motions being voted on, because there have been changes in their presentation.

We have voted on Motion No. 84. What is the number of the one that you are preparing to put to a vote?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I have already said this, but I will repeat it.

The question is on Motion No. 81. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on Motion No. 81 stands deferred.

[*English*]

The next question is on the Motion No. 82. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on Motion No. 82 stands deferred.

The next question is on the Motion No. 83. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on Motion No. 83 stands deferred.

[*Translation*]

The next question is on Motion No. 85. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

[*English*]

The next question is on the amendment to Motion No. 86.

● (1100)

[*Translation*]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on the amendment stands deferred.

[*English*]

The next question is on Motion No. 88. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded on the division stands deferred.

[*Translation*]

The next question is on Motion No. 89. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

[*English*]

We will now move to Group No. 6.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.) seconded by the member for Yellowhead, moved:

Motion No. 92

That Bill C-13 be amended by adding after line 35 on page 28 the following new clause:

"59.1 Equivalency and enforcement agreements shall be subject to the following safeguards:

(a) the Minister shall be accountable to Parliament for all equivalency and enforcement agreements;

(b) the public shall be actively consulted on draft agreements before they are finalized;

(c) the draft agreements, together with the comments made by the public, shall be tabled in both Houses of Parliament for comments and recommendations;

(d) the text of all final agreements shall be included in the public information registry established by this Act;

(e) all agreements shall be subject to termination or revocation upon reasonable written notice given by either party;

(f) the Minister may intervene under a saving clause that would enable him or her to take any action deemed necessary for the administration or enforcement of the Act;

(g) five years after this section comes into force, and at the end of each subsequent period of five years, a committee of the House of Commons, of the Senate or of both Houses of Parliament is to be designated or established for the purpose of reviewing this Act; and

(h) as a condition precedent to the signing of an agreement, a government that enters into an agreement with the federal government must agree to comply with the same reporting requirements that apply at the federal level. The other government must also agree to transmit the related data to the Agency for inclusion in the federal personal health information registry and the public information registry."

Motion No. 94

That Bill C-13, in Clause 65, be amended

(a) by replacing line 4 on page 30 with the following:

"(c) for the purposes of section 10,"

(b) by replacing line 8 on page 30 with the following:

"(d) specify-"

● (1105)

Hon. Jean Augustine (for the Minister of Health) moved:

Motion No. 96

That Bill C-13, in Clause 65, be amended by adding after line 15 on page 31 the following:

"(s.1) respecting the notification of the Agency under subsection 15(3.1);"

Motion No. 98

That Bill C-13, in Clause 66, be amended by replacing line 22 on page 32 with the following:

"Parliament shall be referred to the appropriate"

Motion No. 99

That Bill C-13, in Clause 66, be amended by replacing, in the French version, lines 32 to 43 on page 32 and lines 1 to 9 on page 33 with the following:

"(2.1) Pour l'application du paragraphe (2), le comité compétent de la Chambre des communes est le Comité permanent de la santé ou, à défaut, le comité compétent de la Chambre.

(3) Le règlement ne peut être pris avant le premier en date des jours suivants:

a) le trentième jour de séance suivant le dépôt;

b) le cent soixantième jour civil suivant le dépôt;

c) le lendemain du jour où le comité de chaque chambre du Parlement a présenté son rapport.

(4) Le ministre tient compte de tout rapport établi au titre du paragraphe (2). S'il n'est pas donné suite à l'une ou l'autre des recommandations que contient un rapport, le ministre dépose à la chambre d'où provient celui-ci une déclaration motivée à cet égard."

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.) seconded by the hon. member for Yellowhead, moved:

Motion No. 93

That Bill C-13, in Clause 66, be amended by deleting lines 9 to 12 on page 33.

Motion No. 100

That Bill C-13, in Clause 68, be amended by adding after line 40 on page 33 the following:

"(2.1) Notwithstanding subsection (2), any such agreement must be renewed whenever there is a change in any relevant federal or provincial legislation."

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance) moved:

Motion No. 103

That Bill C-13, in Clause 71, be amended by deleting lines 5 to 12 on page 35.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.) seconded by the hon. member for Yellowhead, moved:

Motion No. 104

That Bill C-13, in Clause 71, be amended by replacing line 6 on page 35 with the following:

"person who undertakes or continues to undertake a specific controlled activity with no change in scope or purpose"

Motion No. 105

That Bill C-13, in Clause 71, be amended by replacing line 12 on page 35 with the following:

"until a day fixed by the regulations. Once sections 10 to 13 are in force, changes in the scope or purpose of such controlled activity shall require a licence."

Motion No. 106

That Bill C-13, in Clause 71, be amended by replacing line 12 on page 35 with the following:

"until 90 days after the coming into force of this Act."

He said: Madam Speaker, I have a number of motions in this group. I would like to comment very briefly on them and use the remainder of my time to focus on the issue in general.

Motion No. 92 outlines some detailed provisions whereby equivalency agreements can be set up. The bill says that a province has the right to establish its own regulations and legislation with regard to the matters dealt with by Bill C-13. Therefore if it is deemed that the provincial legislation is compatible and covers it adequately, that legislation will override the federal legislation.

This would be an absolute nightmare in my view. The members from the Bloc Québécois probably will quote me on this, but the provinces have jurisdiction with regard to delivery of health care and certainly to the regulation of fertility clinics and researchers, even with regard to whether or not cloning, for instance, might be permitted within a province.

In fact the province of Quebec immediately came out and banned embryonic stem cell research. It was very clear from the beginning that the province of Quebec had some problems with the whole idea of the federal government starting to legislate in provincial jurisdiction.

We must address very carefully some of these equivalency agreements. We have to make sure the provinces are on side because we need to have some uniformity across the system to make sure that the intent of parliamentarians is applied uniformly across the country. Motion No. 92 lays out some features that the equivalency agreements should have, features that presently are not in the bill and which I believe should be.

Motion No. 93 seeks to delete clause 66(5). It says that if a regulation is new or altered after we pass the bill and after we promulgate the regulation, if we come forward with any new regulations or amendments to the regulations, they would not have to come back to Parliament like the original ones. Every regulation to this very important bill, whether it is a new regulation or an alteration of an existing regulation should have the consent and the review of Parliament before it is promulgated.

Motion. No. 94 is a consequential motion to delete clause 11. That is explained by virtue of the fact that Motion No. 47 moves the content of clause 11 to another clause. Motion No. 95 is similar so I will not speak to that.

The next motion I wish to talk about is Motion No. 100. The bill says that if there is a change in federal or provincial legislation, we do not have to renew the equivalency agreement that was entered into with the provinces. It appears to me that if there was a change in federal legislation it should come here. If we are allowing provincial legislation to override it if there is equivalency, then ipso facto, if there is a change in provincial legislation we must also have that amendment reflected in the new agreement the federal government would have with the province.

There has to be continuity. We cannot do something with regulations or changes in legislation when the bill is passed and for the first round but ignore it subsequently. That would allow legislators to get through the back door what they could not get through the front door.

It is a consistency motion. The motion also says that we should be consistent and treat everything the way we would treat in the original bill.

Motion No. 103 is very important. Some members would like to delete clause 71. It has to do with transitional provisions. It says that when this bill is promulgated we will have a situation where the enforced date on prohibited activities will be a date specified by order in council. It would be very shortly after the bill received royal assent. However, certain parts of the bill, in particular controlled activities, will not have royal assent until the agency is established and until the regulations guiding all of this legislation are put in place.

● (1110)

Testimony from the health officials confirmed on two occasions that it would take at least two years. This is very important for members to know. After the bill receives royal assent, it will probably take as long as two years before most of the bill comes into force.

Clause 71, which is a transitional provision, says that once the bill comes into force, anybody who has done anything under the bill at least once during the past year is grandfathered and can continue to do it without a licence and without the scrutiny of the legislation. There is a motion at report stage which says that this is something that is asking far too much. If someone is out there doing a prohibited act or a controlled activity which is not in accordance with the provisions of the bill and the person continues to do it, this is problematic.

I understand that fertility clinics will be licensed and they are an ongoing and continuous activity. I believe that they are aware of this legislation. They will have ample opportunity to make the appropriate application. I believe that they are legitimate operations with no problems under whatever regulations guide them now, which I understand are very limited. If they are reputable fertility clinics, they would apply and they would ensure that they were operating in accordance with the provisions of the legislation.

I tend to support eliminating this transitional provision. It is very qualified, the idea that if one has done it at least once in the last year one is grandfathered. I have never seen that before.

I think the different in force dates is somewhat problematic. The regulations are going to specify these dates. We have no idea when the controlled activities sections will come into force, but it will be a long time.

Members should understand that if this bill were to receive royal assent and the prohibited sections come into force earlier, that means we would prohibit cloning, genetic alteration, surrogacy for profit, and purchase and sale of human reproductive material, but the rest of the bill would not be in force until the agency, the unique body about which I have grave reservations, was put together. I will explain why I have grave reservations.

The Standing Committee on Health had a discussion about conflict of interest. The Minister of Health spoke extensively. She said that there was a provision in the bill which said that one cannot be a member of the board of directors if one has a relationship with a licensee or an application for a licence and that should certainly cover it.

The health committee after doing an extensive review and hearing from witnesses and so on, decided that commercialization and commodification of human reproductive material had to be nailed down very strongly. The committee very strongly supported a new clause which said that one cannot be a member of the board of directors if one has a possible pecuniary interest somewhere down the chain, whether it be a licensee, a fertility clinic, or a researcher. We even talked about pharmaceutical companies, biotech companies, those companies that generally would be involved in the whole process of taking research and development and creating patents and pharmaceuticals and all kinds of things.

There is no question that the whole concern is that commercialization may lead to patenting. Patenting may restrict research and may restrict the ability of others to turn that research into therapies and cures.

The minister has not seen the potential impact. I am not concerned about the board of directors' decisions somehow being influenced by fertility clinics or researchers. It is beyond that. I have grave concerns.

● (1115)

If the government has already decided that 50% will not be women, I take it as a signal that the members of the board of directors of this new reproductive agency have already been selected and are just waiting for their appointments. That is the only explanation I can possibly give for why the government would not recognize that the bill has to do with women's issues, with women's health issues and women's social and economic issues, and that it is important that women have at least half the representation on this board. Apparently somebody believes that is not the case.

I hope that members will speak on these very important issues in Group No. 6.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak on this group of amendments. We have been at this for a while and I hope that the people watching across Canada get a sense of the urgency of this piece of legislation, because it is extremely important. It really does go to the heart of the nation and challenges the ethics of our nation as to how far we will go and how we will treat human life, especially at its most vulnerable stage.

That is one of the reasons why it is so important that we stand and speak on this group of amendments. To give people a recapture, we are now on Group No. 6. We started with five groups, but we have split Group No. 2 into two, so Groups Nos. 2 and 3 are yet to be spoken on, and we are now in Group No. 6. There have been three or four days during which we have had the opportunity to speak to these amendments.

We are now starting on the Group No. 6 amendments. Every group has a significant number of amendments and they are not there by accident. They are there because this piece of legislation is so very important to the House and to the nation. Every party in the House has suggested that this legislation should come forward soon so that we can have some parameters around this whole area of reproductive technologies, especially in light of the cloning or supposed cloning that has been happening around the world, or because of those groups that say they are going to do cloning. We need to put some limits on where scientists will go in this whole area of reproductive technologies. Therein lies the urgency for this piece of legislation.

There are some prohibited activities in this piece of legislation, all of us agree, and if we brought in a separate bill that would deal with just those prohibited activities it would pass as fast as the raise in salaries of MPs passed, which was in about 72 hours. We would have it through and we would have some safeguards in place in Canada around this area of reproduction.

That was actually proposed. In fact, I introduced a motion in committee to have that happen and it got shot down immediately for no good reason. Everyone knows that we should prohibit certain activities within this whole area of reproductive technologies, such as cloning, both reproductive and therapeutic, stem line alteration, or chimera or animal-human hybrids. We know that we should be prohibiting all of these areas. I do not think there is any argument across this nation with regard to that. That piece of legislation would pass immediately, but some wanted to piggyback all of the other stuff with the controlled areas into a piece of legislation that challenges the parameters of where we should go as a nation.

If we look to Great Britain as an example, which has a regulatory body similar to the one in this legislation, we see that even under that regulatory regime the ethics in Great Britain and what is allowed under this agency have changed in the last decade. Britain had a very difficult time when trying to stop the idea of therapeutic cloning and in fact it has been allowed as of last spring. Also allowed is the creation of embryos solely for the purpose of research.

These are areas that this piece of legislation would prohibit, and yet we hear a massive cry from the scientific community to hold it and maybe re-examine reproductive cloning. That community is saying that this is not really reproductive cloning but nuclear transfer, so let us call it that instead of cloning to disguise what it is actually trying to do.

We have to be very careful of those who would like to push us into areas that as a nation we should not go into. This piece of legislation will allow that, which is why this group of amendments is so important. I would like to speak to my amendment in particular, Motion No. 103, which speaks to that issue, because in essence it is a get out of jail free card that scientists can use. The power then would not lie with the agency but actually with the governor in council, the cabinet of the House, which would allow them to grandfather in procedures that are deemed to be in a controlled area.

Controlled activities are very important. That is why we would have an agency and that is why we have to go through a tremendous amount of examination and determination to decide whether that controlled activity should proceed.

● (1120)

In fact, when we as a committee first looked at this we had 100 witnesses from across the country and around the world come in and explain to us what should and should not be allowed. At the conclusion of the committee stage, they very eloquently and accurately said that we as a nation should not go into the area of embryonic stem cell research. We were very shy about recommending it at all. It was only at the demand of the minister that we should allow embryonic stem cell research that some committee members changed their minds on this legislation and on how the wording should be as to what we would allow to be under control and what we would allow to go ahead and use embryos for.

The committee was so determined not to allow something that was inappropriate that the wording was very tight. It said that if we are going to go down this road of killing life for the sake of research, then let us say that we should not do it if there is other biological material that could be used for that same research. I think that is reasonable. The committee said “only if no other...material can be used for the...research” should we then entertain the idea of using an embryo.

Some committee members, and I was included, said that this is where we should not go. We called for a three year moratorium on it, to put our emphasis on the non-embryonic stem cells because there is a great amount of research being done there and a great number of cures that have happened, even in the last 12 months. We need to move down that road for the next little while in this whole area of exciting medical research into stem cells that is taking place. Before we go to the embryo, we should move down that road much further so that we can be much more intelligent about where we are going.

If we are to decide on a piece of legislation that will actually determine where we go as a nation, then we should be on the cautious side. If we err in this legislation, it should be on the conservative side. We should be very cautious and tread softly in this area because it has such far reaching implications.

When we get into the area of what the cabinet could allow under this grandfathering clause, we see that it could be abused in an unbelievable way before the legislation is even enacted and before the agency is even up and going. The cabinet could allow scientists to carry on an extreme amount of embryonic stem cell research without any scrutiny of why they are doing it. The cabinet could allow it without any controls as to whether it is in the best interests of the nation and in the best interests of science. These are all the questions that an agency will have to reflect upon and very wisely determine. Whether it is something we should or should not do would all be a moot point under the clause if we do not allow this amendment to go forward.

There should be a limit as to how much should be grandfathered, if we want to grandfather anything at all, and it should not be outside the scope of the legislation we have before us. This amendment is absolutely crucial if we are to do that.

Let us go back to the actual wording of what Bill C-13 is calling for. I mentioned a few minutes ago that our wording was only if no other biological material could be found, but I suggest that this was overturned in this wording. Because of Bill C-13, the wording is not "if no other biological material" can be found. The wording is if it is deemed to be "necessary". The minister explained to me that the reason why she had to change the wording was that "no other biological material" was so tight and restrictive that they could not define it. Therefore, they used the word "necessary", meaning if it is necessary to use this material for the research.

I said that was fair, but if we are to use that terminology then let us then determine what "necessary" is. Let us define in the bill what would we sense and decide on as being necessary for carrying on with a procedure that would destroy a human embryo for the sake of research. Nonetheless, the definition of necessary is not in the legislation and if we do not have a definition of necessary, then necessary could mean anything.

● (1125)

That is exactly what was said by the witness at committee, Dr. Bernstein. I asked him directly, because he is a scientist who works with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. He deals with the majority of federal funds that go into this area of research, although not all the funding because Genome Canada has federal funds as well. I asked him what he in his wisdom would determine to be not necessary for the sake of research, if he could think of something that would be disallowed. If we say we should do this research only if it is necessary, then obviously we are implying that some things are not necessary. I was trying to determine where he would draw the line or what line scientists would not cross over. His comment to the committee was that he could not identify something that would not be necessary.

This means that in his mind everything is necessary. If everything is necessary, then what are we doing with the legislation? What parameters does it lay in front of the Canadian people? I would suggest none, and I would say that we must tread very cautiously with this legislation and adopt these amendments or defeat the bill.

● (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to participate in the debate on Bill C-13. I was discussing this issue with the member for Lotbinière—L'Érable, and obviously we are both aware of how important it is.

I want to remind members how much time the committee spent on Bill C-13, and how hard we worked on this most important bill.

Bill C-13 is a bill that affects a wide range of values. It affects the notion of the family, the issue of the availability of leading edge technologies, our perception of sexuality, our perception of human relationships, and also practices prohibited under the Criminal Code.

During the holidays, we all witnessed what happened with Clonaid. It was quite shocking, even if proof was never provided, to learn that it was scientifically possible to clone humans.

The committee heard testimony about how mice, rats and sheep have been cloned. Of course, it was a different kind of success because, in a certain number of cases, premature aging occurred. Other times, the embryo was aborted. But we know how to make clones.

For a long time now, the Bloc Quebecois has been quite concerned about these issues. Shortly after being elected in 1995, and then again in 1997, 2000 and even in 2002, the member for Drummond introduced a bill specifically on cloning.

It is surprising that it has taken so long, and I must blame the government because the Baird commission tabled its report nearly 10 years ago. How could the government have waited so long to take action in an area such as this?

This bill is extremely controversial. There is a whole side to the bill that we fully agree with. Of course, we strongly support a bill such as this in terms of banned practices. With regard to creating chimeras and maintaining embryos in vitro, and therefore outside a woman's body for more than 14 days, we agree that such practices should be banned.

Maintaining an embryo outside the body of a woman after the fourteenth day should be prohibited because the nervous system begins to develop on the fifteenth day. The consensus in the international community is that this causes risks to viability.

We agree with prohibiting chimera. We do not want an embryo into which a cell of any non-human life form has been introduced or vice versa. We are of course opposed to human cloning and we are opposed to cloning for treatment purposes. We understand the need to say that a pregnancy must serve altruistic purposes. No one wants to live in a society where a monetary value is placed on pregnancy or it becomes a commercial transaction.

If the bill dealt strictly with the prohibited activities, we would have quickly voted in favour of it. For each prohibited activity carries ethical considerations.

Why are we opposed to cloning? We are opposed to it because we think that in human development and psychogenesis, it is not desirable for a parent and a child to have exactly the same physical appearance and genetic makeup.

● (1135)

How could we meet our parental responsibilities? How could a child develop normally, in the healthiest manner, if at all the significant stages of his life he is the spitting image of his father or mother?

No one has studied these questions. But account must be taken of the fact that in human development and psychogenesis, this is not something that is desirable.

At the beginning of the year, and last year, the Bloc Quebecois moved a motion to split the bill. We could have voted on the 13 prohibited activities and there could have been provisions under the Criminal Code such that if someone engaged in one of the prohibited activities in a public or private laboratory, there would have been recourse.

Let us not forget that if we had learned in November or October that Clonaid—which has a subsidiary in Quebec or in Canada—had conducted experiments that resulted in successfully cloning a human being, we would not have had any legal recourse.

The Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, who is the member for Outremont, might not have liked it, but he would not have been able to do anything but make sorry excuses to Canadians because there is no provision in the Criminal Code to punish or lay criminal charges against anyone.

Thus the importance of this bill. Obviously there are colleagues in the House, who shall remain nameless, who would have made this a pro-life and pro-choice debate. I think this is ill-advised. This is not a pro-life and pro-choice debate; this is a debate about prohibited practices and specific regulations.

It is true that under the bill, the regulatory agency could obtain authorization allowing it to conduct research on embryos. Obviously if a woman were to give her informed consent and go to a fertility clinic or any other place that does artificial insemination and say, "If there are extra embryos in my ovulation cycle, I agree to let them be used in a carefully planned research project that has been approved by a research ethics committee", then in this case it is true that research could be done.

We need to be able to do research on stem cells because there are major degenerative diseases, such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's and cerebral palsy, and we must improve the human condition. There may be situations where current reproductive material or knowledge does not allow us to conduct new research without new studies on embryos.

It is true that the use of stem cells requires destroying embryos. Depending on one's definition of life, there may be some who, for religious reasons, or who, because of their convictions, claim that destroying a human embryo is homicide.

However, that is not the case under the law. The Supreme Court has ruled: an embryo is not a human being. A human being exists from the moment it is declared living and viable, outside of its mother's body and once it has taken its first breath. That is the law.

I believe that this is a balanced bill because it requires proof that there is no other way to conduct this research other than using embryos to provide stem cells.

My time has expired. I will have further opportunity to comment during this debate. We have concerns about the regulatory agency and I will comment on these concerns when the other groups of motions are being debated.

● (1140)

[*English*]

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in debate on the motions in Group No. 6 at the report stage of Bill C-13, an act respecting assisted human reproduction.

I am glad we are taking a deliberative approach to these many important amendments that have been placed before the House. I will attempt to address each one in the group in the time allotted to me.

All these amendments deal with the clause in the bill regarding enforcement and the regulations. As we often say, the devil is in the details, and that is why this is an important clause in the bill.

The first amendment brought forward by the member for Mississauga South seeks to place reasonable requirements on enforcement agreements that the Minister of Health may make with other governments, such as provincial governments.

As we know, often in federal law the federal ministry is delegated power by Parliament to make enforcement agreements with the provinces or other levels of government. Clearly, this is the case with criminal law where the power of enforcement for most criminal law is delegated to provincial attorneys general. I believe this is the model contemplated under the bill.

What the member for Mississauga South is seeking to do with Motion No. 92 is amend clause 59 of the bill to ensure that the minister is accountable to Parliament for any enforcement or equivalency agreements with other levels of government, and to ensure that the text of all final agreements be included in a public information registry. In a sense, there are several provisions in this motion that would make the enforcement agreements more transparent and more accountable to Parliament and to the public which we represent.

Most important, item (g) under this motion would require a five year parliamentary review of the bill, if enacted, which is a fairly routine provision in most statutes and ought to be incorporated into the bill. I support Motion No. 92.

Motion No. 94 is very interesting. What the member for Mississauga South is seeking to do in this motion is eliminate the ability of the Minister of Health to make regulations regarding transgenics. Clause 11 of the bill permits transgenics. Transgenics is the very troublesome practice of combining human genetic material, human genomes, with other species. Clause 11 states:

> No person shall, except in accordance with the regulations and a licence, combine any part or any proportion of the human genome specified in the regulations with any part of the genome of a species specified in the regulations.

In other words, the bill contemplates and permits, admittedly within the regulatory framework, a very troublesome practice which I believe is an ethical matter and ought to be clearly prohibited in the bill and not simply controlled or regulated. That is part of what the member for Mississauga South is seeking to do through this motion.

What the bill contemplates in clause 11 and elsewhere is the legal possibility of cross-breeding between humans and other animals. We do not need to read the large body of fictitious, science fiction work about the kinds of gruesome consequences of this kind of pseudo-science.

● (1145)

Let me say as a matter of first principle, as someone who has studied philosophy, that even contemplating this reflects a very profound philosophical mistake, a very profound misunderstanding about the nature of man.

Humankind is not a species of the same nature as any other animal species in creation. Humankind is of a different kind altogether. We possess uniquely in all of creation the power of reason, which is expressed by theologians in all traditions as having been created in the image and likeness of God. That is to say, man has a particular dignity rooted in his capacity for reason which makes human life something which cannot be confused with the nature of other non-rational, non-human but sentient life. To suggest that science somehow can or should combine man with beast is, I submit, a fundamental philosophical and ethical error. Therefore I support this motion.

Motions Nos. 96, 98 and 99 are procedural motions brought forward by the Minister of Health to clarify the technical language in the bill pursuant to amendments which were accepted at committee. I will accept all of these motions. They are not substantive.

Motion No. 93 in the name of the member for Mississauga South would delete clause 66(5) from the bill. Essentially this is an effort by the member to enhance accountability when it comes to the regulatory process pursuant to Bill C-13.

Motion No. 100 is an amendment that would require equivalency agreements to be renewed whenever there is a change in any relevant federal or provincial legislation, again enhancing in the bill accountability to Parliament and the people. I will support it.

Motion No. 103 in the name of my colleague from Yellowhead is an important amendment to which he spoke moments ago. It would delete clause 71 which allows the grandfathering of controlled activities until a day fixed by the regulations.

As currently worded, the clause would allow scientists to engage in a controlled activity once before the act takes effect and thereby avoid licensing requirements and prosecution provisions. It could result in a stampede toward controlled activities, such as embryonic research, before the bill takes effect. The current clause is a get out of jail free card which allows the cabinet to exempt controlled activities through regulations.

I submit that controlled activities ought not to be grandfathered. If they are controlled in the bill, that should apply to activities which had begun before the bill's implementation. I support the deletion of clause 71 as contemplated by Motion No. 103.

Motion No. 104 is in the name of the member for Mississauga South. It would specify that the grandfathered activities should only be permitted as long as such activities have no change in scope or purpose, the intent being to prevent researchers from changing the scope of activities after they have qualified for grandfathering under the bill. Again I think this is sensible.

I see I am running out of time so let me just say briefly that I will also support Motions Nos. 105 and 106. Altogether, the amendments seek greater accountability and would seek to control abuses which I do not think is the intent of the legislation to permit. We ought to take these amendments very seriously.

● (1150)

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it has been an interesting process working through this very important bill. Bill C-13 is entitled an act respecting human reproduction and related research.

The scope of the bill is very broad and relates not only to in vitro fertilization and assisted reproduction. The intent of the bill is to help people, couples who are having trouble because of infertility to have the families they want. It is because of that the health committee, in doing its work on the bill, entitled the study “Building Families”, which is the focus.

There are many controversial aspects of the bill. Part of it is the related research that spins off as a consequence of the in vitro process. The bill contemplates allowing so-called surplus embryos or left over embryos—frankly, even the terminology is offensive to consider—to be used for research purposes.

The bill discusses important issues which we have yet to debate. The amendments in Group No. 2 will be coming up later, and deal with anonymous donations for example and surrogacy. Donations of gametes and issues like that are also covered in the bill.

The subject today largely deals with some of the regulatory aspects. There are 11 amendments in Group No. 6, among them Motion No. 92 brought forward by the member for Mississauga South. These amendments deal with the regulatory body, the governor in council, how regulations shall be set up and some of the responsibilities of the Minister of Health.

Motion No. 92 brought forward by the member for Mississauga South has a number of subclauses. It deals with the equivalency agreements with the provinces. Various provinces may wish to develop their own bills. The province of Quebec already has some regulatory measures in effect concerning reproductive technology, and other provinces may have some also. The clause deals with equivalency agreements with other provinces. The member has very astutely observed that it is quite a loose arrangement in terms of equivalency and the amendment would tighten up the responsibilities. It specifies what an equivalency agreement would look like and the responsibilities that would come with making such changes.

The hon. member has brought in amendments which are quite reasonable. Motion No. 92 states in part:

> Equivalency and enforcement agreements shall be subject to the following safeguards:
>
> (a) the Minister shall be accountable to Parliament for all equivalency and enforcement agreements;

That is a very important clause. Ultimately, what is the purpose of our going through this exercise as a federal institution to develop a law for Canadians if someone is not responsible and accountable to the legislators who put the bill in effect in the first place? The motion further states:

> (b) the public shall be actively consulted on draft agreements before they are finalized;

The members of the committee who worked on the bill put a lot of work and effort into it. We heard from Canadians across the country. The committee received the bill in draft form and went to great lengths to tighten up this very important area.

We are dealing with human life. Children will be produced from this technology, children who will want to know about their identity later in life. We are dealing with some very profound emotional and moral issues relating to this research. The minister needs to be responsible and accountable and the public needs to be consulted. The motion further states:

> (c) the draft agreements, together with the comments made by the public, shall be tabled in both Houses of Parliament for comments and recommendations;

There are a few other accountability measures mentioned in Motion No. 92. An important one is item (g):

> (g) five years after this section comes into force, and at the end of each subsequent period of five years, a committee of the House of Commons, of the Senate or of both Houses of Parliament is to be designated or established for the purpose of reviewing this Act.

● (1155)

That is a very reasonable thing to do. This area of science is expanding at an amazing rate. The possibilities that come out of reproductive technologies are profound and have great scientific and health implications but also great moral implications. It is a very important motion. I hope all members of the House will give it due consideration and will vote appropriately. We certainly will be supporting this amendment.

Motion No. 94 also moved by the member for Mississauga South addresses a very important issue. It deals with the issue of transgenics or so-called chimera. A lot of Canadians are probably wondering what that is all about.

We wrestled with this issue at committee. We might wonder about this and I have raised this question repeatedly. There is a tremendous and resplendent array of genetic material available to us as human beings with some six billion of us on the planet. If we look around, a tremendous variety can be found within the human genome, from the little ones among us to the great tall ones who play basketball for great sums of money, from the ones of us who are a little slow to the ones who are really fast in terms of athletic prowess and ability.

I had the pleasure this week to watch an accomplished pianist at a concert. It was amazing to see that woman sit at the piano and play without looking at a note on a musical score. She could play this tremendous array of music from memory. I watched her hands fly across those keys.

It is amazing what human beings are able to accomplish. All that tremendous ability is available to us within our human genome. I have a hard time relating to why we need to mix animal and human genes. What would we hope to accomplish by putting a gene from a lower life form into a human cell or by mixing cell parts from animals and humans or by mixing genes from animals and humans? The bill allows for this under a licence.

The amendment would change it so that the regulations relating to chimera and transgenics could not be changed by the governor in council or by the minister. That is a very important amendment. If we are going to go this way at all, it needs to be tightened up so that this area is very significantly supervised and regulated.

Motions Nos. 96, 98 and 99 are procedural amendments which we would support. They are tidy-up amendments and we certainly agree with them and support them.

Motion No. 93 is an important amendment. It would delete clause 65 entirely, removing the power of the governor in council to make regulations for carrying into effect the purposes of the bill. Clause 65 (bb) would allow the governor in council to exempt controlled activities from the provisions of the act.

There are important reasons that controlled activities in the bill require licences and that violations are subject to prosecution. It is because they involve the creation and manipulation of human life. Cabinet should not be able to simply overrule these regulations in a closed cabinet meeting. We certainly support the motion and feel it is very important.

Turning to Motion No. 103, clause 71 deals with transitional provision and grandfathered activities. This is a very important motion. It would delete lines 5 to 12 on page 35. This, as I said, has to do with the grandfathered activities. An agency that had done an activity as little as once would be allowed to do it if it had done it in the period preceding the adoption of the regulations.

● (1200)

The regulations could take some two years to come into effect. There is another motion coming forward, Motion No. 106, which is related to this that would require 90 days as a limit for grandfathered activities to be accomplished.

