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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, February 27, 2003

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 27, 2003

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

● (1005)

[*Translation*]

REPORT OF FEDERAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

The Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to section 21 of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, to lay upon the table a certified copy of the report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Nova Scotia.

[*English*]

This report is deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 26 petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1 the committee is requesting an extension of 30 days to consider Bill C-231, an act to amend the Divorce Act, which puts limits on rights of child access by sex offenders. This was referred to the committee on October 21, 2002.

[*Translation*]

MODERNIZATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF PROCEDURES OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Special Committee on the Modernization and Improvement of the Procedures of the House of Commons.

[*English*]

If the House gives its consent I will be seeking concurrence in the report later today. The report contains two recommendations: first, to extend the deadline for the final report to June 13, 2003, and second, to allow staff to travel with the committee.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-406, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce a bill to amend the Employment Insurance Act. This bill is similar to another bill previously introduced.

Its intent is to change the name of the Act back to its original name, that is the Unemployment Insurance Act; to specify certain payments that are excluded from earnings; to allow benefits to continue while a claimant is on training to improve employability; to cancel the waiting period; to include dependent contractors; to alter the duration of benefits; to change the added benefits respecting local unemployment; to provide additional benefits for permanent layoff; to create a separate unemployment insurance trust fund to replace the present employment insurance account, which is a part of the Consolidated Revenue Fund; to replace the present Commission with an independent commission to be the trustee of the fund and the administrator of the Act; to remove the different status of re-entrants and new entrants; to place the burden of proof on the Commission to prove "arm's length" status and "just cause for leaving a job"; to ensure that every office and telephone access has an HRDC representative available.

In this bill I am calling for a total of 14 changes to the Employment Insurance Act, particularly because of its $42 billion surplus. The bill would be good for all Canadians.

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

* * *

● (1010)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

MODERNIZATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE PROCEDURES OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move that the second report of the Special Committee on the Modernization and Improvement of the Procedures of the House of Commons, tabled earlier this day, be concurred in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PETITIONS

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to table today from constituents of my riding. The first one is a very prevalent petition. It deals with an issue which is before the agriculture committee of the House today. It is a petition which would like to draw to the attention of Parks Canada of a serious problem in Riding Mountain National Park with respect to the elk herd and tuberculosis which is being spread now into some domestic herds.

I would like to table this petition on behalf of my constituents and I wish that Parks Canada would respond to this, and ensure that it deals with the issue immediately.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): The second petition, Mr. Speaker, is one that we have had in the House a number of times. I would like to reconfirm it through constituents of mine. It is a petition concerning child pornography.

The petitioners ask the House to protect our children and ensure to take all necessary steps to protect them against pedophilia and sado-masochistic activities involving children. I reconfirm to the House that there are numerous Canadians wishing to stress the fact that we must protect our children.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to present a petition put forward by many Canadians.

This petition calls for support for ethical stem cell research which has already shown encouraging potential to provide cures and therapies for illnesses and diseases. The petitioners call upon Parliament to focus its legislative support on adult stem cell research to find the cures and therapies necessary to treat the illnesses and diseases of suffering Canadians.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is most appropriate on a day when we will be debating Bill C-13 on reproductive technologies that my petition also has to do with the issue of stem cells.

This petition has been signed by a number of Canadians. We have had thousands upon thousands of Canadians who have signed it. These Canadians concur, as I do, that human life begins at conception.

The petitioners would like to bring to the attention of the House that Canadians do support ethical stem cell research which has already shown encouraging potential to provide the cures and therapies for the illnesses and diseases of Canadians. These petitioners would like to inform the House that non-embryonic stem cells which are also known as adult stem cells have shown significant research progress without the immune rejection or the serious ethical problems associated with embryonic stem cells.

The petitioners are calling upon Parliament to make good laws and to focus its legislative support on adult stem cells to find the cures and therapies for Canadians.

* * *

● (1015)

POINTS OF ORDER

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, during question period on Friday past, the government House leader accused the hon. member for South Shore and the Progressive Conservative caucus of breaching the provisions of an embargo on the statement made later on Friday by the Minister of Justice concerning the firearms registry.

First, I would point out that my caucus has been leading the fight for more statements to be made in the House by ministers. It would hardly serve our interests or the interests of Parliament to violate the embargo by which we are given advance access to the minister's words in order for us to provide a coherent and informed response to what the minister is to say in the House.

Second, I have determined that the member for South Shore had no access to the embargoed statement before the Minister of Justice rose in the House. There was a violation of the embargoed information, but it was not from anyone associated with this caucus.

Let me quote from three short news stories that were carried in the media before question period began on Friday. *Hansard* shows that the Speaker called for oral questions at 11:15. Broadcast News carried a report at 10:45 as follows:

> Responsibility for the federal gun control program is about to be shifted. Sources say the Justice Minister Martin Cauchon will announce today that it will be administered by the Solicitor General, who's responsible for the RCMP.

At 10:57, another account from Broadcast News reports statements made by "a bureaucrat". Believe me, Mr. Speaker, "bureaucrat" is not a description that anyone would give the member for South Shore. The statement reads:

> Responsibility for the federal gun control program is about to be shifted. Sources say Justice Minister Martin Cauchon will announce today it will be administered by the Solicitor General who's responsible for the RCMP. The program is expected to cost one billion dollars—500 times its original cost estimate.
>
> The gun control registry has been denied further money by Parliament, but critics note it continues to function. A bureaucrat, asking not to be identified, says the Solicitor General's Department is a natural fit for gun control because of its day-to-day contact with law enforcement. Responsibility will be transferred from the Justice Department on April 1st.

At 11:07, again before question period, there is another story and it is similar to the original one so I will not repeat it, but it is here. Let me repeat an important sentence, "A bureaucrat, asking not to be identified, says the Solicitor General's Department is a natural fit..." Those words are important.

In his news conference following the ministerial statement in the House the Solicitor General, reading from a prepared text, said, "...it only makes sense to move it to the Solicitor General portfolio; it is a natural fit...", and a few sentences later he said, "it is a good fit with the police services".

In this case, the glove fits. And since the glove fits the government there can be no acquittal. A reasonable person would conclude that the words of the anonymous bureaucrat and the Solicitor General match because the same person was familiar with both texts.

It is clear the embargo had been breached by the spinners from the Government of Canada, not by the member for South Shore. The government used an embargo to silence members of Parliament and then breach the agreement itself. The government House leader's response was to attack the integrity of members of the House without providing evidence of his charge against the member for South Shore.

The member for South Shore had asked a question on this exact topic on Thursday. The minister's answer was less than informative. It was perfectly natural that when he saw the report of a change of policy the member for South Shore would again ask a question based on news media reports. He was shown the media reports and asked his question.

I was the member of our caucus who was in possession of the advance copy. I received it by fax at 10:08. I believe there are other members of the House who can say they received calls from the media at 10 o'clock asking for comment and with sufficient detail that it is reasonable to conclude that the embargo had not been respected by the government.

● (1020)

I should add that no one saw the copy that our party received except me.

On Friday, the leader of the government accused the member for South Shore of breaching a solemn undertaking. He said:

> Mr. Speaker, this is the second time in only a few weeks that we have had an instance on the floor of the House where members have been given a document under embargo and before the embargo has expired it is being raised in question period.
>
> This is despicable. The hon. member should know that this is wrong. It goes against all our rules which we are all called upon to respect.

On Friday, after question period, the member for South Shore indicated that he drew his question from media reports that were available before the beginning of question period. He had not seen nor was he aware of the embargo statement. He was following up on his previous day's question on public information, information that came from government in violation of its own embargo.

I agree with the government House leader, this is despicable, but it is not the conduct of the member for South Shore that is despicable. The heated the words of the government House leader should be withdrawn and an apology offered.

What is more, we expect the government to give an undertaking that it will stop the practice of trying to silence members of the House by the use of embargoed documents while its own officials violate the embargo themselves.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to respond briefly to what has been raised.

First, if anyone has breached the embargo, whether it is on my side of the House or on the opposition side, it is equally wrong. Let that be clear. I will never state that is okay if indeed such a thing is committed by anyone on our side.

I am informed by the minister that is not what happened. Of course, whether an official representing either staff of an opposition party or the government committed this deed, we will never know I suppose.

The fact remains that at approximately 10 o'clock some members of the House were given a statement to be made by the minister two hours later and within minutes it found itself in the media somehow. Everyone acknowledges that sequence of events did occur. Before 10 o'clock in the morning and before the document was given to members of the House it had not been leaked to the media, at least not that we know of. Moments after it was given to some members of the House it did appear in the media. That we know.

Second, there is a belief, which I cannot share and which the hon. member seems to espouse, that if someone leaked it to the media then that gives a right to breach the embargo and raise questions in the House about something that is under embargo. I do not share that view. If that is what is going to happen, all that the House has to do is cause one member to breach the embargo, thereby relieving all other members of any obligations they might have had. That is wrong. That will lead to us to not being able to give information to members of the House, and that too would be wrong. I would not subscribe to that either. I want to continue to be able to do that.

Evidently there are days of the week in which this is less complicated. For reasons that we all know, those days are Tuesday and Thursday because the statements in the House occur very early in the day before a question is asked and, as a matter of fact, almost before any proceeding takes place in the House. The chance of a member rising in this place and saying "The embargo has been breached and I am free to raise it now", does not really occur on Tuesday and Thursday. However, it will always occur on Monday, Wednesday and Friday because of the sequence of routine proceedings, with which we are familiar.

I do not want to create a situation in the House where we can only share information with MPs on Tuesday and Thursday. Why are MPs not entitled to the same thing every day of the week? Those are the conditions that we all have to create in this place.

I do not believe that I accused the member for South Shore of leaking the material to the media. If someone says that I have, then I will gladly apologize for that. I will do it now in anticipation if that pleases the House, but I do not believe that I did.

However once there is an embargo and everyone in the House knows there is an embargo, to raise it during question period and put the minister in a position where he cannot answer because there is an embargo, but then those asking the question can breach that and ask the question because they know the minister cannot answer, is not fair. That is what all of us have to realize. That is the point I am making and the point I have made continuously.

I want to continue to work with all colleagues and to continue to offer embargo documents. I think I have gone some distance in the first modernization report, at the insistence of members, and rightfully so, that more statements be made in the House. When a statement is made in the House, it is provided to hon. members under embargo so that it can be first known in the House. How can I do that if it continues to be leaked all over the place?

We do not know where it originated. The hon. member is correct and I acknowledge that. No, we do not know. All we know is that it had not leaked and, seemingly within moments after sharing it with some members of the House, it appeared on the Internet sites of some media outlets. That is the only thing we do know. Whether it is a bureaucrat working for a minister who is alleged to have given it to the media between 10 a.m. and 10:08 a.m. or thereabouts, or whether it is someone working for a member of the House who used that angle to get to the media outlet, we will never know.

● (1025)

Regardless, I want to continue working with colleagues. My point was never to insult the member for South Shore and if I did I will gladly apologize for that. That is not the point.

The point here is that once there is an embargo we all have an obligation to respect it. If anyone breaches that embargo by asking a question about something that is under embargo, obviously the minister will not breach his own embargo. It is totally unfair. Let us all realize that and hopefully we can continue to give documents to hon. members under embargo.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the point the House leader raised. I accept his apology on behalf of the member for South Shore. I believe that he was unjustly accused by the member. I suspect that the member will continue to try to make sure that the House is operated in a proper fashion, but perhaps, before he accuses members, he should look at the internal operations of the ministerial departments and not just simply accuse members of the opposition.

The member for South Shore had raised those very questions previously the day before. He had no understanding that there was an embargo on that information. I do not suspect that the member would like to have all members of the House contact him to make sure there is an embargo on any kind of information that is in the newspapers.

I am certainly accepting his apology to the member for South Shore but I sincerely hope it does not happen again to my members or any other member on this side of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I have listened very carefully to the arguments that have been presented. First, no rule of the House has been broken because, as members know, embargoes are part of the practice and tradition of the House.

I thank you for your representations but in the end it will be up to the House leaders themselves to sort this problem out and renew an agreement that has been reached before in order for these things not to happen again.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1030)

[*English*]

ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION ACT

The House resumed from February 11 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. 6.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As you probably have noted, seven of the eleven motions under Group No. 6 have been moved by myself. I have spoken to this group but I did not get a chance to complete my comments. I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House to have a further five minutes to address those points as the last speaker before we move to questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank all hon. members for their kindness.

I want to raise one issue with the House. In providing report stage motions to the House, the mover of those motions has an obligation not simply to identify those motions but also to explain to the House, for the benefit of all members, as to why those motions are there and what information they should have to assess whether a report stage motion should be considered and passed by this place and become part of the bill.

Probably the one motion that is most significant in the group of motions I put forward, to which I did not speak to very long, was the motion that dealt with regulations. The bill would provide that all regulations associated with it would be reviewed by Parliament, and I believe that is most appropriate.

However members should also know that the experts, the health and justice officials, confirmed before committee on more than a couple of occasions that it would take about two years before the reproductive agency and the regulations could be set up and promulgated. Therefore, half of the bill, particularly the controlled activities, would not be in place and enforced until after these regulations were in place.

The other aspect is that a qualifier is in virtually every clause in the controlled activity section stating that it would be subject to the regulations or as in accordance with the regulations, and it probably occurs more than any other statement in the entire bill. In fact public policy positions on key elements of the bill are buried in the regulations.

My specific point of which I ask members to please take note is that there is another clause in the bill which states that any new regulations, after the initial wave of regulations, or any amendments to existing regulations need not come before Parliament. As a consequence, the bill currently states that we could put forward only a handful of housekeeping regulations in the first wave, and then immediately thereafter come forward with substantive regulations which would change fundamentally the purpose and the public policy statements of the bill.

I am urging members to look carefully at this. If there are to be regulations in which public policy will be buried, in other words trying to get through the back door through order in council that which we cannot get through the front door, being Parliament, then I believe that motion would change the bill to ensure that all regulations on the bill, no matter when they occur, would properly come before Parliament.

Mr. Andy Burton (Skeena, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today as this is my opportunity to speak to Bill C-13, the reproductive technologies act, which is being debated currently at report stage.

The bill has sparked a good degree of concern from constituents in my riding of Skeena. I have received numerous letters, phone calls and e-mails expressing various degrees of concern for the details contained in the bill.

I would like to begin by outlining the concerns of my constituents, the concerns expressed by my party, the Canadian Alliance, and my personal concerns with the bill.

I do not disagree with everything in Bill C-13. There are in fact areas that I do support. I fully support bans on reproductive or therapeutic cloning, chimeras, animal-human hybrids, sex selection, germ line alteration, buying and selling of embryos and paid surrogacy. I also support an agency to regulate the sector, although we do want changes.

The Canadian Alliance opposes human cloning as an affront to human dignity, individuality and rights. We have repeatedly spoken out against human cloning, urging the federal government to bring in legislation to stave off the potential threat of cloning research in Canada.

In September 2001 we tabled a motion at a health committee meeting calling on the government to immediately ban human reproductive cloning. The Liberals deferred a vote on the motion. Their preference was to deal with cloning in a comprehensive reproductive technologies bill.

I would like to address what exactly the bill itself says. The preamble states:

> —the health and well-being of children born through [assisted human reproduction] must be given 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, or AHR, should be given priority. In fact the health committee came up with a ranking of whose interests should have priority in decision making around AHR and related research: one, children born through AHR; two, adults participating in AHR procedures; and three, researchers and physicians who conduct AHR research.

While the preamble recognizes the priority of AHR 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. Bill C-13 is intimately connected with the creation of human life, yet there is no overarching recognition of the principle of respect for human life. This is a grave deficiency.

Our 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 the preamble and the mandate of the proposed agency should be amended to include reference to this principle.

I would like to now move on to the area of the bill of most concern to the constituents who wrote to me from Skeena riding, and that is research using human embryos. With regard to research using human embryos, the bill would allow the experiment under five conditions.

First, only in vitro embryos left over from the IVF process can be used for research. Embryos cannot be created for research with one notable exception: they can be created for purposes of improving or providing instruction in AHR procedures.

Second, written permission must be given by the donor, although donor is singular, and research on a human embryo if the use is necessary, and necessary is undefined, and all human embryos must be destroyed after 14 days if not frozen. We have some concerns with some of those issues.

Embryonic research is ethically controversial and it divides Canadians. As an example, numerous petitions containing thousands of signatures have been tabled in the House calling for ethical stem cell research. Embryonic stem cell research inevitably results in the death of the embryo. For many Canadians this violates the ethical commitment to respect human dignity, integrity and life.

Adult stem cells are a safe, proven alternative to embryonic stem cells. Sources of adult stem cells include umbilical cord blood, skin tissue, bone tissue, et cetera. Adult stem cells are easily accessible, are not subject to immune rejection and pose minimal ethical concerns. Adult stem cells are being used today in the treatment of Parkinson's, leukemia, multiple sclerosis and other conditions. Embryonic stem cells have not been used in the successful treatment of a single person.

Research focus should be on the 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.

● (1035)

Bill C-13 states that 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 category of biological material could be used for the purpose of the proposed research".

During the committee's review of Bill C-13, we tried to restore the spirit of this recommendation with an amendment specifying that healing therapies should be the object of such research. The committee rejected this amendment and the Speaker rejected it coming forward for report stage debate.

Bill C-13 specifies that the consent of the donor to a human embryo is required in order to use a human embryo for experiments. The bill leaves it to the regulations to define donor. However there are two donors to every human embryo, a woman and a man. Both donors should be required to give written consent for the use of a human embryo, not just one.

With regard to the regulatory agency, the bill outlines the following. It creates the Assisted Human Reproduction Agency of Canada to issue licences for controlled activities. A board of directors would be appointed by the governor in council. The bill was amended in committee requiring board members to have no financial interest in any business regulated or controlled by the bill. The health minister is now trying to remove one of the new clauses which she says would prevent almost anyone from serving on the board. An annual report, though not specified in Bill C-13, is required through clause 74, which adds Bill C-13 to a schedule of the Financial Administration Act. The agency would produce the annual report which would be tabled in the House by the minister.

The concerns that we have with clause 25 are that it allows the minister to give any policy direction she likes to the agency and the agency must follow it without question. If the agency was an independent agency answerable to Parliament, such political direction would be more difficult. The entire clause should be eliminated.

The Canadian Alliance proposed amendments specifying that agency board members be chosen for their wisdom and judgment. This was a health committee recommendation in "Building Families". We want to avoid an agency captured by interests. Members must be able to work together to pursue the greater good, not merely represent certain constituencies. The Liberals rejected their own recommendation when our amendment came up during Bill C-13 review in committee.

The health minister wants to delete one of the clauses requiring board members of the AHR agency to come under conflict of interest rules.

The health committee got it right. Board members should not have commercial interests in the field of AHR or related research, fertility clinics and biotech companies. Imagine an employee or investor in a biotech company with financial interest in embryonic stem cell research making decisions for Canadians on the regulation of such research, including the definition of the word "necessary" as specified in clause 40. Or imagine a director of a fertility clinic making regulations on limits on sperm and egg donations, numbers of embryos produced for IVF treatment. Such conflict of interest needs to be prevented in this legislation.

The health minister says subclause 26(8) would prevent almost anyone from serving on the board. This was clearly not the intent of the health committee.

With regard to donor anonymity, Bill C-13 states that although the agency will hold information on donor identity, children conceived through donor insemination or donor eggs will have no right to know the identity of their parents without their written consent. Donor offspring will have access to medical information of their biological parents.

Donor offspring and many of their parents want to end the secrecy that shrouds donor anonymity and denies children knowledge of an important chapter of their lives. The Liberals claim to want to put the interest of children first. In this case they think the desires of some parents should trump the needs and interests of children.

In its review of draft legislation, the health committee recommended an end to donor anonymity. The Canadian Alliance minority report said clearly:

> —where the privacy rights of the donors of human reproductive materials conflict with the rights of children to know their genetic and social heritage, the rights of the children shall prevail.

This is absolutely essential.

When the issue came up during the review of Bill C-13, the Liberals defeated an Alliance amendment to end anonymity in a close six to five vote.

There are a number of other issues, however, in conclusion, I would like to say that with specific regard to these amendments debated today at report stage of Bill C-13, I will at this time be voting in favour of most of them.

However, with regard to the entire bill, I must reiterate that I have some very serious concerns which I have outlined here today. Unless and until those concerns have been addressed and the changes are made to the bill, I will be voting against it.

● (1040)

My vote against Bill C-13 will be made in good conscience, knowing that my party, the Canadian Alliance, has done everything in its power to try to improve the bill and knowing the government has once again used its majority in the House to push through what it knows is flawed legislation.

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and contribute to this important debate on Bill C-13. The bill is attempting to address the vast and complex issues surrounding assisted reproduction. I was one of the few members of Parliament who reviewed the legislation and listened to a range of witnesses. The witnesses represented a broad spectrum of concerns and came from all parts of Canada. I think it was important that we took the time to hear people's opinions on this proposed piece of legislation because of its direct effect on the lives of all Canadians.

Of course none of us would be here without reproduction. Many things have changed over time, and it was time that our laws attempted to address the myriad of issues. As we consider the use of more and more assisted reproduction techniques and methods, we face a number of ethical, moral and religious considerations. As I said before, it was important to hear from all these stakeholders. I think the committee did a good job of doing this, considering the timeframe and competing priorities.

Just to give the House an idea of the level of importance we place on the legislation, it should be noted that we did not have hearings into the Romanow report or the Kirby report because the Liberal members thought this bill was more important.

The members of Parliament for Yellowhead and Mississauga South have worked extremely hard to have a number of their concerns addressed. I would like to speak to a number of their amendments in a general way because I feel they all touch on a common set of concerns and themes.

Let us take Motion No. 92, for example, which calls for transparency and accountability. It also calls for public consultation on draft agreements and for the text of such agreements to be made public. I cannot blame my colleague from Mississauga South for wanting to bring transparency and accountability to the process, especially after witnessing the Liberal record.

When we look at the issue of the registry that would be required to track and monitor things such as semen donations, we can only think of the fiasco we have seen with the firearms registry. The government is wasting more than $1 billion by attempting to register law-abiding Canadians instead of focusing on criminals. I could definitely argue the merits, if there are any, of the firearms registry, but I will focus on the paper side of it for the purposes of the bill. The RCMP has said that almost all records in the firearms registry are incorrect or incomplete and cannot be considered reliable. What would happen if this were the case in a semen donation registry? Are we able to avoid repeating our mistakes?

I think a registry for semen donations is important for a number of reasons. As I highlighted last fall during question period, semen is a recognized carrier of the HIV virus. For public health reasons, we need to be able to trace a donation from beginning to end. We need to be able to assure donation recipients that all donations are screened and safe. As a former coordinator for Canadian Blood Services, I know how important it is to track donations from beginning to end, how important it is to be able to tell donation recipients just what they are putting into their bodies and that it is safe.

In the case of assisted human reproduction, we need to know who provided that donation. Those children who are the product of such techniques have a right to know who gave them life. We have to allow those children to know where their DNA, their foundation, was built. Now we may require further legislation to properly address those related concerns and obligations, but critical to all of this is an accurate registry. This is why we need transparency and accountability in the process.

Hiding government business in arm's length agencies to avoid the access to information legislation does not do this. The Canadian Blood Services, the agency created after a deadly national blood scandal, is not subject to ATI provisions. This makes it less accountable and less transparent in the eyes of most Canadians. While I am confident it does the best job it can, I also would like to see it being more open and accountable for its actions.

● (1045)

Openness is an important part of any democratic system. As I mentioned earlier, my colleague from Mississauga South is also asking for more public consultation and disclosure with his motions on the bill. Public consultation is a delicate issue for every level of government. Some argue that we are elected by the public to act on their behalf and that this is enough consultation for them. In fact, they often argue that public consultation is merely an abdication of responsibility, a way for elected people to achieve their goals without actually doing it themselves. They also state that public consultations provide a false sense of hope and only serve to delay the inevitable.

Others argue that electing a government representative does not mean that opinion should be sought only once every four years. They argue that a democratic system requires a consistent dialogue between voters and the person they elect. They reasonably argue that success on election day should not be interpreted as a blank cheque for four years.

Personally I like the idea of public consultations, with one big condition. Public consultation should be held only if there is an honest and genuine willingness to alter the proposal. Nothing disturbs me more than witnessing the sham of public consultations.

We see the Liberals take their budget road show across Canada ahead of the budget, but somehow what we hear from Canadians never seems to show up in the budget. Unfortunately, I have often witnessed this in parliamentary committees too. We parade a number of witnesses through the process and we debate the issues among ourselves. Then we send it to the clerk for final revision and what comes back in the final report is something none of us saw in the first place. If people are not willing to accept the input of others, they should not pretend that they are. When we are dealing with the legal, moral, ethical and religious components of assisted human reproduction, we have an obligation to seek public input, guidance and opinion.

I would like to take the remainder of my speech to discuss an issue I briefly touched upon before. This is the issue of donor identity. Many couples have trouble conceiving their own children. There are a number of reasons why, but they are not the issue here. The issue is the way they get around the obstacle. Whether it is by semen or egg donations or through a surrogate parent, a growing number of children enter the world as products of such methods.

Many couples, even those who can create their own children, decide to adopt children, and I could tell many stories of wonderful adoptive families that I know. I admire their courage and their ability to share their love with others. Nonetheless, all these children share something in common. They were given life by someone other than the people raising them.

Before I continue, I want to stress that I am not for a minute suggesting that these children are in any way incomplete or different because they may not know who their biological parents are. I just think they have the right to know who their parents are if they wish to.