I hope all members will give these motions serious consideration and we certainly support the amendments brought forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to participate in this debate. Clearly, this is a far-reaching bill affecting almost all Canadians from one end of the country to the other. There is strong interest, because the subject is clearly very complex and very significant. That said, it is very important to have legislation on assisted reproduction and related research activities.

I first want to talk about Motion No. 92. In seeking to apply the same parameters to enforcement agreements and equivalency agreements, this motion is mixing apples and oranges somewhat. The enforcement agreements in the current act are standard administrative agreements set in motion by simple contractual procedures, and are amended or rescinded in accordance with the contract in question.

However, the equivalency agreements change the legal system applicable to assisted reproduction in the province in question, while ensuring equivalency so that all Canadians receive the same protection in terms of health and safety. This bill sets out in detail the approach applicable to important intergovernmental agreements of this type.

I see this is a debate that interests you, Madam Speaker. I am very pleased to see the clear interest you have in this bill.

Several other motions from Group No. 6 address regulation. In fact, regulation is at the heart of Bill C-13. It is the mechanism allowing us to control assisted human reproduction activities in order to assure Canadians that their use of these techniques to build their families will not put their health at risk.

I would now like to talk about Motion No. 93, which suggests deleting subsection 66(5).

Subsection 66(5) simply says that between the time the regulation has been revised by the House committee and finalized, there is no need to revise the regulation a second time even if it has been changed.

However, it is very important to look at subsection 66(4) which in fact requires the minister to lay before the House a statement of the reasons for not incorporating the changes.

We cannot ignore subsection 66(4) and just take the clause that suits us. Nevertheless, all the regulations that are written in the future and all the amendments to the regulations must be laid before the House under clause 66.

In terms of Motion No. 103 to delete clause 71, it should be said that without clause 71 in this bill, all assisted human reproduction activities will have to stop as soon as the bill is passed. Imagine how upsetting this would be to couples who use assisted reproduction services. Without clause 71, fertility clinics will be forced to stop all treatment until an agency is created and the regulations are written. Motion No. 103, if passed, puts an indefinite hold on any hope of having a family through assisted reproduction. Why ask couples to postpone their dream of having a family when this is unnecessary?

Motion No. 103 would only add to the heartache of infertile couples, which goes against the government's intention of reassuring Canadians who use assisted reproduction services.

By reducing to 90 days the time allotted to drafting the regulations, Motion No. 106 does not acknowledge either the scope of the regulatory process or how serious it is. It is too important to be time-limited. It is not some kind of race against the clock. What is important is the quality of the regulations, not the speed at which they are produced. For there to be quality, there must be time taken to consult stakeholders, that is clinic staff, infertile couples and all others involved.

By retaining clause 71, we are acknowledging that regulations on assisted reproduction will require sustained efforts of the utmost quality. By retaining clause 71, we are acknowledging how important it is to avoid any interruption in the assisted reproduction services being provided to all Canadians using such services to create a family.

● (1205)

As for amendments 96, 98 and 99, these are of a technical nature, and aimed at enhancing the clarity and transparency of the bill. In fact, they are in response to the wishes of the Standing Committee on Health, which did such an excellent job on the bill.

Moreover, I must thank all of the committee members who devoted so much time to processing all the information provided to us. My thanks once again to all of the members for their contributions, as well as all the members of this House taking part in the debate.

[*English*]

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise again to speak to Bill C-13. We face a huge dilemma as parliamentarians on issues of this type that come before us. I guess the bottom line question on Bill C-13 is, when is it okay to use cellular material? There are huge ramifications if we do not get this right this time around.

This particular bill would allow for experiments on human embryos under four conditions. First, only in vitro leftover embryos from the IVF process could be used for research. Second, embryos cannot be created for research with one exception. They can be created for purposes of improving or providing instruction in assisted human reproduction technology. Third, written permission must be given by the donor, although donor is in the singular, and for research on a human embryo if the use is necessary. Necessary is undefined in the legislation so it kind of leaves the door wide open to abuse. Fourth, all human embryos must be destroyed after 14 days if not frozen.

That is what is in the bill. Another huge question is, how do we maintain human dignity for the sufferers of disease who see this as the ultimate answer, as well as the unborn who would become the playground for scientists in trying to resolve some of these issues? How do we come to grips with all of this in the stark reality of legislation?

Part of the problem, in typical government fashion, is that it takes forever to get through legislation with all of these dilemmas attached.

The minister, in her wisdom or lack of it,—and again there has been a change in health minister—has chosen to ignore many of the committee recommendations, and some of the amendments that we see negate the work and effort that the committee spent so many hours on. We just heard the parliamentary secretary welcome the results of the committee and thank it for its work and yet on the other hand the government ignores it or says that it does not like what the committee said and so it will go its own way.

The committee is an all-party committee. It is made up of members who represent their constituencies across the country. They are taking input from the members of their communities, bringing it forward, and in the last write-up of the bill, the minister said no, she is better, the officials know, bang, and away we go. That is where one starts to question the other dilemma causing issues.

During the committee review of Bill C-13 the committee tried to restore some of the recommendations with an amendment specifying that healing therapies should be the object of such research. That is all. There would be no embryonic research for the development of cosmetics or drugs, as we have seen done in other countries, or providing instruction in assisted human reproduction procedures.

That has been left by the wayside and left out. We can look at some of the information that came forward from Suzanne Scorsone, a former member of the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies. The government is big on studies and commissions. We have seen hundreds of millions of dollars spent and they are piled up in the basement of the library and nobody ever refers back to them. But there is an excellent quote from her and I would like to read it into the record. She said, "The human embryo is a human individual with a complete personal genome and should be a subject of research only for its benefit".

We were all embryos once. Of course we were. This is not the abortion question, it goes beyond that. When an embryo is not physically inside a woman there is no possible conflict between that embryo and the life situation of anyone else. There are many across the spectrum on the abortion question who see the embryo as a human reality, and I agree, and hold that to destroy it or utilize it as industrial raw material, is damaging and dehumanizing, not only to that embryo but to all human society. We have crossed the bridge. We are on the thin edge of the wedge and it is a pretty slippery slope from there.

Also in true government fashion as we have come to see here, the governor in council would be used to end run a lot of the recommendations that come out in this bill. Perhaps worst of all, the minister would require that the advisory council of the assisted human reproduction agency, her little group,—itself a good idea as we need some watchdog—to report to her alone rather than Parliament and that the council take every ministerial directive as an order.

It is bad enough that Parliament is basically playing God with this research, but now we are going to appoint the Minister of Health as God herself. That flies in the face of everything that a democracy stands for.

There is a one-time, three-year review. That is it. We can never go back and look at this again. Those could be ongoing reviews. That is what democracy and representation is all about, ongoing review. We see that lacking in so many pieces of legislation that the government has brought forward.

● (1210)

We only have to go back a couple of months to the gun registry. If there had been an ongoing review in a situation like that we would not have squandered a billion dollars. It could not have happened because the review process would have kicked out the flaws in that particular piece of legislation.

We also see that as a red flag in this type of legislation. There is no continuing review. The minister herself controls the whole process through her regulatory agency, which we do not disagree with, but she commands complete and total control over what is going to happen to this legislation afterwards. We see that as wrong.

Some of the amendments in Group No. 6 deal with the idea that deliberations and decisions should be open and accountable. What a good idea. Motion No. 93 would delete clause 66 which would allow the governor in council to write regulations after the fact. That could exempt some experimental activity not specified in the act. Accountability and transparency demand that cabinet not hold itself to the privilege of writing exemptions for activities the bill attempts to restrict. However, the way this legislation is written, that can happen.

Motion No. 100 calls for equivalency agreements that would keep changes between federal and provincial legislation in lock step. We see that particular situation break down again and again with the overlap of government to government. We just saw it during the huge debate on health care costs. We saw the Prime Minister whip the premiers into line by saying take the money or else: "My way or the highway". Most of them, having to go back and deal with their own constituents, took the cash. They had no choice.

The same situation applies in this legislation where the federal government becomes over and above everyone else. It is provincial legislation that we are trampling on here. The problem we can have with it being provincial is the concern of the ability of children conceived through these artificial means to find out about their heritage. Some provinces would allow it and some would not. Therefore there would be a huge mishmash of problems across the country. Some people could be born in Ontario, move to Alberta, or vice versa, and in one province they could find out their lineage but not in another. There are some huge problems with this.

Motion No. 103 attempts to delete the grandfather clauses that might allow undesirable lines of experimentation to carry on. Parliament would decide against them in this bill. Motion Nos. 104 and 105 are related to this. The grandfathering must be limited in time and require licensing, otherwise we open up a huge problem with everybody leaping into these activities before the bill becomes law, and we are not there yet, this is report stage.

Cabinet could exempt certain activities through regulations. Basically it is a get out of jail free card before this becomes locked down in a legal situation. We have some serious, dangerous subclauses. We saw that with the Kyoto protocol, an accord that we ratified that has not been implemented yet, where the auto sector received an exemption. We would see the same type of thing here; politics at its worse. That is what we have seen in other legislation and it does scare us a bit.

Members of Parliament and people who have made representations on this do not have to have a religious agenda. A lot of that is thrown back at us that it is our conscience not that of our constituents. However, I have had hundreds of interventions, e-mails, letters and calls from constituents. I know everyone has. I have seen some of the headings on the e-mail lists.

Canadians are deeply concerned about where society and our economy is going. They are concerned with chemicals in the environment. They are concerned with genetically modified foods, government secrecy, and with the huge databases we are developing. Canadians need to be reassured that we can take a thoughtful, insightful look at legislation like this and come out with the best for Canadians. We need to have this legislation.

The problem with some of the sections of the bill that the Liberals have rejected would make the advisory council less political. They have shied away from that, and we see that as a huge problem. Politics has no business in this type of legislation, but here we see it again and again. The Liberals even rejected a recommendation to ensure that the board members of the new assisted human reproduction agency would not have conflicts of interest. They have left that out.

Therefore, at the end of the day we have some huge problems with this legislation. The Prime Minister must allow a free vote on legislation like this in order to best serve the interests of our constituents.

● (1215)

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure today to speak to Bill C-13. The New Democrats have worked long and hard on the bill because we believe the time is long past that we have a bill governing reproductive technology.

The bill is overdue, it is important and there are several issues that must be addressed. We have fought long and hard in the committee that they be addressed.

At the committee stage, the New Democrats proposed 13 amendments to improve the bill. Although the language was not as strong as we had hoped, we were able to add the protection of the health and well-being of women to the principles. We also fought that the donors be provided with independent information before participating. We fought for the concept that the public needs to be informed on the risk factors relative to infertility.

It also was important that the board of the assisted reproductive agency of Canada, called CARA now, be made up of at least 50% women. We feel that this is important because women's health issues are central to this whole issue. We have to be sure that women are making the decisions and that their sensibilities and understanding are totally engaged. We must ensure that we are communicating with women, that we know their needs and that they are informing the board at all times on how everything is working and how we are doing in this area.

We also felt it was important to add a comprehensive conflict of interest clause governing the board. However we were unsuccessful in adding the precautionary principle to make safety an overriding concern in the whole bill.

The committee also voted down the NDP amendment to tighten up the commercial sale of reproductive materials and to make the agency more accountable by stipulating what it would do, rather than what it may do. This is a very important distinction.

Finally, we tried and failed to facilitate donor identification in recognition of the needs of children born through reproductive technology.

Unfortunately and incredibly, since that stage we have seen the bill come back. The government has ignored many of the recommendations made by the committee. That point has already been made today in the House. In the last draft of the bill the government overturned some important recommendations. This is very discouraging.

One of the main issues that the government overturned was the issue of equity and women's equity on the board. The second issue it overturned was the conflict of interest guidelines. At the present time it would be possible for large biopharmaceutical corporations to sit at the table and make decisions that would be very much a conflict of interest. They would have very much to do with the profits and the directions their companies were taking on the issue.

It defies reason that those important recommendations would hit the cutting room floor at this point in this important legislation.

Some of the improvements that have been made to the bill's principles have to do with the reference to women's health. The fact that the precautionary principle, which is a tool for ensuring that women's health is primary, is still not incorporated in the bill. It is not in the overriding principles in such a way to reflect the actual governance of the CARA board.

The rights and health of women must be the first consideration in regulating reproductive technologies. Our approach to reproductive technologies must be grounded solidly in the concepts of women's reproductive freedom.

● (1220)

It is clear that we are concerned about the bill and that we will be making recommendations against it at this point in time.

As the New Democratic Party critic for persons with disabilities, I must say that persons with disabilities and families of persons with disabilities always have a concern when it comes to reproductive technology and what is coming our way in terms of creating designer children and potentially a designer species. It is important that we always keep front and centre the human dignity of persons with disabilities, who are living now and will continue to live, contribute and be incredibly important to our society, even as they struggle with their disabilities.

Although some people do not understand the linkage between reproductive technology and disabilities, the linkage is clear to those people who have disabilities. They see a society that often ignores them and seems to be running ahead to deny them their rights, as opposed to recognizing them and allowing them to plan for the future and to live their lives in a more substantial and respectful fashion.

At this point the New Democrats will be voting against Bill C-13 at report stage. We will continue to fight for the precautionary principle, that we have equity for women and that the issues around disabilities and the conflict of interest issue are dealt with and strengthened in the legislation.

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from the NDP for her excellent speech and I particularly want to echo her sentiments and concerns with regard to the bill and to people with disabilities.

I have a little child who is in a wheelchair and I am always very conscious of legislation like this that could possibly interfere with the vulnerability of people who find themselves in this position in our society.

This is a very important bill. It brings forward moral dilemmas like this for us. One of the huge moral dilemmas that it raises for me is the whole issue of embryonic stem cell research; notwithstanding the fact that I think perhaps there is a lot of pressure from the multinational pharmaceuticals to continue and increase the research with embryonic stem cells because of the need for anti-rejection drugs, whereas adult stem cells do not require that kind of drug therapy. Notwithstanding that, we have the whole question of human life itself.

It brings a moral dilemma to many Canadians and to many of us in the House. In a speech earlier today my hon. colleague from Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, for whom I have a good deal of respect, spoke about his moral dilemma. We have spoken about it privately. He said that the dilemma for him was that if these embryos were human life how should we approach that in this instance in terms of reproductive technology. I may want to speak to him further about this, but he seemed to come to the conclusion that one should come down on the side of embryonic stem cell research and that embryos would provide opportunities for much needed research to heal diseases. He said that if this little innocent life, and I presume he was saying that if that innocent life could express itself and somehow speak to us about this, it would want to help in this way. I found it somewhat startling that he would think that an embryo, which has the potential to live a very full life, would willingly decide to be aborted to be involved in embryonic stem cell research.

What that kind of reasoning does not take into account is the fact that it is quite possible that in the past we have indeed aborted and destroyed embryos that could have grown up to be great Canadian scientists who would find the cures for the very diseases that we are hopefully trying to cure.

I think there is something wrong with that argument. It just seems to hide the real fact that the legislation would allow the production and use of embryos that had their lives terminated. We have to ask ourselves whether that is a correct moral decision for us to make. I suggest that it is not and that there is something wrong with that kind of philosophy.

Then again that is only one of the many reasons that the bill is so important and the debate surrounding it is so important. We have to take the time in the House to get this right. A number of members have said over and over again that we have to take the time to get this right. We are walking down a path that the generations behind us will then be forced to walk upon. We are making decisions for countless Canadians who have not yet been born.

Motion No. 6 calls for the replacing of line 31 on page 2 with the following:

> "with the applicable law governing consent and that conforms to the provisions of the Human Pluripotent Stem Cell Research Guidelines released by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research in March 2002, as detailed in the Regulations.

● (1225)

This amendment expands the definition of consent to include provisions made in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research stem cell research guidelines and certainly has my support. Why? Because I believe that while Parliament must have the ultimate decision making authority in Canada, we must rely upon the expertise, advice and recommendations that professionals can provide for us in this very important matter.

Motion No. 80 calls for the replacement of line 5 on page 21 with the following:

> —proposed research and the Agency has, in accordance with the regulations, received approval from a research ethics board and a peer review.

Again I support the motion. The amendment specifies that research using human embryos should not only be approved by the agency, but by a research ethics board and a peer review.

Even by being as thorough throughout this debate as we possibly can, we simply see that the technology is developing so quickly that we do not know what issues will arise in the near or long term future. It is very important that this legislation include the requirements of an ethics review. The seriousness of embryonic research requires us to support any extra level of oversight or review.

I must note the fact that the Speaker has reorganized the amendments themselves and I do agree with this step. However I also note the number of amendments that are within this group alone. I am certain every member here today would have relished the opportunity to speak at even greater length. Perhaps even further groups could have been made, thus allowing even greater debate on these issues. However I go back to the motions.

I intend to support Motion No. 92. I agree that we should place reasonable requirements on equivalency agreements that the health minister negotiates with the provinces. This was a recommendation from the health committee report entitled "Building Families", and it is a valuable addition to the legislation. We must ensure that full transparency and accountability is a part of the process, that the public is consulted on all draft agreements and that the texts of these agreements are released to the public.

I also support Motion No. 93 which deletes clause 65 entirely. The governor in council should not have the power to make regulations for carrying into effect the purposes of the bill. This is what the 301 members of Parliament and their respective standing committees are elected to do.

There are important reasons why the controlled activities in the bill require licences and why any violations must be subject to prosecution. We are of course dealing with the creation and manipulation of human life. This is not something that any of us can take us lightly.

In turn cabinet should not be permitted to exempt certain activities through regulations. This defeats the democratic process and should not allow a get out of jail free card, in effect. In short I believe that this is a very serious subclause and should therefore be deleted.

Members of the Canadian Alliance will also be supporting Motion No. 94. This amendment removes the ability of the governor in council to make regulations respecting transgenics, which is the subject of clause 11. For those who do not know what transgenics are, transgenics are animal-human combinations and I believe that they are ethically wrong. On any level of which I can think, they are simply wrong.

Motion No. 96 is a procedural amendment that respects a Canadian Alliance amendment which was passed at committee. This amendment, now clause 15(3.1), specifies that a licensee who transfers an in vitro embryo to another licensee shall notify the agency of the transfer in accordance with the regulations. The minister's amendment follows from our amendment's inclusion of "in accordance with the regulations" and will therefore have my support.

Motion No. 100 calls for equivalency agreements to be renewed whenever there is a change in any relevant federal or provincial legislation. This seems appropriate and reasonable and has my full support. For example, if Bill C-13 is ever amended to enable children conceived through donor insemination to know the identity of their biological parents, any equivalency agreements that may be in place should also be renewed to reflect such a change. Without such a clause the legislation may be in disagreement with itself.

The next several motions are all closely aligned with each other. Motions Nos. 103, 104, 105 and 106 all have my support. Included in these amendments is the allowance of the grandfathering of controlled activities until a day fixed by the regulations. Under the current wording, this clause would allow scientists to engage in a controlled activity once before the would act take place, therefore avoiding licencing requirements and prosecution provisions.This could result in a virtual stampede toward controlled activities, that is, embryonic stem cell research, before the bill takes effect. I do not believe controlled activity should be grandfathered.

● (1230)

There are important reasons why controlled activities otherwise require licences and why violations should be subject to prosecution. They require utmost attention because they involve the creation and manipulation of human life as does this whole bill.

I ask my colleagues to take these amendments under consideration and vote according to their conscience.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this bill and to this group of amendments. I am pleased to do that because I know every member in the House of Commons, probably including yourself sir, has received a number of submissions from Canadians throughout the country.

In my riding I have received literally hundreds of petitions, e-mails and letters asking me not to support Bill C-13 without significant amendments. My constituents want all Canadians to know that in no way will they ever support any kind of activity allowing embryonic stem cell research. There is no way they want Canada to engage in any activities whatsoever regarding cloning.

My constituents feel we are off base in even thinking about this without looking at alternatives to deal with this entire situation. I certainly agree with these petitioners, in particular, with regard to the use of embryos for research and efforts to clone human beings.

I commend members of the committee in their efforts to try and reflect the will of Canadians in the legislation. I also commend members of the House of Commons for proposing amendments such as some of the ones in Group No. 6. I support these amendments because I believe they will add a lot of credibility to the whole issue. I encourage all members of the House to look at these amendments and seriously consider what will happen if they do not support them.

Motion No. 94 removes the ability of the governor in council to make regulations respecting transgenics. The whole discussion about animal-human combinations should be stopped in its tracks. A number of people who have written to me feel the same way.

Under the legislation, it is unbelievable the number of times the governor in council can make regulations regarding so many of these activities. This really concerns me. If many of these amendments are put in place, they will delete the ability of the governor in council to make decisions regarding the regulations on how we will proceed with this important issue.

I have been in this place for nine years and I have seen a lot of legislation come forward. The ability to make decisions to change regulations with regard to proposed legislation is overwhelming and wrong. I refer to old Bill C-68, the gun legislation, which caused great debate across this country. No less than 74 times in that legislation did the governor in council or the minister by order in council have the authority to make any changes they saw fit and at their whim. Throughout this legislation the same thing is happening over and over again. The ability to regulate what we do with regard to animal-human combinations is in the hands of one individual by order in council.

● (1235)

Motion No. 93 would delete subclause 66(5) which would remove the power of the governor in council to make regulations for carrying into effect the purposes of the bill. We support that amendment. Subclause 66(5), if not deleted, would allow the governor in council to exempt controlled activities from the provisions of the act through regulations.

Controlled activities requiring licences and the reasons why violations would be subject to prosecution were put in the bill for a very good reason. They involve the creation and the manipulation of human life. In no way should anything be in the hands of one individual in regard to controlling the activities through regulation of that nature. To me it is absolutely astounding that anyone would suggest that would be possible. Cabinet should not be allowed to exempt certain activities through regulations. That is a really dangerous clause and Motion No. 93 would delete it. I am certainly in support of that.

As well, we have an amendment that would delete clause 71 which would allow the grandfathering of controlled activities until a day fixed by regulations. Once again, the current clause 65(bb) would allow the governor in council to exempt controlled activities through regulations. Controlled activities cannot and must not be grandfathered. Why? They deal with the manipulation and the creation of human life. That cannot be in the hands of such a minimum number of people through order in council.

When we head down this path, we had better be very cautious of where we are going by allowing certain things to happen in regard to the licensing and the permitting of activities simply because the bill would allow it to happen through order in council. That has been demonstrated on a number of occasions to be completely out of control in a lot of legislation and we cannot allow that to happen in this bill.

I will be supporting the motions in Group No. 6 because they would eliminate a lot of the proposals and remove the power of the governor in council. That is an absolute must. What we need to do more than anything is take into consideration all the petitions, letters and e-mails which we have received from our constituents throughout the country. We need to move in the direction that society as a whole has called for in regard to these issues.

Research in adult stem cell and umbilical cords has indicated many things. There are a number of ways we can deal with this kind of research in a manner that does not manipulate human life and does not deal with the creation of life or the destruction of such. I would encourage members to do everything we can to go down that path rather than the path of creating embryonic cells to be used as research, or the cloning of human beings.

● (1240)

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-13 and the amendments in Group No. 6. I compliment the government for bringing this bill forward. It has many laudable goals such as the banning of human cloning. I want to deal with a few other issues that perhaps muddy the waters on this sensitive topic, such as the issue of choice, abortion, and the definition of human life. In my view, and I am speaking personally, some things muddy the waters on this extremely sensitive issue.

Make no mistake about it, much of the opposition to investigations into embryonic stem cell research comes from individuals who are completely entitled to have the view that an embryo is a human life. They must be respected for their view. That issue has to be removed from this subject. We are dealing with the potential to do investigations, to do research that will save people's lives.

It is very easy for those of us who are healthy, who do not have multiple sclerosis, who are not suffering from Parkinson's disease, who do not have cancer, to say we should not be doing research based on a certain moral viewpoint that people are entitled to have and should be respected for having. We cannot apply a moral decision, a moral choice on the issue of the definition of human life and apply that to the ability for us to prevent researchers from doing critical research into lifesaving procedures that hopefully will provide the cures for those scourges that kill millions of Canadians every year.

Having seen many people die from many of those illnesses, I cannot help but be somebody who strongly supports research using adult stem cells and embryonic stem cells. I am not opposed to defining the regulations under which that could be done. Many individuals across the country who have respect for the material we are dealing with have put forth eloquent suggestions, as have members of my party, which can be respected and introduced. However, we cannot allow moral viewpoints, moral definitions and moral arguments to impede what I would consider to be a hard moral argument and that is the protection of people who are living today, the saving of their lives.

We should put ourselves in the shoes of somebody whose wife, husband or child is dying of cancer. If that research into embryonic stem cells provided the solution, the cure, we would have a very hard time saying no to embryonic stem cell research.

It is true that adult stem cell research has made leaps and bounds in the applications that exist but there is absolutely nothing that can take the place of the information that we will have on differentiation of cells, communication between cells, how cells migrate through the body and indeed from that, learn important lessons in how we can cure and prevent cancer. Absolutely nothing takes the place of that. It would be a huge mistake for us to invoke any kind of ban on embryonic stem cell research.

Motion No. 94 talks about animal-human clones. I completely understand and support the notion of banning animal genes being introduced into the human genome. No one knows where that could lead but it could lead to enormous biological and medical problems later on. What about the reverse? What about the introduction of human genes into animals? Are we going to ban that? I would suggest not, for the following reason.

In our country today, 170-plus people die every year from a lack of organs for transplant. That number will increase as our population ages, as the incidence of diabetes increases and the damage to people's kidneys and other organs increases. The number of people who will require kidney transplants will actually increase over the years. Indeed it will be an explosion is numbers that normal cadaveric transplants, transplants from humans, will not be able to meet. The need for organs exceeds the number of organs that are available today.

● (1245)

There has been incredible research into introducing human genes into certain animals, for example pigs, to provide heart valves and organs for transplanting into humans to save lives. That research must continue. It is exceedingly important. That research enables us to produce organs that would not be rejected by individuals. Lifesaving organs truly could be the gift of life. It would be an enormous mistake to ban that type of research.

Then there is the issue of assisted reproductive technology and surrogacy. A lady who was in her forties wrote a very eloquent paper on the fact that she was not able to have children of her own. She paid money to a relative to be the surrogate.

The bill indicates that only payment for expenses should be allowed. A woman who undergoes surrogacy gives up more than nine months of her life. She undergoes pain and suffering and experiences a lack of work and is simply recompensed for the expenses. A person should not be criminalized for actually getting paid something more for the time and the pain and suffering involved in producing a baby for another. That should not be banned. That should be a decision between the people involved, the surrogate and the person or persons who are asking that woman to give up part of her life to have a child on their behalf. To criminalize that would be a huge mistake.

The penalties in the bill are $500,000 or up to 10 years in jail. Mr. Reyat, who is responsible for murdering nearly 300 people, just got five years in jail and could be out on parole in 18 months. Why should we criminalize somebody who wants to be a surrogate and potentially put the person in jail for up to 10 years? That is a huge mistake.

Furthermore, the issue of donor anonymity is too much of a hammer and should be dealt with. I understand the purpose is so the child will know the medical history. It is a completely reasonable and worthy endeavour. However, forcing the donor not to be anonymous would greatly shrink the number of individuals who would be donors. All those couples who cannot have children would not have the opportunity to have children in the future. This is a very serious problem.

The way to deal with it is to ensure that every donor would be anonymous but the medical records would be available to the child. In that way the mother and the child would know the pertinent medical history while ensuring that anonymity continued. That would not dry up the individuals who donate their time, their efforts and their sperm or ova so that others can have children.

It might be easy for those of us who can have children to completely ban this type of activity, but there are those people who cannot have children. For some of them, adoption, which is so difficult in our country, is not an option because of finances or simply because there are not enough children available. It would be inhumane for us to use such a big hammer and prevent them from having children.

There is so much more to talk about on this exceedingly sensitive bill. I understand completely those who take a moral and ethical viewpoint on it with respect to those who are against abortion and those who are pro choice, but let us remove that from the bill. Let us not forget that respect for the individuals who are born is exceedingly important but so too is the respect for those who donate their time and their lives to ensure that others can have children.

● (1250)

This is a sensitive issue which must be dealt with sensitively. Banning human cloning is good, but we should not stand in the way of legitimate medical research that will pave the way in the future for those cures that will save many other lives.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to the Group No. 6 amendments to Bill C-13, an act respecting assisted human reproductive technologies and related research.

The issue has a lot to do with stem cell research. Most members have referred to stem cell research. I have never had so much reason to be optimistic about medical research in my lifetime than has been caused by the whole issue of stem cell research. It is an exciting opportunity to finally find treatments and cures for some of the more serious diseases that we face as human beings.

Probably every one of us has someone in our family who is suffering from a disease and we are all desperately hoping for a treatment or a cure for that disease. We all should be very optimistic about the potential of stem cell research and I think we are. It is something to be excited about. I know I am, as is probably everyone who is taking a look at this. It is therefore important that we get it right.

In the Group No. 6 amendments we are talking about government oversight of the legislation. It is a very important aspect of the legislation. Before I get into talking about that, I want to look at the changes these amendments would make to the bill should they be passed.

One of the most critical and difficult aspects of the bill, as the former speaker said, is the issue of whether or not we should be moving into the area of embryonic stem cell research. Most companies which put money and resources into this type of research at first put them into embryonic stem cell research because it seems that there is so much potential in that area. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on research on embryonic stem cells. So far, unfortunately, researchers have come up empty handed in that category.

On the other hand, research using adult stem cells, stem cells which are readily available and are clearly far more stable than embryonic stem cells, has shown not only a lot of promise, but has already delivered, at least in the early stages, some treatments and cures. That is very exciting. From the testimony the committee heard and from information I have heard and read, clearly the most promise comes from adult stem cell research.

Embryonic stem cell research carries some obvious problems. The cells have proven over time to be very unstable, which has caused problems. For example in laboratory testing on mice, many have developed brain tumours when embryonic stem cells were used because of the cells being so unstable or for other reasons. If embryonic stem cells are used in the human body, we do not know whether the recipient, the person who is hoping to have a cure or a treatment that will help him live with a very serious disease, will be required to take anti-rejection drugs for a long time and possibly for the rest of his life. These drugs of course have a negative impact on the individual and they are also very expensive.

There are a lot of serious problems attached to embryonic stem cell research. Another very serious difficulty in using embryonic stem cells for research is that many people feel for religious reasons or moral reasons that it is an improper use of human life to use human embryonic stem cells in research. We have already seen promising and quite amazing results from adult stem cell research. There is so much potential there. Let us focus our resources on that and stay entirely away from this moral dilemma we face. Why have that split, why allow this research to go on when it causes that split in society?

● (1255)

I would suggest that there will be people desperately ill, looking for a cure or a treatment, who will be forced to go against their moral values and positions on this issue because they are desperate for a cure. Again, the adult stem cells show a lot of promise. We have already had some wonderful things happen with adult stem cells. Let us focus on what the Canadian Alliance and I believe the committee suggested. First, there should be a three year moratorium on research with embryonic stem cells. We should focus on adult stem cells. I am absolutely certain we will see some wonderful results in the future.

I think that this is the way to go. Unfortunately the legislation has not properly dealt with it. In the Group No. 6 amendments, Motion No.103 put forth by the Canadian Alliance health critic points to part of the problem when it comes to government oversight. The motion shows that there is a problem with government transparency and accountability, because too many decisions will be allowed to be made behind closed doors just through regulatory changes, which usually go unmonitored. Certainly at the time there is no pre-approval given to them in most cases.