The anonymity of semen or egg donations may encourage people to step forward more readily than if they had to disclose their identity, but is that necessarily good? We are finding that more and more medical problems are genetic. Knowing who one's biological parents were would be essential in fully understanding one's medical history. Most important, and this is the main reason I would like donors identified, is the issue of medical solutions. We know that when it comes to life saving bone marrow transplants it is difficult to find a match. We also know that a match most often comes from one's immediate family. Thus, knowing the donor parents would facilitate these potential life saving medical procedures. I therefore support the proper tracking and identification of donors to allow these children access to important medical information.

In closing, I would like to say that I support all initiatives that are being taken to make this bill more open, accountable and transparent. I also support the greater inclusion of public input on issues such as this and applaud my colleagues for bringing forth such matters.

● (1050)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The question is on Motion No. 92. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): As previously agreed, the recorded division on Motion No. 92 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 94. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

● (1055)

Mr. Jacques Saada: Mr. Speaker, I want to make certain that the question is on Motion No. 93.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): No, I stated at the beginning that the question was on Motion No. 94.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The recorded division on Motion No. 94 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 96. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I declare Motion No. 96 carried.

(Motion No. 96 agreed to)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The next question is on Motion No. 98. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I declare the motion carried.

(Motion No. 98 agreed to)

● (1100)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The next question is on Motion No. 99.

The motion concerns only the French version of the bill. That is why there is no interpretation. I hope that everyone understands this.

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think my colleague was asking why we would go to Motion No. 94 without going to Motion No. 93. Motion No. 93 in my order would come first. If Motion No. 93 was supported, then we would support Motion No. 94. However, if it was not, we would not. That is the confusion I have. I am wondering if you could give the House clarification on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): It seems that the hon. member for Yellowhead is right. We will check it out to make sure that we are going to get to Motion No. 93 at some point in time.

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Mr. Speaker, my point is that the outcome of the vote on Motion No. 93 would determine how we would vote on Motion No. 94. Did you declare Motion No. 94 as carried?

● (1105)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Indeed, Motion No. 94 was not carried. It was deferred.

[*Translation*]

The question is on Motion No. 99. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I declare the motion carried.

(Motion No. 99 agreed to)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The next question is on Motion No. 93. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The division on Motion No. 93 stands deferred.

[*Translation*]

The question is on Motion No. 100. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The recorded division on Motion No. 100 stands deferred.

[*English*]

The next question is on Motion No. 103. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The recorded division on Motion No. 103 stands deferred.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In disposing of the voice votes on Group No. 6, we dealt with Motion No. 103. I understood that Motions Nos. 104, 105 and 106 were also in Group No. 6 and that we should have had votes on those as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Motions Nos. 104, 105 and 106 will be voted on if Motion No. 103 is negatived.

We will now move to Group No. 2.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 13

That Bill C-13, in Clause 5, be amended by replacing lines 29 and 30 on page 4 with the following:

"(a) create a human clone by using any technique, or transplant a human clone into a human being or into any non-human life form or artificial device;"

Motion No. 14

That Bill C-13, in Clause 5, be amended by replacing line 32 on page 4 with the following:

"purpose other than human reproduction"

Motion No. 16

That Bill C-13, in Clause 5, be amended by replacing lines 35 and 36 on page 4 with the following:

"(c) create an embryo from a cell or part"

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance) moved:

Motion No. 17

That Bill C-13, in Clause 5, be amended by adding after line 5 on page 5 the following:

"(d.1) experiment on or harvest an embryo;"

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 18

That Bill C-13, in Clause 5, be amended by replacing lines 6 and 7 on page 5 with the following:

"(e) perform any procedure or provide,"

Motion No. 20

That Bill C-13, in Clause 5, be amended by adding after line 20 on page 5 the following:

"(g.1) transplant a sperm, ovum, embryo or foetus of a human being into a non-human life form;"

Motion No. 21

That Bill C-13, in Clause 5, be amended by replacing lines 21 and 22 on page 5 with the following:

"(h) make use of any human reproductive"

Motion No. 22

That Bill C-13, in Clause 5, be amended by replacing lines 27 to 31 on page 5 with the following:

"life form;

(j) create a hybrid for the purpose of reproduction, or transplant a hybrid into either a human being or a non-human life form; or

(k) clone a human embryo for research or human reproductive purposes."

Motion No. 23

That Bill C-13, in Clause 5, be amended by replacing lines 27 to 31 on page 5 with the following:

"life form;

(j) create a hybrid for the purpose of reproduction, or transplant a hybrid into either a human being or a non-human life form; or

(k) combine any part or any proportion of the human genome with any part of the genome of a non-human species."

Motion No. 24

That Bill C-13, in Clause 5, be amended by replacing lines 27 to 31 on page 5 with the following:

"life form;

(j) create a hybrid for the purpose of reproduction, or transplant a hybrid into either a human being or a non-human life form; or

(k) cryogenically store embryos once ova storage techniques are perfected to at least the same survival rate of stored in vitro embryos."

Motion No. 26

That Bill C-13, in Clause 5, be amended by replacing lines 28 and 29 on page 5 with the following:

"(j) create a hybrid or transplant a hybrid into"

Motion No. 27

That Bill C-13 be amended by adding after line 37 on page 5 the following new clause:

"5.1 No person shall create human reproductive material by the process of parthenogenesis or a similar process."

Motion No. 40

That Bill C-13 be amended by adding after line 23 on page 7 the following new clause:

"9.1 For greater certainty, therapeutic cloning, also referred to as "somatic cell nuclear transfer", is prohibited."

Motion No. 47

That Bill C-13 be amended by deleting Clause 11.

● (1110)

He said: Mr. Speaker, in Group No. 2, 13 of the 14 motions are mine and I would like an opportunity to comment at least to the extent of explaining the intent of each motion. Unfortunately, the rules only permit me 10 minutes. Therefore, I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House to allow me a 20 minute speaking slot.

● (1115)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I thank my seconder, the hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot. Group No. 2 deals with prohibited activities in Bill C-13. It is, arguably, the most important part of Bill C-13 because it deals with an issue, which I think all members would understand, the issue of cloning and whether cloning should be a prohibited activity in Canada.

We know there have been a number of claims that cloning has occurred by the Raelian group, under the company Clonaid. We have no proof of that but we do know the technology exists. In animals, for instance, cloning has been successful in only about 1 out of 200 cases. Ninety-nine cases on average are aberrant or deformed in some very major way.

On that basis alone we can imagine why it is so important for us to ban cloning in Canada. Bill C-13 does not ban cloning. Bill C-13, on the most important aspect of reproductive technologies and related research, does not ban cloning fully, finally, full stop.

There is a provision in the bill that prohibits cloning but we had a royal commission 10 years ago which recommended banning cloning. We had a draft piece of legislation which had a definition of cloning. We had witnesses come before us saying that the definitions were incorrect because they were scientific definitions or medical definitions when they should have been the reverse.

Dr. Dianne Irving presented a complete analysis of the bill. It was translated and provided to all members. It clearly outlined the deficiencies in the terminology of the bill. Two days before the committee finished its committee stage amendments, Health Canada came forward with a new definition of cloning. Can anyone imagine that after 10 years of this subject being on the table, we now want to change the definition of cloning?

Dr. Irving looked at the new definition again. The new definition says that a human clone is an embryo that is a result of the manipulation of human reproductive material or an in vitro embryo contains a diploid set of chromosomes obtained from a single, and that is very important, living or deceased human being, fetus or embryo.

This changed definition now at least addresses what Dr. Ronald Worton said during the review of the draft legislation which was that the terminology was all wrong. However it took the last two days of reviewing the bill at committee for Health Canada to finally admit that it had errors in definition. Can anyone imagine after 10 years still not knowing what the proper definition of cloning is? It is still wrong.

This new definition does prohibit somatic cell nuclear transfer. It does prohibit GLCNT, another form. It prohibits twinning. It prohibits simple as well as demethylated parthenogenesis. If members are going to understand all this they will have to do as I did and invest in a medical and scientific dictionary and thesaurus.

● (1120)

The addition of the word "single" in the definition of clone does not cover all forms of cloning. It does not cover pronuclei transfer. It does not prohibit that kind of cloning. It does not prohibit the formation of chimera and backbreeding. It does not prohibit mitochondria transfer. If we do the work and ask the experts, they will tell us that cloning is not just like Dolly. We take a cell from an adult. We put it in a female egg. We get that DNA and it grows up to be a sheep. It is not simple. There are many examples.

Parthenogenesis. If we were to follow advanced cell technologies in the U.S., scientists took a woman's egg before it entered the process of meiosis, which splits it from 46 chromosomes down to 23. They captured it at 46, interfered with the reproductive process and took it out. They put it in a dish, treated it with chemicals, treated it with a little electrotherapy and tricked this female reproductive egg into believing that it was fertilized and it started to split. It was to become a being. In that case it was an animal.

The technology is that we do not even need a sperm and an egg. It can already be done with just an egg. We have more witnesses to tell us that we cannot do this.

Bill C-13 does not ban cloning, period. We should have had a bill before this place that banned cloning in all its forms and in all its techniques, a full file total ban on cloning; on genetic alteration; on surrogacy for profit; on purchase and sale of human reproductive material. That bill would have passed in the House in one day at all stages and gone through the Senate. We could have had cloning prohibited in Canada with all of the rest of these prohibited activities in one day.

We can still do that. The health committee recommended splitting the bill. The bill is an omnibus bill. It puts upfront the ban on cloning, which it still does not do, then it tacks on to the end regulating fertility clinics, regulating research in Canada and setting up a brand new bureaucratic agency without any expertise and without any teeth to do the job of Parliament. The bill also says that if we change any regulations down the road, Parliament has no right to look at those regulations.

What is happening in this bill, like every omnibus bill, is that it buries a lot of the dirty laundry in the back and puts members in a quandary. I want to vote for banning cloning but if I vote in favour of the bill to ban cloning, I am also voting in favour of doing a bunch of things are wrong. We say prayers at the beginning of every day in this place and we finish off by saying "Give me the wisdom to make good laws".

The bill in its present form, I regret to say, is not a good law. It is not a good bill. It has more flaws than I can imagine. I thought of many ways to deal with it. Should we maybe refer it back to committee to correct the severe deficiencies that have been identified in report stage debate?

I have not seen members of the government who sponsored the bill come forward to defend the bill or to say why they will not support report stage motions. It is just no to everything. Members of Parliament will have to make a decision. I will have more to say about that later.

There are some housekeeping motions here on which I will not spent my time but I do want to go into Motion No. 24.

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This is a very important subject. It is probably the most important piece of legislation that the House will deal with in the history of the 37th Parliament. I would ask that you have a quorum call to encourage members to come in and listen to my hon. colleague as he has lots to say.

● (1125)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): We do not have a quorum. The bells shall ring no more than 15 minutes.

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, Motion No. 24 adds a new prohibitive activity. This is very important. This comes down to the essence of the bill. The whole controversy on the bill has to do with the so-called existence of surplus embryos not necessary for reproductive purposes. If there were no surplus embryos, then there would be no debate about embryonic stem cell research. How do we deal with this?

Research is going on now to perfect the process to cryogenically store women's eggs. If we could store women's eggs, it would not be necessary to fertilize them once they were harvested from women. The eggs would only be fertilized to the extent necessary for in vitro fertilization. There would not be one surplus embryo ever. We would never have "to throw them in the garbage", to quote the minister. We do not throw them in the garbage. They are human beings and they die a natural death. Humans do die, and I am not going to stand here and suggest that somehow they do not. Motion No. 24 says that if the science is perfected to store ova then we shall not freeze embryos. Freezing embryos is wrong. Cryogenic freezing of embryos is an awful thing because it dooms half of those human beings to death. Only half of cryogenically frozen embryos will survive the thawing process.

Dr. Françoise Baylis has told us many times that about 500 embryos are presently in storage across Canada. About half of those so-called surplus embryos might be available for research purposes. However, of those 250 frozen embryos, only 125 will survive.

She then goes on to tell us in many articles and in many representations before UNESCO and other places, that of those 125 embryos, only 9 will produce any form of viable stem cell line. Of those nine, only half, maybe five, will actually meet the quality standards required by research.

Do members realize that we would have to destroy 500 embryos to get 5 viable stem cell lines. It is a fallacy when people say that by donating embryos they can be used to help cure people's diseases. That is such a leap that it has no credibility. If one embryo is donated there is 1 chance in 100 that it will actually provide a viable stem cell line that will meet the quality for research purposes. Even then, who knows what the research is for. They would need 100,000 different stem cell lines.

Dr. Françoise Baylis has said very clearly that there are not enough embryos presently in Canada to sustain meaningful research. To back it up, she made application to the Canadian stem cell network telling it that an inventory had to be done to find out whether enough embryos were available to do meaningful research.

Wait a minute. We have a bill before us that would guide research on embryos. Why would we have a bill that seeks to regulate research on human beings without even knowing whether there are enough embryos available to sustain meaningful research? This is backwards. It is another fatal flaw of the bill. That work should be done in advance. We should not be going through this if there are not enough embryos.

I have no doubt in my mind that pre-existing embryos prior to Bill C-13 coming into force will not qualify for the concept of informed consent. People who donated those embryos for research did not know all the facts. They did not know that half of their embryos would not even survive the thawing process. They were not told that they could give up their embryos for adoption. They were not told that the woman would be drugged to the max to harvest the most eggs possible.

● (1130)

This is a women's health issue and then the government turns around and says, by the way, we do not care if it is a women's issue, a health issue, a social or an economic issue, we will not permit women to have at least 50% representation on the board of directors of the agency that is going to make decisions affecting women. How bizarre and how hypocritical to say no to gender balance on a board of directors affecting women's health issues and then on the other hand say there is gender analysis and so on.

If anybody talks about gender issues in this place and if they are going to support the bill, if they are going to support the removal of gender balance on the agency, then they are contradicting their own principles. It is about time for this: If we say we are going to respect gender balance and gender equity, it should be in this bill, and in any bill. There is no bill more important than this one for protection of the health and well-being of women, but the motion by the government is to eliminate the committee's decision that there should be gender balance, at least on the board of directors. Why is that? What is the agenda of those who are pushing the bill?

Watch out if I get excited, Mr. Speaker.

There is another aspect: therapeutic cloning. It sounds pretty good to me, but its real name is somatic cell nuclear transfer. I have a motion in this group which states “for greater certainty”. We want to make absolutely sure there is no somatic cell nuclear transfer, no therapeutic cloning. The reason is that this is the basis on which Dolly the sheep was created, by using that process. The research community is saying it needs to use somatic cell nuclear transfer, therapeutic cloning, because it quite frankly cannot get over the problem of immune rejection by using embryonic stem cells. That community says that if it is allowed to take an embryo, suck out the DNA of that embryo to make it neutral, then take a cell from a prospective patient and put the new DNA in there and give it a few chemicals and a little electrotherapy, it will start to divide and then there would be stem cells that are compatible with the patient's.

Dr. Françoise Baylis has come out totally in favour of therapeutic cloning, i.e. somatic cell nuclear transfer. Dr. Bartha Knoppers came before committee. She has written articles and has sent them to all members of Parliament, saying that researchers want to have somatic cell nuclear transfer.

Seven days after this bill was tabled in the House, Dr. Alan Bernstein, president of the CIHR, was on a TV program. I have the tape. It was a business program. He was talking about the importance of commercialization of genetic technologies and why we should have somatic cell nuclear transfer. That was just one week after the bill was tabled, and his agency is the one that is going to determine which research is done.

Dr. Ronald Worton came before committee and said we had better provide some flexibility in the bill so that the research community could do some therapeutic cloning. I was in a TV debate with him on CPAC. I asked him the question directly: what is the difference between therapeutic cloning and just cloning as people would understand it? He had to admit that there is no difference. The only difference is that when therapeutic cloning or somatic cell nuclear transfer is done, we stop the process. We kill the human being and take out the stem cells. That is the only difference.

Mr. Speaker, if we had an ova, a woman's egg, and I took a hair or a cell of skin from you, I could take the DNA out of that woman's embryo and I could take the DNA out of your skin cell and put it in the embryo. I could then implant it into a carrier, a woman. If we did not do anything and that embryo took, we would have another Speaker. Every cell in the human body contains the entire DNA of a person.

We cannot permit it. We cannot permit somatic cell nuclear transfer now or ever. That is why there is this motion in Group No. 6 about the regulations, which we will not see for two years until after the bill gets royal assent, but the bill also says that any other regulations that come after that, new regulations or amendments to existing regulations, are not going to go before Parliament. That is their hole, that is the back door, and that is where the research community that is controlling Health Canada is going to get somatic cell nuclear transfer so it can clone human beings and drive their agenda, not Parliament's agenda.

● (1135)

It is wrong, Mr. Speaker. For those reasons, and I could give many more, I appeal to members. I wish I had a couple of hours to speak on this. Today I asked a number of members if they would simply come to the House to second a motion of mine so that it could get to the floor. The response was no, they did not understand it. Ninety-nine per cent of the members of Parliament in this place probably do not have a comfort level with this bill.

An hon. member: That's the problem.

Mr. Paul Szabo: That is the problem, because we are going to be asked to vote on a bill and we will not even know what the hell we are voting on. Excuse that word, Mr. Speaker.

I think it is important that we take the time to educate every member of Parliament. We are going to be making life and death decisions.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege for me to speak on this important piece of legislation. I have said before that it is probably the most important piece of legislation that the 37th Parliament will have to debate and to discern how to put forward and bring into law in Canada.

I say that because many of the bills that come forward in the House have two ulterior motives. Either they deal with finances, the dollars and cents, the money that people give in trust to us as parliamentarians to spend on their behalf, or they deal with the liberties of this land, the freedoms or the laws and rules.

However, this piece of legislation is not about either one of these. This piece of legislation is about life and death. To say that it does anything less than that is not doing it justice as far as the intensity of the bill is concerned.

This group of motions is very important because it deals with the areas of cloning and embryonic stem cells in many ways. To start with, the motions talk about the whole area of cloning. We have a society that really does not understand cloning other than knowing that the general consensus internationally is that cloning is not appropriate.

As for the reason cloning is not appropriate, we have seen and heard a lot of discussion about it with regard to Dolly, the sheep that was our first cloned animal. Dolly recently had to be put to death because she was in such pain. So we knew that through animal research it was possible to clone an animal and it created a considerable amount of interest in the research community and for the ordinary person walking on the street who would say that it is possible to clone someone now.

However, they do not understand the real problems and what it takes to be able to bring about a cloned sheep like Dolly. People need to discern that it takes at least 200 to 300 embryos before one is actually able to grow in a womb and to be born without defects. Three hundred are needed before there is one good one. For a sheep we might say that is not a real ethical problem because a sheep is an animal, but when it is a human being, a new baby, that is significantly different.

We have had a lot of talk about cloning in the media in the last little while. The Raelian cult suggested that it has three cloned babies. The cult says it will prove that they are clones. We have seen absolutely no proof of that. Whether they are or are not, we are not sure and it really does not matter.

Let me suggest that we speculate and say that perhaps they were born, and with what we know is true about cloning, only one would have been born correctly without being retarded, deformed or somehow malfunctioning, and if they were born they probably would not be able to develop fully. If that is indeed the case, it is probably no wonder that there is some hesitation on their part to bring more media attention to that, because there would be a reaction, with the international community saying that we absolutely do not want to go there. It just so happens that the Raelian cult has a base in Quebec. If the Raelian cult were to have that statistic of one in 300 being born healthy, it would want to go to a country that supports socialistic medicine so that it would not have to pay for the many costs that would be imposed.

There are many reasons why the international community is saying that cloning is inappropriate. One thing that is important to discern is that the scientific community does not really tell the truth when it talks about this whole area of banning cloning, because the ink is not yet dry on the draft piece of legislation and we have the scientific community yelling and screaming that we have to allow therapeutic cloning.

I would suggest that most members in the House do not understanding the difference between therapeutic and reproductive cloning. Certainly most people in Canada do not totally understand the difference between the two. In reality, there is not any difference. It is the same process. The only real difference is that one is killed at 14 days or prior to 14 days and the stem cells are taken.

● (1140)

So when we look at this legislation we have to truly discern what we are trying to do with this whole area of cloning. If we are to bring in a piece of legislation that is going to push us as a society into an area where we are prepared to destroy human life for the sake of research, then we should go very cautiously. If we are going to err, we should err on the side of caution. If we are going to convince Canadians that where we are going is the right and appropriate way to go, then we should be clear and solid in our position.

The fuzziness in this piece of legislation with regard to the whole area of just cloning itself, in this group, is something that should ring all sorts of alarms in our minds and in the minds of Canadians. If people think that we are getting technical about our opposition to what is in the bill and in saying that we need amendments to make it better, let me say that we do it because the legislation as it is does not move us into an area that is safe for our society and protects us from abuse by the scientific community and the potential of where it might want to go with this whole area of cloning. Therein lies the reason we support Motion No. 13.

Let us go to Motion No. 14, which really describes the idea of reproductive procedures. We are saying that when it comes to creating an embryo, it should not be created for the purpose of experimentation on the reproductive side. This is another motion that we support. We do not have any problems supporting the motion because it makes a little clearer the intent as to where we think it should be allowed or should not be allowed.

I would like to get into the area of the embryo and the embryonic stem cell, because they are two areas that are very important in this piece of legislation. One is whether we are going to allow ourselves to destroy human life for the sake of research, and that is the embryo. The other is a regulatory body that is very important because it has to garner the support of the nation as we move forward in the 21st century to determine what we will allow and what we will not.

There are two views on the embryo. One is the view of people with diabetes, and the diabetes association, and people with Parkinson's, leukemia and multiple sclerosis. They all want to use the embryo. They have been convinced that the embryonic stem cell would give them a golden opportunity for some cures.

I would challenge them and I have challenged them. I have had them in my office and talked to them. I have tried to encourage them to look at the science and look clearly at what is actually happening, because this legislation would allow research in this area if it is deemed to be necessary, but we do not determine or define what necessary means, so it allows almost anything.

For those people who think that the answer is in the embryonic stem cell research, I say to them and I challenge them, in 20 years of research, what have we seen come through with the research on the animal embryo? The animal embryo has not produced the kinds of solutions they are looking for and I think this is holding out false hope for them.

Yet when we look at the other side of it, the adult stem cell, we see some tremendous advancements in Parkinson's, leukemia and multiple sclerosis and actual cures in some of these cases with the adult stem cells. It is not just a pipe dream. It is not something that is trumped up. It is something that is there and we can see that there have actually been cures over the last year.

In Canada we have 31 million people, which is a very small number when we think of 6 billion people in the world. With 31 million people and limited resources, we should channel our energy, research and effort into areas that show the most hope and have the most cures. We are not going to solve all the world's problems, but we should take the money we have and apply it to what is most beneficial for Canadians, whose money it is in the first place. I would suggest that this would be in the non-embryonic stem cell research.

The hype and drive of scientists to be able to say that we should use these embryos is something that is alarming to me. It is alarming because I think that there is nothing stopping them from doing the embryonic stem cell research on animals, and they should continue with that. That is why Motion No. 17 is to prohibit the use of embryonic stem cell research. That really is the same as what the health committee said, or what we have said, which is that we should limit it for a three year period, but this legislation has in it a review every three years, so if we prohibit it for now it accomplishes exactly the same thing. So we would support that, because if we are going to err we should err in going cautiously. Although we have waited for a decade to have legislation come forward in this place and we need to proceed with it, we need to proceed in an intelligent way that is in the best interests of the people of Canada. I would suggest that we should make these amendments as they are in the best interests of Canadians.

● (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the motions in Group No. 2 concerning Bill C-13, formerly Bill C-56 which in turn, as the hon. member for Drummond will recall, once was Bill C-47.

It is especially difficult to speak on this kind of issues since, as we know, the debate raises so many questions. Given that the motions in Group No. 2 which we are debating deal with prohibited activities, I would like to remind the hon. members that the Bloc Quebecois would have liked to see the bill divided in two. There is basically not much rationale. One could ask: Why do we, in the Canadian Parliament, get to vote on a bill concerning the provision of services in health care institutions?

The reason the government claims that Bill C-13 is legitimate is because it criminalized a certain number of practices. I moved a motion a few months ago calling on Parliament to split the bill. Today, from what I have heard, several political parties, including the Liberals even, realize that the Bloc Quebecois was absolutely right. You might say that this is not the first time that the Bloc Quebecois has enlightened this House. No it is not, nor will it be the last. Nonetheless, it would be better if we could say, "Yes, let us stick to criminal law, for which the federal government has a responsibility.

The public was quite astonished between Christmas and New Year's when Clonaid tried to have us believe—it still has not provided any evidence—that cloning was possible.

The Bloc Quebecois has had a longstanding interest in reproductive technologies. I am especially pleased to point this out because my colleague, the member for Drummond, is in the House today, and this House should applaud her. As early as 1995—and I call on the Alliance members to join in the applause as well—and in 1997 and 2000, the member for Drummond introduced a private member's bill. This took some foresight. The Baird Commission had produced its report. We knew that because one couple in five had fertility problems, technological and medical solutions to those problems had to be explored. The member for Drummond, relying only on her courage and her science, introduced a bill. There happened what happened. Unfortunately, the government did not cooperate as much as it should have and at the time we did not have a system whereby all bills were automatically deemed to be votable as soon as they were introduced by any one of our colleagues.

It is pretty sad to think that if we vote on this bill, the Bloc Quebecois will be torn. We do want provisions included in the Criminal Code as soon as possible. We are talking about cloning but there are 12 other prohibited activities in the bill. But at the same time, can we accept the creation of a regulatory agency, which will interfere in areas of great sensitivity for the provinces?