Motion No. 103 would delete clause 71 of the bill as it is before the House right now. Clause 71 allows grandfathering of controlled activities "until a day fixed by regulations". It is grandfathering control behind closed doors by order in council, in effect by the cabinet or in reality by the minister. Already we are dealing with an extremely sensitive issue. Many say that it allows humans to almost become God. When we are dealing with such sensitive issues I do not think it is proper that one individual, such as the minister, should have the kind of control that is allowed in the bill. This is an issue of openness, transparency and accountability.

As clause 71 is currently worded, it allows scientists who engage in a controlled activity once before the act takes effect to thereby avoid licensing requirements and prosecution provisions. But if it is wrong in the future, why is it not wrong now? Why would they be allowed once to get around the regulations that are supposed to control in the way that Parliament and, hopefully, Canadians want? Why would we allow this one time avoidance of the issue?

This could result in a stampede toward controlled activities, especially embryonic research, I suggest, before the bill takes effect, just so scientists can be involved in this activity once. I think that this shows clearly the moral dilemma in having the minister in effect control this. Some of the concerns to do with that are I think quite obvious.

The current clause is really a get out of jail free card. This is the way our critic has referred to it. I think that is a fairly accurate description, as it allows the governor in council to exempt these controlled activities through regulation instead of having legislation passed in the House that clearly states what we will do and what we want to do.

Our argument is that the controlled activities should not be grandfathered. That is what Motion No. 103 would do. It would prevent them from being grandfathered. There are important reasons why controlled activities otherwise require licences and why violations are subject to prosecution. That is why they are there in the first place. They are not there for a frivolous reason. They are there for a very important reason: because they involve the creation and manipulation of human life, a very serious and sensitive issue indeed.

We do not want to do anything to stand in the way of this effective research that is taking place. In fact, just the opposite: We want to have legislation that will allow that to happen as freely as possible, only putting in place the restrictions that the committee of the House of Commons put forth on behalf of Canadians. That is what I know the committee certainly attempted to do and in large part I think the committee did it effectively. Unfortunately, this is one part where it simply was not done effectively. There is not a proper transparency. There is not a proper accountability with the way the government has chosen to stray from the committee's recommendations and to put this in the legislation.

● (1300)

This is a concern that I see the government becoming involved in, well beyond this legislation. I do not have time to talk about that now, but when we look at it we can see that it is the same type of doing things behind closed doors that is very common with the government. The war in Iraq is an example. The government's statement to the public for some time has been that there would be no war, period. Then it was that there would be no war unless the UN sanctioned it, while all the time the government knew that it would in fact—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair can be generous, but I know a number of members still want to speak to this issue.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise on behalf of the constituents of Surrey Central to again participate in the report stage debate on Bill C-13, an act respecting assisted human reproductive technology and related research.

I would like to share with my colleagues the fact that many of my constituents have contacted me on this issue and almost all of them want me to oppose the bill unless it is amended.

I would also like to acknowledge that many members in the House have worked hard on the bill, specifically the hon. member for Yellowhead and the hon. member for Mississauga South, as well as the former leader of our party. They have worked really hard, along with our other caucus members.

Human reproductive technology is an area clouded by a high degree of moral ambiguity. There is little agreement about the harms and benefits of the relevant technologies. Still, virtually all Canadians would agree that there is a pressing need for laws to oversee the entire area of reproductive genetics.

Since 1997, when the proposed human reproductive and genetic technologies act died on the Order Paper, we have had Dolly, the cloned sheep, the discovery of stem cells, and the completion of the mapping of the human genome. A lot has taken place since then and what the next years hold in store is anyone's guess.

Thankfully, the government has finally seen fit to begin the process of regulating these complicated and controversial issues. Earlier the government was sitting on the fence, not being decisive, but now finally it has recognized that it has to deal with these controversial issues.

The Group No. 6 amendments we are debating today consist of 11 motions, all of which I support as improvements to the present bill. I will go over one by one some of the motions that I deem particularly necessary in this debate.

Motion No. 92, for instance, places reasonable requirements on equivalency agreements that the health minister negotiates with the provinces. All of us are aware of the negotiations that recently took place. In "Building Families", this amendment was a health committee recommendation. Transparency and accountability in this area are needed. The public must be consulted on draft agreements and the text of such agreements must be made public. It is a good amendment and we will support it.

Motion No. 93 deletes clause 65 entirely, thus removing the power of the governor in council to make regulations for carrying into effect the purposes of the bill. This is a good amendment because we have serious concerns with one of the subclauses in clause 65. We support this amendment. It allows the governor in council to exempt controlled activities from the provisions of the act through regulations. I have spoken enough about how the government does not govern but rules through the back door by way of regulations. This amendment will limit the ability to rule through the back door.

There are important reasons why the controlled activities listed in the bill require licences and why violations are subject to prosecution: because they involve the creation and manipulation of human life. Cabinet should not be permitted to exempt certain activities through regulations. This is a get out of jail free card. It is a very serious, dangerous subclause.

Motion No. 94 in the group amends the bill to remove the ability of the governor in council to make regulations respecting transgenics, the subject of clause 11. Transgenics are animal-human combinations. Again this is very important and I am sure my constituents will appreciate my support for this amendment.

● (1305)

Motion No. 96 is a procedural amendment respecting a Canadian Alliance amendment passed at committee. Our amendment, now subclause 15(3.1), specifies that:

> A licensee who transfers an in vitro embryo to another licensee shall notify the Agency of the transfer in accordance with the regulations.

That will allow tighter control and I support that. The minister's amendment follows from our amendment's mention of "in accordance with the regulations".

Motion No. 98 again is a minor amendment specifying that regulations shall be referred to the appropriate committee of each House, rather than to "an" appropriate committee. What is important here is that regulations shall be referred to a committee of the House of Commons, something the Alliance fought for and won at committee. Previous wording said that regulations "may" be referred to the House committee, but if this amendment passes they will be referred to a committee of the House. We fought to enhance accountability and transparency and we won.

In Motion No. 100, again the amendment would require equivalency agreements to be renewed whenever there is a change in any relevant federal or provincial legislation. This seems appropriate and reasonable. For example, if Bill C-13 is ever amended to enable children conceived through donor insemination to know the identity of their biological parents, any equivalency agreement that may be in place should also be renewed to reflect such a change. It is an important change. Children born through the process need to know their biological parents.

Motion No. 103 deletes clause 71, which allows the grandfathering of controlled activities "until a day fixed by the regulations". As currently worded, the clause would allow scientists to engage in a controlled activity once before the act takes effect, thereby avoiding licensing requirements and prosecution provisions. This could result in a stampede toward controlled activities, for example embryonic research, before the bill takes effect.

The current clause is a get out of jail free card. It allows the governor in council to exempt controlled activities through regulations. Controlled activities should not be grandfathered. There are important reasons why controlled activities otherwise require licences and why violations are subject to prosecution: because they involve the creation and manipulation of human life. This should not be allowed. At the very best, the bill should specify a time limit on grandfathering and not leave it to the regulations. That is why I support this amendment.

In Motion No. 104 the amendment specifies that grandfathered activities should be permitted only as long as such activities have no change in scope or purpose. The intent here is to prevent researchers from changing the scope of activities after they have qualified for grandfathering under the bill, similar to Motions Nos. 105, 103 and 104. We support them for these reasons. Motion No. 104 adds the requirement that grandfathered activities should require a licensee if there are changes in the scope or purpose of such activities.

These amendments will ensure tighter control and therefore the manipulation of human life or creation would be under watch.

Similarly, Motion No. 103 specifies that controlled activities should only be permitted for 90 days after the coming into force of the act. The 90 day limit on grandfathering is far superior to the open ended "until a day fixed by the regulations".

Since my time is over, I would like to conclude by saying that the public debate surrounding assisted human reproductive technologies signifies this issue's importance to Canadians. The provisions of Bill C-13 carry great consequences for individuals, families and therefore society as a whole. It is imperative that members be allowed to vote their conscience on the bill. An issue with such high ethical implications should not be decided upon through strict party discipline. The Prime Minister should indicate that there will be a free vote on Bill C-13.

● (1310)

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, back in 1993, when I first came to the House, I made my maiden speech. I said that we were not here to argue and debate just for argument's sake and that we were not here to oppose for opposition's sake. I said that if the Liberal government came forth with a bill that was good, we would support it. If it had a bill which had some merit but needed some fixing, we would try to provide constructive criticism and some logical amendments that would strengthen and improve the bill. I said that only when the government had a bill that was totally without worth, would we strongly oppose it and vote against it.

This bill has some merit but it also has a lot of problems. As a result of those problems, many people, both in the Canadian Alliance Party and others, are trying to find ways to fix what we believe are the errors in the bill. I would suggest that it is not only us who believe there are errors in the bill, but a great deal of the Canadian public believes that as well.

The title of the bill is an act respecting assisted human reproduction. I draw the attention of members to the word "respecting" because that is the purpose of the bill. It is about respecting human beings and the whole process of reproduction. However there are some things in it that are very scary and we need to deal with these.

One concern I have, aside from any ethical or moral question, is the whole question of embryonic versus non-embryonic stem cell research. We have had a great deal of proven success with non-embryonic research, more commonly referred to as adult stem cell research. A lot of cures already have been developed. There are very few problems from adult stem cell treatment because the stem cells of the person being treated can be used and there is no rejection of those cells.

In the case of embryonic stem cell treatment, one would have to take anti-rejection drugs for the rest of one's life. Members probably have heard personally on more than one occasion, and I know through friends of mine alone, of people who had transplants of various organs, which are quite commonplace now. Not only were they on a regime of anti-rejection drugs for the rest of their lives, but in some cases the transplanted organ was rejected in spite of those drugs and they had to go through the entire process again.

What happens when something like stem cells are injected into a body and they are rejected? When an organ is rejected it is removed and the person goes back onto support machinery, if that is deemed appropriate, until such time as another transplant can be tried, hopefully this time more successfully. What happens to the body when injections of DNA and things which are created from stem cells are rejected? That is something for which I do not have an answer.

However my concern with the bill is this. If we do not ensure that we direct our research toward non-embryonic stem cell research where we have had more proven success, in fact our only successes, we may suddenly open the door to a more diversified expansion of research. This would mean that fewer people would be devoted to areas where we have had success and would switch to a new field which is completely unknown.

Yes, there may be some successes to be had somewhere down the road, mixed with all the problems that may or may not still be negatives. However we know we have success in non-embryonic stem cell research. The bill should make it clear that is where the weight of future research should be directed. This will ensure that our scarce research dollars are devoted to areas where we are most likely to have success.

● (1315)

I have said that a lot of Canadians also agree with the fact that there are some things in the bill that are very concerning. As of this morning, I have almost 1,000 letters from Canadians supporting the various amendments dealing with the prevention of killing embryos for research and strengthening the ban on human cloning. We are here to represent the needs and concerns of our constituents, the people of Canada. To do that, we need to listen to what they say and we need to reflect that in bills that are brought forward and in the amendments made to those bills.

Some amendments to the bill have been proposed by the Canadian Alliance. However the ones we are debating and supporting largely come from Liberals who recognize weaknesses in the bill. They want to support their party but say that there are things in the bill that must be fixed.

The people who have written letters are concerned about research into embryonic stem cell research and human cloning. They are saying that if they are to support the bill there will have to be changes. In fact they clearly are saying that if they do not get these amendments, then their elected representatives should be voting against this bill. I assure the House and I assure them that if these amendments are not passed we will indeed vote against the bill.

As to the specific motions in Group No. 6, Motion No. 93 deletes a clause which would allow a proposed regulation to be altered without laying it before Parliament. Think about that. This is supposedly important enough, and it certainly is, to bring this matter before Parliament and to have great debate. Obviously there is a great deal of controversy, yet the government is saying that, once passed, it can alter it. In other words, it can change something and it does not have to bring it back before Parliament.

Think about how concerned Canadians are now with the things that are brought here and that have received their the input. In essence this is what the government is saying to Canadians. The government members hear their concerns but rather than dealing with those concerns by making the amendments, amendments which the main body of the Liberal Party supports and which have been brought forward in response to the desires of Canadians, they are going to ram the bill through. Then they are going to ensure that there is a provision in the bill so future changes can be made without having the hassle of bringing it before Parliament and subjecting themselves to input of the Canadian people. It is despicable that anyone would even consider such a thing.

Motion No. 94 removes the ability of the governor in council to make regulations about transgenics. By this time I am sure everyone is well aware of what transgenics are. That is a mixture of human and animal genes. Perhaps a few cabinet ministers would have to go along with this, but why would anyone in the House or anyone else want to make a specific regulation that says that the government can make regulations or change things in a bill, which deals with such an incredibly controversial thing as transgenics, without it coming before Parliament and without subjecting it to the scrutiny of the Canadian people? With what I have just said, we probably have the answer.

I hope all members in the House will say that they have had a lot of input from Canadians on the bill and that they have listened carefully. I hope they will inject their own thoughts into this. I hope the Liberals will strongly consider that a lot of these amendments have come from within their own caucus and that they are supported widely by other people in Parliament from other parties and by Canadians. Do not turn away the people of Canada who are concerned about what is in the bill or what should be in the bill and is not.

I am thankful for this opportunity. I hope this debate continues until people realize that we have to pass something that we can all live with, something that respects human dignity. As the title of the bill says, it is an act respecting human reproduction. Let us ensure that the respect is indeed in this bill.

● (1320)

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill C-13 again today. We have tried to address most of the groupings of amendments as they have come forward. As the previous speaker said, interest in the bill has been quite high. There have been times when we have dealt with legislation that does not really catch the imagination or interest of Canadians, but this bill certainly has.

We have all received hundreds of letters, e-mails, phone calls and visits on this issue and have been presented with a wide variety of concerns. I had a letter this morning from a constituent in Lethbridge who had picked up on the different amendments and had an opinion on them. I appreciate that input. As we go through this process, it is important that Canadians have that ability.

This legislation was tabled, went to committee where the best witnesses on the subject were brought forward. Our former leader, Preston Manning, headed up the issue for our party. He brought some people together on Parliament Hill, and I was able to get to that meeting. It was an enlightening experience trying to understand a bit more about what this was all about. We are not all experts on everything and we have to learn, along with everybody else, about some of the subjects with which we deal.

In committee experts are brought together and different positions are put forward. The committee listens and comes up with amendments. However there is a possibility that everything which has been done in committee can be changed by the cabinet. Regulations can be created, things can be reversed and a different scope put on the legislation other than what was originally intended by the House and by Canadians in general. Hopefully we will vote for what we think is right and for what our constituents believe is right.

A lot of the amendments in this group deal with some concerns. One concern is the fact that the government is trying to take away the powers of committees and the House and is giving it back to cabinet. If we have a bill in front of us, it concerns me when I am told that the regulations will be done after the bill is passed. That is not good enough.

Some regulations deal with how the legislation will be implemented, how it will be handled and how it will be interpreted. In the past we have sometimes run into trouble with the legislation that has come out of the House. It has been challenged in the courts, that is, interpreted freely by judges as not being tight enough. It is very important that the House consider the bill and the regulations in their entirety. It is important that we do not give the parameters to cabinet to make changes after.

Motion No. 92 in the Group No. 6 deals directly with equivalency agreements that the health minister must negotiate with the provinces. It is very important that this be addressed and that some kind of reasonable requirements be put on this. In the past, results of negotiations between the provinces and the health minister have not always been good.

We know this has been a long time coming. As recently as a few days ago, the first ministers were in town to try to come to agreement with the Prime Minister on health care. This almost fell apart, and many of them went away very unhappy. It is important that this aspect be addressed. It is important that the health minister be given some reasonable limits on coming up with these agreements with the provinces because that is critical.

It is important that the public be consulted on these equivalency agreements with the provinces with regard to transparency and accountability. It is important that the public be allowed to look at the text of draft agreements. All of this is a very important part of the whole public debate on allowing Canadians to look into this process to ensure the government does the right thing and that it comes up with legislation that is meaningful and acceptable.

● (1325)

Motion No. 93 would entirely delete clause 65. It would remove the power that the governor in council would have to make regulations. We are saying to take out clause 65 and take away the power that the bill would give to cabinet to make regulations.

This regulation would actually be the vehicle for which the bill would be put into law. We have some serious concerns with that and so we support the amendment to take out clause 65. Subclause 65 (bb) would allow the governor in council to exempt controlled activities from the provision of the act through regulation. If it is in the act, why on earth would we want to give the cabinet the power to exempt some of these controlled activities?

Motion No. 95 was again an amendment that deals with the shift in power to the cabinet by the governor in council.

Motion No. 98 is a minor amendment specifying that regulations should be referred to the appropriate committee of each House, rather than an appropriate committee, which is just a small thing, but another part that is important is that regulations "shall" be referred to a committee, an appropriate committee of the House of Commons.

It was something that we fought for and won at committee. Previous wordings said regulations "may". This is really important as we go through legislation. The word "shall" implies that it should be done, but "may" that it may not be done, it does not have to be. But when it is changed to "shall" then that is something that the legislation says must be done. We fought for that and are encouraged that it is here. We are going to support that. It was brought forward by the health minister. Anytime we can enhance accountability and transparency in the House, it is a step in the right direction.

Motion No. 103 was brought forward by the member for Yellowhead and would delete clause 71 which would allow the grandfathering of controlled activities until the day fixed by the regulation. That indicates that anything that is happening can be grandfathered until the legislation is implemented.

As currently worded the clause would allow scientists to engage in a controlled activity once before the act takes effect and thereby avoid licensing requirements and prosecution provisions. We were concerned that this would create a huge stampede to start into one of the areas, embryonic stem cell research for example, that the bill is looking to control in some way, and then all of these activities would have to be grandfathered.

We are saying controlled activities should not be grandfathered because there are important reasons why controlled activities, otherwise requiring licences and violations, are subject to prosecution. That is because they involve the creation and manipulation of human life.

That is where we get back to the issue that is important in the bill, that the dignity and sanctity of human life be respected throughout this entire process.

I suppose many of the letters or comments I have received on the bill are aimed at that specific item almost entirely. At the very best the bill should specify a time limit, not just be open ended on grandfathering and not leave it to the regulation.

Motion No. 105 does the same thing. It refers to Motion No. 103 and it is similar to Motion No. 104. But again, it says that grandfathered activities should require a licence if there are changes in the scope or purpose of such activities. That just makes sense. If somebody has been doing a certain type of research and all of a sudden that research is expanded or changed in scope, just to get underneath the grandfathering window, then we need to address that issue.

There are some positive things in the bill. The fact that assisted human reproduction would be more tightly regulated, making it safer and more effective for prospective parents, is good.

● (1330)

Some of the things that need to be addressed are being addressed, but we believe that there is a lot that needs to be taken into account. Regarding the amendments that we are bringing forward it is important that they be looked at and considered, and not just put aside by the majority vote that the government has on these issues.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-13. We support a number of the aspects of the bill. We fully support bans on reproductive and therapeutic cloning, animal-human hybrids, sex selection, germ line alteration, buying and selling embryos and paid surrogacy. We support an agency to regulate the sector although we do have several changes that we would like to make to it.

The health and well-being of children born through assisted human reproduction must be given a priority. Human individuality and diversity and the integrity of the human genome must be preserved and protected. We support the recognition that the health and well-being of children born through assisted human reproduction should be given priority.

The health committee has already come up with a ranking of whose interests should have a priority in decision making around assisted human reproduction and related research. The first priority should be to children born through assisted human reproduction. Next should be the adults participating in assisted human reproduction procedures. Finally, in the list of priorities would be the researchers and physicians who conduct the research.

While the preamble recognizes the priority of assisted human reproduction offspring, other sections of the bill fail to meet this standard. Children born through donor insemination or from donor eggs are not given the right to know the identity of their biological parents. The bill's preamble does not provide an acknowledgement of human dignity or respect for human life. The bill is ultimately connected with the creation of human life and yet there is no overarching recognition of the principles of respect for human life. This is a grave deficiency.

Our party's minority report recommended that the final legislation clearly recognize the human embryo as human life and that the statutory declaration include the phrase respect for human life. We believe that the preamble and the mandate of the proposed agency should be amended to include reference to the principle of the respect for life.

There are a number of amendments that have been proposed and it is worth reviewing them and going through the amendments one after another.

Motion No. 92 would place reasonable requirements on the equivalency agreements where the health minister negotiates with the provinces. This amendment was a health committee recommendation in "Assisted Human Reproduction: Building Families". Transparency and accountability in this area are needed. The public must be consulted on draft agreements and the text of such agreements must be made public.

Motion No. 93 would delete subclause 66(5) which says that if a proposed regulation is being altered after initial tabling it need not be laid before Parliament once again. Since the regulations initially must come before Parliament, it is inconsistent that the amended regulations need not come to Parliament once again.

Motion No. 94 would remove the ability of the governor in council to make regulations respecting transgenics, which are animal human combinations.

Motion No. 96 is a procedural amendment respecting a Canadian Alliance amendment passed in committee. Our amendment, now clause 15, specifies that a licensee who transfers an in vitro embryo to another licensee shall notify the agency of the transfer in accordance with the regulations. The minister's amendment follows from our amendments mentioned in accordance with the regulations.

Motion No. 98 is rather a minor amendment specifying reference to "the" appropriate committee of each House rather than to "an" appropriate committee, minor but still necessary. What is important is that the regulations shall be referred to a committee of the House of Commons, something that our party has fought for and won at committee. Previous wording said regulations may be referred to House committees. We have fought for enhanced accountability and transparency.

● (1335)

Motion No. 99 would make minor changes to the wording of the French version of clause 66.

Motion No. 100 would require equivalency agreements to be renewed whenever there is a change in any relevant federal or provincial legislation. This seems appropriate and reasonable. For example, if Bill C-13 is ever amended to enable children conceived through donor insemination to know the identity of their biological parents, any equivalency agreements that may be in place should also be renewed to reflect such a change.

Motion No. 103 would delete clause 71 which would allow the grandfathering of controlled activities until a day fixed by the regulations. As currently worded, this clause would allow scientists to engage in controlled activities once the act takes effect, thereby avoiding licensing requirements and prosecution provisions. This could result in a stampede toward controlled activities, for example, embryonic research, before the bill takes effect.

The current clause would allow the governor in council to exempt controlled activities through regulations. Controlled activities must not be grandfathered. There are important reasons why controlled activities otherwise require licences and why violations are subject to prosecution because they involve the creation and manipulation of human life.

At the very least, the bill should specify a time limit on grandfathering and not leave it simply to the regulations.

Motion No. 104 specifies that the grandfathered activities should only be permitted as long as such activities have no change in scope or purpose. The intent here is to prevent researchers from changing the scope of activities after they have qualified for grandfathering under the bill.

Motion No. 105 is similar to Motion No. 104, but adds a requirement that grandfathered activities should require a licence if there are changes to the scope or purpose of such activities.

Motion No. 106 specifies that controlled activities should only be permitted for 90 days after the coming into force of this act. A 90 day limit on grandfathering is far superior to the open-ended "until a day fixed by the regulations" statement.

● (1340)

Embryonic research is ethically controversial and divides Canadians. Embryonic stem cell research would inevitably result in the death of the embryo, early human life. For many Canadians this violates the ethical commitment to the respect of human dignity, integrity and life.

An incontestable scientific fact is that an embryo is early human life. A complete DNA of an adult human is present at the embryo stage. Whether that life is owed protection is really what is at issue here. Embryonic research also constitutes an objectification of human life, where life becomes a tool which can be manipulated and destroyed for other, even ethical, ends. Adult stem cells are a safe, proven alternative to embryonic stem cells.

Sources of adult stem cells include: umbilical cord blood, skin tissue and bone tissue. Adult stem cells are a safe, proven alternative to embryonic stem cells. Adult stem cells are easily accessible. They are not subject to immune rejection and pose minimal ethical concerns. Embryonic stem cell transplants are subject to immune rejection because they are foreign tissues. Adult stem cells used for transplants are typically taken from one's own body.

Adult stem cells are being used today in the treatment of Parkinson's, leukemia, MS and other conditions. Embryonic stem cells have not been used in the successful treatment of a single person. Research should focus on this more promising and proven alternative.

Our minority report called for a three year prohibition on experiments with human embryos, corresponding with the first scheduled review of the bill. Bill C-13 says embryonic research can be undertaken if the agency is satisfied that such research is necessary.

During its review of draft legislation, the health committee recommended that such research should be permitted only if researchers can demonstrate that, "no other biological material can be used for the purpose of the proposed research with the promotion of healing therapies as its object".

I hope this important bill receives the utmost consideration and that due consideration and attention are given to the proposed amendments. The amendments are a very necessary part to our party voting in favour of the bill.

● (1345)

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, we are on Group No. 6 and the various amendments relating to that. I am not sure what I can add at this point to some of the comments already made but I do want to put some of my own thoughts into the bill.

First, I want to thank the member for Richmond—Arthabaska who was the member of the committee and our health critic at the time when the bill was introduced to the House. We then had a subsequent change in critic roles.

I was not around during the early stages of the bill when it was developed in committee. The committee travelled from one end of Canada to the other hearing expert testimony. It received ideas on what should be in a bill that is as controversial or complicated, which is probably a better word, as this bill which deals with assisted human reproductive technology.

It might be interesting for the House and the listening public to have a small sense of the history of the bill and how far back it reaches into the workings of Parliament. The response to this was a result of the Baird commission when it reported to the House of Commons in 1993.

As you were in the House at the time, Mr. Speaker, you will remember that the Baird commission was set up in the late 1980s under the government of Brian Mulroney. In fact, the wife of the current leader of the Progressive Conservative Party was a very important member of that commission. The commission did good work and as a result of that good work Bill C-47 was introduced in the House in 1996.

I do not have to remind you, Mr. Speaker, but that bill died on the Order Paper, which often happens around this place. Then, of course, after the election in 1997 a subsequent bill was introduced, Bill C-247, which basically was the same bill, but it failed the test of scrutiny and did not go any further.

Finally, in 2001, and that was when the member for Richmond—Arthabaska was our health critic, the bill was studied by committee and then reintroduced into the House as Bill C-56. However, with the prorogation of Parliament last fall, the bill had to be reintroduced again. Now we have it as Bill C-13.

The other interesting thing about the bill is that I do not think the government recognizes success when it has it within its grasp. Much of the good work that was done on Bill C-13 in committee has been objected to by the government. I will give some examples of that. I am talking about the member for Winnipeg North Centre who sits next to me and who represents the NDP in this place. She was the former health critic for her party.

I just want to give an example of how the government gets overtaken or consumed by its own sense of power and invincibility.

The member for Winnipeg North Centre worked very hard, as did the member for Yellowhead and the member for Mississauga South on the government side, to introduce thoughtful recommendations and motions at the committee stage which would have improved the bill.

One recommendation by the member for Winnipeg North Centre would have actually changed clause 26(8) to guarantee that the board of directors of the agency, which would control the bill, would have no pecuniary or proprietary interest in any business relating to the field of reproductive technologies. The wording for that amendment was based on other legislative initiatives that were very similar in make-up to the present bill.

● (1350)

The committee agreed to the member's amendment. However, despite the fact that the all party committee supported the amendment, when it came to the floor of the House of Commons at report stage the government eliminated that change. It over-powered the opposition and the thoughtful amendments put forward by various members of Parliament. Basically, the government used its power to defeat a logical amendment to the bill.

Not to stop there, the member put forth another amendment. In praise of that member and the hard work that she did, she put forth an amendment dealing with the agency that would oversee the regulatory side of the bill. The member said that the agency, which would consist of 13 members, should be made up of at least 50% women. The reason for that was that some of the biological aspects of the bill involved onerous procedures and medical procedures which had more to do with women than men. The committee agreed to the amendment she put forward and it was passed by the all party committee, only to be re-thought by the government and defeated here in the House in committee of the whole.

The government decided that it did not want it, that it would find a way to fix it and that it would find a way to control opposition to the bill in any respect.

In terms of clarifying the bill, in March 2002 tensions arose between the standing committee and the federal funding agency over embryonic stem cell research. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research, which distributes about $580 million annually for medical research, revealed their own guidelines for funding research on aborted fetal tissue and surplus embryos. This is important. CIHR announced that they would accept proposals involving stem cell research on fertility clinic created embryos as long as the owners had given consent based on full information.

This is where it ran afoul of the committee. The president of CIHR told the committee that the health minister was aware of their guidelines indicating that they were being used to anticipate public reaction for the proposed bill. Faced with charges that they were trying to circumvent Parliament, the CIHR then said that they would not distribute money until April 2003, allowing time for debate and the passing of the legislation. They also promised to change their guidelines if they did not match what was contained in the final legislation.

It is again the minister and her department pre-empting what might happen here on the floor of the House of Commons, assuming the bill will take a particular shape or form before it is passed by the House of Commons.

This fits in nicely with the point that I was making to you, Mr. Speaker, on Friday in terms of contempt of the House and the principles on which debate takes place in the House and what debate is all about. Basically, it is a violation of the rights of the House of Commons. It is a contempt for the House, assuming the bill will take a particular shape before it is passed by this place.

● (1355)

That is the situation in which the government now finds itself. I think many of the parties on this side of the House, at the initial stages of the bill, were prepared to support it. However, after witnessing the heavy hand of government, I think they have had a change of heart, particularly the party sitting next to ours at this end of the Chamber. I think I can say the same for the Bloc and certainly the same for the Canadian Alliance.

When the government tries to stifle intelligent debate on the floor of the House of Commons, assuming a bill will take a particular form or shape where the substance of the bill will only be what the government wants, there is something wrong with the process. It is not the first time the minister has displayed that kind of contempt for the House of Commons.

My argument would be that it should be a free vote in this place on a bill that is as controversial as this one. Our party will be having a free vote on this bill because there are some areas of conscience, ethics and morality. It would be interesting to see what would happen on the government side of the Chamber if all of its members were allowed to vote freely on the merits of the bill. I think we would be surprised at the outcome.

Let us take a look at some of the members on the other side. The member for Mississauga West brought forward very thoughtful recommendations on the bill on how it can be improved so that outcomes are improved. One of the recommendations that came from the other side of the House was on how the bill should be split. I think most of us would have no problem with that. I think it would make it a lot easier for some of us to support the bill if it were split. It was recommended by at least one party, if not two parties in the House, that it would be desirable if the bill were split between prohibited activities, like cloning, for example, and controlled activities, like embryonic stem cell research.

If we were to look at it from the government's point of view, it would be caving into the opposition. It certainly could not do that but that is a very thoughtful recommendation and one that government members should entertain. If they did that we would find that more people on this side of the House would be more supportive of the bill. Of course, that would not be in keeping with the government's record of engaging parliamentarians on both sides of the House, listening to thoughtful debate and responding accordingly.

We will be having a free vote on this. I look forward to second reading and I look forward to debating further amendments in Group No. 7.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

MARCEL DESJARDINS

Ms. Liza Frulla (Verdun—Saint-Henri—Saint-Paul—Pointe Saint-Charles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise today to announce to the House that Marcel Desjardins, vice president and deputy editor of *La Presse*, died yesterday of a heart attack.

Over his career, Mr. Desjardins contributed to *Le Droit*, Radio-Canada, *Montréal-Matin*, and *La Presse*. Everyone agreed that he displayed exceptional skills that made him a key player on the team and also a role model for the entire journalism community.

The media world is in shock. My colleagues join me in offering our sincere condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.

[*English*]

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the narrow, unforgiving stretch of highway between Summerland and Penticton in the federal riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla claimed yet another life yesterday.