I will give a few examples. As we know, the Government of Quebec is one of the best governments ever to have been in power since the quiet revolution. This government run by Bernard Landry listed the pieces of legislation that would be inconsistent with the agency, if it were to be established.

Of course, we could talk about the regulations. These are more important than the bill itself. I will come back to this. Let me however set out the inconsistencies between the bill and existing legislation in Quebec.

In Quebec, we have chosen to consider pregnancy as an altruistic act. Wanting to help someone have a child or to do so ourselves is an altruistic act.

● (1150)

It is out of the question for this act to become a business transaction, for a monetary value to be placed on it.

As it stands however, the bill provides for the reimbursement of certain expenditures incurred in connection with the pregnancy, if receipts can be provided. This is fundamentally inconsistent with a philosophy of intervention found in the Quebec civil law.

Another inconsistency has to do with the fact that, as we know, the Quebec government has legislation respecting health and social services. It would pretty strange for it not to, given that the provincial governments are responsible for providing health care services.

What would it mean if the bill were passed? The fact that a power currently vested in our Minister of Health and Social Services, namely the power to designate institutions for the exclusive delivery of certain services, would be taken over by the regulatory agency should certainly be of concern to my hon. colleagues. That is in section 112. It is unacceptable for the federal government to act this way.

The regulations would prescribe not only the conditions under which gametes are to be preserved, but also the qualifications of health professionals to carry out insemination procedures.

This is a matter of interference, and what is the most upsetting to the Bloc Quebecois. If, tomorrow morning, we learned that a public or private laboratory in Calgary, Montreal, Quebec City or the Maritimes had been involved in experiments with the potential to lead to therapeutic or human cloning, there would be nothing in place to deal with it. Neither the Minister of Justice nor the Minister of Immigration would have any recourse, because there is none in criminal law.

At the same time, however, what can we expect of a regulatory agency? We are faced with a problem on which all MPs need to reflect. The member for Trois-Rivières is extremely eloquent on this point when he talks of it in private—and only seeks an opportunity to do the same in public. The problem is that the federal government wants to use health for nation building. The Romanow report is very clear on this.

It is not possible to accept the creation of a regulatory agency with considerable powers, including those concerning professional qualifications of people who are governed by regional bodies of the Government of Quebec.

To repeat, a minimum of 14 acts are incompatible with the creation of this agency proposed by the federal government.

That said, I would like to take this opportunity to say that I personally believe that research has a role to play here. The bill states that therapeutic cloning and cloning for reproduction are prohibited.

Why? It is because we want to promote the extremely important value that each of us is unique. If we put out a call in the Greater Montreal or Greater Ottawa region for someone like the Minister of Immigration, we would not be successful. Each person is unique. We have our own values and personality, and this is especially true for the Minister of Immigration. But I would not want to say too much about his personality for fear of violating the charter even if, in some respects, the Minister of Immigration is likeable.

That said, why are we opposed to cloning? It is because we cannot imagine that parents can raise children who are their exact copy and that, in terms of personal development, a child could be their exact copy. It is not possible.

An hon. member: We do not want to clone the minister.

Mr. Réal Ménard: We particularly do not want, I am being told, to clone the Minister of Immigration, and I think that we can all agree on that.

● (1155)

For these reasons, we must be cautious. Given the importance of this debate, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you could seek the consent of the House to grant me another five minutes to finish my remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Does the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve have the unanimous consent of the House for another five minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues. Maybe I will ask for consent again in five minutes.

When the then Minister of Health, who is the current Minister of Industry, defended the bill before the committee, he reminded it that each restriction corresponded to values in Canadian and Quebec society. I think it would be wise to remember this.

For instance, we do not want it to be possible to predetermine the sex of a child through genetic manipulation. We do not want a parent or a couple to be able to say, "I want to bring a child into this world, but only if it is a girl; I only want to have girls". This might be acceptable for preimplantation genetic diagnosis of certain degenerative diseases, but that is different.

Why do we not want the sex of a child to be predetermined? Because we believe in equality of individuals. No one in the House thinks that men are superior to women, certainly not the member for Berthier—Montcalm. No one here believes that women are inferior to men. We believe in the intrinsic equality of men and women.

Even if technology or genetics made it possible to select certain genes that are responsible for specific characteristics, for example if a father wanted to have a daughter with blue eyes and blond hair—which is possible with today's technology—we do not want this to happen either; that is called reproductive selection and the bill prohibits this. We believe that discrimination must be avoided. All human beings are equal; we cannot use genetic manipulation except to prevent the transmission of diseases that, in some cases, affect very specific individuals or skip a generation. Those are the extremely important values that are at the heart of our concerns.

Again, setting aside criminal law, the Bloc Quebecois finds it difficult to see legitimacy in what is happening and in what such a bill sets out to do.

Let us move on to research, which is very important. In the case of some degenerative diseases, we could improve people's lives. It is true that some aspects of the research require the use of stem cells.

The member for Châteauguay has taken an interest in these issues; I would like to thank him for the material he sent me. Let us examine this issue of stem cells.

An embryo has about 150 cells that have the distinctive feature, in the first moments of conception of an embryo, of being extremely malleable and they can be used to regenerate tissue.

We know that, in principle, dead cells cannot be revived. Indeed, the dead cells of people suffering from cerebral palsy remain dead. Except that stem cell research could make it possible to use these cells to regenerate certain tissues.

This is true for cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis, and we were also told about the need to do research on stem cells for diabetes. This is extremely important. We know that diabetes affects an increasing number of Canadians. There may be hereditary predispositions to diabetes, as well as factors related to obesity, determinants of health. The food that we eat plays a critical role.

Stem cell research must be allowed, but it must be monitored. This bill would allow such research, with a protocol approved by an ethics committee, provided it is demonstrated that it is not possible to conduct research on other genetic material.

I see that my time is almost up. So, I will conclude by saying that stem cell research is extremely important. I think it would have been imprudent on the part of Parliament to say that we do not want any kind of research to be conducted on stem cells.

● (1200)

Remember those witnesses who told us that, in the fifties, the use of insulin was frowned upon. Yet, today, no one would question the progress that has been made with the use of insulin.

So, the bill had to achieve a balance between stem cell research and a total and uncompromising ban on reproductive technologies and cloning.

I must remind hon. members that some activities are not compatible. Would the Chair be kind enough to see if I could get an additional five minutes?

The Deputy Speaker: Does the House give its consent to extend by five minutes the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve's speech?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues. It is this climate of genuine camaraderie which brings us closer to a reform of democratic institutions.

The other thing we must point out to our colleagues is that the Government of Quebec—whose excellent track record the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is very familiar with—has passed legislation on personal information.

I will draw a connection with the identification card. I read the speech the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration gave before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration and I agreed with what he said. The Canadian public is currently debating this. Do we need an identification card? Hopefully, privacy will remain a consideration.

If I recall correctly, the minister—he will tell me if I am wrong—gave the example of Great Britain, where a debate is under way. I was even told that Great Britain has the most cameras in public places of any society.

All this to say that, if passed, the bill would establish a registry of those who use the technologies and a donor registry. People who go to a fertility clinic, be it public or private, will have to provide a certain amount of information, naturally.

The desire for a public registry of donors is understandable because of concerns about consanguinity. Still, at committee, we heard very poignant testimony. It was argued that donations of sperm or ovules should remain anonymous. If I, Réal Ménard, go to a clinic and make a donation, it is not to have my own family. It is a humanistic, altruistic, philanthropic act designed to help a couple experiencing fertility problems.

But we heard testimony to the effect that, where the development of the individual is concerned, for his or her psychogenesis, it just made no sense not to know the identity of the donor. This is referred to as the right to know who you are. For our personal development, it is good to know not only who our sociological father is—the one who raised us, took care of us and instilled values in us—but we also want to know who our biological father is.

The committee members had an number of questions, among them wondering whether obligations would be created under family law by doing away with anonymity and requiring all donors to disclose their identity. When the children in question reach the age of 18, 19 or 20, might they not go to court to get financial assistance for their studies? To seek support? To seek any other kind of assistance one expects from biological parents?

This was not a simple matter, because we heard from many children conceived through the new technologies who reported problems growing up, troubled childhoods, because of not knowing who their father, the donor, was.

The committee recommended donor disclosure to the government, but the government did not comply. I agree that this was not a simple question to settle. There are arguments for both sides.

The purpose of everything I have had to say is to indicate just how much this bill goes to the very depths of our humanity, of our understanding of the potential of science and of the values we hold with respect to the protection of privacy.

● (1205)

[*English*]

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I do support, in principle, the bill, for two reasons.

First, it does attempt to put parameters around the whole question of cloning and the use of reproductive material, DNA and so on. I think that is very important. More importantly, what attracts me to the legislation is the very prospect that makes it so controversial; that is, the prospect that stem cells can be used for research.

I have received many representations from people in my riding, and elsewhere, who suffer from diseases, like Parkinson's or muscular dystrophy, and they see some hope in stem cell research. The reason why they urge embryonic stem cell research is that there at least is a doubt that adult stem cells from other parts of the body may not be as effective as embryonic stem cells. Any extra hope that research can give to these people who have these awful diseases is enough, in my view, to want to make embryonic stem cells available for research.

But, and this is the key point, no one would argue that these embryonic stem cells should only come as a result of procedures that would lead to them otherwise being discarded. In other words, there is a universal feeling that embryos should not be created for the purpose of being killed in order to further research. That is a current that runs under the debate that has been led by my hon. colleague from Mississauga South.

He has introduced a number of motions that would, I think, correct some of the details in the bill that are inadequate. However, I would like to draw his attention, because he is in the House, to something he missed in the categories he is dealing with that gives me concern, even though I support the bill. I come back to the point that I do believe that if embryos are to be discarded and they can be used for research to save lives, then that is what should happen.

However, I also agree with the many people who have made representations to me that embryos should on no account be created purely for research. Yet, despite the assurances of the minister that this is not the intent of the bill, that there are safeguards in the bill that this would not happen, the House might note that there is a clause that would permit the creation of embryos for the purpose of research, which I think my colleague from Mississauga South has missed.

I draw his attention to paragraph 5.(1)(b) which he mentions in his Motion No. 14. Under the heading "Prohibited Activities", subclause 5.(1) begins with "No person shall knowingly" and paragraph (b) states:

> create an *in vitro* embryo for any purpose other than creating a human being or improving or providing instruction in assisted reproduction procedures;

That paragraph actually says that it would be permissible to create embryos for experimental purposes in order to provide instruction on assisted reproduction procedures. In other words, the bill clearly states, at least in this paragraph, that the law would permit the creation of in vitro embryos for the purpose of instruction and research. In other words, not for the purpose of human reproduction, not for the purpose of creating a human being.

I would suggest, at the very least, this particular paragraph flies in the face of the assurances that we have received from the minister, and I take those assurances at face value. I believe the minister does truly intend to create legislation that would see embryonic material used for research purposes only if it was discarded from other procedures. But here we have an instance in the bill where very clearly there is permission to create embryos for the purpose of experimentation in developing better techniques for assisted reproduction.

● (1210)

That raises a doubt that there may be further problems in this legislation that need to be addressed and I think the member for Mississauga South, through his various motions both in this set and in other groups, has indeed advanced some detailed criticisms of the bill that the government should look at very seriously.

What I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, is that the House is doing Canadians a disservice by stringing out this debate so that we can look at the flaws that exist in the bill even though many of us, and I am one of them, support in principle what the bill is trying to do.

I am sorry that I come late to this debate and that I was not studying the bill at an earlier stage so that I may have been able to submit my own report stage amendments because certainly, Mr. Speaker, had I noticed the problem before, I would have been standing here in the House with my own motion amending paragraph 5(1)(b). I do not think it is acceptable the way it stands.

● (1215)

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, again I am pleased to enter the debate on Bill C-13, a very important bill dealing with reproductive technology and related research. The Group No. 2 amendments, which are the subject of discussion today, involve a very important section of the bill that deals with matters like reproductive cloning. It deals with the delicate area of research in terms of embryos. There are some extremely important matters to be discussed in this section and the amendments that have been brought forward are very important to the way this bill will be implemented, if indeed it is passed.

The issue of cloning is an extremely important one. We hear a lot about cloning today and in the last few years in particular. There was Dolly the sheep and Matilda the sheep. Matilda, the Australian version, died when not quite three years old. There was a news report just recently that said "Australia's first cloned sheep dies of unknown causes. She appeared to be remarkably healthy" and now she is gone.

Dolly the six year old Finn Dorsett sheep, and the most famous one, was unexpectedly euthanized as she had progressive lung disease. A sheep ordinarily would live 11 or 12 years.

Scientists are alarmed about the dangers of human closing. The bill purports to ban cloning. However the hon. member for Mississauga South very ably addressed his concerns this morning that the scientific terminology was very loose in the bill. In fact there are many procedures now whereby cells can be manipulated and can step around the prohibitions that appear in the bill. The definitions in the current bill related to cloning are not adequate to protect Canadians, as the language of the bill would purport to do.

There is a group of people, the Raelians, running around. We have heard that name mentioned a few times today. The Raelians are a cult and they work through their company called Clonaid. Their vision is to perpetuate human life by creating a clone. Again the hon. member for Mississauga South used the Acting Speaker, the Speaker before you, Mr. Speaker, as an example. He said that if we took one of his cells, extracted the nucleus and put it into an ovum, one could stimulate it electrically and allow it to grow. The so-called therapeutic clone would be to take the immature model of Mr. Speaker and extract an organ, if he needed one, killing the clone in the process. That is so-called somatic nuclear cell transfer or therapeutic cloning.

Scientists, including many of the ethicists such as Dr. Françoise Baylis, Dr. Bartha Knoppers and I believe Patricia Baird as well as our stem cell scientists such as Dr. Worton and Dr. Alan Bernstein, the head of the CIHR, and many others, said at committee that we should open it up for therapeutic cloning. They do not want to close the door.

Frankly, there is very compelling reasons, ethically and morally, why we would not want to do that. I think Canadians would be averse to that as they came to understand the implications of the bill. Also, we feel many members of the House are just beginning to delve into the depths of this. The weighty matters involved with this and the scientific terminology causes some to bail out and take a whatever approach.

The members of committee sat through, waded through and listened to the scientists and experts who tried to help us understand this and work through the tangle. I have to compliment the member for Mississauga South for the efforts he has made to inform himself, as a layperson, on the very profound scientific implications of this bill. In fact he has probably become one of the most reliable experts around here. The work he has done and the book he has produced on stem cells to try and raise the level of understanding on all sides of the House is very commendable indeed.

● (1220)

The Raelians want to take some of their cells, take a human egg and implant some of themselves into this new being. They somehow feel that they would be able to transfer their being into a new clone that would look like them. We have to wonder where people are going with this.

The bill also deals with hybrids. Some amendments in Group No. 2 deal with the creation of hybrids. Motion No. 26 would bring some restrictions. Motion No. 27 and Motion No. 23 address various aspects of creating a hybrid for the purpose of reproduction. Motion No. 23 would add paragraphs into the prohibitions, paragraphs (j) and (k). Motion No. 23 states in part:

> (j) create a hybrid for the purpose of reproduction, or transplant a hybrid into either a human being or a non-human life form; or
>
> (k) combine any part or any proportion of the human genome with any part of the genome of a non-human species.

We have to think about the question of chimera. That is another word with which Canadians may wrestle. What on earth is a chimera. We are talking about these hybrid life forms. We have to wonder why would scientists want to take genes, or cells or cell parts from lower life forms and plant those into human beings, just to see what we might get out of it. It is kind of alarming.

Recently the Friendship Group of Parliamentarians for UNESCO met. The subject of the day was reproductive technology and Dr. Françoise Baylis was one of the invited speakers. She is an expert from Dalhousie University. I was rather shocked Dr. Baylis' remarks regarding chimera. She said:

> I am asking people to think about chimeras because they represent for us the possibility that we will say one day that personhood right now means that human is a necessary but, for some, not sufficient condition for moral status. Chimeras between the species will force us to ask the question, "Do you even have to be human to get personhood?"

What does she mean by this? She also said:

> It is fascinating from a moral point of view to understand chimeras, intelligent computers and the world toward which we are moving because we will need to make fundamental value decisions about how to treat other beings.

Is it the purpose of scientists to create some other being? I may be part mouse and part human. Are we talking about something like Greek mythology, some kind of creature with a goat body and human trunk and a head? Where are we going with this? What do we hope to get out of it? Is it possible that she is contemplating that we would create another species with human life, part of it maybe has a human head, human ears and eyes and a mouse body and we will use this for research, but it will not be considered human.

Where on earth are they going with this? Why would we need to go there with the resplendent array of human genetic material we have available to us? There are about six billion of us on the planet. We come in various sizes, shapes, colours and with various racial descriptions. We are pretty well represented in the House of Commons in the type of human beings who are available on the planet. What an array of genetic diversity there is available to us. Why would we need to mix human life with other life forms?

From my knowledge of how viruses work, I am very concerned that this kind of research has the potential to open the doors to the transmission of viral diseases from other life forms that would never have crossed to human beings and offer the potential for catastrophic consequences. We have seen some nasty examples, such as growing human polio vaccine on monkey kidney and monkey brain cells. We ended up with monkey virus, like SV40, being transmitted to human beings. Health Canada right now is looking into whether over nine million Canadians have been infected with a cancer causing virus because of growing a virus on another species to which it would never have had access. Therefore the possibility of spreading disease is there.

The member has raised some excellent amendments in the Group No. 2 motions. They bring some measure of accountability to the bill. I hope all members of the House will look at them seriously and will vote the right way when it comes to voting on these motions. They will tighten up the bill and the definitions and restrict the creation of the mixing of animal and human genes.

● (1225)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the discussion today of the amendments in Group No. 2.

We have been at this a long time. It is important for us to ensure that we expedite the process as quickly as possible to have legislation adopted by the House, ideally before International Women's Day. Obviously it will be hard to do that by March 8, but it would be a strong message to Canadians that this place is serious about putting legislation in place.

A number of individuals have made comments this morning. One in particular suggested that the purpose today was stringing out debate. I hope that is not what we are doing today. I hope we are not stringing out debate for the sake of talking and prolonging an important decision. I hope we are not using tools available to us to kill very important legislation. However that is not to say that we in the NDP support everything in the bill. We have so many concerns that we may end up voting against Bill C-13 at the final stage.

It seems to me that when we talk about the important issue of cloning, we need to be absolutely clear about what the bill says and about the issues at hand. As everyone in the House has said, the issue of cloning must be dealt with on an urgent basis. We have seen too many developments of late, too many reports, around the potential of human cloning to sit back and not take immediate action.

The question before us today is whether the bill is adequate to the task. Does the bill need further amendment? It seems to me that legislation can always be improved. There are certainly problems with this legislation.

With respect to the provisions in Bill C-13 which deal with human cloning, I suggest to hon. members that the bill offers a fairly clear set of recommendations that should accomplish what members have suggested this morning.

We were reminded this morning by the health critic for the Bloc that it was the member for Drummond who began the process that ended in the bill before us today with respect to human cloning. That member brought forward a private member's bill requiring strict prohibitions on human cloning. That bill was sent to committee, was subsequently reviewed and agreement was reached that a broader set of provisions needed to be undertaken to accomplish both the need to prohibit human cloning and address outstanding issues pertaining to reproductive technologies, an area that has been outstanding for 14 years.

I acknowledge the work of the member for Drummond in keeping this issue before the House. The onus is now on all of us to ensure that legislation is adopted as quickly as possible.

I also want to remind members how long this process has been going on and how outstanding this policy area is. Let us remember that it was in 1989 that the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies was struck. That is over 14 years ago. Let us not forget that we have been through numerous stages and procedures in the House trying to accomplish legislation reflecting the recommendations of the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies, recommendations that were presented to Canadians and to the House in 1993. The commission wrote 293 recommendations which gave clear direction to Parliament at that time about required action.

● (1230)

Let us not forget that we dealt with this matter in several forms, including Bill C-47 which was tabled in the House in 1996 and then died on the Order Paper when the election was called in 1997.

Let us not forget that the Standing Committee on Health and the Parliament of Canada have been dealing with this issue now for a couple of years. They have been studying a draft piece of legislation and we now have the final bill before us today. The work of that committee was very important to the process at hand. There are concerns that many of the suggestions made by the committee were not accepted by the government and that the bill falls short in that regard.

However, focusing on the amendments at hand under Group No. 2, we are talking about the strength of the bill to prohibit human cloning. It has been suggested that the bill would create a mirage, an illusion, of prohibiting human cloning and therefore needs numerous amendments to strengthen it.

That is not my understanding of this particular section of the bill. I am not sure that the amendments before us today presented in Group No. 2 would do anything in terms of strengthening the bill. In many cases they appear to be redundant to the provisions outlined in the bill.

The bill, under clause 5 listing prohibited activities, is very clear about restricting and outlawing any human cloning. In fact, paragraph 5(1)(a) states:

> No person shall knowingly create a human clone, or transplant a human clone into a human being;

The bill goes on to list specific prohibitions with respect to the areas that are listed in these amendments before us today. I want to reference some of those because members will see that we are dealing more with an attempt to string out the bill and prevent its passage than we are trying to improve the bill and make it clearer in terms of prohibited activities.

The bill is clear about prohibitions with respect to the creation of in vitro embryos for any purpose other than creating a human being or improving instruction in assisted human reproductive procedures.

The bill is clear that there would be an absolute prohibition on the creation of an embryo from the cell, or part of a cell, of an embryo or fetus for the purpose of creating a human being. The bill is clear about prohibitions on maintaining an embryo for more than 14 days outside of a woman's body. It is clear about prohibitions in terms of sex selection. It is clear in terms of prohibiting germ line genetic alteration. It is clear about prohibitions in terms of transplanting a sperm, ovum, embryo or fetus of a non-human into a human being.

The bill is clear about prohibitions in terms of using human reproductive material previously in a non-human for the purpose of creating a human being. It is clear about prohibitions with respect to creating a chimera or transplanting a chimera into either a human being or a non-human life form. It is clear about prohibitions on the creation of hybrids for the purpose of reproduction or transplanting a hybrid into either human beings or non-human life forms.

Those are the clear prohibitions in the bill right now. Perhaps there is some fine-tuning that is needed. I would suggest to the member who has introduced these amendments that they are in many cases redundant and that the bill needs to be passed as soon as possible with respect to the urgency we all feel around developments in the area of human cloning.

I would suggest that we do everything we can to ensure that this bill becomes law, that we respect the work of the royal commission, and that we recognize that this is an urgent issue facing the health and well-being of all women.

● (1235)

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the constituents of Surrey Central to participate in the report stage debate on motions in Group No. 2 relating to Bill C-13, the assisted human reproduction act.

This long overdue bill would regulate some activities such as the research involving human embryos and criminally ban others such as commercial surrogacy, non-medical sex selection, and all forms of cloning involving human reproductive materials.

It is imperative that we realize that we are creating legislation that would greatly affect the lives of many present and future Canadians.

The motions in Group No. 2 deal with such important issues as human cloning and the use of human embryos. The bill declares that human cloning, either reproductive or so-called therapeutic cloning, would be illegal. The total ban on cloning would put Canada at the forefront of an internationally contentious issue.

The bill would ban the creation of in vitro embryos for the purpose of research. Yet, it would permit embryos to be created for the purpose of reproduction and any surplus embryos would then be used for medical research, which means their destruction 14 days after conception.

For many years, adult stem cell transplants have successfully been used to treat a variety of diseases such as Parkinson's, MS and Crohn's. Adult stem cells include those collected from the umbilical cord, the placenta, brain tissue and bone marrow.

Embryonic stem cells, on the other hand, are those extracted from an embryo in a procedure that kills the tiny, yet 100% genetic human living being. Despite the hype we may have heard, embryonic stem cells have never been successfully used in clinical trials.

The University of Minnesota Stem Cell Institute researchers showed that adult bone marrow stem cells can become blood vessels. The Duke University Medical Centre researchers turned stem cells from knee fat into cartilage, bone and fat cells.

Last summer, a Montreal woman newly diagnosed with leukemia received a stem cell transplant from the umbilical cord blood of her new infant daughter. Seven months after the transplant the woman was in full remission and considered cured.

Canada is already a leader in adult stem cell research. For example, by supercharging adult blood stem cells with a gene that allowed them to rapidly reproduce, a team of Canadian researchers at the University of British Columbia healed mice with depleted blood systems. One day these adult stem cells may replace bone marrow transplants in humans.

Unfortunately, research using human embryos has not yet led to human healing therapies. We should focus our energies and scarce resources on research that is making a difference now.

In spite of these facts, Bill C-13 focuses on the use of the in vitro embryo and would regulate its use for research and experimentation. Such activity disregards the dignity of human life and reduces its value to that of a commodity.

I will be dealing with Motions Nos. 13, 14, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26 and 27 which all deal with some aspect of clause 5 in the current draft of the bill.

● (1240)

In brief, the proposed amendments call for changes that deal with the elimination of the option to clone a human being through any technique. They propose that the technology should be used for no other purpose than human reproduction including the experimentation and transplanting of an embryo, a sperm, ovum or fetus and that there would be no combining of any human genome with any part of the genome of a non-human species.

The subjects addressed in Bill C-13 are ethically complex and highly controversial. The Canadian Alliance supports some aspects of the bill. Some of the things in it are actually very good. We support the banning of human and therapeutic cloning, animal-human hybrids, sex selection, germ line alterations, the buying and selling of embryos, and paid surrogacies. However, the bill is far from perfect and needs amendments, including those amendments that we are considering today.