Canadian Alliance MPs, along with locally elected officials and chambers of commerce, have long called for much needed improvements to this section of the highway.

The federal Liberal government must end years of delay and move ahead with its investment program for nationally designated highways. The federal Liberals take in $1 billion a year in fuel taxes in B.C. alone, while spending barely $300 million on highway improvements across the whole country.

Highway 97 is the primary highway of the Okanagan Valley, serving a population of well over 200,000. It is one of the great highways of North America and serves as an important trade corridor to British Columbia.

It is time that the federal government recognizes the need for a national highway investment program, recognizes the importance of Highway 97 and designates it as part of the national highway system.

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● (1400)

APPOINTMENT TO THE SENATE

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the newest senator from Manitoba, Senator Maria Chaput. With this appointment, Senator Chaput becomes the first franco Manitoban woman to sit in the Senate.

For over 30 years, Ms. Chaput has been a prominent leader in the French Canadian community and has received a number of distinctions for her exemplary community involvement.

I would like to welcome the new senator to the Manitoba caucus and to the women's caucus. I know that she will play a vital role in advancing the views of francophone women from the west.

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[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Quebec, Bernard Landry—who was not elected as such—has been griping for several months, and did so especially loudly on Wednesday night in Ottawa. However, Quebeckers suspect he is not the least bit unhappy with how things have turned out regarding the new Canadian action plan on health. The plan will provide improved access to doctors and nurses as well as other health professionals at all times, more post-operative home care, less waiting time for access to diagnostic equipment and assistance for patients with high drug costs.

The people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue, James Bay and Nunavik thank the Prime Minister of Canada, who has demonstrated flexibility so that patients can receive quality health care in the coming years.

S. O. 31

[*English*]

IRAQ

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, decisions of historical significance concerning Iraq are being made these days, the latest being the unreached consensus at NATO where three countries, Germany, France and Belgium, blocked U.S. efforts to send defensive Patriot missiles and airborne warning systems to Turkey in case of war with Iraq.

The Government of Canada, as a member of NATO, has a very difficult decision to make as to which side to support. It seems to me that it is in Canada's long term interest to side with France, Germany and Belgium so as to emphasize the importance of taking every possible step to continue efforts toward a political solution and avert war in Iraq.

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in commemorating Black History Month, we in the Canadian Alliance would like to pay tribute to the enormous contributions of black people in Canada, people like Lincoln Alexander, Canada's first black MP, cabinet minister and Lieutenant-Governor, and the current member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, our first female black MP. These people and their families often endured much in racism and obstacles to fulfill their dreams. Their road was steeper than ours.

Let Black History Month be not only a tribute but a challenge: a challenge to stamp out racism and discrimination against anyone and ensure that people are judged on the basis of merit, not on the colour of their skin, and a challenge to act in the defence and protection of people abroad, especially in Africa, where people are dying from conflict, AIDS, starvation, and a host of other man-made and preventable problems. More than 50 million will die on that continent alone in the near future.

We in the Canadian Alliance salute the black people in Canada and challenge all of us to come to the help of the underprivileged and oppressed everywhere.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Tony Valeri (Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the members of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy's brownfields task force on the release of its long awaited strategy for Canada.

Brownfields are abandoned, idle or underused industrial and commercial lands that are so contaminated that redevelopment is unlikely.

We know that municipalities are already doing their part. In Hamilton, for example, the city has made progress on implementing its brownfield strategy, but more must be done.

Canada's cash starved municipalities need help from Ottawa. I urge the federal government to implement the report's recommendations and do its part to unlock the potential of these sites.

Redevelopment of brownfield sites creates jobs and an expanded tax base and improves quality of life. It is about leveraging public and private funds to energize our cities. Our G-7 partners are turning their plans into action. We know what the federal role can be, so let us get on with the job.

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● (1405)

[*Translation*]

MARCEL DESJARDINS

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, early yesterday, distinguished journalist Marcel Desjardins passed away suddenly. He was known as a hard worker, passionate about news, driven by a love for his profession, a hard-nosed journalist, a man of integrity and, above all, one committed to freedom of expression.

At work and elsewhere, people said he was motivated by a belief in a better society.

On Radio-Canada yesterday, many of those who knew him spoke of his conscientiousness, his respect for teamwork and his generosity.

For the past several years, he had worked at *La Presse*, where he became vice-president and assistant publisher. He started his career at *Le Droit* in 1967. In 1970, he joined *La Presse* and, in 1974, he was named bureau chief for the National Assembly of Quebec. In 1979, he became chief news editor of Radio-Canada's television network.

To his family, the staff at *La Presse* and his fellow journalists, the members of the Bloc Quebecois extend their condolences.

* * *

[*English*]

NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION CENTRE

Mr. Paul Harold Macklin (Northumberland, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to bring to the attention of all hon. members the outstanding work being undertaken by the National Crime Prevention Centre.

This organization provides funding to groups across Canada that strive to make our communities safer places to work and live. Through its four main programs, the business action program on crime prevention, the community mobilization program, the crime prevention investment fund, and the crime prevention partnership program, the NCPC is an integral part of our government's strategy to create a safe environment for all Canadians.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing the many community groups across Canada that have taken advantage of the National Crime Prevention Centre's outstanding programming. In combination with legislative initiatives, including those currently before the House, this initiative is critical in helping to protect Canadians and further our government's work to stop crime before it starts.

* * *

MEMBER FOR LASALLE-ÉMARD

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there is more evidence for the existence of sasquatches than there is for the existence of the member for LaSalle—Émard. Every once in a while a hunter in the wilds of British Columbia will come across a footprint in the snow or glimpse a shadow in the woods that points to the existence of that hairy, ape-like creature. I am talking about the sasquatch here.

Oh sure, there has been that odd report of a figure resembling the former finance minister disappearing into a stuffed chair in the Rideau Club, a suppressed laugh, a tinkling of a glass, but nothing confirmed.

If the member for LaSalle—Émard, who according to legend wants to be prime minister, if he actually existed, surely he would have stated a position on the war in Iraq or on the health accord or his own ties to the failed firearms registry fiasco, because that is what a real live leader would do.

Let us stop this foolish talk about the former finance minister. Like sasquatches, or the Prime Minister's legacy, he simply does not exist.

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[*Translation*]

MEMBER FOR PONTIAC—GATINEAU—LABELLE

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have learned that our hon. colleague from Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle has been hospitalized.

The member for Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle experienced chest pains, and we are anxiously awaiting news of his condition following a battery of tests. Our hon. colleague is at the Centre hospitalier du Pontiac, in his riding, in Shawville.

On behalf of all the members of the Liberal caucus, I would like to wish him a prompt recovery, and I invite all my hon. colleagues in the House to join me in offering our support to him, his wife Sandy, and their children.

I know how determined the member for Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle is, and I am sure that we will see him back here very soon.

* * *

[*English*]

TERRORISM

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my outrage at the failure of our criminal justice system to adequately punish a man responsible for one of the greatest acts of terrorism before September 11.

Eighteen years ago, Inderjit Singh Reyat provided the materials necessary to blow an Air India flight out of the air, killing all 329 passengers. One hour prior to the explosion, he was responsible for killing two airport staff. For killing two people, he received ten years. For killing 329 passengers, he received five years. That works out to five and a half days in jail for every life that was lost.

To suggest that less than five years is a just sentence for the murder of 329 people makes a mockery of our legal system. To release an ideological murderer on parole after three years is not justice but a farce.

I urge the government to establish a board of inquiry to determine how our legal system has failed our reasonable standard of justice and public safety.

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● (1410)

[*Translation*]

LES VOIX MAGIQUES

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the magnificent town of La Tuque, located in northern Mauricie on the bank of the Saint-Maurice River, may seem isolated but it certainly is not. This town, surrounded by lakes and mountains, fields and forests has a population that is known for its energy and its many talents.

This corner of the world, birthplace of the renowned Quebecois poet, Félix Leclerc, continues to distinguish itself. A good example is the Voix Magiques troop and its musical comedy *Sur les ailes d'un rêve*, which is enjoying major success everywhere it tours.

I would like to congratulate Sylvie Loiselle, the troop's artistic and musical director and all the artists involved in this highly successful production. And of course I must mention the patron of honour, Gaston Fortin, mayor of La Tuque, who must be very proud of his town.

Bravo to all. Keep the tradition of your fine talents alive for all of us to discover.

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[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Raymond Bonin (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian industry can meet the challenge in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and remain competitive in global markets. INCO Limited is doing it and has established itself as an industry leader.

In 2001, INCO successfully reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 8% from 1990 levels. In other words, the company has already met and surpassed Kyoto targets. The INCO experience clearly demonstrates that sound economic policy is not simply good public relations. It is good business with real benefits for the bottom line.

While reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the company has increased production, lowered energy consumption and remained competitive in global markets. As INCO officials readily admit, improving environmental policy has strengthened the company while making our environment safer.

I trust that the government will give credit where credit is due and properly reward industry leaders like INCO.

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CANADA CUSTOMS AND REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of National Revenue stated that CCRA's 5,000 auditors, 1,000 investigators and a special enforcement unit of 175 officers are doing their job and doing it well for Canadians. Nothing could be farther from the truth and that minister and her predecessor know it.

When I receive constituents' calls about CCRA, I tell them immediately to record their phone calls, the only department I say that for. It is absolutely important because CCRA will lie and present it as evidence. It is the only department that when I put in an application for information, I make sure that I actually have it returned. It is the only department of this House where there is absolutely no control by the minister and no inspection by the minister. It has run rampant. It runs over the rights of Canadians on a daily basis.

* * *

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow Ottawa's Black History Month committee will hold its fourth annual reconciliation day in Ottawa. At that time a tribute will be paid to Canada at a celebration at the National Library and Archives of Canada.

Tomorrow, February 12, marks the first anniversary of a very important milestone in the history of humanity and the culture of Canada. On February 12, 2002, the United Nations ban on the use of children in armed conflict came into force.

A tribute will be paid to Canada for being the first nation to ratify this optional protocol to the convention on the rights of the child. This treaty prohibits and seeks to eliminate the use of children under 18 in armed hostilities, a practice the ILO calls one of the most extreme forms of child labour.

* * *

TERRORISM

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Inderjit Singh Reyat was sentenced yesterday to five years in prison after pleading guilty to 329 counts of manslaughter in connection with the 1985 Air India bombing.

Reyat has served 10 years in a British prison after being found guilty in connection with a bomb that killed two baggage handlers at Tokyo's Narita airport one hour before the Air India plane exploded on the way to England from Canada. At the time, the Air India bombing was the world's worst act of aviation terrorism and it remains the largest mass murder in Canadian history.

After the most expensive and lengthy criminal investigation in Canadian history, where is the justice? For 17 years there has been no closure to this matter for the families of the 329 victims of the bombing. Yesterday's decision will do nothing to relieve their pain and suffering. Their wounds continue to remain open and bleed.

* * *

● (1415)

COMMENDATION FOR BRAVERY

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Richmond, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to congratulate 32 British Columbians who were honoured last week with a commendation for bravery in a ceremony at the Vancouver RCMP headquarters.

The recipients included eight civilians and 24 police constables who showed exceptional courage in the face of robberies, fires and attempted suicides. These 32 individuals who put themselves in harm's way in order to save the lives of others are truly heroes. These individuals went beyond the call of duty, entering a submerged vehicle to rescue a drowning woman, subduing armed suspects, rescuing a woman who had been shot by her husband, preventing suicides and convicting sex offenders.

I ask the House to join me in sending our congratulations and our thanks to these brave individuals and all others like them.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, over the last few months reports have been circulating of losses on GST fraud of up to $1 billion. The revenue minister has denied this, but case after case has been leaking out. The minister has not been exactly forthcoming with information, but instead will only give us information on actual convictions for GST fraud.

I will ask the minister a very precise question. Since 1994 how much has the government actually paid out in GST rebates which it believes were fraudulent and which it has not been able to collect?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to provide the leader of the official opposition with the following information.

Over the past six years the courts have identified $25.4 million in fraudulent GST claims. Further, there are 78 cases presently before the courts and the total amount of money in play is approximately $80 million. We cannot give exact figures because until the courts make a final decision, we will not know what the actual numbers are.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is not good enough to say "the courts". The government and the minister should know the answer to this question.

We would not be fishing for this answer if there had not been a backroom deal between the CCRA and Treasury Board to cover up this information for years. This is disgraceful.

I will ask the minister again, can she answer the question? If she cannot answer the question on how much the government believes has been paid out in fraudulent GST rebates and not recovered, is it because she does not know the answer or she does not want to answer? Is it incompetence or is it contempt for taxpayers?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my actions and my words are based on facts, on rigorous audits and examinations. I will say once again to the leader that up to this point in time over the last six years, $25.4 million has been identified by the courts. Of the 78 cases presently before the courts, the total in play is $80 million.

I ask him, where is his billion? It is speculation. There are no facts. He should either put up or not talk so much.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we are never going to shut up until we get the answers to these questions.

Let me move this subject slightly to explore links between the latest GST rebate fraud and terrorism. The sum of $22 million of taxpayers' money was funnelled through a credit union run by Ripudaman Singh Malik. Malik has since been charged with 329 counts of murder and conspiracy in the Air India bombings.

How long has the government known about this link? Has anyone in the government—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Revenue.

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada believes in the rule of law. In this place we make the laws. It is not in the court of CBC or in the court of public opinion that people are tried.

I said to the member before that the $22 million presently before the courts is included in the $80 million in total. I say to him further that this matter is presently before the courts and he should allow the courts to do their job.

● (1420)

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there are reports that in Halifax, $.2 million is missing; Calgary, $.3 million; Kamloops, $.5 million; Kitchener, $1.5 million; Montreal, $4 million; Port Coquitlam, $8.5 million; Milton, $20 million; and Surrey, $22 million; over $57 million is missing due to GST fraud. In the revenue minister's world this money has not been stolen; in the real world it has. This just may be the tip of the iceberg.

Why will the minister not come clean and give us the complete losses due to GST fraud?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the member is listening. I said clearly this afternoon that at this point in time, the courts have identified the number of $25.4 million which is the number over the last six years. Of the cases presently before the courts, we believe it is somewhere around $80 million that is in play.

If the member has other information, I would really like to have it. I know that my information is based on fact and that his is based on hypothesis and speculation.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, these figures are coming out from the minister's own department, so the minister clearly does not know.

The minister has said that $25.4 million accounts only for GST fraud cases that have been identified by the courts. Surely the minister's own department has the capability to identify fraud losses on its own.

Other than those cases that actually have made it to court, does the minister have any idea how much has been lost to GST fraud since 1994, yes or no?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot speculate on that which is still under investigation. Until charges are laid, we do not have a number. That is why I say that the cases before the courts, which total about $80 million, is our very best estimate. It will be the courts that finally decide because that is the way it works in this country. We investigate; when we have proof, charges are laid; and ultimately it is the courts that decide.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IRAQ

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a Security Council resolution explicitly authorizing military intervention in Iraq ought to be a prerequisite to any consideration in the House of deployment of Canadian troops, but the government will not budge.

Canadian participation in a war on Iraq ought to be voted on by MPs, but the government will not let them.

While the inspection process is working, and should be supported, are not all these roadblocks proof that, as far as Iraq is concerned, the government is already locked into a logic of war?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. We were among the first to state very clearly that a Security Council resolution was required. Everyone will remember that, back in July, August and September, there was a strong possibility of the Americans and the British intervening directly without the Security Council.

We have maintained our position, however. There has been a Security Council resolution. Now we are waiting for the report from Mr. Blix on Friday, and then we will see.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is showing no leadership whatsoever on the international scene to give peace a chance. On the domestic scene he is thumbing his nose at the role members need to play, in order to have his pro-war stance prevail. His message is clear: the Bloc Quebecois' motion must be defeated so that troops can be deployed without another resolution and without a vote in the House.

Does the Prime Minister realize that, with all the foregoing, a vote against the Bloc Quebecois motion is tantamount to a blank cheque in favour of war?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. Our position is very clear. We are working as hard as we can to ensure peace. We hope that Saddam Hussein will provide Mr. Blix with the necessary information so that all this can be settled peacefully.

But the United Nations charter contains rules that must be followed. We are insisting that all parties follow the rules of the UN.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as long as the Prime Minister continues to deny the House the opportunity to vote on sending troops to Iraq, he is preventing members from representing their constituents as they should.

Is it not an inherent responsibility in our roles as elected officials to vote on an issue as fundamental as whether or not we should participate in a war? Does the Prime Minister of Canada have so much to fear that he wants to prevent members of Parliament from fulfilling their role, an important role that is rightly theirs?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has the confidence of the House and is responsible for making these decisions.

Last week we said that we would allow a vote immediately following a decision, if there is a decision. Such a vote is possible because the opposition has 14 days it can use to move votable motions. If it wants to use one of these days immediately following a decision, which I hope will never have to be made, then the whole House would have the opportunity to vote.

However, in theory, it is the government that is responsible for making decisions. We were elected by Canadians to run the affairs of the nation. This is an executive power which we must exercise.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for the Prime Minister, we are having trouble following him. We will be voting shortly on a motion to propose a vote in the House the day after a Cabinet decision.

The government has told us it is against the motion. The Prime Minister just now said the exact opposite. Could we know when the Prime Minister is telling us what the government really thinks?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member just said that they want a vote after the government makes a decision. That is exactly what we said last week and what I said a moment ago. Once there has been a decision, the opposition may move a vote of non-confidence or approval and the members can have their say.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I say to the Prime Minister through you that a Prime Minister who had the confidence of the House would put down his own motion and allow people to vote on it in the House and not depend on the opposition.

I ask the Prime Minister, is he aware that the Canadian military liaison team in Tampa, Florida, has followed their American counterparts to Qatar? Why has the decision been taken, which brings Canada closer to military involvement in Iraq before Mr. Blix's final report, before a second resolution of the Security Council, and before any meaningful vote in the House of Commons?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have had people in Tampa, Florida, for more than 16 months planning the activities for Afghanistan, the protection of the waters in that part of the world and so on. It is part of the ongoing discussions we are having with the people participating in the war against terrorism in that part of the world.

The activities were in Tampa and now they have been transferred to another city. As we want to be part of the planning, not to be left out when we have troops in that part of the world at this time, we feel that it is important—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona.

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GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they did not just move up to Miami Beach, they moved all the way to Qatar.

I want to ask a question of the Minister of Industry. He will know that there is a great deal of concern among Canadians that they are being gouged at the pumps with the anticipation of war as a pretext for a huge increase in the price of gas.

I want to ask the Minister of Industry to please not fob this onto the provinces, but tell us what plan the federal government has to ensure that Canadians are not taken advantage of at the pumps during this time?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of factors about which the member knows that lead to increased oil prices, including exceptionally frigid weather in North America and northern Europe, the uncertain situation in the Middle East, and the situation with the oil sector in South America.

We are very watchful of anti-competitive steps on the part of the oil industry, but the regulation of retail prices is a provincial responsibility as the member well knows. If he thinks prices should be regulated, that is where to look.

* * *

IRAQ

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, in 1991 the present Prime Minister's position on Canadian troops in the gulf was that we should send them, but once the shooting started, Canada should bring its troops home.

He has now sent Canadian troops to work with the Americans in Qatar. There would be a contingency plan for the role those Canadians would play in the event the United States acted against Iraq outside the United Nations auspices.

What is the contingency plan? Is it the Prime Minister's plan that those Canadian troops would come home?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have troops in that part of the world at this time. We have ships, planes, and soldiers working in Afghanistan, and fighting terrorism in that part of the world.

The planning groups have been transferred to that part of the world to be closer to the action and the soldiers who are there. We felt it was important that we still be part of the planning there.

Our position is very clear. It is the same as that of the government of the day in 1991, that there shall be no war outside of the umbrella of the United Nations. That was the opposition—

● (1430)

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

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister continues to avoid answers on these questions. The House can only conclude it is because there is no plan in the government; it has no sense of what it is doing.

I want to make very clear to the Prime Minister that I am not asking him to divulge the details of any discussion in cabinet, but may I ask the Prime Minister, have contingency plans for a possible war against Iraq been presented to cabinet, either during today's meeting or at any time in the last few months?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know who is speaking for the Tory Party, whether it is Mr. Mulroney or him. Mr. Mulroney said this week that we should go to war and not pay attention to the UN at all.

I think the position of this party is the same as they had in 1991, which is that if there is to be a war, it has to be done with the authority of the United Nations.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, to increase the possibility of Saddam Hussein disarming, the Canadian Alliance has recommended predeploying forces as a deterrent to Saddam Hussein.

We now know that Canada has sent officers to the U.S. command post in Qatar. We are told that four frigates and possibly a destroyer will be deployed in the gulf related to the Iraq situation, not Afghanistan. Our forces are not just wandering over there on their own and they will not be there just for exercises.

Why does the government tell Canadians one thing about Iraq and then the government gives orders on the other side?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has pointed out, the movement to Qatar is merely a change in location for an operation that was ongoing for some time in Tampa.

As for the ships, they are committed to precisely the same mission as before; that is to say, the war against terrorism in Afghanistan. Their mission has not changed. Their enhanced role signifies Canada's determination to be a major force in the war against terrorism.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we are being told by insiders that Canada's forces are being sent there for double duty and that one side of those duties involves Iraq. The government is not only playing games with Canadians, but is also playing games with our allies.

I am just asking this straightforward and simple question, are the Liberals predeploying forces to the Middle East for the Iraq situation or not?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the hon. member might identify his so-called inside source because I can tell him that his source whoever he or she may be is absolutely wrong.

These forces are there solely and uniquely for Operation Enduring Freedom, which is the war against terrorism in Afghanistan. There is absolutely no commitment to Iraq at this time. Should that ever happen, it will only occur with United Nations support following a deliberate decision by the government.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we now know that the evidence that Great Britain provided to Colin Powell for his presentation before the UN was not worth much.

Yet the Prime Minister said that he was convinced by Powell's presentation, while the French President said that the evidence was not clear: nothing that justifies a war.

Will the Prime Minister admit that serious doubt remains, that his opinion differs from that of other heads of state, and that this doubt is, in itself, enough for him to exercise some restraint with regard to our participation in a war on Iraq?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has always been very clear on this. There is complete agreement to support the UN initiative and wait for Mr. Blix to give his report on February 14. That is how things stand. We will assess the situation. We have always been clear that it is essential to see what the inspection system put in place by the Security Council finds before reaching a decision. That is the responsible, logical position in this very complex situation.

● (1435)

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in our justice system, we are not used to sending someone to prison without having proof beyond all doubt. In Canada, in Quebec, we are innocent until proven guilty.

Is the Prime Minister not ignoring this fundamental principle, in preparing to participate in a war in which victims will be inevitable, based on questionable evidence and opinions that others do not share.

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the applicable law in this situation is resolution 1441. Resolution 1441, paragraph 4, stipulates that Saddam Hussein must cooperate fully with inspections.

Mr. Blix and American Secretary of State Colin Powell are both in agreement on this point. We need to wait until Friday to see what Mr. Blix says and not make false analogies in this regard.

* * *

[*English*]

AIR INDIA

Mr. Chuck Cadman (Surrey North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Inderjit Singh Reyat admitted to helping build the bomb that brought down Air India flight 182 in 1985 killing 329 people. For that he was sentenced to five years for manslaughter. That is about five and a half days for each life lost.

Canadian justice has hit a new low. Thousands of people around the world, the families, and the friends of the victims feel completely betrayed.

Why does the Minister of Justice continue to defend laws that allow this sort of travesty to continue?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question of Air India is, of course, a tragedy. The prosecution of that case is made by the attorney general of British Columbia. Since the case is still before the court the House and the Canadian population will understand that we cannot comment.

Mr. Chuck Cadman (Surrey North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in five years Reyat will be a free man. He will likely be paroled much sooner. He said that he did not know the bomb was intended to blow up a plane. He thought it was to be used on a car, a bridge or something heavy. Did he just assume that nobody would be in that car or on that bridge?

What message is the government sending to the world when in five years it will free a man convicted for participating in the terrorist deaths of 329 men, women and children?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is a tragedy and our hearts go out to the families of the victims of that tragedy.

The attorney general of British Columbia is responsible for the prosecution of that case. Since the case is still before the court the House and the Canadian public as a whole will understand that we cannot comment on such a case.

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[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, said the U.S. is prepared to act without the UN and NATO despite objections by some members, and that planning would continue without NATO if necessary.

Will the Prime Minister tell us if Canada agrees with the position of the U.S. Secretary of Defense?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I gather the hon. member is referring to the situation with Turkey, which is causing a crisis at NATO today.

My opinion and the opinion of this government is that it is the fundamental obligation of an alliance to defend its members. That is why it is very important for NATO countries to agree to defend Turkey, which is a member of our alliance.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by falling into a logic of war at NATO, and in the rest of the Iraqi issue, the federal government is undermining international institutions.

Does the Prime Minister realize that this attitude means that Canada is condoning a war without evidence and also undermining, even destroying, major international institutions?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): On the contrary Mr. Speaker, multilateral institutions such as NATO and the UN are extremely important to Canada. This crisis, this problem with Turkey, runs the risk of undermining NATO, which is a multilateral transatlantic institution of great importance to Canada.

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[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the capital tax is a bad tax because it discourages innovation. It was introduced by the Conservatives as a temporary tax to reduce the deficit. The deficit is long gone, but the capital tax is still here. It is still here because the former minister of finance kept it going.

I ask the Prime Minister, will he direct his current Minister of Finance to axe the tax?

● (1440)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there will be a budget in exactly seven days. I hope the member will be in the House to listen. The Minister of Finance will deal with his plans about taxation.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance could start by axing the capital tax.

As the former minister of industry, the finance minister knows the capital tax is bad for Canada. It discourages the exact type of investment we need to boost our lagging productivity. For the second year in a row the finance committee has called for this tax to be abolished.

I ask the Prime Minister again, will he direct the current Minister of Finance to assure the House he will follow through on this unanimous decision from the House of Commons finance committee?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance will do as we have done for the last 10 years. He will ensure that we have a balanced budget, that the deficit does not exist any more, that we have reduced taxes as we have by $100 billion over the last three years, and that we are in a very good position financially.

Next Tuesday, the member of Parliament will have the occasion to applaud again the good management of our—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Huron—Bruce.

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on December 5, 2002, in the House, the supplementary estimates were passed devoid of new money for the firearms program. Today, without that funding, the national gun registry continues to receive new registration forms.

Could the Minister of Justice tell the House from where the operational funds are coming?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, up until the approval of the supplementary estimates, we were moving with what we call cash management. We said that before Christmas. The program is running at minimum cost but we are able to fulfill our duty.

Of course it is a short term solution and we are sure that the House will support gun control and will support public safety when we vote on the supplementary estimates.

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CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The immigration minister recently asked Canadians to engage in a debate on the national identity cards which that minister supports. A number of the Liberal caucus members, including at least one cabinet minister, have indicated in response that they do not support them.

I wonder if the Prime Minister would take this opportunity to indicate to us and the Canadian people his position. Is he in favour of NIDs or not?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. This is likely the one of the most vital issues for the coming decade.

Like the Canadian population as a whole, the government has absolutely no problem with holding a debate on this matter. It is important in a democratic society to be able to discuss important issues.

When society loses $2.5 billion as a result of identity theft, I think it is important to raise some questions.

● (1445)

[*English*]

AMATEUR SPORTS

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Hockey Association now allows body checking as early as age nine. The changes were made after data indicated there was no evidence of additional injuries.

However, in view of the fact that the data analysis was wrong, that the CHA's research committee resigned en masse in protest of hitting at such a tender age and that at least one province, that of Quebec, does not allow hitting before the age of 14, does the minister responsible for amateur sport not think that the Canadian Hockey Association should be assessed a game misconduct in this issue?

Hon. Paul DeVillers (Secretary of State (Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada considers the safety of all our athletes as a number one priority. The executive director of the CHA has confirmed to me that the CHA has the same priority.

As a matter of fact, the CHA will be reviewing its decision at its annual meeting to be held in the month of May. However, only 13% of all boys between the ages of 9 and 10 are actually playing contact hockey presently.

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GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Revenue keeps referring to the 1,000 person investigative unit within CCRA as proof that she is doing all she can do to prevent GST fraud.

Of those 1,000 investigators, how many of them are actually focused exclusively on fighting GST fraud and how many of them are just simply working on general audit duties?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the member's information, we have 5,000 auditors doing general audit duties. We have 1,000 investigators, and included in the 1,000 investigators, we have 127 special investigators who are looking specifically at links to organized crime. The result of their efforts last year, in GST alone, resulted in an additional $850 million collected in GST.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, in 1995, Revenue Canada cancelled the GST enforcement service. This fraud squad, which was established by the Conservatives to avoid GST fraud, actually recovered millions and millions of dollars, that is, until the Liberals cancelled it.

What was the government thinking of when it cancelled the GST enforcement service?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member really is creating an incorrect impression. What happened in 1995 was that the GST unit and the tax investigation unit were combined to provide greater expertise. The result is that this past year we have seen double the number of prosecutions for GST fraud.

The decision to create a bigger and better unit has resulted in more investigations, more prosecutions and, in fact, a very good record in the court of successful cases.

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GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, when the dust settles on the next budget, many Canadians fear they will wake up to basically the same failed policy started by the former finance minister: things like a billion dollars wasted on the out of control gun registry; untold millions on the GST fraud; and, of course, the $11 billion spent on questionable corporate handouts, many of them to profitable corporations, many of which have close ties to the federal government.

Will the minister agree that now is the time for the federal government to get its act together and stop the handouts to corporate Canada?

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder what the point of the hon. member's question is. After all, when one considers the great success of the government with the elimination of the deficit, the reduction of the national debt and 560,000 new jobs last year alone, this is a government that works well.

Thanks to the hard work and sacrifices of Canadians, we have brought about an economic renaissance that is number one in the world.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): And none more, Mr. Speaker, closer than the friends of the current government.

Last week the Prime Minister explained how he found new money for the health care agreement. In speaking of the provinces, the Prime Minister said:

> They say that the money that we had promised three years ago to be new money this year is no more new money. We have not paid it yet and it's old new money versus new new monies. For me, new money is new money if paying in $5 or $10, it's the same money.

I am not sure what he meant by that but if he is seriously looking for new money to cut taxes, to help health care and so on, will he agree that cutting the $11 billion in corporate welfare is a good place to start?

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder what he finds so unclear. The reality is that the Prime Minister was very clear. He injected billions and billions of dollars to make sure that Canada's health care system will be accessible, high quality and provide the type of service that Canadians demand and deserve.

Now we just have to get the provinces to work hard and bring about positive change in the health care system.

[*Translation*]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Industry acknowledged that, in the past, the Competition Bureau did look into what was going on in the industry. The prices of gasoline have risen astronomically, and yet the minister is keeping his arms crossed and sloughing the problem off on the provinces.

How can the Minister maintain that the Competition Bureau cannot determine that there is collusion, when every day in every big city in Canada consumers see all the gas stations raising their prices at the same time, on the same day?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must insist that the hon. member respect provincial jurisdiction. Only the provinces have the authority under the constitution to regulate retail prices. That is the truth of the matter, and the member must respect the jurisdiction of the provinces.

● (1450)

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister ought to start by assuming his responsibilities, that would be a good start.

Does the minister realize that, by refusing to intervene on gasoline prices, he is also refusing to intervene on heating oil costs, thus leaving thousands of families at the mercy of the oil and gas companies?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, who is going to be the one to inform Premier Landry that we are going to stick our noses into his business? This is unacceptable.

At the federal level, we have jurisdiction over competition. We have a Competition Bureau. We are always prepared to address these issues. Regulating prices, however, is another matter. That is up to the provinces.

* * *

[*English*]

BORDER SECURITY

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, when the Americans raised the threat level to orange there were immediate tie-ups at the border and the Nexus lanes were temporarily closed.

This has many Canadian manufacturers very concerned about the long term access to their American markets and some are even contemplating moving down to the United States.

Given that one-third of the Canadian economy is dependent upon exports to the United States, why has the government been unable to assure our exporters access to their American markets?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as soon as we became aware of the orange alert we contacted our American partners and offered to assist them in any way we could to ensure that there was a heightened security.

We allocated additional resources to customs on the front line in Canada. I am pleased to say to the hon. member that, all things considered, the border over the weekend functioned well and it is functioning well now.

In a state of heightened alert I think everyone should expected there to be some delays because of heightened security.

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, despite the ministers claims, the Americans are becoming even more restrictive at the border, not less.

The proposed 24 hour requirement by the Americans is devastating to the Canadian auto industry, costing our economy billions of dollars and thousands of jobs.

Why has the government allowed its poor relationship with the United States government to jeopardize the Canadian economy and Canadian jobs?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, we have an excellent relationship with the Americans and have worked very hard on this smart border accord under the leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister and Mr. Ridge.

I also want to say to the member opposite that what she is talking about is a proposal by the Americans that has not yet taken effect. I would tell her that not only do we share concerns in wanting to see that the border functions effectively, but we are working very closely with all of those who have an interest in seeing that the border is secure and efficient because that is in the interests of both Canadians and Americans.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently we heard of the plight of members of the Canadian Forces who have been denied full benefits for injuries sustained in the line of duty. In particular, the issue relates to inequities in the insurance benefits available to senior officers and those available to more junior ranks.

I know the minister has wanted to correct this injustice. Could the minister tell the House what he intends to do about it?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it clearly is wrong to limit lump sum payments for dismemberment to those who hold the rank of colonel or above. There is no doubt about it, that is simply wrong. That is why I am extremely pleased to announce today that very soon such lump sum benefits for dismemberment will be available to all members of the Canadian Forces, irrespective of rank.

* * *

NATIONAL PARKS

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on January 20, the CFIA announced that two more Manitoba cattle farms had tuberculosis outbreaks. This is in addition to the six farms that already are under quarantine. In this new outbreak, 230 cattle will be destroyed, but guess what? No elk in the Riding Mountain National Park will be destroyed, even though they are the proven source of the tuberculosis.

Why is the heritage minister standing idly by and not eradicating TB from the Riding Mountain National Park elk herd?

● (1455)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Parks Canada, together with other stakeholders, has played an active role in the concrete measures that have been implemented to manage this complex problem.

[*English*]

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the plan is totally useless. It is not doing the job. The government's plan to reduce the elk herd through hunting licences is one way of trying to do it. However this year only 260 elk were taken by hunters. At that rate, the disease will never be eradicated.

Maybe we can get an answer from the agriculture minister. Does the Minister of Agriculture understand that Manitoba will never regain TB-free status unless the disease is eradicated from the wild elk herd?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working with the industry and with the province of Manitoba. We have developed a zone that will allow part of Manitoba to continue its TB-free status. We are working with the industry, the livestock breeders and others to ensure that they can move their cattle there as well.

We recognize the challenge that we have here and we will continue to work with the Minister of Canadian Heritage to alleviate this problem that we have.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while visiting the North Shore yesterday, we were able to see that the softwood lumber crisis is continuing to claim victims. Many workers will see their employment insurance benefits dry up soon, the lumber mills are closed and entire regions are crying out for help. The government promised it would be announcing a second assistance plan, but we are still waiting.

Could the Minister of Industry tell me what he is waiting for to do his job and announce, as he himself promised on October 8, the second phase of his assistance plan for victims of the softwood lumber crisis?

Where is the aid promised by the minister?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me first remind the hon. member of the efforts that have been made by the government on behalf of workers in the softwood industry.

Clearly we are concerned about the reality that they face as this disagreement continues. However I would remind the hon. member of the $450 million that goes to employment insurance benefits, of the more than $250 million that has been announced for support to communities, as well as additional support through employment insurance.

I also would remind the hon. member of the over $650 million the Government of Canada transfers to the province of Quebec specifically for active measures—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, government statistics prove that forced bilingualism discriminates against English speaking Canadians with respect to hiring and promotion in the public service. In fact my recent survey mirrored a 1991 report by the Professional Institute of the Public Service. The vast majority of respondents said that their careers were negatively affected by language discrimination.

Why is the President of the Treasury Board forcibly imposing artificial language requirements which deny employment and promotions for anglophones in the public service?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is perfectly acceptable that Canada's public service is committed to serving the people of Canada in both of the country's official languages. Anywhere anglophones and francophones live, they must receive appropriate services from our government.

I really have no idea what the member is driving at, particularly since he should have faith in young anglophones in Canada, who are becoming more and more bilingual.

* * *

[*English*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, the government does not have a good track record when it comes to managing and securing data. Witness the gun registration debacle and the social insurance card fraud. Now the government is floating the idea of a national identity card scheme.

Given the government's dismal track record in this area of personal security, does the minister really expect Canadians to have confidence in the government's ability to manage this high tech novelty item?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do not have to bury our heads in the sand. We have to take care of two issues. First, there is the issue of identity theft that costs society $2.5 billion. Second, with what is going on with the entry-exit at the border all the time, we need to ensure that Canadians will decide the kind of identity policy we should have.

It is not a government thing. It is the Canadian way. It is among ourselves to decide what we want to do. It is an open debate for all. I urge every member and every Canadian to give their thoughts on that issue.

● (1500)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the decision by the Minister of National Defence to deal unfairly with landowners adjacent to the expanding JTF2 military base only generates negative publicity at a time when the minister needs to highlight the elite unit's excellent work in Afghanistan.

Why will the minister not offer fair compensation to these local landowners?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge and highlight the excellent performance of our special forces, the JTF2, which have indeed done a superb job in Afghanistan and elsewhere, although I must always be mindful of the security requirements, as indeed I am. However I hope in the not too distant future to share with Canadians the fantastic achievements of this group.

On the other hand, I cannot remember the other part of her question.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in several sectors of the seasonal employment industry, an increasingly common practice is for employers to accumulate employee overtime hours instead of declaring them in order to extend the work periods and avoid the infamous gap.

Will the minister admit that not recognizing seasonal work is the true cause of these fraudulent practices?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary. The government appreciates the contribution of seasonal industries and seasonal workers to the overall Canadian economy. The hon. member should recognize that our change to an hours based system directly supports seasonal workers by lengthening their entitlement and increasing their benefits.

As well, she will recall that we have made changes to a number of aspects of the Employment Insurance Act quite directly that respond to all workers, including those in the seasonal industries.

We are convinced that we have a program that works, that works well and that is there when Canadians need it.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. Last week the Prime Minister blocked the call of three territorials premiers for a northern health fund of roughly $60 million, despite the support of every provincial premier and Roy Romanow. Northern Liberal MPs have been shamefully silent on this issue so far.

Will the Prime Minister now assure the House that the coming budget will fully fund the critical health needs of northerners so that his legacy will not be one of neglect and betrayal of northern and aboriginal Canadians?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, both the Prime Minister and I have indicated before in the House our willingness, and in fact on Monday, February 24, I will have the opportunity to meet with my three territorial health minister colleagues. At that time I hope we will begin the implementation of the new health accord for the people who live in the three territories.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN IRAQ

The House resumed from February 6 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

The Speaker: It being 3:03 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, February 6 the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

● (1515)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 38)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Anders
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bailey	Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Benoit	Bergeron
Bigras	Blaikie
Borotsik	Bourgeois
Brien	Brison
Cadman	Cardin
Casey	Casson
Chatters	Clark
Comartin	Crête
Cummins	Day
Desjarlais	Desrochers
Dubé	Duceppe
Duncan	Elley
Epp	Fitzpatrick
Forseth	Fournier
Gagnon (Champlain)	Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gagnon (Québec)	Gallant
Gaudet	Gauthier
Girard-Bujold	Godin
Goldring	Gouk
Grewal	Grey
Guay	Guimond
Harper	Harris
Hearn	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hilstrom	Jaffer
Johnston	Keddy (South Shore)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lanctôt
Lebel	Lill

Loubier
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayfield
McNally
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Nystrom
Pankiw
Perron
Proctor
Reynolds
Robinson
Roy
Schmidt
Solberg
Spencer
Strahl
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Vellacott
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Marceau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McDonough
Ménard
Merrifield
Moore
Obhrai
Penson
Plamondon
Rajotte
Ritz
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
Skelton
Sorenson
St-Hilaire
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tremblay
Venne
Williams– — 104

NAYS

Members

Adams
Allard
Augustine
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bélanger
Bennett
Binet
Bonin
Bradshaw
Bryden
Byrne
Calder
Caplan
Carroll
Catterall
Chamberlain
Coderre
Comuzzi
Cullen
DeVillers
Discepola
Duplain
Efford
Eyking
Finlay
Fry
Godfrey
Graham
Harb
Harvey
Ianno
Jordan
Karygiannis
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Laliberte
LeBlanc
Leung
Longfield
Macklin
Malhi
Manley
Marleau
Matthews
McGuire
McLellan
Minna
Murphy
Nault
Normand
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Owen
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Peric
Peterson
Phinney
Pratt
Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)
Bagnell
Barnes (London West)
Bélair
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Boudria
Brown
Bulte
Caccia
Cannis
Carignan
Castonguay
Cauchon
Chrétien
Collenette
Cotler
Cuzner
Dion
Drouin
Easter
Eggleton
Farrah
Frulla
Gallaway
Goodale
Grose
Harvard
Hubbard
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Keyes
Kraft Sloan
Lastewka
Lee
Lincoln
MacAulay
Mahoney
Maloney
Marcil
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough East)
Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
Mitchell
Myers
Neville
O'Brien (Labrador)
O'Reilly
Pacetti
Paradis
Patry
Peschisolido
Pettigrew
Pillitteri
Price
Proulx
Reed (Halton)
Rock
Savoy
Scott
Sgro
Simard
St-Jacques
St. Denis
Stewart
Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi
Torsney
Valeri
Wappel
Wilfert
Provenzano
Robillard
Saada
Scherrer
Serré
Shepherd
Speller
St-Julien
Steckle
Szabo
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tonks
Ur
Vanclief
Whelan
Wood– — 148

PAIRED

Members

Asselin
Dalphond-Guiral
McCormick
Picard (Drummond)
Bertrand
Knutson
Paquette
Regan– — 8

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

[*English*]

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

● (1525)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 39)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Bailey
Benoit
Bigras
Borotsik
Brien
Cadman
Casey
Clark
Crête
Day
Desrochers
Duceppe
Elley
Fitzpatrick
Fournier
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Anders
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Bergeron
Blaikie
Bourgeois
Bryden
Cardin
Casson
Comartin
Cummins
Desjarlais
Dubé
Duncan
Epp
Forseth
Gagnon (Champlain)
Gagnon (Québec)

Gallant
Gauthier
Godin
Gouk
Grey
Guimond
Harris
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Jaffer
Keddy (South Shore)
Laframboise
Lanctôt
Lill
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Marceau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McDonough
Ménard
Merrifield
Moore
Obhrai
Penson
Plamondon
Rajotte
Ritz
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
Skelton
Sorenson
St-Hilaire
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tremblay
Venne
Williams– — 103

Gaudet
Girard-Bujold
Goldring
Grewal
Guay
Harper
Hearn
Hilstrom
Johnston
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lalonde
Lebel
Loubier
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayfield
McNally
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Nystrom
Pankiw
Perron
Proctor
Reynolds
Robinson
Roy
Schmidt
Solberg
Spencer
Strahl
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Vellacott
White (Langley—Abbotsford)

NAYS

Members

Adams
Allard
Augustine
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bélanger
Bennett
Binet
Bonin
Bradshaw
Bulte
Caccia
Cannis
Carignan
Castonguay
Cauchon
Chrétien
Collenette
Cotler
Cuzner
Dion
Drouin
Easter
Eggleton
Farrah
Frulla
Gallaway
Goodale
Grose
Harvard
Hubbard
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Keyes
Kraft Sloan
Lastewka
Lee
Lincoln
MacAulay
Mahoney
Maloney
Marcil
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough East)

Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)
Bagnell
Barnes (London West)
Bélair
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Boudria
Brown
Byrne
Calder
Caplan
Carroll
Catterall
Chamberlain
Coderre
Comuzzi
Cullen
DeVillers
Discepola
Duplain
Efford
Eyking
Finlay
Fry
Godfrey
Graham
Harb
Harvey
Ianno
Jordan
Karygiannis
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Laliberte
LeBlanc
Leung
Longfield
Macklin
Malhi
Manley
Marleau
Matthews
McGuire
McLellan

Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
Mitchell
Myers
Neville
O'Brien (Labrador)
O'Reilly
Pacetti
Paradis
Patry
Peschisolido
Pettigrew
Pillitteri
Price
Provenzano
Reed (Halton)
Rock
Savoy
Scott
Sgro
Simard
St-Jacques
St. Denis
Stewart
Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi
Torsney
Valeri
Wappel
Wilfert

Minna
Murphy
Nault
Normand
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Owen
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Peric
Peterson
Phinney
Pratt
Proulx
Redman
Robillard
Saada
Scherrer
Serré
Shepherd
Speller
St-Julien
Steckle
Szabo
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tonks
Ur
Vanclief
Whelan
Wood– — 148

PAIRED

Members

Asselin
Dalphond-Guiral
McCormick
Picard (Drummond)

Bertrand
Knutson
Paquette
Regan– — 8

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

● (1530)

[*English*]

ALLOTTED DAY—SENDING TROOPS TO IRAQ

The House resumed from February 10 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: We will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the hon. member for Saint-Jean relating to the business of supply.

The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 40)

YEAS

Members

Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bergeron
Blaikie
Bourgeois
Bryden
Cardin
Clark
Crête
Desrochers
Duceppe
Gagnon (Champlain)
Gagnon (Québec)
Gauthier
Godin

Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Bigras
Borotsik
Brien
Caccia
Casey
Comartin
Desjarlais
Dubé
Fournier
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gaudet
Girard-Bujold
Guay

Guimond
Keddy (South Shore)
Lalonde
Lebel
Lincoln
Marceau
McDonough
Nystrom
Perron
Proctor
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Hearn
Laframboise
Lanctôt
Lill
Loubier
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Ménard
Parrish
Plamondon
Robinson
Roy
St-Hilaire
Tremblay– — 54

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Alcock
Anders
Anderson (Victoria)
Bagnell
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bélanger
Bennett
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Boudria
Brown
Byrne
Calder
Caplan
Carroll
Castonguay
Cauchon
Chrétien
Collenette
Cotler
Cummins
Day
Dion
Drouin
Duplain
Efford
Elley
Eyking
Finlay
Forseth
Fry
Gallaway
Goldring
Gouk
Grewal
Grose
Harper
Harvard
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hubbard
Jaffer
Johnston
Karetak-Lindell
Keyes
Kraft Sloan
Lastewka
Lee
Longfield
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Macklin
Malhi
Manley
Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayfield
McGuire
McLellan
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Minna
Moore
Myers
Neville
O'Brien (Labrador)
Adams
Allard
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Augustine
Bailey
Barnes (London West)
Bélair
Bellemare
Benoit
Binet
Bonin
Bradshaw
Bulte
Cadman
Cannis
Carignan
Casson
Catterall
Chamberlain
Coderre
Comuzzi
Cullen
Cuzner
DeVillers
Discepola
Duncan
Easter
Eggleton
Epp
Farrah
Fitzpatrick
Frulla
Gallant
Godfrey
Goodale
Graham
Grey
Harb
Harris
Harvey
Hilstrom
Ianno
Jennings
Jordan
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Laliberte
LeBlanc
Leung
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
MacAulay
Mahoney
Maloney
Marcil
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Matthews
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough East)
McNally
Merrifield
Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
Mitchell
Murphy
Nault
Normand
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly
Owen
Pagtakhan
Paradis
Penson
Peschisolido
Pettigrew
Pillitteri
Price
Provenzano
Redman
Reynolds
Robillard
Saada
Scherrer
Scott
Sgro
Simard
Solberg
Speller
St-Jacques
St. Denis
Stewart
Szabo
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tirabassi
Torsney
Valeri
Vellacott
Whelan
Wilfert
Wood– — 195
Obhrai
Pacetti
Pankiw
Patry
Peric
Peterson
Phinney
Pratt
Proulx
Rajotte
Reed (Halton)
Ritz
Rock
Savoy
Schmidt
Serré
Shepherd
Skelton
Sorenson
Spencer
St-Julien
Steckle
Strahl
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tonks
Ur
Vanclief
Wappel
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams

PAIRED

Members

Asselin
Dalphond-Guiral
McCormick
Picard (Drummond)
Bertrand
Knutson
Paquette
Regan– — 8

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

[*English*]

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, government orders will be extended by 34 minutes.

* * *

● (1535)

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (for the Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved that Bill C-24, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act (political financing), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to move second reading of a bill that will change the way politics is done in this country, a bill that will address the perception that money talks, that big companies and big unions have too much influence on politics, a bill that will reduce cynicism about politics and politicians, a bill that is tough but fair.

Canadians demand transparency, openness and accountability. They demand it in health care and we delivered last week.

Canadians demand it from their politicians in terms of their fundraising and we are delivering with this bill.

The bill provides for full disclosure of all contributions and expenses over $200 at all levels, not only for national parties and candidates in elections but for riding associations, for nominations, and for leadership candidates.

We are acting on recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Kingsley, an officer of the Parliament of Canada. These recommendations were the accumulation of a career spent as custodian of the democratic process in Canada, a career that has earned him the respect and gratitude not just of Canadians or of this House but of new and struggling democracies around the world that have sought his advice as they have worked to bring truly democratic and fair elections to their nations. I want to pay tribute to Mr. Kingsley and I would like to thank him for his excellent work.

With these new rules, there will be no more black holes for campaign contributions and no more allowing unreceipted money and unaccounted expenses.

We only have to look south of the border to see how money impacts on politics, the many millions that are raised for individual Senate seats and the huge contributions to political action committees. In the United States, the fitness of a candidate for office is judged first on his or her ability to raise huge sums of money, rather than on his or her brains or ability to lead. They call it the money primary. It takes place in the shadows long before an idea is expressed, before a speech is given, before a vote is cast. We do not want to see this in Canada.

The bill will ensure that we have a very different system, a typical Canadian new institution, a system that will be a model for other democracies.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

Many years ago, we in Canada placed limits on campaign spending. This bill places limits on fundraising. Limits on contributions to political parties. Limits for candidates. Limits for nominations. Limits for leaderships. And it imposes full disclosure.

I was not always in agreement with René Lévesque on everything. But there is no doubt that the party financing legislation he passed in Quebec has served as a model for democracy. It has worked well. This bill builds on that model and corrects some of its flaws.

Contributions from individuals will be limited to a maximum of $10,000 to a political party per year. This amount is approximately equivalent in current dollars to the $3,000 of the Quebec legislation of 1977.

This bill is in the same vein as legislation passed a few years ago in Manitoba to prohibit corporate and union contributions to political parties' election funds.

With a very limited exception, which I will explain in a moment, businesses and trade unions will be prohibited from contributing to political parties or candidates or leaderships or nominations.

We all know there is a perception that corporate and union contributions buy influence. I do not believe that this is true. And I do not believe that any member of this House feels that he or she has been improperly influenced.

But, and this is very important, there is something that we should all recognize. All of us in this House have been guilty at one time or another of throwing out the accusation that corporate or union contributions influence our opponents. Often we have done so without really thinking, and the media are no better.

None of this is good for the political process or democracy. This bill addresses this issue head on. I firmly believe that the elimination of contributions to political parties by business and trade unions will greatly improve the political culture in Canada.

Members of Parliament argued that they should not be precluded from taking very small contributions from local businesses in their ridings. In fact, in the last election, the average such contribution was $450. Clearly such contributions cannot be seen to be influencing decisions.

Therefore the bill allows businesses and trade unions to contribute a maximum of $1,000 a year to a candidate or a riding association, but not to a national party. This is, I believe, an acceptable compromise, but anything more would gravely diminish the purpose of this bill.

A thousand dollars a year over a four-year period adds up to $4,000. No business should be able to contribute more than that to a political party through a riding association. Otherwise we would be recreating at the riding level what we are attempting to eliminate at the national.

Indeed, one of the great sources of frustration to those who are working for a true reform of political party financing is the existence of loopholes that allow people to get around the law. The necessity to plug those loopholes right from the start with this bill, and thus to avoid the public cynicism to which they give rise, is the justification for the severity of this bill we have before us.

Political parties are essential to the democratic process. We all know that in this House. We all know that they need money to operate. That too is essential in a democracy.

● (1545)

The principle of public funding has been long established in Canada through tax credits for individual contributions to political parties and through rebates to parties and candidates for a proportion of election expenses.

To make up for the loss of corporate and union contributions, this bill substantially increases public financing of the political process. The maximum tax credit for individual contributions is raised from $200 to $400. National party rebates for election expenses will be raised from 22.5% to 50%.

Candidates themselves receive a rebate of 50% if they have more than 15% of the vote. The bill reduces the threshold to 10%. Each political party will receive $1.50 per vote received in the last general election.

[*English*]

The increase in the individual tax credit, the increase in the rebate and the direct subsidy to the party will make up for the loss of corporate and trade union contributions and it will do so through public financing, the only way to remove the perception that big money influences decisions of government. We can do this at a cost of about 65¢ per Canadian in non-election years and a bit more than $1 per Canadian in an election year. This is a very small price to pay for helping to improve our democracy. It is a very good investment of public funds.

Some have suggested that the subsidy to a political party means that an individual's tax dollars may go to a party that he or she disagrees with. The reality is that the $1.50 a year goes to the party that person voted for in the previous election.

If someone changes his or her mind after an election, if someone realizes he or she made a mistake, for example by voting for the Canadian Alliance, the $1.50 per year still adds up to a total of $6 over the four years. That person can make up for his or her mistake. Everybody makes mistakes. It could happen to somebody who voted Liberal too, but not many because we are still doing quite well.

That person can make up for his or her mistake by making a personal contribution of up to $10,000 a year to the political party of his or her new choice. That person will benefit from the increase in the limit for the maximum tax credit. The argument about the use of tax dollars for a political party the taxpayer does not agree with just does not hold water.

As a result of this bill, elections will be financed almost 90% by the public. This will make Canada a model for democracy. It is something we should all be proud of.

I know some members have concerns about the impact of this bill on the internal workings of political parties. It is important to understand that these are matters that are not for legislation; they are matters for parties to work out. We do not need legislation to regulate the internal workings of political parties.

This is a long bill with a lot of clauses in it. It is possible that there are provisions that have been drafted in a way where there are unintended consequences. I would hope that the committee will propose appropriate amendments. However, the basic principles of the bill are fundamental to the government. By that I mean disclosure and accountability, the banning of corporate and union contributions with the maximum $1,000 exception, the limits on individual contributions and the public financing regime.

Corporations and unions have contributed to political parties out of a spirit of good corporate citizenship. I thank them and all political parties thank them. I would hope that in the future they will take the money that they would have otherwise contributed to political parties, and first they could send it as a gift to the government to pay for the programs. That would be a contribution if they believe in it but if they have reservations and they do not want to do that, they could contribute that money to charities and universities.

Democracy is a living thing. The history of the world teaches us it is a fragile thing as well, to be nurtured, to be encouraged, to be promoted and to be defended.

● (1550)

Philosophers say there is no such thing as a perfect democracy. Of course that is true. Any society is a work in progress. The truest test of a living, growing democracy like Canada is the extent to which our institutions strive to live up to our ideals, for it is in continuing to measure ourselves against our ideals that we reaffirm their power to inspire. I believe that this bill passes that test.

This bill is about making Canada more open. It is about removing barriers for women, for men of religious and ethnic minorities, for the poor and the disadvantaged. Ultimately it is about ensuring that their voices are heard as loudly and clearly as anyone else.

Forty years ago this month I became a candidate for this Parliament. I was elected on April 8, 1963. I have had the honour of having been elected to this body 12 times. I know I speak for every man and woman in this House when I say that on each of those occasions, I have been filled with reverence for the democratic system.

Bill C-24, far from repudiating the system that allowed me and so many others to serve this great country, pays tribute to it by seeking to give it new energy, new vigour and new relevance by passing on to the new generation a democratic tradition not tired or worn, but renewed and alive; not perfect, but better; one that lives up to its name, one of the most beautiful, most fragile, most cherished words in any language: democracy.

● (1555)

[*Translation*]

As my career draws to a close, this is a very significant occasion for me. I have seen this Parliament evolve, and I see what is going on out there. Public scepticism is increasing. Our system is a very open one. Question period can be seen in every home every day, as is the case for all the exchanges that take place here in the House, and people can also read reports in the press. A lot of people have lost faith in our democratic institutions.

When we see how people in other jurisdictions have to collect millions and millions of dollars—for instance to become a United States senator—and when the public hears talk of hundreds of millions of dollars in contributions, people lose faith. Here we want our institutions to be made in Canada.

[*English*]

One of the things that is very important for us as Canadians is to have a personality that is very different. There is a country south of us which has a very different institution. We have this Parliament that meets every day, where ministers, the Prime Minister and members come together to ask questions. They do not have this there. We have different institutions that have served Canada well, that have given us a great personality.

This legislation will pass and we will be looked upon as a modern society that takes democracy seriously, a country that is very preoccupied with making sure that diversity and unity are very important. We want to give a chance to everybody to come to Parliament and serve the people. Money will not make the difference. It will be the quality of the system.

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask the Prime Minister why he waited until he was leaving to introduce the legislation.

The Speaker: The right hon. member knows there are no questions on the first three speeches at second reading stage on a bill, so I am afraid he is stuck.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I started out today with mere skepticism about what the Prime Minister was up to but after listening to his speech, I guess my skepticism can only rise. For a man who claims there is no problem at all with corruption and undue influence in his government, he is sure making an awfully big deal about fixing it. I hope members caught some of the ironies in that.

There was criticism of the American system of electing senators. I remind the Prime Minister that he is opposed to electing senators at all in this country.

He was praising democratic political parties and keeping them open, while the aspirant to his own leadership restricts membership sales in his own political party.

This is a party that talks about cleaning up the nomination process, making it more open for nominations and for elections, when the Prime Minister regularly appoints candidates in winnable ridings for his party.

The biggest hypocrisy today is to talk about democracy and the importance of this institution, when only a half an hour ago the Prime Minister and his successor stood in the House to vote against the requirement that they come here and get a mandate for war, that they face this House before sending our soldiers to face war.

The Canadian Alliance, unlike the Liberal Party, has long been a proponent of real democratic reform. We have proposed over the years substantial reforms to how we do business in the House.

Our previous House leader, the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, and the member for Fraser Valley before him, tabled documents "Building Trust" and "Building Trust II" that have made important proposals for how we can actually bring democracy to the House of Commons.

Of course our party has been at the forefront for a very long time in urging reform of the Senate, and not just elections, but comprehensive reform to make it a democratic and effective institution. We have stood to bring about in this country an effective system of direct democracy to enhance the voice of average Canadians, not once every four years, but all the time.

Obviously with this kind of history, our party is very interested in real measures that would avoid or lessen undue influence from the large donations of corporations, unions, associations or individuals. It is obviously something that we would be interested in.

However, by its very structure, Bill C-24, the campaign finance reform legislation proposed by the government, while it hints at some improvements, in the end it fails to be the type of positive reform legislation that we can support. It does not, and if we are realistic, it cannot end corruption or inappropriate influence in government. Our fear is that it will serve to weaken an already fragile democratic framework.

First, to be frank, the appearance of this legislation at this time is too driven by internal Liberal politics and needs: the need of the Prime Minister to whitewash various scandals from his record before he retires; the need to deal with his leadership rival within the Liberal Party; and, as stated by the Prime Minister's own principal adviser to his caucus, the need to deal with the bank debts of the Liberal Party itself.

When the Liberal public relations rhetoric is set aside, the true nature of the bill is simply the replacement by the government of its addiction to large business and union donations with an addiction to taxpayer funding.

Ultimately, like so much Liberal political reform legislation, it really is about stopping participation. The bill is really about simply who cannot do what, when they cannot do it, and why they should not be able to do it. It is not in any way, shape or form about encouraging or replacing participation in the political process.

The bill as a consequence will simply require hardworking Canadians to pay for political parties they do not necessarily support.

● (1600)

Fundamentally, it is not democratic for a supporter of the NDP to be forced to back the Canadian Alliance or for a supporter of the Alliance to be forced to back the Liberals. Quite frankly the bill is simply an autocratic solution to a democratic problem.

First, the bill represents a further progression of the public subsidization of political parties. The Prime Minister praises that as a good thing in and of itself, and that is the problem with the Liberal Party. It is a problem of the Liberal Party not just in this, it is the problem of the Liberal Party when it comes to running the economy.

Political parties, like markets, should be responsible to the people who need them and want them, not operate on subsidies from people who do not.

Currently, the public may or may not be aware, that political parties are already very heavily subsidized by taxpayers. In the first place donations to political parties are subsidized, first, by a tax credit system that credits up to 75% of the donation. Then, when candidates and political parties actually spend the money, they are reimbursed for that electoral spending by taxpayers based on minimal electoral performance; for candidates up to 50% of eligible expenditures and for parties, 22.5% of eligible expenditures.

To give some idea of the scale of this, for the 2000 election these so-called rebates cost Canadian taxpayers just over $31 million to refund candidates and $7.5 million to refund political parties for their eligible election expenses. Currently, by this one element alone, taxpayers already subsidize slightly less than 40% of the funding of parties in Canada.

Proposals in the legislation would push that direct subsidization, leaving aside tax credits, to beyond 70%. The legislation would increase taxpayer reimbursement to political parties. The tax credit program is enhanced but more disturbing, so are expense rebates. The percentage of eligible expenditures that is to be refundable to parties has been more than doubled to 50%. The authorized limit of such expenditures has been raised to 70¢ of each registered voter from 62¢. As well, the threshold for receiving the rebates has been lowered for candidates.

Finally, the cost of polling, which is a significant cost, will now count as an eligible expense. Far worse, because that is only the beginning, on top of this enrichment of the current reimbursements for parties, there is now to be a yearly allowance paid to each party which obtains minimal shares of the popular vote. Starting in 2004, each party will be allotted a share of $1.50 times the total number of ballots cast in the last election based on the percentage of the votes they received in the last election.

Obviously, the biggest beneficiary is the Liberals and they will benefit regardless of how people's views of them may change in their performance as a governing party. Admittedly, the Canadian Alliance stands to benefit financially from the allowance. We will benefit especially because this party does not rely heavily on donations from corporations, unions and other large donors. However the principal beneficiary will be the Liberal Party of Canada.

The Liberals could not exist without an alternative source of funding, guaranteed taxpayer funding, if corporate donations were severally limited. Whereas the Canadian Alliance has shown it can and would continue to survive.

For instance, in 2001, the Liberals received donations from fewer than 5,000 individuals which comprised only 19% of their total fundraising. That same year nearly 50,000 individuals contributed to the Canadian Alliance and that made up over 61% of our funding.