Given the great moral sensitivity of the decision, I believe the government ought to allow the conscience of every individual member of Parliament in the House to be freely heard by allowing a free vote on the bill.

The official opposition's minority report called for a three year prohibition on the experimentation with human embryos to allow time for the use of adult stem cells to be fully explored. We recommended that the government strongly encourage its granting agencies and the scientific community to place the emphasis on adult post-natal stem cell research.

We must make changes to the bill before it is voted upon. I hope that all hon. members will be listening to their constituents and voting accordingly on this important bill. I am sure the House is aware that 84% of Canadians are against the cloning of human beings. Let us also remember that medical therapies developed using human embryos may be refused by people who do not believe they are ethically derived. I am sure members are aware of the blood transfusion case in Alberta. Ethical concerns are important and we should look into those ethical concerns as well.

I remind all members that the bill is about improving human health, not destroying it. I am a pro-research person. I believe in research and we must give research a chance. The Canadian Alliance strongly supports research at this end, wherever it is compatible with the dignity and the value of human life. We should not forget that. The Canadian Alliance will strive to protect the dignity and value of human life because nothing is more precious than a human life.

The bill is about the best interests of children born through the use assisted reproductive technology. Along with my colleagues in the Canadian Alliance I will work to protect them. With this in mind I would urge all members of the House to vote with their conscience and to listen to their constituents.

I received many e-mails, phone calls and letters from my constituents asking me how I intend to vote. We should respect human life. It is known that human life exists after conception. We must have a free vote in the House and I would urge all members to vote with their conscience.

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I know on this issue that is before the House there are strong moral and spiritual views. We must respect all points of view in this most serious and challenging debate. Points of view will be expressed here that flow from deeply personal experiences, whether they are of a spiritual or moral experience or from a deeply personal, sad and tragic experience.

In my own case, it was the latter that helped shape my views on this issue. Like many members present, all I bring to the discussion is my own experience. I do not pretend to have scientific knowledge, nor do the constituents I consulted on this issue. All we have is our own personal value systems and experiences to guide us.

When my husband and I began our life and family together, we were blessed with the arrival of three children. Every mother and father in this place will testify to the joy that children bring to our lives. Our first daughter was born and appeared perfectly healthy, but we soon learned that there was a small defect called biliary atresia and in her case, it was complete biliary atresia. It was, and remains to this day, incurable. We were told that most infants born with this live for only three months. We had 10 months of joy with our baby and still consider ourselves blessed for those additional months.

From our own personal perspective and from my own sorrowful experience, I can stand here and say that if there had been a cure offered, no matter how it was developed, I would have demanded access. Even if I had no scientific knowledge of embryonic stem cell and adult stem cell research, if that had been offered as a cure, I would have accepted it and thanked God for saving my daughter. No such solution was available then and tragically, there still is no cure today.

If some Canadians wonder how we in their Parliament arrive at our conclusions and our decisions, I want to tell them that many times it is from our own experience. My heart goes out to people who are stricken with chronic diseases, and to parents who learn their newborns are suffering from incurable problems. I want them to know that I would have walked through fire to save my baby and I expect nothing less of them. I would have accepted a cure, and still would, no matter what research took place to arrive at that cure.

When I stand here to talk about embryonic and adult stem cell research, I want all members and the Canadian public to know that I believe that because of my own personal experience this is not a moral choice for me. I would be lying if I stood here and said that I would have changed my mind with regard to saving the life of my own daughter. I would not have.

Since that time, and because this issue is before Parliament and the people of Canada, I have delved as deeply as possible, both personally and in terms of broadening my knowledge, into stem cell research. I have arrived at my conclusion only after weighing everything very carefully, the knowledge I have gleaned through study and my own personal experience and views.

I have concluded that the best way for us to proceed is to stay with adult stem cell research. Colleagues on all sides of the House have outlined similar reasons but I want to repeat them so there will be no doubt as to where I stand on this issue.

Adult stem cells are easily acceptable. They are not subject to tissue rejection and they pose minimal ethical concerns. Tissue rejection is a serious consideration. When embryonic stem cell research is used, there will be rejection problems. The person, infant or adult, who receives this life-giving stem cell is going to be on a regime of anti-rejection drugs for his or her lifetime.

We know we have a health care crisis in Canada and we are working to fix it. The system now and in the future could not possibly afford perhaps thousands of patients on anti-immune suppressant drugs for thousands of lifetimes.

There has been so much positive progress through research that we in the Canadian Alliance have concluded that the government has but one option. We recommend that this divisive ethical issue and debate could be avoided with a three year prohibition on embryonic stem cell research. That would give science and research into adult stem cells time to develop and make even more progress than has been made to date.

● (1245)

We ask, considering the tremendous progress that has already been made, why abandon adult stem cell research? There is simply not the funding available to do justice to both types of research.

The choice we face today is clear and simple. Stay with adult stem cell research and put all of our financial skill and resources behind it. Much good work has been done in this area, much progress has been made, and there are thousands of people in Canada relying on us to make the right decision.

I would like to go back to an earlier theme. I did not arrive at this decision because of my moral beliefs, although I certainly respect those. I agree that this is a moral issue but mine was not a moral decision. It was based on the evidence put in front of me and what I was able to learn through my own study, through conversations with my constituents and from my own personal experience. I am grateful to those people in my riding who came to me to relate their own painful or tragic experiences, to help me arrive at my conclusion.

I would like to relate one of the stories told to me by a constituent. It is that of a little boy of under five with diabetes. The father and I discussed this very issue and when he departed he told me he agreed with my decision to stay the course and focus on adult stem cell research. We have a moral obligation to that child and we have a moral obligation to all children in the country to do what is right.

We have an obligation to the people of Canada who suffer from Parkinson's disease. There is evidence to suggest they might be helped by adult stem cell research.

We must do the right thing and the right thing is not necessarily the fast thing. Canadians who are following this closely should know one other thing. We have committees in Parliament spending countless hours, energy and resources on issues such as this. They work together to arrive at conclusions and recommendations and bring them to the House and then, after all that work, they learn that their conclusions and recommendations are overridden and either a ministerial or bureaucratic agenda is put before the House. It takes us back to the observations of many. The Liberals are intent on making Parliament irrelevant.

I am heartened by the knowledge that there are some Liberals who are as concerned about this as we are on this side. Perhaps one day the real democrats in Canadian society will band together and make Parliament, and members of Parliament, relevant to Canadians.

In an earlier debate a colleague wondered if the government was putting the interests of drug and pharmaceutical companies ahead of the interests of Canadians. Is it not those companies that are pushing the idea of embryonic stem cell research? Would it not be companies like that that would benefit from treatments that would require lifetime prescriptions of anti-rejection drugs?

All opinions on the issue should be brought here to the House. All opinions should be considered. The vested interests should be heard as well as those with deeply held moral and spiritual values. In the end though, we as parliamentarians must make the decision. My own is to support only adult stem cell research. My hope is that it will lead to fantastic advances and miraculous cures for suffering Canadians.

My hope is that some day in the future some young mother will be told her child has biliary artesia but that she should not despair. My hope is that a future doctor will tell the young mother that due to wise considerations and decisions made by the Canadian Parliament in the year 2003, a cure for her infant is available. I hope she would offer up a prayer of thanks for us in this place because we did what was right when we were called upon to do so.

● (1250)

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I speak again to this subject. I certainly do not view myself with any particular expertise or expert knowledge of the subject, but I am extremely interested in it as a lay person. I believe, as do a great number of my colleagues in the House, if not the majority of us, that the whole issue of assisted human reproduction and especially of human cloning is one of the defining issues of our time.

With the tremendous explosion in technological expertise in this field, all human beings, whether they be Canadians or from other parts of the world, are extremely concerned that the noble human society may be severely impacted by the whole issue of cloning. It may introduce notions and changes in our societies that would have a profound effect on the way these societies conduct themselves in the future.

This is why I am interested that the bill reflect the tremendous concerns that citizens at large, including all of us here in this House, have about the bill and especially about the issue of human cloning. As I said, I do not pass myself off as having any particular knowledge of this field beyond what I have read. I would like to rely on the expertise that I have found as it relates to when the health committee studied the issue of cloning, and especially that of Dr. Dianne Irving from Georgetown University, who is one of the foremost experts in the whole issue of cloning.

It was due to the representations made by Dr. Irving that the definition of human cloning in the bill was changed to include a new sentence. I would like to read the definition of cloning as it presently appears in the bill:

> "Human clone" means an embryo that, as a result of the manipulation of human reproductive material or an in vitro embryo, contains a diploid set of chromosomes obtained from a single—living or deceased—human being, foetus or embryo.

I emphasize the word "single". According to Dr. Irving, the use of the term "single" means that we do not cover all the possible impacts of cloning. It would not cover, for instance, pronuclei transfer, formation of chimeras and backbreeding, mitrochondria transfer, or DNA-recombinant germ line transfers, eugenics. Such techniques would require more than one source of the genetic reproductive material used. Because those techniques would require more than one source, the definition of "single" would not cover them.

For example, by pronuclei transfer one could clone two types of chimeras. The first would be a human/human chimera which is a human embryo, but a cloned human embryo produced with male and/or female pronuclei from two different human IVF or cloned embryos.

● (1255)

The second would be a human/animal chimera, produced pronuclei from a human embryo and from an animal embryo, from which the human genetic material could be retrieved before syngamy or later by backbreeding.

Dr. Irving goes on to say that the definition as it is would not cover germ line gene transfer, where foreign DNA molecules are cloned or replicated by means of the passing down of these molecules of foreign genes through the generations.

She also states that it would not cover mitochondria transfers, which technically would produce a cloned human embryo. Such a human embryo would have genetic materials from two mothers and from one father.

Therefore it is quite clear, according to Dr. Irving, who produced perhaps the leading paper on the subject to the health committee, that using the word "single" in the definition restricts the definition very significantly, and that word has to be removed.

I suggest that in presenting a bill with the tremendous impact that a bill of this nature has for future generations, for society in general, it is imperative that we as parliamentarians ensure that we are using the best possible definitions, the best possible provisions and the most secure provisions in the banning of human cloning.

I would say that there probably is a unanimous feeling on all sides of the House that we are for banning human cloning. If this is the case, as I believe it is, then it is for us to make doubly sure that our definitions are complete, watertight, comprehensive and secure to the degree that we do not leave any doubt whatsoever that certain aspects of human cloning could be left out of the bill, as Dr. Irving, who should know more than any of us here, believes that we have done.

My plea to the minister, to the House in general, is that we review the definition of human cloning and that we take into account what Dr. Irving has put before us, that using the word "single" restricts the definition to the extent that a large number of possibilities of cloning are left out of the bill.

I plead with the minister that this be revised as soon as possible, that this definition be changed at report stage. This is really what I am hoping and pleading for today. This is my reason for having intervened today.

● (1300)

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to stand in the House of debate. I sometimes call it the word factory because our job here is to crank out words which then become part of the permanent record. It is a privilege to stand here and debate.

I would like to begin by saying how very frustrating this is. This is undoubtedly one of the most, if not the most important bill that we will debate in this Parliament. It has extremely large, long term ramifications. It has a huge dimension to the value that we place on human life. I find it very frustrating when I think of what is going to happen.

We have before us in Group No. 2 a number of amendments. Those amendments are all very important amendments. They are amendments which correct the flaws in the bill. I would love to debate with members of Parliament in a meaningful way the merits of these amendments but I guess I will just have to be brutally honest and say that I have a big suspicion that no members are really paying attention to this debate. Very few are actually listening or participating. Very few will actually go back and listen to the debates or watch the tapes later. They are disengaged from what is undoubtedly one of the most important issues facing us. I really regret that and I think that is a huge flaw.

Add to that another flaw. My predecessor, Mr. Brian O'Kurley, who represented Elk Island before I did, and who by the way will be the only other member for Elk Island, since he was there in the first term when Elk Island came to be, because the riding is disappearing. It will be gone.

Mr. O'Kurley told me before the election that when I became a member of Parliament I would find out that my most important work would be done in committees. I came here and found that to be true.

When we are working in committee there will be members around the table engaging in debate with each other and with the witnesses. We actually grapple with these big issues and come up with conclusions and recommendations which are included in the report.

In this particular instance, this very important bill was studied at length by the members of the committee. The committee did a lot of good work and made recommendations. What do we find? Does the government, in finishing off the legislation, take these recommendations into account? Does it look at the actual proposals made by the committee, for example to split some of the conditions of the bill? No, it just motors right along.

As a matter of fact, it is my opinion, and I think I am right, that the decision on where this bill is going is not even made by parliamentarians. I think it is people in the back rooms who have determined how this is going to be. They have persuaded the minister to carry the ball for them here and all the government members will vote on command as they always do.

Members may think I am wasting the time that I have in my speech now but I think it would be wasted no matter what I said because I do not think anybody is listening or anybody is hearing. That is very unfortunate.

There are issues here which are of tremendous importance. I have a tendency, when speaking on issues of this nature to try to deal with very deep principles, really fundamental principles. I think the overriding principle that should drive any bill at all on genetic research, on reproductive technologies, on issues like cloning and medical research, should be, and it should be written in huge bold letters on the top of the bill, that we value explicitly each human life. The value of human life should be our priority when we are discussing these things.

● (1305)

I sometimes think our society has lost, as represented in this Parliament, the sense of the special value and the sacredness of an individual human life. We have lost the sense, certainly, of the sacredness of reproduction if we look at some of the things that have come before this Parliament, such as the issue of child pornography and other pornography, the issue of reproduction, and the issue of marriage and divorce.

I do not know how we can separate a debate on these issues from the deep, abiding, moral structure that has held our country together for many years and is now being seriously challenged and eroded. I believe there is a sacred component to human life that we need to get back to. It is an affront to any individual who has that deep conviction to suggest, even for a moment, that a human being in any form is dispensable for the sake of research.

I do not want members to get me wrong. Even though I place great value on human life, I am also a strong advocate of research and development in medical areas. What I am not in favour of is abandoning the respect for one person's life in order to promote the respect for another. When we do that we go beyond the realm of what we should be doing as humans.

When we think of things like cloning and toying with the genetic make-up of a human being and the setting up of a situation where we get an exact replica of another human being, I think we are dabbling in an area where we ought not to go, because instead of taking genetic material from a male and a female, we have imposed on the new individual the genetic make-up of only one of those individuals, and hence the clone. I believe very strongly that we are dabbling in an area in which we should simply stay away from just on principle.

We can use many other ways to look for cures for diseases and ways of preventing other diseases. There is so much to do. I cannot help but think of several of my friends who are in long term care. Actually my mother is in long term care having gone through a recent hip operation. I think of my younger friend who has premature Parkinson's disease and who is totally disabled and unable to communicate most of the time. He is unable to walk and is in a wheelchair. How desirable it would be to have a cure for that disease. However there are many things we can do without encroaching on the moral dilemmas that a bill such as this brings to our minds.

We need to make sure that our legislation and our work here is such that it is directed toward a proper and moral solution that upholds the value and sacredness of human life. I am committed to that. I wish we all were.

● (1310)

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on Bill C-13 and the Group No. 2 amendments. No one can underestimate the importance of this issue with respect to the health of all human beings.

I want to say that unfortunately the bill has been bogged down with a lot of issues surrounding the definition of life and has actually polarized two groups: those who believe in choice and those who really are part of the anti-choice movement and believe that the definition of life begins with the fertilization of an egg. Both sides must have their views respected and certainly both are understandable; however, this detracts from the larger issues, I would say, that the bill could afford all Canadians.

A person may be sick or have amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or Lou Gehrig's disease, or Parkinson's disease, or diabetes, which is epidemic in our country, and it is easy for those of us who are healthy to say that we should ban and prohibit science on the basis of our moral conviction that life begins at the moment an egg is fertilized by a sperm. Unfortunately, when we do that, we will deprive thousands upon thousands of people, not only in our own country but around the world, of potentially life saving tools, technologies and treatments that will improve their lives and indeed save their lives.

One of my colleagues mentioned this to me because I am of the view that human cloning should be banned. That is generally accepted by scientists, ethicists and the general public, but there is a far greater range of views on and a far greater acceptance of using medical technology, particularly when, at the early embryonic stages, it can provide that information. I will tell members why. When an egg is fertilized by a sperm, what happens in that ball of cells are things that we simply cannot get or understand out of any other science we have today. Cells that are undifferentiated and look much the same have what we call a potential to develop into any part of our body. It is truly an extraordinary time in the life of those cells.

What happens with those cells is that they begin to differentiate into organs. They also move and migrate around various parts of the body. Why this is important is that this kind of behaviour is the same type of behaviour, in many cases, that occurs with cancers. Cancerous cells suddenly become one normal cell and then, for reasons that we do not fully understand today, become cells whose behaviour changes. In the changing of that behaviour, they start to move into various parts of the body and they start to eat and erode away at other cells and other tissues, too often ultimately killing people.

What we can understand and glean from the first fertilization of that egg are behaviours in the cell patterns and a differentiation that we really cannot get from any other source, including adult stem cells, although I will certainly agree that the research in adult stem cells has changed dramatically.

My colleague said to me that he had a gentleman call him up after he heard my comments on television, the same comments I have just made. The gentleman said he was a man who was dying of cancer and he would not sacrifice a single fertilized embryo even if it were to provide life saving knowledge that would save his life from the cancer eating away at his body.

That gentleman is perfectly free to make that comment. However, should we use that viewpoint to prevent or deny other people who do not have that luxury from having the medical knowledge and the tools that could ultimately save their lives? I would submit that we cannot do this.

Bill C-13 really deals with two important areas: assisted human reproduction technologies without compromising the health and safety of individuals, a very worthy endeavour, and prohibiting certain practices, what are known as unacceptable practices, such as human cloning.

● (1315)

I would submit that we should allow the use of embryonic stem cells up to seven days, and many scientists would agree, so that we can glean that invaluable knowledge on the differentiation, migratory pathways and communications that cells have between each other. It is absolutely essential for our ability to combat the cancer that kills so many people in our country and around the world.

On the issue of surrogacy, the bill seeks to provide compensation for costs incurred in surrogacy. We have between 50 and 100 women per year who actually become surrogate mothers, providing infertile couples with a child. The bill states that if an arrangement is made such that the woman receives more compensation than just costs like air fare and such, she will be criminalized to the extent of anywhere between $500,000 and up to 10 years in prison.

Let us imagine a woman who is a surrogate, who is giving of herself in an enormous way in terms of the pain and suffering, the time off work and the effects on her own body. If she has a child for another couple and receives money that somebody deems to be more than just compensation for costs, that woman would be criminalized and thrown in jail for up to 10 years. That is ridiculous. We need regulations because we do not want to commodify human reproduction, and everybody would agree with that, but for heaven's sake, to criminalize a woman or a couple for engaging in this is absolutely unbelievable.

The second point I want to make is what some put under the rubric of the buying and selling of sperm and eggs. Again, nobody wants to commodify that. However, people need to receive fair compensation for the time and effort it takes to make those donations. The extraction of eggs from a woman is not a simple procedure and is not without risks. Surely the person deserves a lot more than the bus fare to get down to the clinic. Those decisions should be made in a reasonable way with guidelines, not laws, that will enable reproductive groups to provide fair compensation to those people who give of themselves so that infertile couples will have the opportunity to have the children they want.

Another point is the issue of identification. The bill seeks to make public, or at least public for the interested parties, the identification of the donor. If this passes, we will see that up to 75% of people who donate sperm or ova will no longer be donors. They will be gone. They will not want to make their identities known.

I believe that the intent of the bill is to ensure that the child born of that conception and the parents of that child should have access to and knowledge of the medical health of the donor. That is perfectly reasonable. That has relevance for the child's future as well as for the parents taking care of the child. There is no reason, however, to make the personal identification of that donor known to any other party. That is not necessary.

The bill will also put a chill on and do an enormous amount of damage to the ability of organizations that deal with infertile couples to gain access to the material they require. I want to close, if I may, on that point and quote the Canadian Fertility and Andrology Society, which is the professional body of fertility physicians. They object to Bill C-13 and its prohibition of payment. I want to quote the society, because it says this very well:

> We believe as strongly as anyone else that human gametes are not commodities; they are things to be given freely.

That was said by Dr. Roger Pierson, professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Saskatchewan and chair of communications for the society. However, he also said:

> But we have to recognize there is considerable nuisance and time involved, and that deserves some form of compensation.

That is the point I want to make on the bill. The bill should not be passed until that is cleared up.

● (1320)

The bill also has to deal with the issue of language, because it is extremely vague. I would like to quote Dianne Irving, professor of philosophy and ethics, who appeared in front of the standing committee and said:

> Of all the legislations that I have analyzed—on the basis of the correct science used, the linguistic loopholes employed, and the "genre" of "ethics" assumed—this Bill is probably the most problematic...it is my recommendation that this Bill should not be passed, even with amendments.

I support that and recommend that the government take the bill back and modify it so that it can be a fair bill that does not commodify the reproductive tools we have, a bill that enables infertile couples to have the babies they would like to have in the future, and a bill that does not inadvertently quash good science that could save people's lives.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise again to speak on Bill C-13. This is the third time I have spoken on the bill. My colleagues before me have eloquently elaborated the concerns and problems they have with the bill. I would like to re-emphasize exactly what they are saying, because this is one of those new areas, new science, that we are going into, and it causes a great deal of concern to Canadians and to everyone around the world.

Last time I spoke, I mentioned the news about human cloning that had come at the beginning of the year, which shocked everybody around the world and once again brought to our attention the question of where we are going with this bill and with this technology. This technology has the potential of going in any direction if it is not checked or regulated. As such, by itself, having the bill brought in front of Parliament is a good thing. It is an attempt to regulate this new science that has the potential of either bringing forth a Frankenstein or, as said by my colleague who spoke last, being a huge benefit to humankind.

There is no debate about what stem cells can do and how beneficial they are to people who are suffering from diseases. Therefore, I do not think there is any debate coming along and saying we do not want stem cell research. The issue that comes out here is which direction we should go to. Because this is a new technology, it is better to err in favour of caution than to go ahead and blindly move into this science and then have to face the consequences further down the road. The consequences could be horrendous because we are talking about the science of cloning, the science of human beings, the basic structure of human beings.

Today we are speaking on the Group No. 2 amendments brought forward by the member for Mississauga South. I am glad that he has brought forward these concerns, because, like everyone else in the House, he has listened to the people and as such has brought his point of view forward in these amendments, most of which the Canadian Alliance will support.

We have two issues in his Group No. 2. One is that the member for Mississauga South has brought forward Motion No. 13 which intends to make it absolutely clear, in no uncertain terms, what human cloning is and which direction we will take. The majority of it is saying to proceed with caution, that this is an area where we must tread very slowly and very carefully because of the potential for not knowing what will happen.

My colleague from Calgary Southeast has brought forward Motion No. 17, which says the same thing. He is expressing an absolute concern saying that he does not wish to take the route of cloning, period. That is his motion. It is a motion that I will support. I do not think I want to take the route of cloning.

We do have the issue of stem cell research, adult and embryonic. Right now the adult stem cell research that is going on has a lot of potential. Whose potential? We have not actually evaluated or seen how deep the potential can go.

● (1325)

Perhaps it will answer a lot of the questions we are asking more specifically on using stem cells to assist people who have diseases such as cancer. If we have not yet examined the potential of stem cell research, then why do we want to go into the arena of cloning when we do not know where it is going?

The motion put forward by my colleague from Calgary Southeast which calls for a total ban on this route of embryonic cloning research is fine. We wish to support it. The Canadian Alliance put forward amendments at the committee stage saying that there should be a three year stopgap. In that way we could see in which direction we were going with stem cell and adult stem cell research. Down the road we could slowly and distinctly see its impact and maybe never have to resort to cloning. I am sure the majority of Canadians do not want to go the route of cloning.

Canadians are aware, as are we, that the health benefits of this kind of research are very good and that scientists need these routes and in wanting to go down these routes they have good intentions of assisting in the cure of diseases. Nevertheless, as those who make laws and regulations we need to use caution on this issue because this is one of the sciences that we do not know which way it will go.

I rose to speak to the bill to express the concerns that we have. I hope that when the time comes to vote on the bill, the government will allow a free vote so Canadians can, through their elected representatives, express their points of view on the bill.

● (1330)

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to touch on the broad subject of reproduction and replacement. It has come to the knowledge of many that a Sea King helicopter has crashed on to the deck of the HMCS *Iroquois* and two people have been injured. That ship, which was intended to be a command ship in the Gulf of Oman, is right now on its way back to Canada because of that.

I would like to touch briefly on the subject of replacement and reproduction. We are touching on that with regard to Bill C-13. We understand when we talk about the bill that replacement and replenishment is important when it comes to human beings, but for some strange reason the government has taken far too long to do the right thing when it comes to our Canadian armed forces, our navy and the Sea King helicopter replacement program. That is a real shame. I just wanted to get that on the record.

I would now like to talk about Bill C-13 and about human dignity and respect for human life. It is ironic, when I think of that as the first touchstone with regard to this speech, acknowledgement of human dignity and the respect for human life, I would like to think that the government does have respect for human life. I am grateful that no sailors died with regard to the HMCS *Iroquois* crash. Maybe that makes me think about whether or not the government really does have a commitment to those principles when I talk about Bill C-13 and whether or not the government is doing its level best to safeguard the lives of our littlest citizens.

Bill C-13's preamble does not provide an acknowledgement of human dignity or the respect for human life and I think it is very important that it does. There is also no overarching recognition of the principle of the respect for human life in the bill.

Our minority report recommended that the final legislation clearly recognize the human embryo as human life. We would like to have it such that the statutory declaration include the phrase “respect for human life”. We also believe the mandate of the proposed agency should be amended to include reference to the principle of respect for life. Some of our objections stem from the following ideas.

The complete DNA of an adult human is present at the embryo stage. We need to understand and respect that with regard to the bill.

Also, we in the Canadian Alliance recognize that adult stem cells are a safe, proven alternative to embryonic stem cells. Adult stem cells can come from umbilical cords, blood, skin tissue, bone tissue, et cetera, and are all perfectly valid sources for us to get stem cells. The adult sources also are easily accessible, not subject to immune rejection and pose minimal ethical concerns. They are not treated as foreign tissues by the body and they are often taken from one's own body, never mind anyone else's. It seems the logical way to go.

Currently, adult stem cells are used in the treatment of Parkinson's disease, leukemia, MS, and other conditions for that matter. Our minority report called for a three year prohibition on experiments with human embryos corresponding with the first scheduled review of the bill.

On a different subject but which is still related to Bill C-13, it does not seem very fair that the bill only requires the consent of one of the donors when it takes two donors to make an embryo. It takes two sets of genetic material. The bill does not recognize that both parents need to be required to give written consent for the use of the embryo, not just one. They have made the embryo collectively.

● (1335)

One of the things that really shook me and made me an advocate for the pro-life position was that I remember the debates that took place with regard to Chantal Daigle. I was a young man at the time, but as that decision was coming through the Supreme Court, I thought it was profoundly unfair that I as a man was deemed discounted from having any relevance or influence with regard to that decision and with regard to the definition in respect of human life. The idea that it was only one person's decision and that we as a society, or that I as a man, had no relevance in the decision with regard to human life struck me profoundly. I was not any more than a very young teenager at the time.

This bill, I feel, replicates that very same mistake. It does not recognize that it takes two people to create a child, not just one, and that the implications and the ramifications of those decisions are far above and beyond just the one individual carrying the child. Just as with regard to our Criminal Code, one rape does not just involve the victim or the criminal, it involves everybody else that it touches as well.

That is the reason we have a Criminal Code. We recognize that we do need to set laws that determine the difference between right and wrong and that set a standard of behaviour for all of us. If we do not have that, then we merely have capriciousness. We have anarchy. We have mob rule. We have a situation where people can do whatever they want so long as maybe it is consensual or reciprocal and is done in the privacy of their own homes or something, as some of those arguments go.

It is not quite that simple. Those things really do have an impact on the quality of life for the rest of us. They do impact the society we live in, the culture we have, our civilization. Therefore it is very important that we take firm stands on these things.

That is the reason we do not arbitrarily say murder is something that is up to somebody to decide whether it is right or wrong. We say firmly, through this place and our Criminal Code and through the police officers who enforce it out in the public at large, that murder is wrong regardless of how it comes about. If a person takes another person's life just because the person is upset or angry with the other person or it was done during some bar brawl or because of some grievance or something like that, it is wrong.

We have certain situations in this country where we do justify the taking of life, for example, in the case of war. Of course we know how serious and grave a situation that is and how long we deliberate before we take on something like that.

It is interesting and it is profound that there are parties in this place that will object strenuously to the use of force to remove somebody like Saddam Hussein and object to the potential harm of innocent life, and I think of our friends in the Bloc and in the NDP. I understand there are sensitivities, particularly in Quebec for example, with regard to the situation of war.

I find it ironic that there can be such concern with regard to people in Baghdad yet when it comes to Canada's littlest citizens, there is not that type of concern about people who may have sat in this place but will never get the chance because of some of this legislation, the way the Criminal Code is set or not set in this place, the grey areas it leaves in the law and the arbitrariness it leaves with regard to the definition of life. As a result there will be people who may never sit in this place.

It is profoundly ironic that some people are very upset about some nature of death but not others. It is interesting.

I want to quickly touch on a few points I wanted to make with regard to this bill. The regulatory agency would not report to Parliament but only to the minister. That is a profound mistake. Also, I believe there needs to be a free vote on this subject and the legislation.

● (1340)

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here to speak to Bill C-13. I have had the opportunity to speak to the bill a couple of times before but today I will speak specifically to the Group No. 2 amendments.

A number of the amendments which we are dealing with today have to do with stem cell research and embryonic stem cell research. I want to explain what stem cells are, where we can find them and some of the roles they can play in medical research.

Stem cells are the master cells that we find in every tissue of our body. These cells continue to reproduce throughout our lives. They can be manipulated in the laboratory to produce different kinds of cells and tissues. Scientists have found that stem cells have some very valuable possibilities for them in terms of medical research.

At the present time stem cells can be obtained from many different places and from different organs and tissues. Blood, bone marrow, skin, brain tissue, muscle and fat all contain stem cells.

Adult stem cells are cells that have reached a certain degree of maturity. They can be specialized stem cells. They can be taken from various tissues and organs including placental tissue and umbilical cord blood. Over the years scientists did not realize the advantages of using those placental cells and the umbilical cord blood. However in the last couple of years they really have moved on research in that area.

Embryonic stem cells are taken from embryos. I will talk a little today about adult stem cells and embryonic stem cells. A consequence of using embryonic stem cells is that, by necessity, the embryos die when the embryonic cells are removed. That is in contrast to the adult stem cells which can be taken from living human beings without hurting or damaging the person.

Adult stem cell research is really exciting and is an essential frontier in medicine, especially for those who are suffering from degenerative diseases such Parkinson's and multiple sclerosis. It also is thought that there is a potential to treat Alzheimer's through adult stem cell research. Another area in which stem cells have some tremendous potential is in the tragic spinal cord injuries. Hopefully a cure will be found for that condition.

We often hear announcements of medical breakthroughs in the use adult stem cells, which include those cells taken from umbilical cords, placental tissues and other tissues. There is a great benefit to adult stem cell research. We see it is has a significant impact in a number of areas.

Bone marrow transplants are an example of stem cell research and has been very successful over the years. Parkinson's disease is another area. Canadian neurosurgeon, Dr. Michael Levesque, is treating a patient with stem cells taken from that patient's own brain. It has had a tremendous positive effect for that patient.

There have been cases dealing with multiple sclerosis, four of them in particular in an Ottawa hospital. Researchers have been able to use stem cells taken from patients' own bone marrow. They have helped with a significant improvement in the condition of multiple sclerosis.

We may not think Crohns disease would be an area where this research would be useful. American patients have been treated successfully with their own stem cells and have received some relief from that terrible condition.

There have also been other blood diseases that over the years people have got some relief from by using adult stem cells.

This new data is being incorporated in the consideration of which avenues to take in stem cell research. There are researchers who would like to focus on embryonic stem cell research. I want to point out some of the scientific risks in embryonic stem cell research.

First, in spite of all the noise and hoopla that we have heard on the TV and read in the newspapers over the last few months, there has never been a successful case using embryonic stem cells. Regardless of those results, we often hear of people pushing for the use of embryonic stem cells. They want them to be used and developed, but there are some real problems with using embryonic stem cells.

● (1345)

One problem is that embryonic stem cells often appear to be subject to completely random and unacceptable growth. In certain situations they have been implanted in people and all of a sudden there has been the growth of a tumour that doctors cannot explain. The embryonic stem cells have mushroomed and ballooned and have caused the condition to get worse rather than better. Adult stem cells seem to be a lot more predictable in responding to growth factors and hormones that function to redirect their development.

Another real problem with embryonic stem cells is that they have been found to often grow into the wrong type of cells. Scientists have not been able to direct them in the way they would like to and in some cases they have found things like hair and teeth cells growing in the brain of patients who have received treatment of embryonic stem cells. This is strange but it is true. I do not think that any one of us would enjoy or like to have that situation happen to us or anyone that we hold near and dear.

However, there is an even bigger problem with embryonic stem cells. There is an issue of rejection. When we introduce foreign materials into our body of course, our bodies reject them. One of the main problems that we have had with embryonic stem cells is that throughout the patient's life he or she will need to take anti-rejection drugs. These stem cells cannot be absorbed from someone else.

It is clear that the focus of research really should be in the adult stem cells. There has been some good success with that and it is an area that we really need to focus on and try to develop.

One other thing the bill does not directly do is address the value of human life and lay out a framework for valuing and cherishing human life. I have talked before about the fact that we all recognize now that human life begins at conception. When the DNA package is put together, we understand that human life has begun. There has been a lot of debate on that over the years but really that debate has subsided and scientists and the general populace believe that when that DNA package is put together, we then have a human being.

The question then becomes what value do we give to that human being? I spoke about that before. We need to engage in the discussion on what value we will give to that DNA when put together. Many of us believe and know it is a human being. We have to decide what we will do with it then. Will we take it apart and allow it to die? Will we treat it as though it is something unique and we want it to develop and grow?

That actually brings me to the Group No. 2 amendments. I do not have time to speak to all of them but I want to speak to one specific motion, Motion No. 17 proposed the member for Calgary Southeast. The member has brought forward a clause that would prohibit embryonic stem cell research. It clearly states that no person shall experiment or harvest on an embryo. I support this motion, and I hope that members in the House will as well.

The current wording in the bill states that embryonic research can be undertaken under licence if the agency is satisfied that such research is "necessary". I am not comfortable with that. I had a chance to sit in on a couple of health committee meetings with the director of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. I am not comfortable with the lack of what I would call accountability.

Scientists felt that they could run with whatever experiments and experimentation they wanted. I felt they were trying to get ahead of this bill so that they could have those experiments in place. By the time the bill would be passed, they would be able to say that they were already doing certain research and that it was not the place of Parliament to interfere with them.

I would like to support the member for Calgary Southeast's motion that we prohibit embryonic stem cell research. This research of course is very controversial. It divides Canadians, as I have said before. There are no benefits to it that we know of as yet. We really need to focus on adult stem cell research.

My main point is that human life begin at conception when the DNA is put together. It is important that the leaders, the people in this House, consider the value that has. It is important that we take a position that we will not take that apart, kill that life and treat it as a commodity. Instead we will treat it with the uniqueness that it deserves.

● (1350)

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I believe it is very appropriate that we take the time to wish the men and women of the Canadian navy from the HMCS *Iroquois* well following the tragic crash into its deck this morning of a Sea King helicopter. I hope they arrive back in Halifax soon to be with their friends and their families. Our wishes and our prayers are with them too.

Defending Canada's interests and freedoms has a toll, the price of peace can be very high. This should remind us all of the increased cost as lives and health are at risk in dated equipment. Today it is a 40 year old Sea King helicopter. Yesterday it was an under armoured and under gunned Sherman tank put up against Tiger tanks in World War II.

Perhaps this bill being discussed today has relevancy to this. Imagine the injured, the wounded, the high toll of World War II and what advances will be made by stem cell research over the next years, and how that could have aided our past generations of wounded from World War II.

I am pleased to speak to Bill C-13 today. It should be noted that we support a number of aspects of the bill. We fully support bans on reproductive and therapeutic cloning, animal human hybrids, sex selection, germ line alteration, the by and selling of embryos and paid surrogacy. We also support, with changes, an agency to regulate the sector.

We oppose human cloning as an affront to human dignity, individuality and rights. We have repeatedly spoken out against human cloning urging the federal government to bring in legislation to stave off the potential threat of cloning research in Canada.

In September we tabled a motion at the health committee calling on the government to immediately ban human reproductive cloning. The Liberals deferred a vote on the motion. The preference was to deal with cloning in a comprehensive reproductive technologies bill. However Motion No. 13 seeks to clarify the bill's current cloning prohibition.

What the bill says is that the health and well-being of children born through assisted human reproduction must be given priority. Human individuality and diversity and the integrity of the human gene 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.

In fact the health committee came up with a ranking of whose interest should have priority in the decision making around assisted human reproduction an related research: children born through assisted human reproduction; adults participating in assisted human reproduction procedures; and researchers and physicians who conducted assisted human reproduction research.

While the preamble recognizes the priority of assisted human reproduction offspring, other clauses 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 the biological parents. The bill's preamble does not provide acknowledgement of human dignity or respect for human life.

The bill is intimately connected with the creation of human life and yet there is no overarching recognition of the principle of respect for human life. This is a grave deficiency.

Our 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 respect for human life.

We have several concerns with stem cell research. The first would be that embryonic research is ethically controversial and divides Canadians. Embryonic stem cell research inevitably results in the death of the embryo, early human life. For many Canadians this violates the ethical commitment to respect for human dignity, integrity and life. An incontestable scientific fact is that an embryo is an early human life. Complete DNA of an adult human is present at the embryo stage. Whether that life is owed protection is what is really at issue here.

● (1355)

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 are umbilical cord blood, skin tissue, bone tissue, et cetera. Adult stem cells are easily accessible, 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 focus should be 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 states that 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 be permitted only if researchers could demonstrate that no other category of biological material could be used for the purposes of the proposed research.

During the committee's review of Bill C-13, members tried to restore the spirit of this recommendation with an amendment specifying that healing therapies should be the object of such research. No embryonic research should be done for the development of cosmetics or drugs or for providing instruction to assist human reproduction procedures. The committee rejected this amendment and the Speaker rejected it coming forward for the report stage debate.

Bill C-13 specifies that the consent of the donor of human embryos is required in order to use a human embryo for experiments. The bill leaves it to the regulations to define donor. There are two donors to every human embryo, a woman and a man. Both donors, parents, should be required to give written consent for the use of a human embryo, not just one. Motion No. 17, put forward by our party, calls for a complete prohibition on embryonic research.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVE

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out today the importance of the National Homelessness Initiative introduced by the Government of Canada to find local solutions for local needs and problems related to homelessness.

All the major cities are dealing with youth homelessness. Thanks to this initiative, in Laval, the Bureau de consultation jeunesse and Oasis received financial assistance from our government to build a shelter with 10 transitional housing units. This assistance will fund the purchase of a mobile intervention unit to more effectively reach and serve youth living in isolation on the streets.

I am convinced that the purchase of a new vehicle for Oasis and the new transitional housing will greatly improve the quality of life of homeless persons in Laval.

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[*English*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Chuck Cadman (Surrey North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have had enough of the government's lax attitude toward violent crime.

A woman was handed a conditional sentence of two years less a day for killing her partner in 1993, even though crown said that she was likely to reoffend.

Now, 10 years later, she is charged with allegedly attacking her new partner with a hammer.

Earlier this month two street racers were convicted of criminal negligence causing death for killing a pedestrian. One was even caught speeding while prohibited from driving as a condition of bail. Their punishment: two year conditional sentences.

A man who caused brain damage to his own baby gets house arrest.

Child pornographers regularly get house arrest.

A 58 year old man rapes a young girl he gets house arrest.

Abusers who traumatize their victims for life get the equivalent of a time out for punishment.

Any remaining confidence in our justice system was shattered last week when a man got five years for his part in the killing of 329 people with a bomb.

Canadians are not impressed.

* * *

● (1400)

NATIONAL ENGINEERING WEEK

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, National Engineering Week is a national celebration of engineering excellence. This year engineering week will be from March 1 through to March 9.

Without engineers and their ingenious inventions there would not have been the Canada as we know it today. We must inform our youth that engineering is an exciting, fun and rewarding career choice.

The mandate of National Engineering Week is to raise public awareness of the importance of engineering and technology in our daily lives and encourage young people to consider careers in engineering and technology.

National Engineering Week activities give Canadians of all ages a chance to explore, discover and appreciate how engineering, science and technology contribute to our quality i life. The emphasis is on activities for youth that show how math and science can be fun and that demonstrate real life applications of engineering.

When we drive across a bridge, make a telephone call, fly in a plane or use a computer, we experience firsthand the work of engineers.

This is a young person's chance to explore engineering, to consider it as a career and to discover the impact it has on all our lives. Engineers prove every day that anything is possible.

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[*Translation*]

JEUNE CHAMBRE DE COMMERCE DE QUÉBEC

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, Quebec City's junior chamber of commerce held its Gala de la jeune personnalité d'affaires, an event attended by the Secretary of State of Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions. This is an occasion for selecting the top finalist from among the eight selected over the year by the governors of the junior chamber of commerce.

At this event, a high point in the year for young entrepreneurs from the Quebec City region, Sylvain Parent-Bédard, CEO of Québécom, won the Jeune personnalité d'affaires de l'année award.

We want to congratulate Mr. Parent-Bédard, as well as point out that youth entrepreneurship is a priority for the Government of Canada. Our objective is to help young Canadians confidently take their place in society.

Congratulations to Sylvain Parent-Bédard.

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[*English*]

FRED ROGERS

Mr. Tony Tirabassi (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are saddened today to hear about the death of a long time childhood icon, Mr. Rogers.

Fred Rogers, whose show *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* aired from 1968 to 2000, was a part of so many of our neighbourhoods as we were growing up.

What many Canadians do not know is that his program got its start as a 15 minute show here in Canada on the CBC before he took the program back to his native Pittsburgh.

Mr. Rogers had a special way of soothing and entertaining. His love of children and his simple messages taught important life lessons, while leaving us feeling as though a friend had just come over to visit.

Fred Rogers was a Presbyterian minister who studied early childhood education and did most of the puppetry for the show himself.

Indeed, it is a sad day in the neighbourhood this morning. Many of us have lost a cherished figure from our childhoods. He will be remembered fondly.

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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF ALBERTA

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to send a big "get well soon" hug to our lieutenant governor in Alberta, Lois Hole. She was recently diagnosed with cancer and is undergoing aggressive treatment. The news came as a shock to us all and was met with a collective resolve to cheer her on, pray for her and to offer her as many hugs as it takes to see her through this.

Lois Hole, "the gardening lady", has been nothing short of fabulous in her role as our lieutenant governor. Her presence brings delight to all, young or old, sick or well, military or civilian. Her warm nature, love for people and incredible sense of duty are appreciated by all Albertans.

Lois is known as the "queen of hugs". Thousands of people have been the recipients of one of her hugs and they remember it always.

Lois needs our hugs now. We think fondly of Ted and her. All Albertans wrap their arms around her today and until she is back to full health.

God bless Lois. We love her.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 300 people from 12 countries will meet in Ottawa at the northern contaminants program symposium on Arctic contaminants, a key environmental and public health issue for people in Nunavut, Nunavik, Labrador, the Northwest Territories and Yukon.

Established in 1991, but scheduled to sunset in 2003, the northern contaminants program is managed by four federal agencies, three territorial governments, Dene and Yukon first nations, and Inuit.

An acknowledged success, this program generated the data that made the case for international agreements to reduce polluting emissions globally, emissions that threaten the health of indigenous people, especially women and children.

Canada assumed important monitoring and assessment obligations of the program in 2001 when it signed and ratified the global Stockholm convention on persistent organic pollutants. This program exemplifies Canada's renewed commitment to Arctic research stressed in the recent budget.

I congratulate the Government of Canada for its support of this fine work and urge a renewal of the northern contaminants program.

S. O. 31

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

PEACE

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate a student of Polyvalente Deux-Montagnes, Marie-France Phisel, who took it upon herself to circulate a petition for peace and has gathered 1,162 signatures of young people opposed to the prospect of war on Iraq and any potential participation by Canada in such a conflict.

The petition was handed over to me last Friday to be passed on to the Prime Minister, which I have done.

The wording of the petition is a reflection of the great wisdom of today's youth. It reads as follows:

> Peace and freedom are fundamental values. If we are to have a better world, there must be peace and unity among the nations. The world we want to live in is one that promotes peace, freedom, justice and equality, and we wish to express our total disagreement with any armed and violent intervention in Iraq. We wish to express our support for peace between peoples.

This shows the great social conscience of our youth.

* * *

[*English*]

LANDMINES

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nearly every 22 seconds someone in the world steps on a landmine. Each year between 15,000 and 20,000 new victims are claimed by landmines and, of those, over 20% are children.

Today I am pleased that the youth mine action ambassador program and Mines Action Canada are organizing an event at Ottawa City Hall called the Save Our Soles Shoe Project. This important event is to symbolize Canada's role and our youth's effort in the international campaign to ban landmines.

I am proud of the fact that our youth are following up on the work of the former foreign affairs minister, Lloyd Axworthy, and others to eliminate the threat of landmines once and for all.

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CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Alliance has long taken the position that lobby groups and special interest groups should look to their own membership for funding. Yet the government is all too willing to fund lobby groups which support its political positions while it completely cuts funding to other groups, like the Conference of Defence Associations.

Why is this? Could it be because the CDA is too effective in pointing out the government's slashing of our Canadian Forces and the neglect of our military personnel? Could it be because this organization, which has over 600,000 members, too effectively points out the underfunding of our military?

Does the government really believe it is okay to fund only groups that take the same positions as it does? I do not, and I say that most Canadians do not either.

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remember the outpouring of sympathy and affection toward Americans by all Canadians following September 11. That relationship was not built because of the tragedy, it has existed for many years.

Canadians and Americans have much in common. They are not just our closest neighbour, they are our friends and even family. Even though most, if not all, Canadians do not want the United States to launch war against Iraq, we still respect and cherish our relationship with America and Americans.

These are very tense times in the world, but Americans need to know that even if Canadians disagree with going to war we will continue to live in harmony and peace with them. We share the values of freedom and democracy. We share the longest undefended border in the world. We share hopes for our families and our futures.

Canadians do not hate Americans. We pray for them, we care for them, and we respect them as a nation. May God bless America.

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[*Translation*]

RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on February 22, the Bathurst and Campbellton areas of New Brunswick welcomed the 2003 Canada Winter Games. Hundreds of athletes from all over Canada are focussed on giving the best of themselves and doing their province proud.

Since the games began, I have had a number of complaints from people in my riding. They are extremely surprised and disappointed that Radio-Canada is not giving this national event the same amount of coverage as the CBC's English network. Only RDS, TSN and CBC are covering the games.

If people want to watch RDS, they have to be subscribers to extra cable channels, and most people have only basic cable.

A public broadcaster like Radio-Canada has a duty to cover such a great national event. Radio-Canada is not just for Quebec, but for all Canada's francophones.

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● (1410)

CKRL FM

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on February 15, 1973, the first francophone community radio station began broadcasting on 89.1 FM in Quebec City.

A young and determinedly different radio station, CKRL FM is noted for its diverse music and quality programming.

CKRL FM is a true training ground for all those working in culture and communication. More than a hundred people got their start there before pursuing their professional career in major electronic or print media, here and elsewhere.

On the occasion of this 30th anniversary, I would like to pay tribute to the many volunteers and others who, through their involvement and dedication, have contributed to making CKRL a dynamic and original radio station that continues to delight us today.

* * *

[*English*]

IRAQ

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's ambassador to the United Nations, Paul Heinbecker, put it very well to the Security Council when he said:

> History will judge the United Nations and this Security Council on how well you manage the Iraq crisis. Around the world, people are speaking out, asking that this crisis be resolved peacefully. No one wants a war. The government and people of Canada are fully prepared to accept the judgments of the inspectors and the decisions of this council.

It is therefore clear that Canada wants to prevent a war in Iraq, preserve the United Nations, avoid military action, and support a political solution. A war in the Middle East will only create newer and bigger problems, as repeatedly stated by Canada's foreign affairs minister.

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SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to reinforce my recent discussions over the past few days with the Minister for International Trade about the importance of securing fair treatment for Canada's independent lumber remanufacturers in current negotiations with the U.S. under the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber trade dispute.

Exports from these independent producers have dropped by half since the beginning of the dispute. Ironically, exports from Canada's primary sawmill industry have actually increased in most cases.

What makes the situation even worse is the fact that Canada's independent lumber producers are not part of the problem. They have no formal allegations of a subsidy against them and the WTO ruled that the U.S. was wrong to include this group in the duties. Even U.S. Under Secretary of Commerce Grant Aldonas has agreed to address the unique situation of Canada's independent remanners.

The government has an obligation to show leadership on behalf of Canada's value added lumber sector to continue for an exclusion from any interim measure against them, including an export or border tax. Without the exclusion for independent remanners, the minister cannot and should not go ahead to cancel legal challenges under NAFTA and the WTO.

* * *

DORIS SAUNDERS

Mr. Lawrence O'Brien (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for three decades, *Them Days* magazine has recorded and preserved the oral and documentary history of Labrador. The driving force behind the magazine has been its founding editor, Doris Saunders, who recently announced her retirement.

The work of Doris Saunders is valued by people in Labrador, across the country, and around the world. In over 100 issues of *Them*

Days, the good times and hard times in old Labrador have come to life in stories, photos, poems and songs. Her work has been recognized through the Order of Canada and an honourary degree, but especially by the loyal readers who treasure every page. More than anyone she has made us aware in Labrador that our own history is worth preserving and sharing with the world.

On behalf of my constituents I wish to extend to Doris Saunders our gratitude and appreciation for a job well done and to *Them Days,* best wishes for many more years of success, ensuring that Labrador's rich past will have a future.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, next week we herald women by celebrating March 2 to 8 as International Women's Week.

Canada could do so much more than pay lip service to this very important week by demanding that Iran cease the human rights abuses and ruthless treatment of women in that country. It is not good enough for the foreign affairs minister to say Canada will work with the government of Iran to stop the senseless execution of women who are being stoned to death. Canada should threaten to isolate Iran from the rest of the world and should threaten the use of sanctions until these atrocities end.

That Iran continues to murder women for merely attending a birthday party is intolerable. Canada must take the lead and raise this as an issue at the Human Rights Commission in Geneva in March.