It is obvious that the bill serves simply for the Liberals to replace their heavy reliance on corporate donations in particular and union donations, not with donations from the CEOs and union bosses who made those contributions, with subsidies from taxpayers. In fact, the Liberals have structured the bill so that they will actually receive a net benefit from the new rules.

In 2004 the Liberals stand to receive almost $8 million worth of taxpayer money which will replace about $6.5 million they received from corporations, unions and associations, not all of which I should add, will be lost.

● (1605)

In a democracy it is simply wrong to force hard-working Canadians to support political parties. It should be the voters right to choose which parties they support in any given year.

What is needed for real accountability is some financial link between politicians and the individuals who support them. One way of doing that and one way that does exist in the system is the political tax credit system which the bill enhances. This is one proposal worthy of consideration, but even this proposal deserves close examination in committee. Already small and modest contributions to political parties are much more heavily supported by the state, much more generously than charitable contributions. That is something that should be examined.

It is unfortunate that even here there is a flaw. Donors of only $200 to our system face disclosure under this present system in the requirement. There is no possible undue influence from a donation to a political party or candidate of $200. It is simply unnecessary paperwork and exposes, through publication, the names of donors to solicitors and fundraisers of all kinds, something they should not have to face.

I repeat, the real problem is that by strong-arming hard-working Canadians into paying for political parties, the bill will over time distance an already apathetic public from engaging in the political system and our democratic framework will suffer as a consequence. Voter turnout has been constantly falling. In the 2000 election it was the lowest since Confederation and it has been on a steady decline since the 1980s. This trend can only get worse if the legislation is adopted. No politician in any party can afford to be alienated, distanced or not directly accountable to voters.

This is the problem that really concerns me. It is one thing for the government to come here and at least come clean and say that there have been instances of undue influence in the government or in politics in Canada. However it is not a solution to say that taxpayers will fund us regardless. We cannot replace undue influence with no influence whatsoever from the voters as to how their money is spent.

I would point out that there are ample problems. If we look at the limits set out in the bill, there are already ample problems that require study. The bill sets out severe limits for donations to corporations, unions and associations and it has some limits for individuals. This could help deal with problems of undue influence, but let us look at some of the problems.

For example, under the legislation individuals are allowed to contribute up to $10,000 per year per party, plus an additional $10,000 in any one year to leadership contestants of any one party, plus a further contribution of $10,000 to the election campaigns of independent candidates. It stands to reason that average Canadians cannot afford to contribute anywhere close to these amounts annually to political parties. This is a measure designed specifically to capture wealthy Liberal supporters who in the past donated using corporate or union funds at their disposal.

Unfortunately, there are many loopholes for those who really wish to use this to buy influence. For example, the legislation does not set age restrictions for donations. An individual family could contribute $10,000 per year, per party, times the number of family members. Also, although there is an attempt to prohibit indirect contributions, the restrictions limit those contributions to individuals who have filed nomination papers with the returning officer during a writ period. This still allows for unlimited pre-writ donations to an MP's trust to assist his or her re-election, as pre-writ expenses are not regulated by the act.

It is in any case virtually impossible for police to track and enforce the provisions in the bill, which are intended to prevent corporations, unions and others trying to circumvent such limits. The reality is that as long as the government maintains programs and agencies that pay large amounts of discretionary money to particularly the businesses, programs that pick winners and losers, these limits will do little to restrict those with money who wish or who need to influence government and politicians, whether they do so by the terms of the legislation or whether they do so illegally.

● (1610)

Hon. Don Boudria: It would have been better to read the bill.

Mr. Stephen Harper: The government House leader says read the bill. I think the committee will want to study the provisions on MP trust pretty carefully.

Let us talk about transparency. One desirable aspect of the bill is the goal of promoting greater openness and transparency. However here there are real problems. I submit that this legislation pushes beyond what is sensible and may actually weaken the system it attempts to protect.

The bill does not but should, as I said earlier, change some basic rules for disclosing small contributions to parties and candidates. As I noted, the requirement that all $200 donations must be reported to Elections Canada with names of contributors is excessive.

Under the legislation such detailed reporting and disclosure would actually be extended to riding associations, candidates seeking nomination and leadership candidates. This would only add onerous bookkeeping and bureaucratic burdens to local associations and candidates. The thought that donations less than $1,000 could foster or even appear to contribute to undue influence on the political system is preposterous. The government knows it. That is why its tax credit system encourages people to make such donations.

In truth the enhanced measures in the bill would produce very little increased transparency for what is in effect an enormous, unnecessary bureaucratic incursion. More likely, the increased bureaucracy at the local level would have the potential to cause volunteers to become disengaged and disenchanted with the process.

Even more important, I am very concerned that the bill could discourage the participation of people seeking nomination. Under the bill, riding associations are required to file a report with Elections Canada containing the names of candidates who contest the nomination within 30 days of the selection date. Nomination contestants cannot collect donations nor spend any money until they appoint a financial agent and they are required to file a full financial report through their financial agent if they receive more than $500 in total donations or spend more than that money.

These bureaucratic measures will lead to increased costs and additional time. Resources are usually sparse in nominations races, especially among individuals seeking nomination for the first time. This process will simply discourage good people from seeking party nominations. This result will be to further protect incumbents and the status quo.

There is little, if any, value to the public interest from accumulating information on individuals seeking a party position, especially if those contestants fail to win the nomination. Perhaps it could be applicable to a successful nomination contest. When the bill is referred to committee, this is something the Canadian Alliance will raise.

However, let us beware of the U.S. experience. A lot of mythology comes out of this government constantly about the U.S. experience. There are real problems in the United States, some of them the government has identified However the United States has far closer regulation of donations and reporting that could ever be imagined in this country. I know our House leader will go through that in committee.

The real effect of this regulation, especially regulation as a goal in itself, has been to discourage candidacies and discourage competition for nominations. People without the expertise and the connections within the party find it practically impossible to get into the system without being accused of breaking the law.

I cannot leave this discussion without making some reference to the current defect in the Canada Elections Act that discourages increased citizen involvement in the electoral process outside of political parties, something which this bill notably fails to address. I am referring of course, as the government House leader says, to independent third party advertising during election campaigns.

On several occasions, and most recently in 2000, the Liberals have attempted to place limits on the freedom of individuals Canadians to express political views or policy positions during the most advantageous time to use the mass media, the period of elections campaigns. It has at least restricted them to do so unless they go through the major parties.

● (1615)

In each case the courts declared such attempts a violation of the freedom of expression under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and not something that constituted a reasonable limit on such freedoms in a free and democratic society.

Hon. Don Boudria: What is the name of the case in front of the courts?

Mr. Stephen Harper: The government House leader asks what is the name of the case? It is the Harper case, the most recent one, and we will get to that.

It is interesting how little problem the government has talking about this particular case or about cases where it is violating the freedom of expression of citizens yet it clams up when it comes to covering up GST fraud or soft penalties for terrorists.

I say once again, the courts declared each one of these attempts a violation of freedom of expression under the charter of rights and not something that constituted a reasonable limit on such freedoms in a free and democratic society.

The most recent attempt occurred when the Elections Act was amended in the year 2000, on the eve of the last general election. This past November the Alberta court of appeal upheld the initial trial decision striking down and rendering these provisions unconstitutional. As has been noted, this particular litigation was initiated by the National Citizens' Coalition at the time when I served as its president.

Rather than accepting this clear statement of the highest court of Alberta and subsequent lower courts, the federal government has decided to appeal this decision to the Supreme Court of Canada at further taxpayer expense. In addition, and despite the clear court ruling—and frankly Elections Canada should hang its head in shame—it is pursuing prosecution of the NCC, a voluntary citizens' organization, for alleged violation of the act in Ontario during the 2000 general election under provisions that have already been declared unconstitutional by senior courts in the country. It is absolutely disgraceful.

To put this all in context, the desire of the government to regulate the participation of ordinary Canadians in the political process is reflected in both its zeal to enforce such limits on independent groups and in this bill by its attempt to over regulate such activity by local riding associations and nomination contestants. The government seems to want to remove the voluntary element from the electoral process and replace it with state regulation, augmented by favouring established parties through massive increases in direct public subsidies.

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

To conclude, in addition to this government trying to regulate the participation of ordinary Canadians in the political process, this bill will cause troubling changes to the source of contributions to political parties, shifting it from the voluntary act of free citizens to a tax levied on all taxpayers.

In a democratic society, it is unfair for shareholders and unionized workers to contribute to a political party without their consent. However, it is even worse to take this money from taxpayers without their permission.

Let us be clear. We could support, in principle, the provisions of this bill to limit corporate and union contributions. What we are against is replacing corporate and union contributions with forced subsidies from taxpayers. Political parties should learn to depend mostly on contributions from their members.

Frankly, we find it outrageous that the Liberals are describing this bill as a democratic reform. There is nothing democratic about forcing people to give money without their consent. Furthermore, many of these so-called reforms to strengthen our democracy have the exact opposite effect.

This legislation will discourage voluntary initiatives at the local level, creating an even wider gap between voters and politicians, discouraging people from becoming a member of a political party and preserving the status quo.

[*English*]

In summary, in addition to the government's attempt to over regulate the participation of ordinary citizens in the political process, the bill represents a disturbing shift in the sources of political party contributions from voluntary acts of free citizens to mandatory imposition on all taxpayers.

If we look at the provisions of the bill, there can be no doubt. This is a bill designed by the Liberal Party, of the Liberal Party, and for the Liberal Party. For this reason the Canadian Alliance cannot support Bill C-24 in its current form.

Let me conclude by moving the following amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by replacing all the words after the word "that" with the following:

This House decline to give second reading to Bill C-24, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act, because the bill shifts the sources of contributions to political parties from the voluntary actions of people and organizations to a mandatory imposition on all taxpayers, making political parties more dependent upon the state and less responsive to society.

● (1625)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The amendment is in order. The question is now on the amendment. The hon. member for Roberval.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are those in life who have decided that evolution is important, that we must move forward, that progress must be made. There are those who wish things to stay as they are and who resolutely refuse to accept progress, in whatever form. Unfortunately, the amendment before us puts our hon. friends in the Canadian Alliance in the latter category.

Today is important. The House has before it an extremely important bill that makes party financing democratic. While the government has made an effort, I must admit, that should be recognized, the official opposition quite simply does not want this bill to be read, improved, and put forward, when in fact what we are supposed to be doing today is debating the principle of it.

I would like to go back to some things that the Prime Minister mentioned in his speech or that were not mentioned by any of the parties up to now, but which, in my mind, should be debated at this time.

The Prime Minister talked about the credibility of politicians. If anyone in this Parliament should be concerned with the credibility of politicians, it is the members, especially members of the opposition. When they say that they will be the next government, that they can do better and they make criticisms, their aim must be to improve the image of politicians.

The credibility of politicians has taken a hit in the past several years because, aptly enough, the crux of our work is to do battle. The success of one side resides in its ability to show that the other side has not done a good job, is wrong or has gone down the wrong path. That is the way the political battle works.

Consequently, it is understandable that those having this difficult job for many years inevitably end up leaving battered and wounded and wishing that somehow the situation would improve.

In politics, funding is a very sensitive issue. You would have to have blinders on to think that these astronomical contributions from banks or large unions did not buy these sponsors the attention of a particular audience. It would be ridiculous to think that major corporations would give $200,000 or $250,000 to a political party just for the pleasure of squandering that kind of money.

Companies quickly realized that they could buy their way into select, powerful circles. That is what René Lévesque wanted to eradicate from Quebec in 1976. And that is what he did with the Loi sur le financement des partis politiques.

Since the Prime Minister graciously underscored the impact Mr. Lévesque had on democracy, I will be just as gracious and say that at the end of his career, the Prime Minister has had the courage to do something which will reflect positively on the reputation of all the politicians who sit in this House.

This gesture will reassure Canadians that in the future, companies will no longer, as they did in the past, have undue influence on the government or on those who one day hope to form the government.

Parliament has just emerged from a major crisis, namely the sponsorship scandal. Unfortunately—and this was not one of the Prime Minister's shining moments—we saw the very close ties that existed between firms that obtained extremely lucrative contracts, in defiance of all the criteria, for work that was never done or done very quickly and at an exaggerated cost.

● (1630)

Unfortunately, just by chance, these companies happened to be among the biggest donors to the Liberal Party. Companies that had committed all manner of acts—some likely to lead to legal proceedings—were found to be close buddies of ministers, politicians here in this House with government responsibilities. There is cause for concern. It seems to be very much a case of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours".

I welcome this initiative. Today's bill will have the considerable advantage of making it absolutely impossible for companies with close connections to the government to do as they did in 2000-01, making quite sizeable donations and then—just by chance—reaping quite considerable benefits months or even weeks later. It was always the same ones involved.

The undue influence of those who hold the purse strings is a reality. No one would like to waste considerable sums of money without the assurance of gaining a sympathetic ear. And that sometimes means undue benefits.

Today's bill, which addresses the same points as the legislation we have had in place in Quebec for the past 25 years, will ensure that these influences will not have, truly will no longer have, any place in politics.

Another principle defended by Quebec's legislation and respected by the government's bill is equity. In fact, what could be fairer for people, for those listening, than knowing that they could go into politics and defend their ideas in a democratic forum, and that everyone would have an equal opportunity thanks to this bill.

In fact, it will not be enough to cozy up to large corporations to get the upper hand in an election campaign, to monopolize the media and be able to afford the best ads; it will no longer be essential to cozy up to large corporations to have access to the tools that everyone should have access to.

All the political parties, equally, based on merit and on the public's interest in them, will receive modest but sufficient financing.

When I hear the Canadian Alliance tell us that it is unfair that taxpayers be asked to finance political parties, I say that taxpayers are being asked to pay for democracy. When taxpayers no longer pay for democracy, democracy will be no more. That is the reality.

The public already pays for all of Parliament's activities. The public, through taxes, tax deductions granted for contributions, already finances the political parties represented in this House. We should stop putting our heads in the sand, stopping hiding, stop pretending that this is not true.

The Canadian Alliance is financed by Canadian taxpayers because they get tax receipts. In their tax return, people can claim deductions and get back up to 75% of their contributions. That is the reality. All the political parties in the House are financed this way.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Michel Gauthier: Those who, in the Canadian Alliance, are shouting that this is not true, are breaking the law. Those who do not comply with the current Canada Elections Act are breaking the law.

● (1635)

I hope that everyone will admit that taxpayers are financing each of the political parties represented in the House.

With this bill, financing will be based more—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. member for Elk Island on a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry for the delay, but I am fully dependent on the interpreters, so this happened probably half a minute ago. The member accused us of acting illegally. That is patently untrue. He ought not to say that in the House. It is against the rules of the House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, allow me to repeat it very slowly so that the member and everyone can fully understand what I meant when I said that the political parties in this House were already funded by money from Canadian taxpayers. I explained that the current Elections Act not only allows political parties to accept contributions, but requires them to report them, to submit a funding report. This allows those who contribute to claim a more or less sizeable tax credit based on the contribution they made. That is what I said.

When members booed me for saying that taxpayers are already paying for political party funding, when they protested and said that is not true, I answered back that was a problem, because if citizens are not contributing to any member here in the House through their taxes, then they are acting illegally, because the law is clear.

Funding is not done under the table. Either members are not aware that they are already being funded by the public purse, or else they have a whopping legal problem on their hands. The members can choose for themselves, but in either case, it is pretty serious.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): To conclude the point of order, I hope the explanation that has been supplied is satisfactory to the hon. member for Elk Island, because basically the Bloc House leader said that all political contributions need to be reported on the income tax report and if they are not that is when it becomes illegal. I thought the explanation was quite clear.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the explanation you allowed me to give was part of my argument on a point of order.

I will pick up where I left off before the member interrupted me, and mention that the element of transparency, which is also included in this bill, will make it easier to know the sources supporting each party.

It would be extremely important for the government to require private individuals—who are authorized to donate up to $10,000 to a political party under this bill—to identify their employer. We will submit amendments to this effect.

It could happen that 25 employees from one engineering firm or any professional firm, each decide to give $10,000 to a political party. This would result in a very significant contribution of $250,000 and there would be no way to find out where these people work unless you did some cross-checking.

I think that it would be in everyone's best interests for the government to amend the bill so that the sponsor's name, address, contact information, and employer are indicated, which would probably help us to avoid this situation.

We will also make recommendations about sums and conditions. These are minor things that do not detract from the principle or the quality of the legislation or the need to adopt such legislation. However, I think it would be appropriate to make some adjustments in order to improve and accomplish even more of the government's objectives, which we support.

I am concerned about the issue of individual trust funds. I checked in the political funding and trust funds play an extremely important role. I know that the provisions of the bill are meant to prohibit contributions from individual trust funds in riding associations. There can no longer be payments of $60, $70, $75 or $50,000 made from trust funds.

But, unless the government has anything else to add, there are no provisions to eliminate individual trust funds. The fate of these trust funds is completely unclear. As I understand it, there can be quasi-political activities in the riding of the member who has the trust fund. This still needs to be clarified.

I know that it is probably not the government's intention to cause confusion over the trust funds, but there can be no shadow of doubt or problems will persist.

We are also extremely disappointed that the Liberal Party and Conservative Party leadership campaigns, which are currently under way, will not be covered by the provisions of this extraordinary bill. This means that the future leader of the Liberals—who, as we know, has had great success in amassing funds across Canada in recent years—is avoiding all the lovely provisions of this bill, which guarantees democracy, quality of representation, and the independence of individuals and political parties.

Unfortunately, the next leader of the Liberal Party, whoever he or she may be, will not be as pure as the driven snow, will not be covered by the provisions of this bill. That is unless candidates decide, in a gesture of altruism, to apply to themselves all that is contained in this bill in advance. This would be an extraordinary act. Unfortunately, it is our impression that it is very unlikely.

We find it regrettable that the government has not set some timeframes that give the signal to those already involved in fundraising, sometimes pretty heavy fundraising, by telling them, "Beware, the bill is about to be passed, and as soon as it is, it will apply to you. So begin now to comply with its provisions and demonstrate, through your behaviour, at least some sense of ethics".

● (1640)

While we are at it, if we want to imitate Quebec's legislation, perhaps we should use all of its good points. I would have liked this bill to include certain things. I will be proposing amendments to this effect.

While we are at it, if we want to make political financing more democratic, we should use this opportunity to provide access for everyone to the political process, to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities, and to make the process transparent. Perhaps we should have seized this opportunity to do what was done in Quebec and depoliticize the position of returning officers in the ridings.

It would have been nice if returning officers were chosen based on their skills from now on, if there were a test of their skills, as is the case in Quebec, instead of choosing them based on their ties to the governing party and having political appointees in jobs that should be above suspicion.

I would like to see the government continue its work. I would like the Prime Minister to go a bit further in what he is doing, and include in the bill on political financing all of these provisions to depoliticize the returning officers' positions.

It is our pleasure to support this bill. I think that the principles it sets out are excellent. As for the details, we will be proposing amendments in due course. That belongs to another stage of the process. I hope that we will all be satisfied with the process and come out better for passing this bill, because it will enhance the reputations of all politicians.

● (1645)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake, National Parks.

[*Translation*]

Starting with the next speaker, speeches will last 20 minutes, followed by a ten minute period for questions and comments. The Chair would appreciate it if members would indicate if they will be sharing their time with a colleague.

[*English*]

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will not be sharing my time this evening but I am pleased to be the lead speaker for New Democratic Party.

I gather that we are speaking to the amendment to Bill C-24, that the House decline to give second reading to the bill, which was introduced by the Canadian Alliance. We will be voting against the amendment.

I would like to make a small prediction. Like the pensions for members of Parliament, the Canadian Alliance will vote against and then quietly accept the public largess that will follow.

Bill C-24, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act, is highly complex legislation with many technical changes because the amendments to the Canada Elections Act, instead of being a complete code within themselves, are amendments and this adds to the complexity of it.

Basically, the bill before us today, as we have heard from the Prime Minister, is being distributed to us as a way to remove big money from the political process. We in the New Democratic Party support the bill in principle. We support the idea of it. We had a convention last month in Toronto and passed a resolution similar to what is being proposed today.

I note in passing that in the minority government period of 1972-74, the New Democratic Party leader of the day, David Lewis, secured the passage of the Election Expenses Act which set, for the first time, spending limits on national and district campaigns and expanded public access to the source and amounts of contributions of all political parties. That was a very good beginning. We have not had very much in the quarter century or almost 30 years since then. However the bill does build on the work of David Lewis and that minority Parliament back in the 1972-74 period.

We start from the premise that the only people who should be allowed to contribute to political parties are those who are actually eligible to vote at election time. That would exclude organizations, corporations and trade unions. We think that is a good, fundamental way in which to begin.

As the House knows, currently political contributions are allowed unlimited amounts of money from individuals, corporations, trade unions and other organizations and, as I said, with no limit on the amount of money that can be contributed.

Because of that, we have the perception that money buys status and influence, that money talks, as the Prime Minister himself said. Companies give thousands of dollars, as we have noted, and tend to give dollars to parties that are likely to win the election or are up for re-election. Therein lies some of the problems that we have witnessed in this Parliament and some of the things that need to be redressed and fixed.

The heritage minister herself has indicated that the ratification of the Kyoto protocol was delayed by the government because of the lobby from big businesses to delay and frustrate the ratification of the Kyoto protocol.

With the bill that is before us today, I think it will reduce, if not eliminate, those kinds of peculiarities and problems. Bill C-24 requires that only individuals can contribute to political parties. They can make financial contributions to registered parties, to constituency associations, to leadership candidates and nomination contestants. It is capped at $10,000 in total to a registered party, its electoral district association, candidate and nomination contestants.

I want to stop here to say that the $10,000 should be a total aggregate amount of money. It should not be possible for a wealthy individual to give $10,000 per annum to all five of the parties that have status in the House, plus the other registered parties, even if the individual has the wherewithal to do that. That certainly does not remove the perception of big money and influencing politics.

● (1650)

We will be looking for an amendment that would cap that at $10,000 as the total amount of money if the individual wishes to contribute to more than one political party, but certainly not $10,000 to all.

The bill would prohibit corporations, trade unions and associations from donating money to any political party or leadership candidate. They may, however, contribute to a maximum of $1,000 collectively to a party's candidate, nomination contestants and constituency associations. I think this is a bit of a sop to perhaps the government backbenchers who have been concerned that they would not be able to raise any money from an organization, a small business or a trade union that is in their riding.

On balance, we will not raise much objection but when we begin to make changes, even modifications, along this line it does open up the possibility of finding more loopholes. On balance, I would prefer that this were not in the legislation but we will not object beyond that.

We are pleased to take part in the debate because we know that Canadians want a real debate in the financing of political parties. We know that Canadians overwhelmingly want government and political parties to clean up their act in this money buying spree that we have seen, particularly on the government side last year.

As I indicated, the New Democratic Party has long called for removing big money. We certainly support the bill in principle but we do have specific amendments and, as is often said, the devil is in the details. We will be proposing important amendments to the committee but we do support the bill in principle.

It is worth noting, from our perspective, that about 60% of the donations made to the New Democratic Party do come from individual donors, people who give $10, $20, $30, $50 or $100 to our party and to our candidates. That situation stands in stark contrast to what the Liberal Party has enjoyed in recent years: 60% of its donations come from the business community and only 32% from individuals.

Our political enemies always take every opportunity to point out that the New Democratic Party is overwhelmingly supported by the trade union movement. We are proud of the special and unique partnership with the labour movement. That was how the New Democratic Party was founded back in the early 1960s. We are and remain full partners with the labour movement, and, yes, unions do support us, but to a far lesser extent than most people believe. About 30% of our donations come from the trade union movement but the overwhelming amount, 60%, comes from individual donors.

The legislation would allow individuals to donate $10,000 a year to any party. Individuals could donate in multiples of $10,000. For example, one wealthy individual could give $10,000 to each of the five parties in the House. We believe that is far too high, and that donations of that magnitude could still buy considerable influence. It flies in the face of removing the perception of big money influencing politics. We think that even the $10,000 level is too high. I heard the rationale from the Prime Minister. He said that $10,000 was about what $3,000 was worth back in the 1970s when René Lévesque brought this legislation to Quebec. That is a fair point but it still strikes me that it is a large amount of money.

Furthermore, the limit, whatever it will be, should be the total amount that can be donated to all parties in aggregate, not the amount that can be donated to each party. If we say that we are going to get big money out of politics, then let us not fool around. Let us actually do it.

● (1655)

The bill prohibits contributions to political parties from corporations, unions or associations. As a minor exception, it proposes permitting such organizations to contribute $1,000 annually to the aggregate of candidates' local associations and nomination contestants of a registered party. In other words, all contributions from corporations, unions and other associations are combined under the $1,000 limit.

We are checking on this and it may not prove to be a valid concern, but we wonder whether a trade union with many locals will be considered as one unit no matter how many locals it has, as compared to perhaps an automobile dealership that may be considered as a separate entity, with each of those dealerships in the Ford Motor Company, let us say, being able to donate $1,000.

We want to make sure of this in the legislation. We will be asking some questions to ensure that there is a level playing field, that everybody is operating on the same level and that we are not treating unions and corporations differently just because they are set up differently under the various acts.

Trust funds were mentioned earlier in the debate. We know or are aware of some members of the government side who have amassed pretty impressive trust funds, upwards of a quarter of a million dollars. It is not entirely clear to us how the legislation is going to impact on those trust funds.

It seems that while this legislation will not in any way prohibit the trust funds, the intent is that the people who control the funds will be restricted to the $1,000 maximum annual donation to a candidate's riding association or candidate for nomination.

We fear that there will be an enormous temptation for members of Parliament with these trust funds to find ways to slip money over and above the annual maximum into their own good political work and campaigns. We firmly believe that there is no place for trust funds in politics. We know that there are some political parties in the House that do not allow candidates to amass or to begin a trust fund. I would appeal to the members opposite on the government side to take the steps necessary to see that these funds are dismantled now.

This would be a good time to dismantle trust funds when we are changing the Canada Elections Act and putting strict limits on donations. Let us get rid of these trust funds. The Prime Minister makes a good point: if we want them to be donated to universities, hospitals or other good works, let us do that. However, let us get trust funds out of the Canadian political system.

Another area is the area of third parties. This is not really addressed in the legislation. We know that third party advertising has had an enormous impact on politics and elections in other countries, particularly in the United States with all of the so-called soft money that goes into advertising there. Those of us who were around in 1988 also remember the famous free trade election and the barrage of third party advertising to support the free trade agreement with the United States.

It could be argued, because it was a very close election, that the third party advertising played a disproportionate role in the outcome and may have thwarted the democratic will of the majority of Canadians. Of course, proportional representation would have helped a lot too, because we will recall that the government of Mr. Mulroney was returned with about 42% of the popular vote while the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party had a combined vote of about 58%. However, because of our first past the post rules, the Conservative Party had an overwhelming majority. A combination of the lack of proportional representation plus third party advertising did contribute heavily to the outcome of that election.

If the government truly wants to remove the perception that big money rules politics, then I think it is imperative to limit the amount of money that third parties can spend during elections and on politics generally. Yes, I am thinking of the National Citizens' Coalition, which the leader of the official opposition mentioned earlier, and of other organizations with deep pockets and not much accountability.

● (1700)

The current election act limits expenditures by third parties, but several elections back, the Alberta Court of Appeal ruled in favour of the National Citizens' Coalition. Unlike the leader of the official opposition, I am pleased that the federal government is appealing that ruling. The limits on third party advertising have effectively been ignored heretofore as a result of that court ruling.

As an aside, let me say that I think it will be more difficult for the Judge Muldoons of the world to argue in favour of no limits on third party advertising when the political parties themselves pass this piece of legislation and restrict themselves, not only to the amounts of money they can accept but from whom they can accept that money. Not being a lawyer, I obviously do not know, but that is my faint prediction when it comes to third party advertising. I am glad the government is appealing that decision.

The concern is that Bill C-24 does not deal adequately with third party expenditures. Its intent is to remove the influence of big money from politics and that will be severely undercut if third parties are free and able to spend whatever they want.

Once this legislation comes into effect, it will confine political parties to accepting only individual contributions. At the same time, if third parties can continue to raise unlimited amounts of money at election time when candidates and parties are bound by the new restrictions, then we will simply be making a travesty out of the commitment to remove big money from politics.

I will briefly talk about public funding for parties between elections and at election time. It is premised in the bill that some of that money has to be replaced. If we do not allow corporations, trade unions and other organizations to donate, then we have to deal with that. Bill C-24 does so by proposing that $1.50 per vote go to each party, based on the previous election. Some people say that is handicapping the outcome of the last election. In a horse race, weights are usually put on the favourite to slow that horse down, but as has been pointed out, about $7.8 million will go to the governing party under this proposal based on the results of the last election. Lower amounts will go to the five political parties. I think that we are prepared to accept that arrangement and, as an aside, to assure the Liberals and anyone else that in the next election the New Democratic Party will be receiving many more votes than it did in the November 2000 election.

I do note that there is no provision in this legislation to index these publicly funded amounts, so they will decrease over time. It is worth noting that contributions from individuals, corporations and unions are indexed on the $1,000 side. We believe that public funding should be looked at and considered for indexation as well.

In conclusion, the New Democratic Party does support the legislation in principle. Given the hostile comments we have heard this afternoon from the official opposition and what we have not heard from some members on the Liberal backbench, perhaps the Prime Minister is going to need all the support he can muster. However, we will be putting forward amendments because there are flaws in this piece of legislation and we look forward to the debate when we get to committee stage.

● (1705)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Madam Speaker, I noticed that the member from the NDP referenced the 1988 election and the per cent of the vote at that time, but I thought he might have referenced the 2000 election, which actually had the same result. There were different numbers for all the parties involved, but again there was a majority government with 40% of the vote in the country and roughly 60% of the vote going to other parties.

My question is with regard to the $10,000 donation per individual and the $1,000 donation per corporation. I do not see that this prevents the same type of fundraising between elections that we have always had and that all the political parties participate in. I am talking about fundraising involving a dinner and the cost of a plate at that dinner being $250, $500 or $1,000 for individuals who want to buy a plate or a table. Those major fundraisers would not be precluded. Individual parties will still have to do some fundraising between elections.

Although I am certain that the premise of the bill is a good thing, I am not certain about all the details. I would like a comment from the member.

Mr. Dick Proctor: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for South Shore for his question. First, with regard to why I did not talk about the 2000 election campaign as opposed to 1988's, the member is correct. The point I tried to make was that in regard to the 1988 election campaign I think there is a general consensus that there was a lot of interest from people who were proponents of reaching a free trade agreement with the United States. They, and they being largely corporate Canada, were putting a lot of time, effort and particularly money into the campaign to ensure that the government of the day would be returned and free trade would become a reality.

In fairness, in the 2000 election campaign we did not have those kinds of issues, but the point still remains that proportional representation would have been helpful in both elections because we did elect a majority government with a minority amount of the vote.

With regard to the thrust of the member's question on individual donations, yes, I think obviously we are going to continue to have fundraising. Individuals, if they are so inclined and so endowed, will be able to contribute up to $10,000 a year. The point is that a corporation, a trade union or an organization will be prohibited from donating to any political party, but they will be allowed to make a maximum aggregate donation of $1,000 to a candidate or to a constituency, a New Democratic Party or a Progressive Conservative Party constituency.