If we want to make this year's International Women's Week truly remarkable, we should be taking concrete action to stop the murder and torture of women in Iran. Anything less is tantamount to sanction.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

● (1415)

[*English*]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, today is a day of embarrassment for the Liberal government. The member for Mississauga Centre has continued a long Liberal pattern of insulting our most important neighbour and trading partner, a pattern established by the Prime Minister, his former communications advisor, the member for Oakville, the member for Durham, and I could on and on.

Can the Prime Minister explain how any of this does any good for Canada?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Mississauga Centre made very inappropriate and unfortunate comments about the United States and the American people, for which she has apologized. I understand she may have something more to say about this later this day.

The statements she made in no way reflect the position of the Government of Canada.

* * *

IRAQ

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I hope she will have more to say because that was an inadequate apology. But let us talk about another embarrassment.

After months of having no position on the Iraqi conflict, the government tried to pass itself off as an international mediator, but its attempts have apparently been dismissed out of hand by the White House and the Security Council.

What, if any, position does the government have now?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I totally reject the premise of the question. What the government was seeking to do was to bridge an important gap in the Security Council. This is a matter which is still under discussion at the Security Council and members from other countries, other than the ones which have been referred to by the hon. member, are discussing the issue.

We are seeking to play a positive and constructive role. I do not think it helps by saying that some people reject. Our point is that we want to bridge the gap. We want to bring the Security Council together. It is a valuable role which we will continue to play.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, they are discussing it all right, with as little understanding of the Canadian position as Canadians have.

Here is another embarrassment. We know that the government was trying to participate in the Iraqi conflict through back channels by sending the HMCS *Iroquois* to the Persian Gulf. Now the government's ancient helicopters are crashing, military personnel have been injured, and the ship is apparently returning home. What does the government have to contribute now?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at about 10:30 this morning Atlantic time a Sea King helicopter on board the HMCS *Iroquois* carrying a crew of four crashed on takeoff. When I heard about this I was extremely relieved to learn that nobody had been killed and that there were two minor injuries. Some personnel had minor hand and leg injuries. The ship is now returning to Halifax and an investigation will be underway.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, 10 years is how long the government has been dragging its feet on replacing the Sea King helicopters. Thanks to the Prime Minister's political stalling tactics, two people are injured, a helicopter is badly damaged, and the HMCS *Iroquois* has had to abandon its mission in the Persian Gulf and return to port.

Will this latest international embarrassment be enough to force the government to replace the Sea King helicopters before 2005?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the House many times, the government is working to replace these helicopters as fast as possible. Indeed, recently we changed the nature of the contract, making it one contract instead of two contracts. There is a widely shared consensus that this will indeed result in the faster replacement of this helicopter.

In the meantime, as I said, the HMCS *Iroquois* is returning to Halifax and an investigation is ongoing. It is too early to draw conclusions on the implications for our mission.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, if the government had not cancelled the contract our people would be flying brand new helicopters right now.

I would like to be a fly on the wall when the Prime Minister phones Washington to explain that Canada cannot participate in the war on terrorism because one of the helicopters, one of the ones it did not replace, crashed and our warship is in the shop. This embarrassing foot-dragging, all to save political face, has gone on long enough.

I ask again, will the Liberal government replace the Sea Kings today and not wait another two, three, or five years?

● (1420)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is physically impossible to replace all of the Sea Kings today. We are living in the here and now, and in the practical world I cannot replace all of the Sea Kings right now, but we have taken action to make that replacement occur as fast as possible.

I would remind the hon. member, when he says that we are not in the region, that we are indeed in the region with ships and airplanes, and after the investigation it is hoped that the HMCS *Iroquois* will also return to the region.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IRAQ

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the situation with Iraq, even the tight timeframe proposed by Canada to please the United States is not radical enough for the American administration. President Bush, who wants war now, flatly rejected the deadline of March 28.

With only two options left on the table, namely a resolution authorizing military action in Iraq and the strengthening of the inspection program, the Canadian government is finding itself at a crossroads.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs must tell us whether Canada is headed for war or for peace, aligned with the Americans or with the French and the Germans and their peace plan?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always stated in this House, and it is still this government's policy, that Saddam Hussein must disarm under Security Council resolution 1441.

The proposal we have submitted to the Security Council will enable it to find a way to close the gap between the radical French position and that of the Americans. I think that is still a positive contribution. It is being considered by various states to stay on track, to continue supporting peace.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this proposal is not closing the gap, it has fallen into it, which is something entirely different.

If the minister is serious about peace, a plan has been put forward by the Germans and the French, which China, Russia and others support. What does he not like in that plan? Can he give me one good reason to disagree with any aspect of this plan? Otherwise, why does he not support it, unless what he really wants is war? I would like him to comment on that.

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the serious world of diplomacy, it is words like those spoken by the hon. members opposite that fall into the gap, it is their rhetoric which falls flat.

What is needed is serious work, work in support of peace. This is always hard, complicated work, but we will continue this work and our efforts to ensure peace through a compliant multilateral system.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the UN Security Council will not yield and the Americans will decide to attack Iraq, despite the objections of the United Nations.

Since Canada has always maintained that resolution 1441 was enough to justify a military intervention in Iraq, are we to conclude that it supports the U.S. decision to take action in Iraq, despite the position of the Security Council?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the United States has not indicated that it will get involved in Iraq without the approval of the Security Council. This is the issue that is before the Security Council; this is why we are trying to find a way to meet two requirements: to disarm Saddam Hussein and to protect the role of the Security Council and international institutions in the world, which is very important.

This is a task that we are working on with many other states. Today, the Prime Minister is in Mexico. We on this side of the House will continue to do our job to achieve peace and to preserve international institutions.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, despite all its clever ploys, Canada has in fact made up its mind.

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs admit that, with or without the approval of the Security Council, Canada will follow the United States and go to war on the basis of resolution 1441? Let the minister admit it.

● (1425)

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask members of the party opposite to read the speech delivered recently by the Prime Minister, in Chicago.

The Prime Minister made it clear: "Canada has its own international policy. Canada must follow its own approach. Our approach is to support multilateral institutions. We will continue on that path". That has always been our approach and we will not change, despite the criticism from the other side of the House.

* * *

[*English*]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs for finally releasing the details of the Canadian proposal circulating at the UN, something he refused to do yesterday when I asked him, but today is better than never.

I would like a similar attitude to be shown by the Minister of Industry and ask him to share with the House what new ideas he has for a Canadian auto strategy and how the federal government can help to ensure the future of the auto industry in Canada and stop the flow of good jobs to the U.S. and to Mexico. When will the federal government step up to the plate in this matter?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was just last month that the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association announced that Canada is among the top countries in the world for investment in the auto sector. We have attracted, last year alone, $6 billion of investment in the sector.

To strengthen that important sector, last year I created the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council, with five automakers, the union, parts manufacturers and dealers and three governments sitting at the one table to develop an effective strategy for autos in Canada.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that only one out of 18 auto assembly plants built in North America since 1990 has been built in Canada. Something is not working and it is time for the federal government to do something different in this regard.

I want to ask the Minister of Industry, what specifically is he doing to ensure that the DaimlerChrysler plant will be built in Windsor? Could he tell us what the federal government is doing about that?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): For one thing, Mr. Speaker, we apparently persuaded the Government of Ontario to act on the very priorities that the council I created last year identified: infrastructure, training and skills, and R and D. The very things that provincial governments should be doing, the Ontario government has finally said it is going to do and we are happy to see it.

Let me say something else. Last week with the budget we eliminated the capital tax, which has been a perennial complaint from the auto sector and other investors. We have the lowest rates of inflation and interest. We have the best tax environment. This is the place where companies want to come and invest and that is as a result of the hard work of the federal government.

Oral Questions

ETHICS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Transport told the House "categorically", to use his word, that the member for LaSalle—Émard absented himself "from any cabinet discussions dealing with the marine industry".

Is a record kept of the occasions on which a minister of the Crown recuses himself or herself, that is, steps aside, from a cabinet decision because of a potential conflict of interest? Would the government publish the record of the number of times the member for LaSalle—Émard took himself out of cabinet discussions for that reason during the period when he was minister of finance?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand by the statements I made yesterday, which also were reflected by the Prime Minister when he spoke on this matter. Once again what we have here is the right hon. member for Calgary Centre engaging in his customary innuendo, engaging in witch hunts, in trying to assault hon. members of the House in a very inappropriate and unfortunate way.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): What I am asking, Mr. Speaker, is that they publish documents they have so the public can be advised of just what was going on, what the former minister of finance knew and when he knew it. The ethics counsellor has said that the purchase of three new ships for the Jawa power company in Indonesia could have put Canada Steamship Lines at risk. He said that purchase justified briefing the then minister of finance.

In March 2002, Canada Steamship Lines bought three other ships, this time for its Great Lakes operations. Could the acting Prime Minister tell the House whether the former minister of finance received a briefing as a result of this three-ship purchase as well?

● (1430)

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the House that the former minister of finance followed all the rules and procedures. There were provisions for certain discussions with the ethics counsellor and as Mr. Wilson is quoted today in particular of a meeting that was described, he said:

> The nature of the discussions never led me to believe this was in any way connected with his responsibilities as minister of finance.

The former minister of finance has been consistent. The government has been consistent. The ethics counsellor has been consistent. All the procedures have been followed.

* * *

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we saw once again the ugly side of Liberal anti-Americanism when the member for Mississauga Centre said that she hates Americans.

Had she expressed her hatred for any other identifiable group, for Africans or Asians or Jews, she rightly would have been turfed from the Liberal caucus, but in the Liberal Party there seems to be a particular exception for hate speech: when it is aimed at Americans.

What is it about the government that sees its members constantly expressing their hatred for our American allies? Would the government defend this comment as free speech if it were made about any other national group?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I already answered this question in reply to the Leader of the Opposition. The hon. member for Mississauga Centre made inappropriate, unfortunate comments. She has apologized. She will have more to say about this matter later this day. I think that we have to take her apology at face value and hear what she has to say later today.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): At face value, Mr. Speaker? After expressing her hateful remarks, the member tried to pretend that had she done so in a private conversation when she said it right in front of reporters. Then she threatened reporters to have them banned if they reported on it, and then she issued a statement claiming that her hateful remark did not express her personal views. Then whose did they? What a whopper.

When is the government going to understand that there is a pattern of these bigoted remarks and when will the Prime Minister put his foot down and end this endless stream of anti-American bigotry coming from his own party?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I categorically reject the accusations of the hon. member. Members of this side of the House cherish our friendship with the United States. We enjoy a very warm relationship with Americans. They are our largest trading partner and in no way can inappropriate comments of one member, for which she has apologized, detract from the fact that the Government of Canada certainly believes in our friendship and strength of—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Longueuil.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IRAQ

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, very soon, the Government of Canada could commit us to armed conflict in Iraq. Since the House will not be sitting for the next two weeks, there should be a process in place by which to recall the members if needed.

Will the government agree that it must consult the House and allow it to vote on this important question before Canada sends soldiers to a war in Iraq?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this question was raised yesterday in the House by the parliamentary leader of the hon. member's party. I know that she is deputy leader and that she is asking the same question today.

There are legitimate reasons for consultation among the parliamentary leaders during recess. We constantly do this when necessary. We did it after September 11. We continue to do this.

In any case, the Prime Minister has committed to holding a debate when Parliament returns, if any such regrettable situation should—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Longueuil.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are asking the government House leader and the government to make a commitment to, in fact, negotiate with the parliamentary leaders the terms under which the House would be recalled should Canada take part in a war on Iraq.

This seems fair and reasonable to us. I am telling the government that it can count on the Bloc Quebecois' cooperation to recall members to the House.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, judging by the cooperation that existed after September 11, I would say truthfully that all the political parties represented in this House lent their full cooperation during that recess.

I commit to speaking with my hon. colleagues, as I have done in the past. This is the truth. I will once again repeat what the Prime Minister said, that as soon as we return, given a scenario that no one wants, there would naturally be an opposition day.

* * *

● (1435)

[*English*]

ETHICS

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we know that the former finance minister received a briefing from the ethics counsellor about Canada Steamship Lines when it started shipping coal to the Suharto family in Indonesia. We know he was briefed about environmental charges against CSL when it dumped oil in Halifax harbour. And we know the former finance minister was in on conversations about certain financing arrangements between CSL and the Toronto Dominion Bank.

How many other times did the ethics counsellor brief the former minister of finance about the extraordinary corporate events surrounding Canada Steamship Lines?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have dealt with this question for the last week. Obviously we know that there was a blind management agreement in place and that this type of briefing is allowed for extraordinary corporate events. Of course the content of any of these briefings, and the discussion of financing of projects, anything like that, is personal and confidential, but as Mr. Wilson said today, in a published newspaper report, any meeting that occurred was not inappropriate at all.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we know there was not a blind management agreement. There was a supervisory agreement which is a big difference.

For nine years we have been promised an independent ethics commissioner by the government. For nine years the Liberals have voted against it, including the member for LaSalle—Émard. The former finance minister we know has had to excuse himself from cabinet votes and votes here in the House of Commons but now he says that new guidelines will protect his company, protect his reputation and protect the Canadian public interest. To do that he would have to install a revolving door in the cabinet room or perhaps the secret cone of silence.

How will these new guidelines possibly—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transport.

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): On the general matter, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the governance of ethics dealing with politicians, these matters are now currently before the House. The hon. member will have ample time to make his views known.

However I would like to say quite frankly that the conduct of the government over the last nine years, in comparison to the earlier government, the government of which the right hon. member for Calgary Centre was a member, is one that has been exemplary. Ministers have not resigned as they did in the Conservative regime. That is really the issue here.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HEATING OIL PRICES

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, consumers are seeing an unprecedented increase in the cost of heating oil, which is up 38% over last winter.

When the price was 51¢ a litre, right before the election, the government was quick to issue cheques to everyone, including the deceased and the incarcerated. Today the price has reached 62¢ and the government is sitting back and doing nothing.

Could the government explain why there is no program to help the public and why it tolerates such an increase in prices without taking any action?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Recently, Mr. Speaker, the Competition Bureau found that there was no collusion between the oil companies. The committee recently decided that it would also investigate this.

In the meantime, I do not agree that the federal government should regulate retail prices. It is up to the provinces to do so. I do not agree with the hon. member's suggestion that all these powers be centralized in Ottawa. That is unacceptable. We must respect the jurisdiction of the provinces.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the question focussed on the fact that some families will be unable to pay for heating this winter. Oddly, before the last election, the government felt so responsible for this that it issued cheques to everyone.

Why, now, has the government just told us that this is none of their business?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, competition is a federal responsibility. We have already conducted an investigation and the committee will begin its investigation in a few days.

In the meantime, if the problem really is retail prices, it is up to the provinces to exercise their authority. The hon. member's suggestion notwithstanding, I do not agree with all the powers being centralized here in Ottawa. That is completely unacceptable. We must respect the Constitution and stay out of the provinces' jurisdiction.

● (1440)

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, every fall in every province, thousands of teenagers try out for junior hockey teams. If they make the team the players know that they will receive no salary, accommodations will be provided for if necessary and perhaps some spending money. That is the way it is in amateur hockey.

Whether one plays for a team in Saskatchewan, or the Listowel Cyclones or the Stratford Cullitons in Ontario, that is amateur hockey.

Why does the Minister of National Revenue tax amateur junior hockey players when other amateur athletes are not taxed for the accommodation they receive?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to state clearly for the member opposite and for all Canadians who are watching that the role of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency is to administer the Income Tax Act in Canada fairly so that it applies equally to all Canadians.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Revenue may not realize it but her tax actions now will kill junior hockey in Canada.

The teams in Saskatchewan, some of them at least, will no longer be viable after CCRA's crippling audits. Now in Ontario, junior hockey also fears an audit will be coming its way.

When will the minister issue a directive to her department to stop taxing junior hockey players?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while I cannot speak to any individual case, I can tell the member opposite that when any individual goes to HRDC and asks for benefits and they look at the case and they say "we do not know if you are entitled to these benefits because you may not be an employee", then CCRA does a ruling. We do thousands of those rulings every year. If the individual is deemed to be an employee then they are entitled to the benefits of employment insurance, Canada pension and so forth. This relates not only to hockey but to all—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

The 2001 census showed that demographics in Canada were constantly changing. I am wondering whether the minister could tell the House what she is doing to ensure that all Canadians have the opportunity to celebrate their heritage and to engage in cultural expression in the Canadian context?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to tell the House how pleased I am that the Secretary of State responsible for Multiculturalism and the Status Women and I will co-host a summit on culture on April 22 and 23 which intends to ensure that the heritage of Canada is the heritage of all her peoples and not simply the heritage of the English and the French.

To that end we will be inviting aboriginal people, minority communities and the cultural sector to get together to see how we can create a true synergy of cultures which should be the real nature of Canada.

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[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, aheadline in the February 24 edition of the newspaper *L'Acadie-Nouvelle* reads "Chrétien sympathetic to seasonal workers' stand on calculation of hours", but Canadian families cannot eat sympathy.

My question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. Will the minister change the way hours are calculated for EI, given the $43 billion surplus, rather than just expressing sympathy?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would draw to the attention of the hon. member the changes that have been made to the Employment Insurance Act that do benefit seasonal workers. The change to an hours based system is responsive to seasonal workers. The repeal of the intensity regulation was in recognition that it was not fair to workers, including seasonal workers.

Where there is evidence that the Employment Insurance Act can be improved for the benefit of Canadians, we take action. The Prime Minister just conveyed that again in his meeting in the hon. member's region.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that this government would not have a balanced budget if it had not robbed EI.

International Women's Day is on March 8 of next week. I want to talk about real balance. The Liberals hiked RRSP limits, a move that benefits three times as many men as women, but they will not touch rules for EI that make it all but impossible for part time workers to qualify, and we all know that part time workers are twice as likely to be women.

Where was the status of women minister when the budget was being developed, because clearly she was not standing up for the status of women?

● (1445)

Hon. Jean Augustine (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I should address actually the last part that I was not standing up for the status of women. I think it is important to look at the budget very carefully. I think it is something that the member did not do. Look at what we have done to improve the situation of children, what we have done to improve the situation of graduate women who are entering educational systems, what we have done on compassionate leave and what we have provided to women and their families. All those are issues I think the member did not notice.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad today to see that members of the Canadian Alliance want the Sea King replaced, especially when they were against it in 1993.

Just last week the Canadian search and rescue EH-101 helicopters proved their superiority in a record-breaking ocean rescue. Now today we have the tragedy and embarrassment of the 40 year old Sea King crashing on the deck of the HMCS *Iroquois*, injuring two people and delaying the mission to which the *Iroquois* was assigned.

Will the minister get off his butt today and take the politics out of this—

The Speaker: I think I misheard the hon. member for Saint John. She has forced the Speaker to take certain steps. The minister will now have a chance to reply.

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I note that the hon. member and the Alliance are not on the same page on every issue. Both of them did ask me to replace the Sea King immediately.

I wish I was able to wave a magic wand and cause that to happen. In the real world, under the realities in which we live, one can only do what is humanly possible.

We have moved very recently to expedite the process and obtain that replacement as quickly as we possibly can, but that is all I can do.

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FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, there has never been a worse example of fiscal sleight of hand, a gun registry shell game, than yesterday's supplementary estimates providing $59 million for the gun registry and another $14 million accessed through Treasury Board contingency, again for the gun registry.

The Minister of Justice probably does not know the answer, but in the off chance that he does, could he tell us exactly how much money was given to the gun registry is yesterday's supplementary estimates?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to see that the hon. member cannot even read.

If we look at the supplementary estimates that were tabled yesterday, essentially we are talking about $59 million for this fiscal year. It is clear in the document that I have with me, which was tabled yesterday by the President of the Treasury Board.

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G-8 SUMMIT

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, during the G-8 summit in Kananaskis last summer, many businesses in the area suffered from lost revenue as a result of security restrictions imposed for the meeting.

Prior to the summit, the government promised local businesses full compensation for their losses. To date less than half of the claims submitted have been offered a partial payment, while others have been flatly denied any money.

Why is the government not fulfilling its promise?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a procedure was defined well in advance of the G-8 summit in order to identify losses that were compensable. Guidelines were established on whether compensation would be payable.

I am, of course, insisting that my department apply those guidelines as they were pre-agreed prior to Kananaskis.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time the government has reneged on its commitment to local businesses.

Businesses here in Ottawa had problems obtaining compensation after damage was done during the G-20 meeting in November 2001.

Quebec City had to take the government to court for compensation after hosting the G-7.

The government is simply continuing its record of broken promises.

When can local business owners in Calgary, Canmore and Kananaskis expect the government to compensate their losses?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the procedure is proceeding according to guidelines. I understand there are approximately five enterprises that may not be satisfied with the status of the matter at the present time.

However I have given a clear instruction to my officials that they should follow the guidelines and apply them as they were agreed prior to Kananaskis.

● (1450)

[*Translation*]

BANKING INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has changed the legislation on banking institutions to oblige banks to open an account for any customer who meets the minimum requirements.

According to consumers' associations, however, the planned regulations on access to basic services weaken that obligation by giving the banks too much latitude.

Is the Minister of Finance aware that his planned regulations allow the banks too much discretion, particularly in permitting them to deny an account to someone merely because he or she has had credit problems in the past?

[*English*]

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question because it is an area for which the government truly cares, which is the reason we introduced Bill C-8, precisely to take care of concerns as cited by the hon. member.

I know the hon. member is an individual who follows the file so he probably knows that the regulations were pre-published on November 30, 2002.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there have been over 200 consumer complaints in the past six months in metropolitan Montreal alone. If a person does not have a bank account, it is impossible to cash cheques and to have access to direct deposit. It is also very hard to pay rent or get paid.

Does the minster intend to amend his planned regulations so that people can have ready and normal access to basic banking services regardless of their social and financial situation?

[*English*]

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, actually the largest component of Bill C-8 was consumer protection. That is precisely what we have done. We will continue to do that whether or not the hon. member shouts along the way.

Our priority is to make sure that the interests of consumers are safeguarded and the measures taken by Bill C-8, including the establishment of the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, speak to that reality.

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government was forced to withdraw $72 million for the firearms registry last December. The minister is now asking for $172 million. Would the minister please explain why the House should provide him with the funding that Parliament, including his own colleagues, has already rejected?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member should get in touch with those organizations that decided to speak out over the past few days and weeks supporting the notion of gun control. She should also have a look at the statistics since the time we decided to proceed with that wonderful policy. As well, she should have a look at the plan of action that we tabled last Friday.

It is clear in my mind that there is strong support from the Canadian population. It is also clear that we are going in the right direction.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, a fouled up list of duck hunters does nothing to protect Canadians.

The government is determined to throw good money after bad. This is $18 million more than the minister was originally planning to spend in the 2002-03 report on plans and priorities.

The minister is unable to tell Canadians how much this program is going to cost because he does not know himself. Why should Canadian taxpayers be on the hook for the minister's incompetence?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us have a look at the statistics. We see for example that 9,000 licences have been revoked or refused with our system. We see that the number of lost or missing firearms has declined by 68% from 1997 to 2001. We see that the number of stolen firearms has also decreased by 35% for the same period of time.

Of course when one's colleague sends out a press release saying that gun control will result in more crime, more injuries and more deaths, one cannot support common sense.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Andy Burton (Skeena, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, February 18 the B.C. energy minister was asked a question in his legislature. That question was based on a statement by the federal environment minister that $120 million would need to be spent on environmental studies before the federal government would consider lifting the drilling ban for oil and gas off Canada's west coast.

Did the Minister of the Environment make such a statement and if so, on what does he base his numbers?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I made clear in a number of statements that before there could be offshore oil and gas drilling in British Columbia there would have to be substantial investment in studies so that we could make sure we had the information necessary to weigh the risks against the potential benefits.

I indicated that I could give no clear final figure, but the figure could well be between $100 million and $120 million. It might well be higher. I just cannot give a firm figure because until the studies are done we will not know what all the potential concerns might be.

● (1455)

Mr. Andy Burton (Skeena, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, how many more studies need to be done?

The B.C. energy minister stated in the B.C. *Hansard*:

> Well, there are only a few negative people in British Columbia that don't want to see any development in the province. They're [the federal environment minister] and the two [NDP] members that sit in opposition. I can't tell you whether the $120 million is real, because I don't think [the federal environment minister] knows whether it's real. He continues to throw roadblocks in front of British Columbia on any kind of development we want to move forward with.

My question for the minister is, why? Is he really from British Columbia?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of roadblocks. It is a question of a decision being made about the potential impact of the oil and gas sector getting involved on the British Columbia coast, which is now barred by 32 years of a moratorium. It is not a question of trying to prevent that. It is trying to say that there should be some analysis of what the benefits and risks might be.

The Alliance does not believe there could possibly be any risk. I suggest that it look at the figures for the coast of Spain, the 100,000 people who—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laval Centre.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the refugee appeal division established under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act has suspended its activities for more than eight months now.

In a letter to Kemi Jacobs, of the Canadian Council for Refugees, the minister said he was exploring avenues concerning the establishment of an appeal procedure, but did not even refer to what is already in the act.

Could the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration explain why he continues to refuse to implement the appeal procedure provided for in the act, thereby allowing a situation to go on which denies refugee status claimants access to a procedure that is consistent with the fundamental principles of justice?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question.

Not only is Canada a model for refugee protection, but it is envied around the world. I do not think we have any lessons to learn in that respect.

In addition, I have made a commitment to the general assembly of the Canadian Council for Refugees to put forward an appeal system. It is coming. There are resource issues, and there are application issues. We are currently in the development phase.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence is about to close the cadet camp located in Cap-Chat. This is an institution that is over 30 years old where, each year, some 500 cadets come for training.

Can the Minister of National Defence tell us why, in a region where unemployment exceeds 20%, he is about to cut 70 jobs and deprive a whole community of $3 million in economic spinoffs?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since I myself was a cadet for four years, a number of years ago, I am well aware of the value of that institution. It is my objective and that of my department to preserve and promote the cadet program in Canada.

As regards the hon. member's region, I will inquire and report back to the House with the appropriate information.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's main estimates show some disturbing cuts to programs under the Department of Canadian Heritage. There was $7 million taken from Telefilm Canada and a $20 million cut to aboriginal organizations and native friendship centres.

The minister said there would be more money for the CBC, but the estimates clearly show a $56 million cut to its operating budget. That money was being used to create Canadian programs.

How can the minister justify cuts to distinctive Canadian programs on TV and radio in both official languages?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to use the very important question of the member to clarify once and for all in the House that when the supplementary estimates are presented in September, the amount of money available to the CBC will be at an all time historic high. In fact the amount of money made available will be $1.57 billion. I think that is a significant contribution and a significant increase in the amount of investment we have made in this very important arm of public broadcasting.

* * *

● (1500)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, the defence counsel for the opposition leader in Zimbabwe recently asked the RCMP for information which might help prove his innocence. The RCMP has now given the requested information to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

In the interest of defending democracy and justice, has the department forwarded this information to the defence counsel in Zimbabwe?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the RCMP has been cooperating to the best of its ability and has provided the information. We have been in contact with a number of national and international partners on this matter, including the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Absolutely, from the point of view of the RCMP, the Solicitor General and DFAIT, we want to see that due process is followed and that the information is provided.

Privilege

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour today to ask the hon. government House leader what business we will have for the rest of today, tomorrow and the week after the break.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to make the business statement and I will have two motions which relate to that immediately afterward, with the permission of the House.

This afternoon we will consider the Senate amendments to Bill C-12, the sports bill. I understand this will be brief. This will be followed by third reading of Bill C-15, the lobbyists legislation. If time permits, we would then turn to Bill C-20 on child protection, and then possibly Bill C-23, the sex offender registry. I think by then the day will probably have exhausted.

Tomorrow our plan would be to commence with Bill C-2, the Yukon bill, which would then be followed by Bill C-6, the first nations specific claims bill.

When the House returns on March 17 we will complete the budget debate on that day. I will have a motion to offer to the House in a few minutes to defer the vote on that.

March 18 shall be an allotted day, as shall be March 20. I will give an update to members of the House in terms of legislation to be called on March 19.

Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I wish to seek unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

> That, if on March 17, 2003, a division is requested on the main motion for government order, ways and means proceedings No. 2, the said division shall be deferred until the conclusion of the time provided for government orders on March 18, 2003.

For the benefit of members, that refers to the budget motion.

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, the modernization committee met very early this morning. I tabled one report of the modernization committee this morning.

I now seek unanimous consent to revert to the presentation of committee reports at which point I would then table the third report and seek unanimous consent for its adoption. This is pursuant to what we did this morning.

The Speaker: Is it agreed that we revert to presentation of committee reports?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

POINTS OF ORDER

TABLING OF DOCUMENT

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during question period yesterday reference was made to a paper which was circulated in New York by the Canadian government and members had shown an interest in having it deposited in the House. I was not in the House this morning to table it during the time for depositing government documents.

I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to deposit with the House at this time the paper which was circulated in New York. I understand it is also available in the government lobby.

● (1505)

The Speaker: I am sure it is agreed, but of course the minister does not need unanimous consent of the House. He can table anything at anytime. It is a wonderful power that ministers enjoy in this House and which of course the Speaker is pleased to permit when required.

The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for St. Albert.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege to charge the Minister of Justice with contempt in regard to his release of material to the media that was intended for Parliament.

Yesterday, the President of the Treasury Board tabled the main estimates in the House. The estimates reported that the government was seeking more funds to keep the firearms registry running.

Despite the urging of the Auditor General, the government has failed to provide a proper accounting of the program, a program that the Auditor General considers a major crown project. Apart from an $18 million item under Department of Justice, contributions to provinces and territories, there is no mention of any other funding for the firearms registry in the estimates.

However some cost estimates and details not mentioned in the estimates were revealed yesterday in a government news release. The release reads:

> Firearms Program Funding 2003-04 (Main Estimates)
>
> Treasury Board material on the Main Estimates mentions $74 million for the Canadian Firearms Centre. What is this for?

It goes on to say that:

> The $74 million is part of the $113 million sought in the Main Estimates for the Canadian Firearms Program. These funds are needed to operate and administer the firearms program for fiscal year 2003-04.
>
> The $113 million figure is arrived at by adding the $74 million to the A-base estimate for the program ($35 million, which was included within the Department's Main Estimates figures for the 2003-04, tabled last year). The $113M includes employee benefits and accommodation costs.

I am not sure what the A-base is. The news release goes on to detail how it was spent.

> The $113M consists of the following major elements: $21.5M to the "Alternative Service Delivery"; $8M to operate the Miramichi facility (costs for the Quebec processing site are included in provincial contributions); $16M in contributions to provinces that are administering the program (eg. Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, etc.); $11.3M to administer the program in opt-out jurisdictions; $4.6M for NWEST; $16M in other contributions to federal partners involved in the program; $14.4M for maintenance of the current Electronic Data Processing system and current business operations; and $9.2M for program administration.

The NWEST may be the Northwest Territories but I am not sure. The news release then goes on to provide details of the $74 million. The latter half of the release concerns itself with program funding of $59 million for 2002-03 supplementary estimates.

Mike Murphy, a spokesman for the Minister of Justice, reported to the *National Post* that the more detailed breakdown contained in the news release would be tabled in Parliament in late March. Mr. Murphy is admitting that the information in the news release is intended for Parliament and that Parliament will be provided with the information later.

Later in March would mean that the detailed information in the news release would be provided to Parliament when the reports on plans and priorities, or part IIIs of the main estimates, are tabled in the House as required under our rules. As you are also aware, Mr. Speaker, those reports are intended for the House.

The Minister of Justice has decided to release this information to the media one month ahead of providing it to Parliament. His spokesman has made the link between the information in the news release and information intended for Parliament in an interview with Bill Curry of the *National Post.*

I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to a question of privilege that was raised by the member for Provencher on March 14, 2001. His question of privilege was in regard to the Department of Justice briefing the media on Bill C-15 prior to its tabling in the House.

On March 19, 2001 the Speaker ruled on the matter and stated:

> In preparing legislation, the government may wish to hold extensive consultations and such consultations may be held entirely at the government's discretion. However, with respect to material to be placed before parliament, the House must take precedence.

● (1510)

We had another case on October 15, 2001. The opposition House leader raised a question of privilege with regard to Bill C-36. The *National Post* had reported the contents of Bill C-36 and indicated that it was briefed by officials from the Department of Justice. The article published on October 13, 2001 entitled "New bill to pin down terrorism" described the bill in detail and quoted officials from the department.

The Speaker ruled that the case of Bill C-36 was similar to Bill C-15 and that there had been a breach of privileges of the House and the matter was sent to committee.

I would argue that the reports on the plans and priorities are material placed before Parliament and like legislation, if they are to be released, the House must take precedence.

The supply process deserves the same respect, integrity and protection as the legislative process. I would argue even more so than legislation because the estimates are the fundamental reason that Parliament exists.

The minister's attempt to appropriate money through a news release is an affront to Parliament.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, supplementary estimates (B) 2002-03 for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2003. were also tabled by the President of the Treasury Board yesterday. On page 82, the Canadian firearms program will receive another $59,447,000. In addition to that it also has with an asterisk, "Incremental funding to address operational requirements, Vote 1, at $16,436,000". At the bottom the asterisk states:

> Funds in the amount of $14,098,739 were advanced from the Treasury Board Contingencies Vote to provide temporary funding for this program.

If I go back to the 2002-03 main estimates, part I and II, the government expenditure plan in main estimates at page 1-54, for the vote 5 of the government contingencies for the Treasury Board it states:

> Subject to the approval of the Treasury Board, to supplement other appropriations for paylist and other requirements and to provide for miscellaneous minor and unforeseen expenses not otherwise provided for, including awards under the Public Servants Inventions Act and authority to re-use any sums allotted for non-paylist requirements and repaid to this appropriation from other appropriations.

Note the word "unforeseen".

We do know that the Minister of Justice has been telling us that he has been funding the firearms program through cash management after the government withdrew a request for $72 million last December.

I am raising this point with you, Mr. Speaker, at the earliest opportunity because supplementary estimates (B) were only tabled in the House yesterday. I have not been able to verify whether that $15 million was for the Canadian firearms program as the $72 million was in December 2002.

If we find that this money actually was used for the firearms program to replace the money that the government did not request in December 2002, it was not unforeseen. It was to replace a request that was withdrawn which is a significant difference. Unforeseen we can understand; to replace a request that the government withdrew from the floor of this House, for reasons we do not know, cannot under any circumstances be classified as unforeseen.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you will find that the Minister of Justice is in contempt of the House for the total disregard for the historic and constitutional role of the House in financial matters and the business of supply. If you agree and if you do so rule, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think some of the applause is a little premature. Some of these accusations are getting more than a little overstated in the House.

I want to go back to the statement made by the Auditor General, an officer of Parliament, some time ago. The opinion of the Auditor General, at least on that point, was that it was not specifically identified in the main estimates, although funding for the firearms program had been in the supplementary estimates at the time. I do not think anyone can allege that the information is not in the estimates. It is quite clearly there. No one could make an allegation otherwise.

The second point I want to raise is the statement that the minister somehow gave information to the media that was not otherwise available to the House. For the minister to have talking points, further elaboration on any point within a minister's department, whether it is the staffing of my office, or whether it is another minister's programs anywhere, is quite normal. The minister and his staff would have further explanation to further enlighten those who want to ask questions.

Similarly, ministers have briefing books in the House of Commons when opposition members ask questions about a particular item so they can give other information about the item in question. That is not abnormal in itself, although it perhaps shocks the hon. member from Edmonton, and I can understand her shock, given that she will not have a riding anymore.

The hon. member raised an item, and I believe he was serious, contrary to the member from Edmonton, which I believe is on page 82 of the supplementary estimates B. It is in regard to the asterisk portion which refers to funds in the amount of $14,098,739, I believe. I see the hon. member nodding. These funds were used for drug prosecution and aboriginal litigation.

I hope that any suggestion that the minister had used these funds improperly will be rectified by those who made the accusations. To make these accusations against the minister just because one does not know better is not justification for doing so.

Finally, I will carefully review *Hansard* and I would like to come back tomorrow, or possibly the President of the Treasury Board would return to the House tomorrow, to further elaborate on what I just said. Meanwhile, maybe someone can prepare the necessary apologies to the Minister of Justice.

● (1515)

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say a few brief words to the question of privilege with which I agree. The government tabled supplementary estimates at the time when it knew there would be no time to examine them in committee, perhaps one 90 minute meeting.

This delay and the promised statement further impedes the House and the committees by holding back information during the time meant for the procedure of committee scrutiny. This is another example of keeping the House in the dark, just what the Auditor General said was the cardinal sin of the government.

Yesterday I complained about alterations to the budget being made outside the House. A budget was presented but the Prime Minister went out and said, no, that was not what it was, that it was something else. This is more of the same conduct.

This proves that the words of the Minister of Finance about accountability to Parliament are just words and not actions. We are left with the words of the former minister of finance who said that there was a democratic deficit in Parliament.

The Speaker: The Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has asked that the matter be deferred so that further submissions can be made in response to the hon. member for St. Albert on his very elaborate question of privilege, which I sense is two different points really. I managed to get thoroughly confused on the second one. I found it difficult because figures were being bandied about by both sides and I did not have all the books in front of me.

Obviously this will take a little time to sort out but we will hear from others either tomorrow or on Monday, and the Chair will then take the matter under thorough advisement and get back to the House in due course, as is usual in circumstances of this kind.

● (1520)

The Chair has notice of a point of order from the hon. member for Mississauga Centre.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mrs. Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to express my regret over inappropriate comments that I made outside the House yesterday. These are difficult and frustrating times for everyone. I share a fear of imminent war experienced by many Canadians. That fear and frustration do not justify my comments. I sincerely regret having made them and I have made a fully apology to Mr. Cellucci, the U.S. ambassador to Canada.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT ACT

[*English*]

Hon. Don Boudria (for the Secretary of State (Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved the second reading of, and concurrence in, amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-12, an act to promote physical activity and sport.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will participate only briefly on this item because another member wants to make her comments.

[*Translation*]

We know that at first the amendments as presented to us by the other place were not appreciated by Canada's athletic community.

I am told that the sports community has had the time to examine these amendments. It now supports the amendments as presented by the Senate or, at least, they are able to reach a consensus.

Under such circumstances and with the support, I think, of all sides of the House, I am pleased to indicate that the government also intends to support these amendments and recommends that they be passed by the House of Commons.

[*English*]

The amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-12 are now agreeable to the House. We intend to support them and to concur in them as I have indicated a moment ago.

I understand that there are a few other brief comments to be made. I am sure that the athletic and sports community in Canada is enthusiastically awaiting our support. If we were to provide that support early today I understand that the bill could receive royal assent in a few days. I hope that we all cooperate in order to do that.

I would like to thank all hon. members and the critics from the other side of the House who have cooperated with the hon. secretary of state on this issue. The secretary of state is very pleased that the bill will finally come to pass and that it will be the new law of Canada very soon.

We wish to thank everyone involved in the amateur sport community for their tremendous contribution, and the preparation and the adoption of the bill.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to let the bill pass later this day, get it back to the Senate, and approved in time to not only help our athletes prepare for things like the Olympics but also to prepare Canadians to exhibit more healthy lifestyles. We must encourage Canadians to engage in sporting activities, to use that as a reason to encourage one another to cut back on some of our health costs, and to have a healthier Canadian population.

I have a couple of points though about the Senate amendments. The Senate put back into the bill a clause which we took out in the House of Commons committee. The purpose of the bill is to help our athletes and to promote healthy living by Canadians, but the Senate put another clause back in that changes the purpose of the bill to also promote bilingualism.

Bilingualism is certainly something that is a Canadian reality. No one is fussing with that but it is a mistake to use a bill, which primarily should be about sport, as an excuse to promote bilingualism. This should be about promoting sports with all Canadians regardless of their linguistic backgrounds, whether English or French. It should not be about the bilingualism policy of Canada. That is a separate issue and we wish the government would have kept that separate.

It was a mistake to put that clause back in, but nevertheless we will allow the bill to go through. It is not something that should hold it up, but again we believe it is a mistake. The government does make this mistake from time to time.

The other thing that cannot go without passing comment is that we encourage the government to support our Olympic athletes. We thank the government for reversing its stand that it would help our Olympic athletes only if the 2010 Olympic bid did go through. Thankfully the government saw the error of its ways in time to send the proper message to our elite athletes that not only would it support them with this new bill but it would also support them with that minimum financial support regardless of whether athletes are fighting for Olympic gold here in Canada or in some other location.

Having said that, all of us in the House are confident that the 2010 Vancouver Olympic bid would be successful, this bill not being a major part of it but nonetheless supportive of that 2010 bid.

We will let the bill go through. Let us get on with not only a healthier lifestyle for all Canadians, but with supporting our athletes from coast to coast who compete in international games both at the amateur and elite levels.

● (1525)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to take part in today's debate on amendments from the other place to Bill C-12.

First, given what is at stake, I hope that the Secretary of State for Amateur Sports, who has said that he is concerned with the future of our athletes, is listening to everything being said here in the House.

The merits of this bill are not in question. After holding numerous consultations, the federal government has finally responded to the expectations of the sports community by introducing a modern, updated bill, which makes sports and physical a central feature of our daily lives and our health.

Inspired by Canada's sports policy, which aims, in particular, to increase participation, support excellence and develop potential, this bill will become the strategic framework for federal government policies on sports and physical activities.

Despite this expression of willingness to serve the interests of the population and the sports community, I would like to mention a few extremely important points.

First, there is the thorny issue of the official languages. This bill contains certain provisions on official languages. But we will be responsible for ensuring that the principles it contains are respected and turned into concrete action.

The flaws as far as official languages are concerned are more of a concern to me and most certainly are nothing new. In June 1999, I filed a complaint with the Commissioner of Official Languages, asking for an investigation of the situation of francophone athletes in elite amateur sport in Canada. This was a follow-up to the hearings of the sub-committee on sport and the discrimination I had witnessed.

The commissioner's report indicated that our complaint was justified and clearly demonstrated that francophone athletes were markedly disadvantaged in the present sport system in Canada.

In the year 2000, the commissioner tabled a report containing 16 recommendations to be implemented by April 1, 2001. We are not far from April 1, 2003, yet the report's recommendations have barely been addressed. This is a major cause for concern and is one of the reasons that the Bloc Quebecois has strongly urged that there to be some clear indication in Bill C-12 of respect for official languages.

Energetic measures are needed immediately so that francophone athletes in Canada do not have to leave their language behind in the dressing room if they want to get on to the podium.

This is why I am so pleased with the amendments made in the other place. They are, in fact, a reflection of the commissioner's recommendations.

The first amendment addresses the principle of linguistic duality. According to the commissioner, the principle of linguistic duality, a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society, needs to be part of the preamble to the bill, on an equal footing with the other important advantages of physical activity and sport.

The other amendment, moreover, refers to a crucial clause in the bill, since it relates to the financial assistance the minister can provide through grants and contributions. These are the sources of funding for the sport organizations which were the object of my complaint. They have demonstrated—and in a number of cases still do—some serious shortcomings as far as respect for official languages is concerned.

With this addition, the minister will have to exercise his powers in accordance with parts IV and VII of the Official Languages Act which, among other things, requires the government to enhance the vitality of francophone and anglophone minorities.

These two are important prerequisites for encouraging and imposing respect of both official languages.

Another aspect to which I wish to draw your attention is the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre. We have already voiced some concerns about certain aspects of the centre. I will not revisit them here, except for one.

One of the key elements of the bill is without a doubt the creation of the sport dispute resolution centre. Although we are convinced of the importance of this centre for athletes, namely with regard to timeframes for settling disputes and the exorbitant costs of legal proceedings, we have certain reservations about the minister's power to make appointments to the board of directors.

Like the sporting community, we think that creating a board of directors is an excellent idea. However, this board must reflect the diversity and backgrounds of all the athletes, and must be equitable, and respectful of linguistic duality.

● (1530)

This board of directors, which will be required to decide on the centre's policy directions, will have to be impartial and transparent, two fundamental values for ensuring confidence in the centre's integrity and especially its independence.

The Secretary of State for Amateur Sport told the sports community of his intention to hold an extensive consultation before appointing a board of directors. I intend to follow this consultation very closely.

Furthermore, still in reference to this centre, two amendments were proposed by the upper chamber requiring the minister to table a copy of the business plan and the annual report in each House.

I would like to reassure the sports community that these amendments are not meant to take away from the centre's independence. It is imperative to preserve the centre's independence. This measure is not aimed at interfering in the management of the centre, but at strengthening Parliament's control over the management of public funds. The centre's accountability to Parliament is not synonymous with interference by parliamentarians. The purpose of the amendments is to make the centre accountable to Parliament.

Finally, one last issue that is of particular concern to me is the funds that are necessary to achieve the bill's objectives. Even though we support this legislation, I want to remind the secretary of state about something that is very to truly achieving the stated objectives. It is all fine and well to pass an act promoting physical activity and excellence, but if, in the end, we do not provide the sport community with adequate funding, this will be disappointing for athletes.

In this regard, the federal government has just missed a great opportunity to demonstrate its willingness to provide the sport community with the necessary tools. We were also very disappointed with the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport, as we were with the budget, because he was not at all upset by the measly amount of money earmarked for athletes and the sport community. The base budget of $75 million was not even increased, despite the fact that Athletes CAN and members of the sport community recommended that the government double Sport Canada's budget, to increase it to $150 million.

But nothing was doubled, not even a loonie. Yet, during an awareness campaign held last fall, these athletes took the trouble to come here to meet the parliamentarians of this House. Moreover, in January, during a brief discussion with top level athletes, the Prime Minister recognized the importance of sport and physical activity.

The Prime Minister could at least have asked the Minister of Finance to take action, so that some money, some hard cash, would follow. On the contrary, these athletes only got a pittance, a measly $10 million over a two year period for high performance athletes. And had it not been for the outrage of the sport community and my own representations through the media, these funds would still be conditional on the 2010 Olympic Games being awarded to the City of Vancouver.

I still have some reservations and I still wonder about the government's real willingness to invest in the development of sport, which is the main objective of the bill. Therefore, I would like the government's action to reflect the objectives stated in the bill. In order for a policy to be effective, the means to carry it out must be provided.

The Bloc Quebecois is prepared to support this bill and the amendments, but in return we are asking the federal government to take a very serious look at the situation in the sports world and to make a financial commitment to athletes and coaches, so that they will have adequate facilities and an income worthy of an Olympian or of an athlete that makes us proud by standing on a podium.

● (1535)

[*English*]

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part briefly in this discussion of Bill C-12. The reason we are dealing with it is that four amendments have come back to us from the other place. One is on linguistic duality. The second is on grants and contributions that will accord with the Official Languages Act. The third one deals with the corporate plan of the new sports body to be tabled annually in both Houses and, finally, that an annual report be tabled each year.

Just briefly by way of background, Bill C-54, now Bill C-12, was considered to be non-controversial and was supported unanimously last June by all parties in the House. The bill replaces and updates the Fitness and Amateur Sport Act, which dates back to 1961, and is intended to bring people, organizations and governments together to encourage, promote and develop physical activity in sport in Canada, a goal that all parties supported enthusiastically, as I have said.

In its preamble, the bill indicates that sport and physical activity can be forces that bind Canadians together, enhancing, among other things, the bilingual nature of Canada. The bill received unanimous support in the House on October 9, 2002, although I do not believe there was a recorded vote at that time.

To deal specifically and briefly with the amendments, Motion No. 1 makes a change to the preamble to the bill by adding the phrase "linguistic duality".

[*Translation*]

The preamble states, and I quote:

> whereas the Government of Canada recognizes that physical activity and sport are integral parts of Canadian culture and society and produce benefits in terms of health, quality of life, economic activity, cultural diversity and social cohesion, including strengthening the bilingual character of Canada;

And the amendment reads as follows:

> social cohesion, linguistic duality, economic activity, cultural diversity and quality of life;

[*English*]

The main change here is to have the phrase "linguistic duality" replace the words "bilingual nature of Canada". I would point that out to the member for Fraser Valley, who seemed to be concerned that the government was somehow trying to sneak something in as a result of the proposed changes from the other place. I think the two are very similar.

Motion No. 2 relates to the grants and contributions in accord with the Official Languages Act. The bill as passed in the House last year read as follows:

> For the purposes of this Act, the Minister may provide financial assistance in the form of grants and contributions to any person.

The amendment adds, after the words "to any person", the following words:

> in accordance with Parts IV and VII of the Official Languages Act.

In Motion No. 3, the corporate plan of the new sports body is to be tabled in both Houses each year, with the annual report to be tabled in both Houses each year. We support both of these.

With regard to the corporate plan, the Senate amendment adds a new subclause 32(4), which states:

> The Minister shall cause a copy of the corporate plan to be tabled in each House of Parliament on any of the first fifteen days on which that House is sitting after the Minister receives the plan.

We contacted representatives of the sports community. They were initially opposed to that clause being added, arguing that the sport body was set up to be at arm's length and the government seemed to be pulling it back under too tight a control. They insisted initially that enough accountability had already been built in and that these amendments sent a negative signal to sports bodies and athletes.

We have been told, however, that after consideration they are now prepared to support these amendments. So are the members of this caucus. We will be supporting the four amendments that have been presented to us this afternoon.

● (1540)

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words in support of the amendments and the bill in general.

Recognizing linguistic duality in a bilingual country certainly should not be a chore for any of us. Having said that, when talking about sports, athletes or Olympic competition, many of the great athletes in this country of course come from the great province of Quebec. Just to make sure that as they proceed through the whole process they feel as comfortable as anyone else when assurance is given that linguistic duality is recognized, we support that fully.

There is another concern I have with the bill. It is laudable for the government to talk about increasing our awareness of sport and physical activity, to encourage participation and to make it possible for more people across the country to be involved in sport and physical activity, unlike, Mr. Speaker, in your day and my day as we were growing up when it seemed everyone was involved in physical activity, from the workplace point of view to the sports point of view. Everyone around, all the young people, were involved in some sort of sport or physical activity.

That does not seem to be the case today. A lot of our young people would rather come home from school on a bus than walk the two miles like we did, sit in front a television, which we did not have, and watch programs and eat junk food, which we did not have either. All of this leads to a lifestyle which certainly does not promote physical fitness or encourage people to get involved in sports. I still believe that with encouragement, leadership and the opportunity to participate, we would encourage people to get off the soft chair and get involved.

However, the one concern I have when I hear government talking about encouraging more people to get involved, and the great support we have for our people who are involved in the Olympics or professional sport, is the fact that it is very easy to set up organizations that encourage people to do things. But encouraging people to get involved and ensuring that they meet their full potential are two entirely different things. Our Olympic athletes cannot make it to the top without financial assistance. It is a wonder that Canada does as well as it does with the meagre assistance it gives in comparison to the countries with which it competes.

There is no better way to encourage young people to get involved in physical activity and in sports than having them see their heroes perform.