That, as I tried to indicate in my speech, is a bit of a gift to some of the Liberal backbenchers. When the bill was floated, we will recall that the president of the Liberal Party said it was as "dumb as a bag of hammers". Other people have been complaining about it too. I think this was a bit of a gift to them to try to alleviate some of their concerns with the bill. Fundamentally what the government is saying by introducing the legislation is that trade unions, corporations and organizations will not be able to donate money to political parties themselves, that only individuals will, and that is worthy of support.

● (1710)

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the comments from the member for Palliser. He mentioned one particular item that may have fallen through the cracks and that was about the control of the trust funds, the members' trust funds that are there or not there. I have looked through the legislation and cannot see any of those controls that we should be talking about with respect to some members of Parliament who have trust funds, I am told, and fairly large trust funds at that.

What is the opinion of the member for Palliser as to why that has not been dealt with? The Prime Minister stood in the House and talked about transparency. He talked about how Canadians want to make sure that their members of Parliament are accountable. Why is it that this, in my opinion, glaring omission has happened in this piece of legislation?

Mr. Dick Proctor: Madam Speaker, I wish I could help my colleague from Brandon—Souris as to why it is not in there. Obviously being on the opposite side of the floor from the government, I cannot really answer. I think it is an omission. Perhaps, with the goodwill of the government that is introducing the bill, it is something that we can deal with.

I firmly believe it should be in the bill. Otherwise I think this will be open to all kinds of shenanigans about how to get around the law. Some might say that if it is only $1,000 surely there must be some way to funnel money in the back door. I think the best way to deal with it would be for the political parties that have these backbenchers or cabinet ministers, or whoever it is who has these trust funds, to say to them very clearly, directly and distinctly, "Get rid of them because they have no place, and as we are amending the law with Bill C-24, let us do away with them".

As I said before, take the $246,000 that is apparently in one member's trust account and donate it to a university, hospital or charity of his choice, but let us get rid of it now.

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, unfortunately I missed part of the member's speech. I do not think he addressed this question, but I will ask in any case and perhaps he can clarify it for me.

The Canadian Alliance position is that we agree with the concept of not allowing big corporations and union organizations to make massive donations to political parties, but we also do not believe that those donations should be replaced by the taxpayers' purse.

If corporations were prepared to give money and that has been cut off, that should be replaced by people who are shareholders in the corporation, let us say, should they choose to donate to a particular party. Likewise, with union organizations, we say that it should be replaced by the union workers who are members of that organization choosing individually to donate to political parties or individuals. That would be the replacement rather than going to the taxpayers' purse and having them donate whether they want to or not.

Would he agree with that kind of replacement of the funds?

Mr. Dick Proctor: No, Madam Speaker, I would not agree with that analysis, but I do agree to this extent that there is no question that all of the political parties are going to continue to raise funds, but from individuals. We are going to go out and talk to union members and other ordinary Canadians and ask them to continue to support us with their $10, $20 and $30 donations.

I think if the member from the Canadian Alliance were to look, he would find that his party receives about the same percentage amount of donations from individuals, as the New Democratic Party does, which is around 60%. His leader said 61% in the House earlier this afternoon.

Clearly, each of those two parties has a base of individual support. We are going to continue to reach out, build the base, and raise money from the base. At the same time the political parties are losing the wherewithal from unions, corporations, and other organizations to raise money. We think the principle of some public funds to offset what we are losing at the other end is worthwhile.

This is an extension of public financing of political parties. This is something that was begun in 1974. There has been a grand hiatus, but now we are into something that is new. It is definitely a step in the right direction and worthy of our support.

● (1715)

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to follow the member for Palliser. I was particularly interested when he was speaking about his intimate knowledge of horse racing. That would suggest to me that he is not a member who would parade his piety before the House. Unfortunately, sometimes his party does.

Hearing him refer to the bill of 1972-74 and the role of the hon. David Lewis, I must add that I had the privilege of serving on that committee at that time and, not to make too much of a point of it, one of the amendments that we were able to get adopted despite rigorous opposition from the NDP was an amendment which would have covered contributions by governments to political parties. The reason the NDP was so opposed to that amendment was that it was then briefly in government in the province of British Columbia. But sanity prevailed and the bill survived.

My caucus and I support the principle of campaign finance reform. We agree that there is an urgent need to modernize the rules. However, we believe that the bill, Bill C-24, may well create as many problems as it purports to solve.

I know the debate at this stage is on the amendment and let me be clear about the amendment. It asks the House to decline to give second reading to the bill; in other words, to kill the bill and stop reform. That is a very interesting position to be taken by a party that was originally elected to the House by embracing principles of reform.

When the Leader of the Opposition spoke he outlined several concerns of detail, consequence, and inadequacy of the drafting of the bill that we share. I think members on all sides of the House are concerned about the implications of what is in the bill and also implications of things that are not. We want to take a very close look at that in committee.

However, the amendment proposed by the Canadian Alliance would kill the bill and that would be wrong. What Parliament should do is improve the legislation that is here. Consequently, we will be voting against the Canadian Alliance amendment.

I find it strange that a party that was so proudly populace in its origins would defend a status quo which better serves the interests of the National Citizens' Coalition than it does the interests of free democracy.

Everyone knows the bill was introduced in haste and with a hidden agenda. Had the Prime Minister believed in the principle of party finance reform, he would have consulted broadly and acted long ago, acted early enough that the new rules would have applied to him too and not just to others. What we have here today is one more instance of the Prime Minister lunging after a legacy as he leaves his position in public life. In fact, his legacy in Canadian public life is the double standard and this is just another example.

I was struck that the Prime Minister began his remarks by attacking the system, not in this country but in the United States. There is almost a pathological anti-Americanism about the Prime Minister that is particularly inappropriate at this time.

We have a bill that offers a chance for reforms the country needs. Our task now is to make this careless bill significantly better. Canadians are understandably concerned about the role of money in politics.

Last Friday, the public works minister revealed that the RCMP would widen its investigation into Groupaction and related cases. The government tries to blame these events on public servants, although no one believes that public servants would have acted without clear direction from political ministers.

If we were truly interested in the good reputation of politics, the House would find a way to hold those ministers to account. What is at issue here is that the Groupaction scandals are a tip of the iceberg of impropriety which accumulates when political influence and political favours are for sale. There has been a pattern of abuse starting in the government with Shawinigate, leading to resignations, cabinet shuffles, and appointments that are an abuse of our diplomatic service. In all cases the core issue has been the relationship between the public official and backroom financial supporters.

● (1720)

[*Translation*]

Of course, not all public officials are susceptible to this kind of influence, but the system is weak on two levels. First, it is too open to temptation and, second, these days, perception is an important part of politics. Canadians believe that money can influence the course of events. Even without an experienced minister, like the Minister of Canadian Heritage, saying that money held up the Kyoto accord.

Solutions are twofold. We can legislate with respect to donors and contribution amounts, and we can legislate how these amounts are spent and publicly disclosed.

[*English*]

When I responded to the government House leader's statement introducing the bill I noted that my colleagues and I would be taking a very close look at the details. It is a good thing that we did. It is always the case that the devil is in the details, but there are a number of concerns in the bill, many enumerated already in the early moments of this debate.

What I hope is that all members of the House will be free to consider seriously the weaknesses of the bill and will be free to improve it. The worst thing that would happen in the name of parliamentary reform would be if legislation were rushed in, have party whips imposed upon it, and there would be an inability on the part of the House to build on reforms that would be more effective than are in the present bill.

Let me deal with four serious weaknesses in the proposal as we see it that were introduced by the government House leader and by the Prime Minister today.

The first weakness concerns the regulatory burden on parties and local riding associations. That regulatory burden is simply impossible to bear. These provisions have the odour of regulations written by people who have never personally participated in political campaigns and may not even recognize what babies they are throwing out with the bathwater. I doubt that any party is strong enough in all 301 constituencies in the country to file the reports to Elections Canada that this new bill would require.

The second is through a question, why ban corporate and union donations to parties outright? Why not, instead, tighten disclosure rules and cap corporate and union donations, possibly at the same level as those allowed for individuals? That would ensure transparency and accountability, but it would maintain the freedom of organizations to support the political party of their choice.

[*Translation*]

During my party's annual meeting in August, we proposed substantial improvements to the system's transparency. We proposed that parties disclose their incomes every quarter, like any other business in Canada, that contributions received by riding associations be included in these quarterly reports and that the internal party leadership races be subject to more or less the same rules as political parties in general.

[*English*]

Third, the government is introducing rules governing political activity at the national level through the national party, and at the local levels through the riding associations, but most parties have regional conglomerations of riding associations, youth associations, campus clubs, women's associations and other such groups that are neither the main party nor a riding association. On all of these, Bill C-24 is virtually silent. The government therefore is either creating a number of loopholes or it is creating a bureaucratic and regulatory nightmare for those who will be responsible for monitoring and enforcing such provisions.

● (1725)

[*Translation*]

Fourth, the political parties would get an allowance to compensate for losing the financial support of businesses and unions. However, internal leadership races would be subject to different rules.

[*English*]

Members of this House simply have to consider how parties would conduct leadership races. We cannot pretend they are unimportant. This Government of Canada has been stopped in its tracks by a leadership race in its own ranks, a race that is being decided not by a healthy competition among contending candidates but by the fact that one has been able to accumulate immense amounts of money and consequently has an unfair advantage. This is public business. It is a matter of public interest. We in the House have to find some way to look at the conduct of leadership races.

There is no question that the means of financing political parties needs drastic reform. I have spoken in the House, as others have, of the influence of big money. That danger exists in fact and, as important, and we would be fools to ignore it, it exists in perception. There is a very strong sense among ordinary Canadians that the political system, the party system, does not merit their confidence or support because it is controlled by powerful interests.

But I want to make another case. There has been another growing and significant change in our system that has made reform of party financing more urgent: the growth over time and the power of special interest groups. Special interests have always been part of politics, always a legitimate part, from labour unions to business to organizations mobilized to fight a particular cause. But in an earlier time, when the present system of party financing took root, the influence of special interests was balanced and often overweighed by a powerful sense of the common interest.

[*Translation*]

Many individuals and organizations that contributed to political parties invested in a democratic system. They demanded accountability. They wanted to be able to chose between the parties. They thought that one candidate or another had a good chance of making a contribution to public life. They knew that all this would cost money and their donations were motivated in part by the feeling that they were doing their civic duty.

[*English*]

That of course was not the whole story. There have always been interests and individuals who sought to buy influence for themselves or for their views, but when the present system was built, one of its foundations was a sense of a public interest that was more important than private interests.

That balance has changed. Our political system has changed. The weight of private interests has grown. The sense of public interest has declined. That is why the lobbying industry, which virtually did not exist in Canada 30 years ago, is so powerful today. The reality now is that in this capital city good lobbyists have much more influence than good members of Parliament.

That raises a very serious question for the Canadian political system. Special interests, by definition, fracture community. They put particular interests ahead of the whole.

Historically in Canada, two institutions performed the function of knitting together different claims and putting the public interest first. Government itself was one of those institutions. The other was political parties, particularly political parties that were national in their reach and in their ambition.

It is not healthy for the public interest to have the role of parties decline and the role of lobbyists and special interests fill the vacuum. That is a large issue of which this question of party funding is one important element, because the present situation allows the enfeeblement of political parties. It makes it much more difficult for them to perform their task of drawing together the interests of the whole community.

These reforms outlined here today would allow us to make a step in the direction of reasserting the public interest. These issues are central to the health of our democracy. It is clear that the status quo does not work. It invites very real cynicism in the country. The Minister of Canadian Heritage testified to that effect the other day when she said that financial considerations and the interests of contributors held up the timetable on Kyoto. There is no doubt that the present system invites abuse.

This bill is only a beginning. It is hasty. It was introduced without adequate consultation. It is incomplete. It is badly drafted. It needs substantial amendment. However, that is the business of this House. My party and I will support the bill at this reading and encourage the widest possible opportunity for members of all parties in the House to improve it in committee and elsewhere by considering and debating amendments.

● (1730)

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Madam Speaker, I always appreciate the right hon. gentleman's comments. I certainly believe that no one in the House has more experience, statesmanship and ability in regard to putting forward comments to the House of Commons.

The member mentioned at the very close of his dissertation that the status quo is simply not the way to go. We also heard from the Canadian Alliance, which wishes us to maintain the status quo with no changes whatsoever.

We agree that the House of Commons has to reform political contributions. Certainly the concept of that not being the status quo has been put forward. The right hon. member has indicated that we are prepared to take this forward to committee. However, he talked about some problems that we should be able to deal with.

Does the right hon. member believe, from past experience with this government in particular, that the government will be open minded with respect to changes for some of the flaws in this legislation? One we talked about today and which was not mentioned in the right hon. member's speech is that of the trust funds. That seems to be a black hole that still remains.

Does the right hon. member honestly believe that we will be able to convince the governing party of the day to make this legislation better so that Canadians would accept it for what it really is, a reform for the betterment of the way we operate the House of Commons?

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question by the hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

Certainly past practice would suggest that the government will clamp down on members of other parties and members of its own party who want to reform the bill, but this is a rather unusual bill. The Prime Minister claims that it is a matter of great importance to him, a question of principle, a reform that needs to be introduced. He admitted in his remarks, as I heard them, that there are imperfections in the bill, that it needs to be changed.

I hope he will not succumb to the bad habit of limiting debate and limiting the ability of members on his side of the House and this side of the House to improve the bill that is brought before us. This is too important a matter to let fall victim to the party whip or the party whim of the Liberal Party. It can make a significant change in the way the political system works and the way the political system is seen.

I would hope that there will be, particularly among members of the Liberal Party themselves, an insistence upon a right to amend the bill and not have Parliament's capacity to debate it limited.

There is one other point. I think I heard someone from the Alliance saying they are not against the bill. They have introduced an amendment that would kill the bill. That seems to me a fairly dramatic way of indicating that they are against it.

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I know it is a long way down there to where the fifth party sits, but I still thought the members would be able to hear what the Canadian Alliance has been saying.

Both the speaker who just spoke and the Conservative's one sole member from what is considered western Canada have said that the Canadian Alliance is for the status quo. I do not know where they were hiding when the Canadian Alliance made it extremely clear that its members support the bill's concept of doing away with big corporate, union and organization donations, but instead of going to the taxpayer's purse, they should be replaced by having people who are shareholders of those corporations make individual donations, and by having the workers who contribute their money to the unions instead deciding whether or not they wish to contribute and, if so, to whom.

I would ask the hon. member if he supports that kind of concept. Does he think that corporations still should be allowed to give large sums of money to political parties? Or indeed, does he support what the government is proposing, which is that we replace these corporations and unions by just forcing the taxpayer to pay us money whether they want to or not?

● (1735)

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Madam Speaker, I believe there should be caps on contributions. As I said in my remarks, I think that some of the caps being proposed should be looked at.

I hope the Canadian Alliance does in fact have proposals that it will bring forward as amendments, but let me say that I am not putting words in its members' mouths. I am quoting from the amendment that was just introduced by their leader. Their leader's amendment states that "This House decline to give second reading...". That is pretty categoric. The position of the Canadian Alliance is to kill the bill. The position of the party previously known as Reform is to kill reform. I find that odd, but they are entitled to their position.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the right hon. member for Calgary Centre. I also listened to the member for Palliser when the original discussion about trust funds was brought forward.

The issue of trust funds is certainly one that is not dealt with in this package, or at least to my knowledge, and a number of individual Liberal backbenchers who are not even ministers of the crown have substantial trust funds of at least a few hundred thousand dollars. There also are riding associations that have a couple of hundred thousand dollars in their accounts and trust funds.

Certainly there was a former minister of industry in this House, whom I think we can name now, from Newfoundland, who was reputed to have $2.5 million in his trust fund when he left politics. Some of that would have been promises that would have been met had he actually run for the leadership, but much of that would have been cash in the form of cheques and cash from fundraisers.

I have no idea where the transparency is on any of the trust funds. The member for LaSalle—Émard, if we read the press clippings, is reputed to have $8 million ready to fight a campaign just for the leadership of the Liberal Party.

I really do not see any provisions in the bill to limit these trust accounts. These trust accounts are no more than retirement packages for many members. Somehow or another, if we are going to really do something about parliamentary reform and the financing of political parties, then we also have to do something about financial reform in the financing of the retirement packages of individual members of Parliament.

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from South Shore. Earlier I neglected to answer the question about trust funds. I do not believe there is a provision in the bill and there should be.

The key is transparency. The public has to be able to look at what we are doing and have some confidence that we are behaving in an appropriate way.

The sprouting of trust funds, in particular in the amounts mentioned by the hon. member, only leads to cynicism and suspicion. That is deadly to a democracy like ours. We have to find ways in committee, among other challenges, to build in transparency with regard to circumstances that led trust funds to be developed.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand today and speak to the bill. If you could indulge me for just a moment, I would like to say that this is a great opportunity today in the House to have this legislation come forward, but it also is the first time I have been able to speak in the House as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

I would like to take a moment to pass on my greatest thanks to the many people who phoned and offered notes of congratulations on the position. It is a great honour. I am very proud. The fact that the Prime Minister was so gracious in acknowledging me and selecting me as his parliamentary secretary is a significant acknowledgement of the respect that he holds for the people of Cape Breton and the people of Bras d'Or—Cape Breton.

I also want to make reference to the Prime Minister's speech today in the House. I think it is significant to see just how committed he is, in his final months in the House, to bringing back the integrity of elected officials and of the House into the backyards of Canadians. It is not that often that he takes the opportunity to speak to legislation in the House, and certainly today, having presented the bill, it is a great honour and a pleasure to come in behind him and support the bill.

Canadians are rightly proud of their country. They are proud of its reputation for honesty and good government which has made us model for many democracies around the world.

However, this did not just happen by itself. Rather, it was the result of hard work and self-sacrifice of ordinary Canadians who educated themselves about the issues of the day. They became involved and they made a difference.

Canadians today are no different. They too want to get involved. They want to make a difference but to do this they need information on how the system works.

One area where Canadians do not have all the information they need, involves the funding of political activity. In the Canada Election study of 2000, it was reported that 94.2% of Canadians felt that they had the right to know how political participants financed their election campaigns. And they do.

In polling results released last summer, close to 80% of respondents were in favour of increased disclosure measures. This fact was abundantly clear when the Leader of the Government in the House consulted experts, provincial leaders and ordinary Canadians on how we could improve our current system.

Time and time again they said that Canadians did not have enough information on how political activity was financed and that what they did know, they did not always like. Canadians have a perception that donations by corporations, unions and rich individuals sometimes give government undue influence in decision-making processes.

This of course is mistaken. However, as we know, perceptions matter, especially in politics, and we must do everything in our power to ensure that all Canadians have complete confidence in our democratic process.

Probably the best way to counteract such misconceptions would be to give Canadians the fullest possible information on where donations come from, who gets them and how the money is spent. That would mean better disclosure and would require all the players to divulge their finances.

The recommendations from Lortie and the Chief Electoral Officer are significant. As I mentioned, in the development of the bill, the government consulted with experts and stakeholders. It also reviewed past studies of the electoral system, including the recommendations of the Lortie commission and the Chief Electoral Officer.

● (1740)

The Lortie commission came out with a series of recommendations on electoral issues in 1991, including on the issue of disclosure. As stated in the Lortie commission report:

> Full disclosure of information on financial contributions and expenditures is an integral component of an electoral system that inspires public confidence. Essential to enhancing the integrity of the political system are the principles of transparency and public accountability. Full and timely disclosure requirements help remove suspicion about the financial activities of candidates and parties by opening the process to public scrutiny.

In that regard, the Lortie commission recommended extending disclosure requirements to electoral district associations, leadership contestants and nomination contestants.

The Chief Electoral Officer also studied the issue of disclosure extensively, including it in his recommendations following the 37th general election.

The CEO mentioned in his report that financial disclosure requirements had been part of the Canada Elections Act since its inception in 1874, and that "the history of the Canada Elections Act is a history of the growing realization of the importance of disclosure". As he has been famously quoted as saying, "the absence of full disclosure requirements for political participants, other than parties and candidates, is the 'black hole' of political financing".

As such, in his last report he recommended the extension of disclosure requirements to electoral district association, nomination contestants and leadership contestants.

Many provincial jurisdictions have already acted to extend measures in ways similar to that proposed in the bill. For example, in my home province of Nova Scotia, in New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia and Quebec all have requirements for disclosure for electoral district associations.

The provinces of Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia have disclosure requirements for leadership contestants. Both the United States and Britain have extensive disclosure requirements for political participants.

At a conference last summer, attended by the chief electoral officers of several countries, all the CEOs agreed that disclosure was a key part of an effective political financing system which complements other important measures, such as contribution limits and public funding.

What does that tell us? Many studies have pointed to the importance of full disclosure. Canadians have made it very clear that disclosure is very important to them. Disclosure is widely viewed in the provinces and other countries as a key element of an effectively functioning political system. The bill reflects all this.

I will now review the key elements relating to disclosure. To begin with, the bill contains measures designed to open up the system, make it more transparent and remove the air of mystery that obscures some areas. This makes a lot of sense, for the system is, after all, honest and above board. Why not let the public see everything and judge for itself? At present, only candidates and political parties are required to disclose to the Chief Electoral Officer the sources and amounts of contributions received. This clearly does not go far enough since it misses a number of important players.

To address this, the bill would extend reporting obligations to all the political participants, including electoral district associations, leadership contestants and nomination contestants. All political participants would have to disclose all contributions, including the name and address of the person or organization making donations of more than $200. Electoral district associations would report contributions and expenses on an annual basis. They would also be allowed to issue tax receipts for contributions in between elections.

● (1745)

Upon registration with the Chief Electoral Officer, leadership contestants would have to disclose the amounts and sources of contributions received prior to the date of registration. In each of the four weeks immediately preceding leadership conventions, they would be required to submit information on amounts and sources of donations.

Finally, six months following the leadership contest, they would be required to submit information on all contributions received, as well as all expenses incurred to the chief electoral officer. Nomination contestants also would be required to report on finances and would have to disclose amounts and sources of contributions, as well as expenses incurred, four months following the nomination contest.

These measures, once passed into law, will go a long way toward enhancing public confidence in the way we fund political activity in Canada. They will reassure Canadians of the basic honesty of the system by giving them a better idea of what money is being contributed, who receives it and how it is being spent.

In addition, the bill would fundamentally improve the way we fund political activity at the national level, which would send a powerful message to Canadians and the world that our political and governmental systems are based on the highest possible ethical standards and will continue to do so in the future.

Clearly, this is a situation where everyone wins. Canada's electoral law and political financing provisions are already the envy of the world. When these measures are put into full force, Canada's disclosure requirements will be unparalleled and Canadians will enjoy the highest standards of information about political participants.

For those reasons I will be supporting the bill and I encourage other members in the House to do likewise.

● (1750)

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Madam Speaker, first, I want to congratulate the member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton on his new position. It is nice to see a fellow maritimer being elevated within his own party. I hope he does well in that.

The member talked about disclosure and transparency. One of the things that always amazes me about the Liberal Party is its ability to finance an election without any apparent local support. I know this has happened in Bras d'Or—Cape Breton. We hope the new legislation stops this from happening.

However under the bill contributions would be made to the Liberal Party of Canada, not to the local organizations. I know what would happen in the Liberal organization in New Brunswick Southwest. Most of the money would be given to the federal organization. The federal organization then would write a cheque and transfer all the money needed to run an election back to the local level. The obvious reasons are that many of these associations could not raise money at a local level.

I want the member to be very forthright and tell the House how much money he received from the federal party in that election, whether or not he feels that was right, and whether or not he feels the legislation would prohibit that from happening in the future?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Madam Speaker, first, I would like to thank my colleague from Atlantic Canada for his congratulations. I feel a camaraderie and a certain sense of support because we face similar situations in Atlantic Canada.

I will have to play dumb on this one. In my own campaign it is very natural. I can assure the hon. member that in preparation for a campaign, we had a financial committee in place which was responsible for the fundraising. I know much has been said about big trust funds and large bank accounts in some constituencies. I can certainly attest to the fact that there are none in the constituency of Bras d'Or—Cape Breton. We raise our money through chicken suppers and spaghetti dinners, one member at a time. It is certainly from the grassroots of the party.

As far as we go forward with moneys coming from the national party, the support we garnered in our constituency was from the grassroots people and small businesses that wanted to offer their support. From that we went forward.

● (1755)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I too want to extend my congratulations to the member on his important appointment. He is a popular member in the House. I know that he will do a very good job and will always respect this place and certainly his constituents.

There is one issue that has been raised by a number of my constituents. It was addressed by the Prime Minister in his speech and the member also addressed it somewhat in his own speech. It has to do with shifting the cost of our political system from corporations to all taxpayers through our general tax system. It is a question we have to answer clearly and concisely. I know the Prime Minister said that to the extent that corporations are not going to be making these contributions, they have an opportunity to send them to charities or to put it to other community good. They have some options here, but it also makes sure that there is some equity.

I would like to give the member an opportunity to address the very fundamental question about rationalizing the shifting of the burden from corporations to taxpayers as a whole and although that is a shift of who pays the toll as it were, how that relates to the objective the bill is trying to achieve.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Madam Speaker, that is the essence of the bill. There is a perception and we are looking at addressing the perception. We can best allay any cynicism within the financing process if that process is clear, transparent and accountable. That is what Canadians want and demand. We have heard it time and time again.

Sometimes we are our own worst enemies in casting aspersions back and forth in the House. We are guilty of it on this side as well. Throughout the Kyoto debate we were tough on taking the position that some parties might be at the mercy of certain corporate sectors.

Many Canadians want to take part in the process. We live in a great country, all of us know that. Canadians hold the virtues of democracy very high and are willing to pay a price for that. The initial response we have received around the country is that this is a positive piece of legislation. We see that Canadians want to step up and be part of that process. Through clear, open and accountable policies and a transparent process they will have that opportunity.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, do the Liberal government, the member himself, the right hon. member for Calgary Centre and the Progressive Conservatives never get tired of taking the taxpayers' hard-earned money away from them and spending it foolishly?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Madam Speaker, I do not think this is about taking the taxpayers' money and spending it foolishly.

The bill is trying to build some integrity back into the process. It is about transparency and accountability. Yes, there is a small price to pay for the taxpayers of Canada, but I think it is a very small price to pay. If one looks at the figures of what it now costs Canadians through corporate donations and tax relief and what it will cost as we go forward with a revamped system through the bill that we are debating today, the difference in what it costs the people of Canada is very minimal. It is marginal.

If we ensure there is that transparency and accountability and if it builds integrity back into the system, then I think Canadians are willing to pay that price. That is what we have been told. In going door to door or listening to talk shows, that cynicism of corporate Canada pulling the levers of government is very obvious and apparent.

That is what the legislation is all about. It is why I will be supporting the legislation.

● (1800)

Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this legislation which I support in principle should not be seen as imposing a burden on taxpayers. The democracy we have in Canada is to be cherished and if it is worth having, it is worth paying for. I am sure most taxpayers would agree.

As a result of this legislation, we in the Liberal Party will no longer have to share our rebates with headquarters. Some of the money we will get will be from corporations at the local level and that money cannot be shared with the party because it will be barred by the legislation.

Another concern that I want to place on the record has to do with the provision to provide rebates with respect to expenditures on polling, whether it is at the local level or the national level. I feel somewhat squeamish about that. I think we spend enough money at the local level. If we allow for rebates, 50% on polling expenditures, that is an inducement to spend more money and I do not think that is necessary. Maybe the parliamentary secretary would like to respond to that.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Madam Speaker, in today's society and in today's electoral environment, polling is a tool used by most parties and by most candidates. If we are looking at a particular issue, polling is necessary. It is another way of gaining information as to the desires of specific groups or of all Canadians and knowing what is important to them.

The bill will be going to committee. The essence of the bill will not be compromised; we would not want to do that. These are aspects of the bill that can be debated. I encourage my colleague to bring forward his recommendations at the committee level.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Since it would be helpful to have a member start and complete a speech in one sitting, I wonder if the House would agree to see the clock as being at 6:04 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is it agreed to see the clock at 6:04 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Bakopanos): It being 6:04 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

CANADA HEALTH ACT

The House resumed from November 22, 2002 consideration of the motion that Bill C-202, An Act to amend the Canada Health Act (linguistic duality), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am a very big fan of private members' business, especially when it involves proposed legislation which I consider to be wise and well thought out. Bill C-202 in the name of the member for Ottawa—Vanier is a very good piece of proposed legislation.

The member is the chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages. He has spoken out very passionately in this place as recently as the debate on Bill C-13 to get that piece of legislation subject to the Official Languages Act. As a consequence, the government even supported the motion and his reasoning. Even on a voice vote the House embraced it. It is a signal from this place that the Official Languages Act has a very special place in Canada and that all our legislation, all our agencies and all of those organizations which touch the fibre of Canada should be covered under the Official Languages Act.

I congratulate the member wholeheartedly for presenting Bill C-202. This will add the principle of respecting linguistic duality to the Canada Health Act specifically, but it is also a signal that we are ready to clean up all of the other areas. I am sure that the government will consider the member's recommendations.

The member spoke very eloquently to this bill. He wanted to ensure consistency in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canada Health Act and the Official Languages Act. We have to put our constitution, our legislation and our Official Languages Act on the same playing field because they fit very well and serve Canada very well.

The member gave a number of arguments. One was that effectively we would be adding a sixth principle to the Canada Health Act. We operate now under five principles but that sixth element is equally important. The Canada Health Act guides us in all the legislation to do with health. It provides the foundation on which all Canadians can get the services they need; comprehensiveness, accessibility, portability, et cetera, and in both official languages without hesitation. That is as important as effective delivery.

The member indicated that the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology held hearings on this matter and issued a report. A number of testimonials came from the provinces.

The federal government provides leadership in many ways but when the provinces come forward and say that this is a good idea and it is what we should be doing, then it is pretty important. When there are key players in each of the provinces who are prepared to make testimonials on behalf of the proposal that the member has raised and on which the Senate committee had hearings, those things are very powerful and should not be ignored.

Mr. Paul d'Entremont from Nova Scotia stated:

> In Nova Scotia, there exists no provincial law or policy stipulating that services must be offered in French. This explains why access to health care in French is so very limited, and where such services are offered, they are provided thanks to the dogged persistence of individuals and community organizations.

That is very important. They are trying to get around it but they do not have the tools to make it happen. The quote continues:

> Existing French services have often been put in place by chance, randomly, and the community fears losing them. The comments gathered during the recent consultation of the Acadian francophone population in our eight Acadian regions such as in the recent study carried out by the FCFA, bear witness to the fact that there is very little access to services in French.

That was the Nova Scotia representation. Nova Scotia does not have adequate access to services in French. Mr. d'Entremont went on to recommend that the federal government add a sixth principle to the Canada Health Act on linguistic duality.

● (1805)

In Ontario we have similar support. A representative from Ontario said specifically:

> The data show that half the time, francophones living in minority situations have little or no access to health care services in their own language. In other words, a great deal remains to be done before we achieve equality as regards health care services for francophone minority communities.

Therefore Ontario has the same situation. The Ontario representative also supported a sixth principle on linguistic duality and the protection of minorities. We have again a very important reference from credible people who represent the interests of people in their provinces.

In British Columbia, Ms. Yseult Friolet, who is the Executive Director of the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique in her testimony stated:

> When we think of British Columbia, we often think about mountains and the sea, but we may forget that there are 61,000 francophones living in our beautiful province.

She went on to say:

> There is also a large community of people who speak French as their second or third language. There are close to 250,000 people in our province who can speak French, which is roughly 7 per cent of the population.

She went on to add her support for a sixth principle for the Canada Health Act. She also appeared before the Romanow commission and made the same argument.

In Prince Edward Island it is a very similar situation. In representations by Ms. Élise Arsenault of the Centre communautaire Évangéline, she stated:

> The community now wants the federal government to assume a leadership role in this regard by providing financial support to the provinces that wish to offer more health services in French and to include a sixth principle in the Canada Health Act.

From sea to sea to sea I could read testimonies from Quebec, from New Brunswick, from Yukon, but I believe that many members here would like to join in this debate to lend their support to the proposal that we should have this sixth element in the Canada Health Act because it is important to Canada. It is a constitutional issue. It is a minority rights issue. It is a parliamentary issue. Specifically, in the proposed bill it is also a health issue. I am very sure that once we deal with this aspect it will provide the springboard effect that is necessary for us to move forward in other legislation and with regard to the operations of other agencies.

As can be seen, the members of the official language communities are expressing their support for health care services in both official languages. Through a number of spokespeople, they have requested that the Government of Canada add a sixth principle to the Canada Health Act. Numerous communities have also spoken. They want to see their constitutional rights guaranteed when it comes to health.

We as members of the House of Commons are in a position to make that happen and I urge all members to vote in favour of Bill C-202. Let us make it unanimous, let us do it all stages and let us make this the law in Canada.

● (1810)

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the constituents of Surrey Central to participate in the debate on Bill C-202, an act to amend the Canada Health Act. The bill would add a sixth principle to the Canada Health Act, ensuring that Canada's linguistic duality would be respected in the health care system everywhere in Canada.

I will begin by saying that opening up the Canada Health Act is certainly a bold move by the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier. My initial reaction is to wholeheartedly support his private member's bill. However, upon further reflection, I must voice reservations.

Clearly, an individual's ability to communicate with his or her health care provider in a language in which the individual is comfortable is extremely important. For doctors to offer appropriate treatment, they must fully understand their patients. Unfortunately, language may sometimes act as a barrier to understanding and this may be detrimental to health.

I remember a patient was to be operated on in California. His left leg was to be amputated but because of a lack of communication somehow the doctors wrongly amputated his right leg. Ultimately both legs were amputated and the person had to suffer throughout his life. We understand that language and communication is important.

Bill C-202 seeks to ensure that Canadians have access to health care in both official languages. However the problem is that this proposal really ignores Canadian reality. In Canada today, especially in areas popular with immigrants, it would be nearly impossible to ensure that all Canadians have access to health care in their language of choice. It is not simply a case of bilingual service, service in English and in French. That is a dated view of our country.

Let us consider the riding of Surrey Central for a minute. There are 68,810 residents whose mother tongue is neither English nor French. According to the 2001 census, only 1,590 people in Surrey Central have French as their mother tongue and only 200 use French around the home. There are 11 other languages that more commonly are used in Surrey Central homes. Punjabi for instance is the mother tongue of 35,140 people in Surrey Central and 18,705 people use Punjabi as their home language in Surrey Central.

In this case, if we are truly interested in language rights and serving people in a language they can understand better and clearer, we should not be asking medical personnel to speak French. We should be asking them to speak Punjabi or another language. Even if we do so, it might do nothing to help the many thousands of residents who speak Cantonese, Filipino and Korean, just to name a few languages which are prevalent in Surrey Central.

Also, the proposed amendment to the Canada Health Act will do nothing for the 9,285 residents of Surrey Central who speak neither English nor French.

Requiring the provinces to provide bilingual services would make no sense in Surrey Central. French is simply not that prevalent in that region. It is far less popular than a whole slew of Asian languages.

Surrey Central is by no means unique. Throughout the B.C. lower mainland, in Toronto and in other areas with a heavy concentration of immigrants, we will find many Canadians who interact most comfortably in neither of our official languages.

Already multilingualism is a reality in Canada's largest urban centres. In Vancouver, one in six people have Chinese as their mother tongue. In the metropolitan area of Toronto nearly two million people have neither French nor English as their mother tongue. Many of these people are more comfortable speaking in Chinese, Punjabi, Urdu or Tamil than they are in English or French.

● (1815)

The Canadian reality is that 59.1% of Canadians are anglophone, English is their mother tongue; 42.9% francophone, French is their mother tongue; 18% allophone or non-official language as their mother tongue.

Only in Quebec and New Brunswick do francophones make up more than 4.4% of the population. Outside Quebec there are 980,270 francophones and 4.6 million allophones. If we exclude Quebec for the sake of this debate, there are nearly as many Chinese or East Indians as francophones in Canada. Therefore why stop only with linguistic duality in the health care system?

Regrettably economics must be a consideration when deciding upon adding a sixth principle to the Canada Health Act. There are now one million Canadians on wait lists for medical services. According to the Fraser Institute, total wait times from referral by a general practitioner to treatment averaged 16.5 weeks in 2001-02. That should not be acceptable.

There are 4.5 million Canadians who are unable to get a family physician. The provinces are already stretched in their efforts to deliver health care. They already have enough to deal with in addressing long wait lists, shortages of medical personnel and increasing public expectations. The federal government should not burden the provinces with new responsibilities, especially if there is no additional cash commitment to do so.

Bill C-202 states that the provision of health services for the linguistic minority shall take account of the human, material and financial resources for each facility and the social, cultural and linguistic characteristics of the members of the public served by the facility. This vague language leaves the bill open to wide interpretation. The Canada Health Act is already vague in a number of respects without need for further vagueness.

The Canada Health Act came into force in 1984. It sets out five criteria and certain other conditions that a province's health care insurance plan must meet in order for the government of that province to receive the full federal cash contribution under the Canada health and social transfer.

For the information of those who are watching this debate, the five criteria in the act include: universality, accessibility, comprehensiveness, portability and public administration. The act also contains specific provisions with respect to extra billing by physicians and user charges by hospitals.

Full compliance by some provinces has been from the beginning a problem. Part of the problem has been definitions or more specifically, the lack there of. What is mean by "medically necessary"? That is up to each individual province to decide for itself. The result is uneven public coverage across the country.

Likewise, what does the act mean by "reasonable access" to insured health services? With the growing prevalence of long waiting lines for medical services, it is little wonder people are asking whether they have reasonable access to health care services.

In 1984 many services, such as drugs, rehabilitation, recuperation and palliative care, were provided in hospitals and therefore covered by the act. Increasingly these services are provided in the home or community and as a result fall outside the scope of the Canada Health Act.

Health care gobbles up $10 billion annually in B.C. It accounts for 41¢ of every provincial tax dollar. The government has increased funding by some $1.1 billion but it still is not enough and further cost savings are being explored.

People in my community have been faced with the closure of Saint Mary's Hospital in nearby New Westminster. This means seven fewer operating rooms. Last year almost 1,800 Surrey residents had surgery in this hospital. Where do they go now?

Therefore I appreciate the efforts of the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier. It is a noble idea but it will not pass a cost benefit analysis. It will not pass geographic and demographic criteria. Our health care priorities require tough and difficult decisions. We must consider those priorities, which are emergencies in many of our hospitals and communities.

● (1820)

We all watch the health care services that are required in our northern territories and so on. Each and every community suffers from the lack of health care services provided because of the lack of facilities. The government is the root cause for the deterioration of our health care services in our communities because it cut $25 million from our health care transfers since taking power in 1993.

Now the government wants to be perceived as the saviour of our health care. It is like an arsonist who sets a house on fire, then he is the first one seen with a bucket of water to put out the fire, and wants to be called a hero. That is what the government is trying to do.

The government created this mess in our health care services. It is time that we look into this issue seriously, carefully, and make prudent and diligent decisions to restore the health care services to seniors, children, the sick, and the destitute who are suffering because of the lack of those services.

Health care priorities are unique because they require tough and difficult decisions. Sometimes we must make choices and we have to live with them. This is an excellent effort by the member. However, it will not pass the test of a cost benefit analysis as well as the demographic realities.

Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-202 and I want to pay tribute to the member for Ottawa—Vanier, the sponsor of the bill. His work around the bill has been exemplary.

On behalf of all Manitobans I wish to express my support for Bill C-202 which would add the principle of respecting linguistic duality to the Canada Health Act of 1984. This sixth principle is a logical consequence of the Official Languages Act as it would ensure that the linguistic minorities of Manitoba would be entitled to health care services in the language of their choice, that is, English or French, the two official languages of Canada.

We forget too often that there are francophone communities west of Ontario. Some 45,000 francophones live in my home province of Manitoba. Saint Boniface is one of the largest French communities outside of Quebec. French communities in Manitoba are strong, well structured, and their contribution to the cultural, economic, and social development of our province is significant.

Since 1993 francophones in Manitoba have governed their own school board. The time has come to get the same rights in health care accessibility.

Health care in French is important for the preservation and promotion of Franco-Manitoban communities. Among the many arguments, a good communication between health care professionals and patients is absolutely essential. Many studies confirm the importance of the language in ensuring efficient health care service. Language related obstacles reduce accessibility to and the quality of health care.

The health care professional has to help, guide and advise patients. When communication is good, services are more efficient, there is no time wasted, results are better, and costs are reduced.

Francophones in Manitoba have been working hard for a number of years to ensure the delivery of quality health care and social services in French, but access is still very limited. When such services are offered, their capacity is restricted. The Government of Canada must respect its own constitutional obligations and support francophones by giving them quality of status and equal rights in the field of health care.

The Société franco-manitobaine, SFM, is the spokesgroup for Franco-Manitobans. In March 2002, a little less than a year ago, supported by nearly 50 francophone organizations, the SFM presented its view to the Romanow commission when it came to Winnipeg. The SFM asked Mr. Romanow to recommend to the government the addition of a sixth principle to the Canada Health Act.

Francophones want to see their constitutional rights guaranteed when it comes to health in Manitoba. The Société franco-manitobaine was in complete agreement with the document produced by the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, "Health in French: Towards improved access to health care services in French".

Voting in favour of Bill C-202 would definitely be an advancement of rights for official language minority communities in Canada and it would be an excellent way for the Government of Canada to reaffirm its commitment to enhance the vitality and support the development of Canada's francophone and anglophone minorities as recommended by section 41 of the Official Languages Act.

I am delighted to support Bill C-202 and I recommend it to all members of the House.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Madame Speaker, I am torn—strong words maybe—by this speech, but at least I understand the reasons behind the bill presented by my friend and colleague, the member for Ottawa—Vanier, with whom I had the pleasure and honour to sit on the Standing Committee on Official Languages, along with other colleagues here.

I do not object to the messenger or the message per se, but I will go a little further. When the member for Ottawa—Vanier asks us to amend the Canada Health Act by adding a sixth principle, namely linguistic duality, the goal is noble. My colleague's purpose in introducing this bill is also justified and justifiable.

Where I have a slight problem is with the desired results. We want to offer communities that live in a minority situation—let us call a spade a spade—offer Francophone communities in Canada services in their language, where numbers warrant.

Is the member for Ottawa—Vanier's approach of amending the Canada Health Act to meet this objective of offering services in French to Francophones the right one? The bill would add the following after section 12:

> 12.1 In order to satisfy the criterion respecting linguistic duality,
>
> *(a)* as soon as possible, the province shall, in co-operation with the facilities of the province that offer insured health services, develop a program ensuring access to health services for members of the province's anglophone or francophone minority and, in so doing, shall take account of the human, material and financial resources of each facility—

Already we have a problem and this is the reason for the Bloc Quebecois' main objection to this bill. It says "as soon as possible, the province shall, in co-operation with the facilities of the province —"

In fact, it is right. It is the province that must establish the priorities. It is the province which, under the Constitution, under the Health Act, provides services to clients, patients, individuals, and the public. It is up to the provinces to define this.

The bill says "—the province shall, in co-operation with the facilities of the province that offer insured health services—". In fact, this is a provincial jurisdiction.

Even if we circumvented that, which would cause us no end of pangs, but if we did decided to go ahead anyway, supporting Bill C-202 even if this is a provincial area of jurisdiction, the excuses we used are also available to the provinces. They could tell us, "We are taking into account human, material and financial resources, in not providing access to services as stipulated in clause 12.1".

I know that it would be fallacious, a misuse of the bill as presented to us, but unfortunately I think these would be the excuses the provinces would come up with. When there is reference to sufficient financial resources and we know that there is a problem everywhere in Canada with health care funding, it seems to me that they will throw the argument of insufficient financial resources back at us.

If I may, I will point out that this bill would be hard to implement in Quebec, not because we are any better than anyone else, nicer, better looking or whatever, but because we have already given some thought to this. I would have liked to have heard some comments on this.

We in Quebec enacted Bill 142 back in 1986—when, I believe, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis was in cabinet—guaranteeing access to health services in English throughout Quebec.

● (1830)

Here is what I would propose to my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier: why do we not work together to promote interprovincial reciprocity agreements based on the principle of Bill 142, which Quebec enacted back in 1986, thereby respecting provincial jurisdictions and saying we merely want the reciprocity of what is the practice in Quebec?

If I wanted to make political hay with this—which I don't—I could draw a parallel with the Young Offenders Act and its implementation in Quebec. The desire was to make blanket changes, and this went over like a lead balloon in Quebec. It is not that we were opposed to preventing youth crime, that we had anything against virtue, or against young offenders, but merely that we had a different approach.

This bill affects me when it states that there will be blanket coverage. If we agree to that, first of all we would be recognizing the first five principles, which are not recognized in Quebec, although applied. If we are to recognize a sixth, we will have to recognize the first five. But what if a seventh, eighth or ninth were to appear later, what would we hear? "You agree with the first six, but not with the other three". It is a sensitive issue.

In ten years, education might be a serious issue in Canada, it might be such a serious issue that the federal government may want to interfere in the area of education. If we accept it for health, because the situation is so serious, then we might accept it for the environment because it is also experiencing serious problems, just as we accepted for education. What jurisdictions will be left to the provinces? Will they have any areas of responsibility?

The goal my colleague, the member for Ottawa—Vanier, wants to attain is legitimate and worthwhile. We too want to attain this objective, which would allow French speaking communities to be served in their language.

What is Quebec doing, in concrete terms, to help? My colleague from New Brunswick is here. The University of Sherbrooke offers medical courses—he is a doctor, to boot—to students from New Brunswick so that francophones in that province can be served in their language.

There are interprovincial agreements. There is a willingness on Quebec's part. However, I do not think that the way to reach the objective of providing francophones with French language services is by adding a sixth principle. I think this approach sidesteps the problem.

It is perfectly legitimate to raise this for debate in order to propose another approach in the end, and I would like to invite my colleague to consider another approach.

For example, let me give him another suggestion. I was reading in his speech that he has waited five years to introduce his bill. It gives me no pleasure to tell him that we are against the bill, even though we espouse the principle that francophones should have more services in French.

However, I would propose another suggestion: Bill 142. There may be a few others that could apply here, but Bill 142 recognizes provincial jurisdiction. It recognizes that each province must provide, across its territory, services to minorities, in this case, in French.

It is important to remember that the Canada Health Act, created in 1984, has never been recognized. It is applied, but it has never been recognized in Quebec, because it intrudes into areas of provincial jurisdiction.

It is unfortunate to talk in political terms about an issue as sensitive as health, but we have to. I will remind the House that when the last two reports of the Commissioner of Official Languages were tabled, a journalist by the name of Elizabeth Thompson asked me the same question, "Do you want to subject transfers for health to the Official Languages Act?"

I can easily see a province like Saskatchewan, Manitoba or Alberta having its transfer payments in health cut, having problems with hospital waiting lists and so forth, even resulting in some deaths, and then being told that it is because they did not respect the Official Languages Act.

I think this is, I repeat, a sensitive subject, and simplistic solutions should not be provided for complex problems.

The committee is already looking at Part VII of the Official Languages Act. It could be very interesting to see how, in respecting provincial jurisdiction, francophone communities could be encouraged to obtain services.

If there is meddling in this area, I fear that, next, there will be meddling in the environment or education. It is unfortunately for this reason that we want to work to provide services, but in a different way that will, I hope, be as effective for those communities that are truly in dire straits as a result of the government's inaction.

● (1835)

[*English*]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to say at the outset that I do not want to spend a lot of time speaking about where I and my party stand on the private member's bill that is before us.

Nobody ever suggested that it would be easy to build a modern, progressive, bilingual, multicultural Canada, but I think we have seen a couple of examples tonight of how at least two parties in this Parliament, the official opposition, the Alliance, and the Bloc, make it extremely difficult to achieve. I have to say I am always puzzled by that, knowing and respecting the fact that there are very stringent laws to protect and reinforce the French language, and understandably so in Quebec. It always surprises me that there is so little interest in the whole issue of how to ensure that francophones outside Quebec also have their language, one of Canada's two official languages, fully respected.

Similarly, I always find it depressing that so many Alliance members say, and I do not want to say this applies to everyone, to heck with French or either of the official languages if there are in fact other language needs. Let me say very clearly how important it is to be responsive to those other language needs and nothing in this bill in my view in any way is insensitive to that. We have to be clear about what we are dealing with here.

[*Translation*]

It is a pleasure for me to speak this evening to Bill C-202, An Act to amend the Canada Health Act (linguistic duality).

My colleague, the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, a proud Acadian and a proud francophone, has already spoken in the House on this subject. Tonight, it is a pleasure for me to congratulate and thank the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier for having proposed such an important initiative for official language minority communities.

This bill includes an important component for official language minority communities, that being linguistic duality in health care services for Canadians.

In this respect, this bill proposes a sixth health care principle. This principle states that Canadian provinces must respect the principle of linguistic duality in health care delivery.

Currently, the Canada Health Act includes five principles that regulate the delivery of health care. These are public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability, and accessibility. It is true that these five principles are often sorely tested by the current crisis affecting Canadian health care institutions.

The proposal in the bill is based on the participation of the provinces, which would receive the full transfer payment amount for health in order to respect the principle of linguistic duality within medical institutions.

The provinces must also entrust the management of institutions providing health care to people belonging to the provincial francophone or anglophone minority, where the number of users of the establishment warrant this.

In short, we are talking about linguistic rights. Official language minority communities would have the right to be served in their own language.

The provision of quality care is not just about the ability of medical professionals to provide care, help and advice, but also about their ability to understand and be understood.

● (1840)

This application of the bill is very feasible. Two provinces, New Brunswick and Quebec, have already taken steps in this direction with regard to their health care delivery.

I remember what was said about this in the last Speech from the Throne. I am quoting Her Excellency the Governor General, Adrienne Clarkson.

> Linguistic duality is at the heart of our collective identity—It will support the development of minority English- and French-speaking communities, and expand access to services in their language in areas such as health.

In June 2001, a study on access to health care services in French, commissioned by the Consultative Committee for French-Speaking Minority Communities and supported by Health Canada, was done by the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada.

This study looked at the importance to the effectiveness of certain types of care received of being able to use one's own language. There was considerable research confirming this. Moreover, this study found that anglophones' accessibility to health care is three to seven times greater than of francophones, which is all to the good.

However, much still needs to be done in order for official language minority communities to be able to receive health care services in their own language.

The right to health services in one of the minority languages is not a privilege, but a right that should be ingrained in the mentality of this government and the provinces.

A person should be able to first, obtain health care in his own language, second, understand the directions of a health care provider and third, fully understand the care he is receiving or should receive. None of this should require an uphill battle. Canadians say all the time that access to health care is their number one priority. In my view, the language of communication is a major component of access.

In conclusion, I would like all parliamentarians in this House to imagine being in a hospital where no one spoke or understood theirr language. I guarantee them, they would go through all sorts of emotions and realize that they might receive care without knowing what will be done to you or what exactly their ailment is. Definitely something to think about.

I can only wish one thing in finishing this speech and that is: long live this bill.

● (1845)

[*English*]

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will keep my remarks very brief. My colleague from New Brunswick Southwest wants to intervene and I want to ensure that I leave him that time.

I was sad while listening to our colleague from Surrey Central, whom I have much esteem for, when he started to throw out percentages, that 4% speak French and 50% speak another language, that more people in Vancouver speak Chinese than French and that more people speak English than French here and there. I think that misses the very heart of the issue.

One of the key characteristics of this country is its duality, the French and English cultures, the French and English languages, the founding cultures. This is what distinguishes Canada as a special country. It has devoted compassion, laws and protection to minority cultures, even when the numbers are very small. I know this has not been observed as faithfully as it could have been and it is why I congratulate my colleague the member for Ottawa—Vanier. He has been so diligent, persistent, committed and convinced about minority languages, cultures and communities in Canada.

The bill comes in time to remind us that of all sectors and institutions, the health sector and the health institutions should care about minority languages and minority cultures.

● (1850)

[*Translation*]

I have a great deal of respect for my colleague from Repentigny, with whom I have had the opportunity to work with closely, and we both a great deal of respect for each other. However, having said that, I cannot agree with him.

When I read this bill, when I see the words that is uses, I see that it is based on Quebec's Bill 142. I recall the discussions that took place in the National Assembly when that legislation was being considered, I was there. There were my colleagues, Thérèse Lavoie-Roux and Christos Sirros. This bill was supported by all of the parties. Everyone wanted to settle this issue of minority language.

As everyone knows, and I am not saying this to play party politics, but these things become a sort of political game, depending on the minister, the times, and the government in power. That is why it is good that we now have legislation, the Canada Health Act, to settle the matter, not just for New Brunswick, but across the country, that is based at the outset on the premise of provincial jurisdiction.

The legislation states clearly that the province is responsible. That is the key to the act. I do not think that this offends one province or another, or imposes anything, because it is up to the provinces to put this in practice.

[*English*]

It is a praiseworthy objective to ensure that in hospitals, and health institutions above all else, people could obtain health care and could call on someone who understands one of the minority languages.

This bill is praiseworthy and I congratulate my colleague once again for bringing it forward. I hope that we, including my friend from Repentigny and his colleagues, will find a way to back this bill because its objective is very Canadian and it is an objective we should trust and back very strongly.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Madam Speaker, I am glad I was able to hear the member for Lac-Saint-Louis and his reflective comments that are always right on target as we would expect from the member. I appreciate him allowing me to have a few moments to reflect on Bill C-202.

I wish to congratulate the member for Ottawa—Vanier, but I will take some credit for helping the bill to the floor of the House of Commons. I am one of those who signed on in that process.

The intentions of the member are good. We are encouraged by what he is attempting to do. I do not have to remind the Speaker nor the House that I come from Canada's only officially bilingual province. This linguistic duality as it pertains to health care is something that we have been striving to achieve. We have had great success in New Brunswick. We would hope to see that across the country if the bill were passed by the House.

I will throw out some questions to the member. I know we will have another hour for debate. The member will most likely address those concerns and possibly already has.

Looking at the bill, this would in fact bring a change to the Canada Health Act by adding a sixth principle in respect to linguistic duality. I will read a summary of the bill so that my constituents back home will know exactly what the bill does. It says:

> This enactment amends the Canada Health Act so as to ensure that payment of the full cash contribution under the Canada Health and Social Transfer is subject to the obligation for each province to respect the principle of linguistic duality.

This is what the bill would do as we understand it.

If we look through some of the language in the bill, and the member could speak to this, perhaps it has to be tightened up. In my opinion it has to be made more doable.

We are all attempting to change the Canada Health Act and add new principles to it. I know as a party the Progressive Conservative Party has suggested that the sixth principle of the Canada health Act should be stable long term predictable funding. Then the provinces would know in fact how much money they would have to deliver health care across the country. The provinces have not had this.

The reason I point that out is because we know what the Prime Minister and the federal government recently went through with the provinces in terms of this last health care accord and the difficulty of achieving an accord that everyone could agree with. I am saying this because there are still some financial restraints on the system.

Some of the phrasing in the proposed section 12.1(a) of Bill C-202 that I am not comfortable with reads:

> (a) as soon as possible, the province shall, in co-operation with the facilities of the province that offer insured health services, develop a program ensuring access to health services for members of the province's anglophone or francophone minority and, in so doing, shall take account of the human, material and financial resources of each facility—

And so on. That is the concern that I have.

It appears to me as if the provinces could use that as an escape clause for not achieving the objectives that the bill wants to achieve. In other words, the duality issue is contingent upon their financial resources.

● (1855)

If those financial resources are not there, and in some cases they are not, the province simply could look at the amendment to the Canada Health Act and say that the bill states that financial resources of each facility have to be taken into account in order to offer linguistic duality. My concern is that they could use that against the bill. Maybe the member could speak to that.

Finally, proposed section 12.1(c) of the bill states:

> as soon as possible, the province shalltake action to ensure that the managementof any facility in the province that offersinsured health services is placed entirely inthe hands of members of the province'sanglophone or francophone minority, where the number of users from the anglophoneor francophone minority is sufficientto warrant that action.

I just want clarification on that. I guess we need to have a definition of that word "sufficient", because again we do not want to have the ability for a province to opt out, which we often see if we do not have tightly worded legislation. This is another concern that should be raised.

In terms of what the member is trying to achieve with the bill, we do support it. We are encouraged by the bill. We want to see this type of legislation enacted and endorsed by all provinces. Our only thought, when we get into that final hour of debate on the bill, is that the member could flesh out some of these details so that the bill will survive the close scrutiny it will come under in each and every one of the provinces. We support the bill in principle. Maybe the member might have a minute to sum up on some of those points we have made.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mauril Bélanger: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I believe that if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent that the time provided for consideration of private members' business has now expired for today.

● (1900)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Does the House give its unanimous consent to say that it is 7.03 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

NATIONAL PARKS

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, according to the rules of the House, we have one issue with which to deal. It arises out of a question that I asked in question period before Christmas. The answer I received was less than full. As a result, I want to raise it again to give the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage an opportunity to expand on the answer and more clearly state what the government's position is.

This concerns the loss of the tuberculosis free status for the Province of Manitoba with regard to our cattle industry in particular. The loss of that status impacts on trade with other provinces as well as the United States. It is very important for Manitoba to regain that TB free status. That is the issue. It is not a question of food safety. Food going out of Manitoba from all livestock, including elk, bison, deer, is not in question. It is a question of animal disease control, and in the case of tuberculosis, it has to be eradicated.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency will go to a ranch where a domestic cattle herd has been identified as having tuberculosis and literally will have all the animals destroyed. That eliminates the disease. The farm or ranch is ultimately repopulated with a clean herd and the business continues on, with no re-infection.

In Manitoba the elk in the area of the Riding Mountain National Park, which comes under the heritage minister's purview in the House, are a reservoir for tuberculosis. When the elk leave the park, they interact with the cattle herds in the surrounding district. There are about 50,000 cattle in the immediate area, so there is quite a bit of contact. The elk herds re-infect the clean cattle herds. The problem is that Agriculture Canada and the CFI are cleaning up the cattle herds but nobody is cleaning up the elk herd inside the Riding Mountain National Park.

The point of my question is why does the plan, which has been developed by Heritage Canada, Agriculture Canada, the Province of Manitoba and the local municipalities, not have in it a specific proactive effort to eradicate the disease from wild elk. Part of the plan is to increase the number of hunting licences and have hunters reduce the number of elk.

There are about 4,000 to 4,500 elk inside the park. Everybody knows and agrees that is the reservoir for the disease. However in this last hunting season of 2002, there were approximately 260 animals taken by hunters. These animals were from all around the park, not just in the hot zones, which are the places where the elk come out and contaminate cattle herds.

Hunting will not reduce the number of elk down to the target level, which I believe the government has said would be about 2,500. There have been 260 taken by hunters, with maybe a few more yet to come. That will not do it.

My question to the Minister of Canadian Heritage is this. Why is something proactive not being done to reduce the number of diseased elk inside the park?

● (1905)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake for his question, which provides me with the opportunity to further elaborate on the role of Parks Canada in dealing with tuberculosis in the elk population.

Parks Canada acknowledges the gravity of the situation involving TB in wild species and cattle in and around the Riding Mountain National Park. Parks Canada will continue to address the threat this disease represents for the ecological integrity and socio-economic situation of the area.

Bovine tuberculosis is a non-native disease in wildlife in Canada. It was introduced into the Riding Mountain area by infected cattle in the early 1900s. There has been sporadic control of the disease since then on a case by case basis. By 1986, it was considered eradicated from Manitoba's cattle. In 1991, however, bovine tuberculosis was again detected in cattle, in a herd near the Riding Mountain National Park. In 1992, it was found for the first time in wild elk. Over the past 11 years, five cattle herds in the area have tested positive for bovine tuberculosis, leading to the destruction of twelve herds in all. Ten wild elk have tested positive since 1997, as has one white-tailed deer.

Parks Canada has been actively working to resolve this problem since the disease was detected in wild animals in 1992. Staff at Parks Canada are collaborating with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Departments of Conservation and Agriculture and Food of Manitoba to provide on-site laboratory services at the park to detect the disease in wild animals. Technicians have tested more than 2,500 elk, moose and deer carcasses. Only 11 specimens tested positive for bovine tuberculosis. Given the results, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has concluded that the disease is still a threat, but a very low level one, to the elk population in the Mont Riding ecosystem.

Parks Canada is well aware of the impact that this disease is having and can have on Manitoba's livestock industry. Although elk populations are not under immediate threat from bovine tuberculosis, it could have a negative impact on the well-being of animals in that area, including elk.

Given the potential impact, Parks Canada has taken various measures to manage the situation.

For instance, it has taken an active role in the implementation of a bovine tuberculosis management program in Manitoba. This five-year program was developed by a inter-agency technical committee on wildlife, including representatives from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Manitoba Agriculture and Food, Manitoba Conservation, and Parks Canada.

Lastly, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has also become an active member of the committee. The Manitoba Cattle Producers Association and the Manitoba Wildlife Federation have also joined the committee and benefit government agencies with their valuable knowledge on the subject.

The main elements of the plan—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary, but she has run out of time. The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake.

[*English*]

Mr. Howard Hilstrom: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary bringing that information forward.

We know there is a plan but the cattle producers were not consulted sufficiently on this. I point out that the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association has stated that the plan put forward by the various government agencies will not work because it will not proactively reduce the number of elk inside that park. The numbers are so great that the elk herd will continue to carry the disease and, if there are too many elk inside the park for the amount of habitat, the elk will leave the park looking for food. It may be only 1 out of 100 or 1 out of 500 of the elk that have TB but they will go along with the rest of the herd and the disease will spread to local cattle.

The ranchers and cattle producers were not been fully listened to, including their representatives at the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association. They would have liked to have had their recommendation that the hot spots, where the disease is known to exist in greater percentage—

● (1910)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Carole-Marie Allard: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to add that the measures we are taking are documented in the implementation plan for the Bovine TB Management Program. This information is available on the website of Manitoba's Ministry of Conservation.

A technical interagency committee is responsible publicizing the testing protocol, results, strategies and activities to local and provincial stakeholder groups. These groups are the Riding Mountain Liaison Committee, the Manitoba Wildlife Federation and the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association.

Parks Canada is continuing to take part in developing these strategies and has launched scientific projects. The first is a four-year study on elk migration. The second is an elk habitat study. The third involves staff from Riding Mountain National Park helping local livestock farmers build barrier fencing. The fourth project has Parks Canada sharing scientific information with Manitoba's Ministry of Conservation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*English*]

Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:11 p.m.)

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