Mr. Speaker, you and I probably played hockey because we saw someone that we admired and we wanted to do what that person did. You certainly made it to the NHL, in one way or another. I certainly did not, for all kinds of reasons, but over the years I participated with people who could have if they had been given any kind of a chance, if they had had the right coaching or the right financial incentives, but of course they did not.

Mr. Speaker, more than anyone here you know the cost of helping people get to the top. Consequently, if we want our athletes to be the best and to be the shining stars that our young people can emulate, then we had better put our money where our mouth is.

Mr. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been discussions among the parties and I think if you were to seek it you would find unanimous consent for the following motion: That Bill C-332, an act to confirm the rights of taxpayers and establish the office for taxpayer protection, stand in the name of the member for Mississauga South.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the parliamentary secretary have the consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

● (1545)

The Deputy Speaker: We will go back to the previous matter before the House, Bill C-12.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to, amendments read the second time and concurred in)

[*Translation*]

LOBBYISTS REGISTRATION ACT

Hon. Robert Nault (for the Minister of Industry) moved that Bill C-15, An Act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Serge Marcil (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to have the opportunity to begin third reading debate on Bill C-15, An Act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act.

This legislation is one of the key elements of the eight-point action plan on ethics in government announced by the Prime Minister on May 23. It also fits in with the commitment toward ethics which the government reaffirmed in the September throne speech.

Given how important this legislation is to meet the commitment we have made in the Speech from the Throne, let me start by thanking the Standing Committee on Industry, Sciences and Technology for the fantastic job it has done.

The committee recognized that this bill is one of the key elements of our plan to build the confidence of Canadians in their public institutions. It can be proud of the work it has accomplished expeditiously and diligently.

In no small measure, that prompt analysis was due to the work that the same committee did back in 2001 to look at the existing act. At that time, the committee concluded that Canada's lobbyists registration system works well, and really only needed a few changes to work better. They pointed the way to the improvements that make up Bill C-15.

I know that not all of my honourable colleagues were able to take part in the debate at the time this bill was referred to the committee in October. I know that it is worthwhile to remind one and all of the current situation, the legislation that we have now, and the direction that Bill C-15 proposes—a direction that the committee agreed with, in sending this bill back to the House with no changes.

The amendments this bill proposes will provide a clearer definition of lobbying; strengthen the enforcement provision of the Lobbyists Registration Act; and simplify registration and strengthen deregistration requirements, with a single filing approach for registration for corporations and non-profit organizations.

I should start by describing the four key principles that are the basis for the entire Lobbyists Registration Act and the system that it establishes.

The first of the principles is that free and open access to government is an important matter of public interest. And I do not believe that anyone would disagree with that.

The second principle is that lobbying public office holders is a legitimate activity. Clearly, what we do here and what the government does in general affects people and institutions in our society. Lobbying is a legitimate way for interests in our society to bring their views before the people in government who will shape and make those decisions.

The third principle is where we get to an important consideration. That principle says it is desirable that public office holders and the public are able to know who is attempting to influence government. So, the issue is one of transparency.

The fourth and final principle guides how the system should actually work. It says that a system of registration of paid lobbyists should not impede free and open access to government. It calls on us to ensure that the system does not throw unreasonable roadblocks in the way of a legitimate activity.

My assessment of what the standing committee heard during its hearings is that no one disputes these principles. They are a firm basis for action for better government and the transparency.

Equally, I know of no one who has disputed the reach of the current act in terms of the lobbyists it covers.

First, the act differentiates between two general groups of people. The first group are people who lobby or are responsible for lobbying, in the context of their jobs. The second group are people who lobby as volunteers.

The current Lobbyists Registration Act does not apply to that second group. It does not apply to volunteers and I do not hear many suggesting otherwise.

However, there is general agreement that paid lobbyists should register. And this is the case under both the current and amended act.

The act includes many other elements. Among the most important are the requirements as to the information that lobbyists have to provide.

● (1550)

It indicates what they have to report on the record about the clients, businesses or organizations they represent and their activities. Once again, these fundamental elements are not changing in any substantive way. However, there are important improvements alongside the technical amendments in Bill C-15.

These improvements cover three major areas. The first clarifies who has to register as a lobbyist under the act. If I can simplify things, the existing legislation generally requires a person to register as a lobbyist if they communicate with a public office holder in what the law calls an "attempt to influence" that office holder. Now remember that I am just speaking of people acting in a paid capacity here.

But what is meant by "an attempt to influence"? Where does this start or end?

Bill C-15 addresses this uncertainty. It proposes that if a paid person communicates with a public office holder, as a general rule, that person is lobbying and has to register under the act. Clearly, not all communications would really be lobbying, and the government recognizes this. For that reason, Bill C-15 includes an exemption to the registration requirement. That exemption would come into play when someone is making a simple request for information.

The idea is that if a person is just asking for the kind of information that we get every day from our constituents, then it is not fair to call that lobbying. It makes no sense to trigger the entire registration and reporting process.

Bill C-15 also responds to another issue about registration that the standing committee recommended in its 2001 report. And that is to eliminate an exemption that is in the current law. That exemption says that a lobbyist does not have to register if it is the public office holder who initiates the contact. I suppose that could have been the case if a minister or departmental officials were to ask an organization for comments on a policy or legislation or some other business.

The Standing Committee on Industry saw this situation as a possible loophole that goes against the transparency that we are seeking in lobbying activitities. That is why Bill C-15 eliminates this exemption.

Bill C-15 proposes a second series of major changes that the standing committee approved. In fact, I understand that they did not give rise to any discussion among witnesses. These changes relate to the registration process under the act.

Currently, registration requirements are different for people who lobby as in-house lobbyists for a corporation or as in-house lobbyists for a non-profit organization.

Let me start with those who work for a corporation. Under the current legislation, if an employee spends at least 20% of his time lobbying, then that employee must register.

It is different in the case of a non-profit organization, since only the senior officer must register if the time spent lobbying by any of his employees amounts to 20% of the work done by a single employee.

Here is how it would work. If the time spent lobbying by several employees of a corporation is equal to or higher than 20% of the work done by a single employee, then registration is mandatory.

The person who would register would normally occupy the position of executive director or would have equivalent functions. Any employee who does lobbying directly would have his or her name on the list, but the official registration form would have to be signed by the head of the organization.

The second of this series of changes concerns the rules governing how often registration information is to be updated.

As I said, transparency is one of the key objectives of the Lobbyist Registration Act. One way to achieve transparency is to require lobbyists to disclose who their clients are and what the nature of their work is—in other words, on which departments they are focusing their lobbying efforts.

● (1555)

Bill C-15 will correct a deficiency in the existing legislation. This deficiency is due to the fact that different timeframes and registration rules apply to different categories of lobbyists. The government is proposing to standardize the rules governing registration and to have them apply to all lobbyists.

With this bill, all lobbyists will be required to renew and update their registration at least every six months. Any lobbyist who fails to comply will have his or her registration cancelled.

The six month rule represents a minimum requirement. The legislation would provide, however, that lobbyists are required to update their registration as often as necessary to ensure that the registrations in the database are, as far as possible, up to date.

I am pleased to report that the standing committee did not see fit to amend this proposal.

Allow me to mention a third and final major change as we embark on this debate. The bill contains a new requirement for those involved in administering the lobbyist registration system.

Bill C-15 provides that possible offences under the regulatory lobbyists' code of conduct will be investigated. The bill clearly sets out that if there are reasonable grounds to believe another act may have been violated, the investigation is to stop, and the case be referred to the police, which will take it from there.

The purpose of Bill C-15 is to make a system that is already working well work even better in the future.

As I indicated in my introduction, in this bill, we are proposing amendments designed to increase the clarity, transparency and enforceability of the lobbyist registration system. It will result in the establishment of a rigorous lobbying regime that will be part of the key elements of the Prime Minister's eight-point action plan to build the confidence of Canadians in their institutions.

I look forward to the speedy passage of this bill, so that the necessary improvements can take place as soon as possible. I urge all my colleagues in this House to support the bill, because it spells real progress.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is with great interest that I take this opportunity to speak to Bill C-15, an act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act.

A lobbyist is recognized as an individual who seeks to influence legislators on a particular issue, with a lobby being an organization to attempt to influence. From this definition of a lobbyist flows the term influence peddling which defines those individuals who allege that whatever the issue, they possess the ability to influence the government in someone's favour, usually in return for some type of payoff.

The payoff can assume many forms, from monetary to favourable media coverage, in return for access. For example, during the Ducros affair, which centred around the intemperate comments made by the Prime Minister's director of communications about the President of the United States and ultimately led to the forcing of her resignation, certain reporters did not even cover the story.

Who lobbied these reporters? Canadians are left wondering what was promised in exchange for practising self-censorship and being a willing conduit for government propaganda?

It is recognized that in a modern, functioning democracy there are legitimate forms of lobbying. It was, however, the not so legitimate types of lobbying that led to the necessity of the Lobbyists Registration Act in the first place.

The government of the day felt that it was important for the public to know exactly who was lobbying the government; on whose behalf the lobbyist was working; the subject matter for which the lobbyist was retained to communicate with a public officeholder or to arrange a meeting with; to identify any relevant legislative proposal, bill, resolution, regulation, policy, program, grant, contribution, financial benefit or contract; and the amount and the terms of the payment.

The government felt that it was important for the public to know the particulars to identify any communication technique, including appeals to members of the public through the mass media or by direct communications that seek to persuade the members of the public to communicate directly with a public officeholder in an attempt to place pressure on the public officeholder to endorse a particular option.

The government also felt that it was important to provide the information relating to the identity of the individual, the client, any person or organization and any subsidiary company directing the lobbyist or anyone who had a direct interest in the outcome of the lobbyist's activities on behalf of a client.

It is interesting to note why lobbying has become an issue now. It has become an issue because the government made its unethical behaviour the issue.

The Prime Minister even promised an independent ethics commissioner who would report directly to Parliament, a promise he promptly broke when it became apparent that the independent ethics commissioner would only be taking up too much time in Parliament reporting on the sins of the current government.

Where is Stevie Cameron or similar civic-minded journalists when we need them? It is time to write the sequel to *On the Take*. The book could be called *On the Take* Part Two, starring the Prime Minister and the rest of the Liberal Party.

This need to legislate lobbyists started in 1993 with the Prime Minister accusing the former Tory government of corruption or, more specifically, illegal lobbying.

The industry minister, who is the sponsor of the bill, as justice minister led the witch hunt all the way to former prime minister Brian Mulroney. It is hard to see how he found the time to attack the former prime minister when he was so busy setting up the billion dollar gun registry.

What slowly became apparent was the speed with which the government sought to overtake the previous government when it came to a lapse in political ethics.

● (1600)

In the words of one observer to the federal scene at the end of 2002, "the lost value of boondoggles hits a record high, smashing the ugly 1999 benchmark established by the HRDC mess. The missing money into Groupaction caper, the fraudulent GST claim scandal, the air security tax mess and the mother of all mind-boggles, the $1 billion gun registry database even the police say is flawed or incomplete".

No one cannot legislate moral behaviour.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill because of what it represents, lost opportunity. The decision of the Prime Minister not to do the right thing and respond to the real concerns of Canadians is the hallmark of a corrupt regime.

Canadians are concerned that power and influence is now a commodity in Ottawa to be bought and sold to the highest bidder. The real problem in Ottawa is not the lobbyists who ply their trade as professionals. The lobbyist registry is something that they support as they see the need to clean up what has always been considered to be suspect activity at best, immoral, unethical and, at its worst abuse, illegal.

Legitimate lobbyists in Ottawa are in many ways similar to firearms owners in Canada: law-abiding and doing something that they have always done without a hint of any problem. Then along comes the justice minister and starts to treat all owners of firearms as criminals.

The fact that a lobbyist act exists is an admission on the part of the government of criminal activity and the fact that we have amendments to existing legislation confirms that the criminal activity associated with lobbying is getting worse.

Let us distinguish between legitimate lobbying activity and the activity these amendments to the lobbyist act hope to curtail.

Criminals do not register their firearms. Lobbyists who seek government favour for financial payoff do not want to be identified as a lobby registry. The lobbyists who are engaged in suspect activities have not registered and will not register.

It is under the table deals that Canadians fear about the current government. If any individual or activity demonstrates the need for an independent ethics commissioner it has to be the events surrounding the former solicitor general.

The spin is that the former solicitor general resigned because of the ethics counsellor's ruling that he broke conflict of interest rules by lobbying the RCMP and Correctional Service Canada for a $6.5 million grant for a college that is run by his brother.

Amazingly, before that resignation the former solicitor general was trying to defend an untendered $100,000 contract to his friend, Everett Roche's Prince Edward Island accounting firm of MacIsaac Younker Roche Soloman, with Mr. Roche's name as the signatory on the contract.

Everett Roche was the former solicitor general's official agent in the 2000 federal election.

If I have identified Mr. Roche incorrectly as the campaign manager for the former solicitor general in the 2000 federal campaign, I am pleased to confirm the fact that Mr. Roche was the chief financial officer, in many respects the most responsible position in the election campaign.

I also want to make it clear that in the case of the former solicitor general's brother, I do not know if he personally gained from the activities of his brother.

● (1605)

However it is a matter of public record that the lobbying for $6.5 million for the P.E.I. college run by his brother was a conflict of interest and it was that activity that was identified as the cause of the former solicitor general's resignation.

After the former solicitor general's resignation, more and more information surfaced about the accounting firm of MacIsaac Younker Roche Soloman, with thousands of more dollars in untendered contracts, only this time in the form of verbal agreements. How convenient that verbal agreements leave no paper trails.

Treasury Board guidelines require verbal agreements be backed up by a formal written agreement. There was no contract for work billed by Everett Roche's accounting firm in one case and a contract for other so-called work was signed five months after it was finished, in May 2001. What a coincidence that this so-called work was completed about the time of the last federal election.

Unfortunately, if there was any legitimacy around these activities Canadians would never know because we do not have an independent ethics commissioner, which is the most serious flaw in Bill C-15. Only an open court of law will reveal whether or not the subject matter of the former solicitor general's untendered contract with his election campaign's official agent involved getting money for the minister's brother's college.

The lobbyists act, as is, unamended by Bill C-15, prohibits inter-ministry lobbying. Canadians may never know the secret lobbying that took place by a member of the Prime Minister's staff to shut the Emergency Preparedness College in Arnprior. Still bitter about being rejected by the people of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, the government has been looking for ways to punish the voters. Mean, petty and vindictive are the only words to describe the action to shut down 60 years of teaching excellence. This move to punish the people of Arnprior has already backfired.

I invite the Prime Minister to read the headlines in the local newspaper which read:

> This Liberal Government has shafted us with the...(helicopter) contract and again this time with the Emergency Preparedness College.

A local councillor goes on to observe:

> —there would be a serious political price to pay for what has been done. The Liberals have made sure they will never have this seat back again.

How much secret lobbying is taking place in the Office of the Prime Minister? Ottawa valley residents know that the someone who is in his office with no known responsibilities has received money from the horse racing industry, and this is a matter of public record.

What is not widely known is the lobbying that this individual is doing on behalf of this group from which he has accepted money in the past. In fact, this individual brags about his ability to influence the Prime Minister.

Addressing a racetrack gathering in the United States recently, he said "Speaking of power. Never underestimate the power of the unelected—.The key is to get to the powerful people. I am the special advisor to the Prime Minister so I can gain access to him and have meetings with these people".

What is that power of the unelected to lobby from the Prime Minister's Office?

In the section referred to as Insider News of the Standardbred Canada in *Trot* magazine in an article dated April 22, 2002, which was basically a reprint from an article that was in the *Recorder & Times*, which is the local newspaper in Brockville, an application to build a $230 million racetrack was floundering, which I now understand is not proceeding. This was after the developer of the project bragged that the application was almost complete.

● (1610)

In a letter to the editor of the *Brockville Recorder & Times* Anton Stephens, the developer behind the racetrack proposal, publicly thanked the special advisor in the Prime Minister's Office. The same article in *Trot* magazine said the following about the Prime Minister's involvement:

> Amazingly, the development group did manage to obtain a meeting with the Prime Minister (Chrétien) on December 12 after which the federal portion of the project was assigned to the Prime Minister's (Chrétien's) senior advisor Hector Cloutier.

We know what this employee does. He lobbies for racetracks and that is not all.

I have in my possession correspondence that was blind copied to the Prime Minister's Office over other racetrack lobbying with a federal government agency.

The true rot in the government is the secret lobbying that takes place behind the closed doors in the Prime Minister's Office. The worst thing about these practices is the fact that members of the government, not all I might add as the courageous members with principles do not go unrecognized by the official opposition and ordinary Canadians, see these practices as normal, as nothing being wrong with them. Unfortunately, the horse racing industry is often penetrated by organized crime.

I want to get back to the need for the lobbyist registration bill and how the Prime Minister's Office is underscoring this need.

In the case of gambling we are talking about billions of dollars. This same individual, as a confidante of the Prime Minister, had this to say when he was confronted by a local parish priest in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, the late Rev. Ken Bradley of Our Lady of Sorrows parish in Petawawa, about the evils of gambling, horse racing, and his involvement. He said:

> Let me get this straight, Father. We have parish bingos every week. What's the difference?

When the good Father tried to explain the difference between God's work and lining the pockets of a few individuals, the official word on behalf of the Prime Minister's Office was:

> Now you have to figure out how you're going to ameliorate with God so you can move ahead on this gambling.

He then went on to attack the efforts of social workers who have to pick up the pieces of the shattered lives of gambling addicts. I have a complete copy of this individual's comments published on the web for the world to see, so there can be no question about the authenticity of these quotes.

The secret lobbying by the anti-rural wing of the Liberal Party to waste a billion dollars on a useless firearms registry has resulted in the needless deaths of thousands of Canadians as health care lineups get longer.

I see the frustration on the faces of government members of Parliament who have to face angry rural constituents who are justifiably upset over more social engineering by the urban lobby. The transfer of power from the elected representatives to the faceless minions in the Prime Minister's Office is destroying our democracy.

A Liberal backbencher is pressuring the industry minister to prove he is not under the influence of companies funding his underground former leadership campaign. The member for Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge is suggesting that Warren Kinsella, who has been closely associated with the industry minister's failed leadership bid, is the most obvious example of a conflict of interest for the Prime Minister's ethics counsellor to look into.

The member's comments were in response to the fact that Mr. Kinsella is still registered as a lobbyist on the Competition Act even though it now falls under the responsibility of the industry minister.

There is talk that senators on the banking, trade and commerce committee are planning to send Bill C-23, the competition bill, back to the House, a move the member for Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge said would effectively kill the bill.

The industry minister is expected to appear before the committee sometime in April. The member for Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge said the minister must speak against any amendments to prove he is not under the influence of the large corporations that are trying to derail the legislation. He told *The Hill Times*:

> We have yet to hear from the minister on his own bill. I'd be interested to see why that hasn't happened.

● (1615)

When asked whether he felt Mr. Kinsella is in a conflict of interest, the member said:

> I'm sure I'm going to be proven wrong, but given those who have been alleged to be affiliated with the industry minister's failed campaign have been also those who have been identified as being opposed to this legislation, I'm wondering if [federal ethics counsellor Howard] Wilson's musings wouldn't be more appropriately directed toward the most obvious example.

The Prime Minister has got away with using millions of taxpayer dollars in slick ad campaigns while child poverty in Renfrew County continues to rise thanks to the policies of the government.

The Canadian Alliance will continue to be elected in western Canada and more and more in Ontario, and the Bloc Québécois in Quebec, as long as the real concentration of power and inter-office lobbying remains in the Prime Minister's Office.

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure as well to take part in this debate on Bill C-15, An Act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act. In his presentation earlier, the parliamentary secretary pointed out that the bill is the result of work done by the Standing Committee on Industry, which reviewed the legislation from spring 2001. He is right about this.

However, he forgot to mention that the reason the Prime Minister set out an eight-point plan in the throne speech is that, after eight years of Liberal government, there were problems of perception—real or imagined—in public opinion concerning ethics within this government. This negative perception had repercussions and continues to have repercussions on all parliamentary institutions and is even proving an obstacle to Canadian democracy.

Something had to be done. I do not need to get into all the cases, such as Groupaction, Everest or Mr. Gagliano's departure for Denmark. I would like to point that even today, during oral question period, some concerns were raised by the opposition parties about the ethics of some prominent government members.

There is also this backdrop. It is not just the work done in committee that should be raised, but also the Prime Minister's desire, at the end of his reign, to perhaps leave behind a much more positive legacy—this was mentioned earlier—than Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney did at the end of his second mandate.

The Prime Minister therefore decided to something. He announced it in the throne speech to give us the impression he was leaving behind a decent legacy when it came to ethics. I still wonder, as do many members of the Bloc Quebecois and other parties, why he waited so long. Why did he wait until the end of his political career, especially his career as Prime Minister of Canada, to respond not only to the demands of the opposition members, but of all Canadians and Quebeckers.

It is unfortunate—and I think this has been mentioned by many of my colleagues in previous debates—but why wait so long to do so little? Take, for instance, the case of the ethics counsellor. When the Minister of Finance phoned the president of the CIBC about the Ottawa Senators, the ethics counsellor, who is always appointed by the Prime Minister, said there was no ethical problem.

Again recently the Minister of Finance had some pre-leadership meetings while on his pre-budget tour. Once again, the ethics counsellor appointed by the Prime Minister said there was no ethical problem.

Clearly, this matter is not addressed directly in Bill C-15. It does not go far enough. I would remind hon. members that, in the throne speech, the Prime Minister centred his plan on ethics around three points: changing the legislation on lobbyists, which we are dealing with at present; creating an independent ethics commissioner position, which the opposition parties have long been calling for; and a code of ethics for MPs.

Since we are discussing the Lobbyist Registration Act, I would remind hon. members that this bill was enacted in 1989 to establish a framework, which has since that time has governed those who lobby the Government of Canada, whether paid consultants, employees of a business, or people from an NGO.

After passage in 1989, the act was amended in 1996 and 2001. Today we have another amendment before us. The government told us when introducing the bill—if memory serves, that was on October 23, 2002—that it was intended mainly to provide a clearer formulation of what lobbying is.

● (1625)

The second intent of the bill was to strengthen the enforcement of the Lobbyists Registration Act and simplify requirements for the registration and strengthened requirements for revoking registration through a single registration process for both corporations and non-profit organizations. That is what was presented to us as being the basis of this fundamental amendment as far as ethical problems in Parliament and in government are concerned.

We have, of course, already indicated that the amendments are not substantial enough to respond to all of the concerns raised by both the general public and the opposition parties, the Bloc Quebecois in particular.

Where we particularly fault the Lobbyist Registration Act is that the concept of intensity of lobbying has been dropped from it. The amendments do not give us any idea about the intensity of the lobbying of the government or of individuals in responsible positions. For example, what amount do the lobbyists receive in fees, and what are the positions of the people they lobby?

In its desire to be positive and constructive, the Bloc Quebecois presented, in a June 2001 dissenting report on the Lobbyists Registration Act, a number of principles to retain in the event of a substantial reform of the act, which has not been the case. As I was saying, these principles were not retained by the committee and were also not retained during the legislative reform. This tells us that not only is Bill C-15 not substantially different from existing legislation, but furthermore there are no real improvements to transparency.

I want to refresh the House's memory on a number of the Bloc Quebecois' proposals and how they relate to the substance of the bill before us. At the same time, I will tell the House what the Quebec government and the National Assembly passed concerning ethics and lobbying. I am certain that the House will notice that Quebec's legislation goes much further than the federal legislation.

In its June 2001 report, the Bloc Quebecois had proposed, for example, that lobbyists disclose meetings with public servants and ministers. There are no such provisions in the bill before us. So, lobbyists are not required to disclose their meetings with public servants and ministers.

In Quebec's legislation, when lobbyists file their return, they must divulge the nature of the duties of the person with whom they communicated or intend to communicate, as well as the institution where this individual works. As you know, under the current federal legislation, only the name of the department or the government organization must be disclosed, but at no time are lobbyists obliged —in either the act or the bill—to disclose the names of public servants or ministers with whom they have met.

In our opinion, this first principle should have been included in Bill C-15 and was not only forgotten but completely rejected. As a result, this bill does not meet the expectation of transparency that, in theory, the government seems to hold dear.

The second principle we had suggested in the June 2001 report is disclosure by lobbyists of amounts for lobbying campaigns.

That brings me back to the principle I referred to earlier. We believe that it is important for the public to know how intensely the government and people in position of power are being lobbied. I think everyone would agree that there is a huge difference between a $2,000 and a $2 million lobby.

● (1630)

For the public to truly understand the scope of these lobbies, lobbyists should be required to disclose the money they spent on their lobbying activities. As I said, there is no mention of that in the bill.

The third principle mentioned in our report of June 2001 is that in-house lobbyists should disclose their professional fees and wages. Again, there is no mention of that in the bill. People in Canada and in Quebec are kept in the dark about the intensity of the lobbying activities.

Under Quebec's legislation on lobbying, consultant lobbyists must disclose all the money they receive for their lobbying activities according to various brackets, like $10,000 and less, from $10,000 to $50,000, and so on.

As you can tell, a lobbyist getting $40,000 in fees is not doing his job with the same intensity as a lobbyist fetching $400,000 in fees. Any lobbyist paid $400,000 would be considered more important by the public. If any group, association or business decides that it would be better to spend that much money to retain or even hire a lobbyist, then I think the public has a right to know.

In Quebec's legislation, without divulging the exact fees, we give the public a range of fees through reports, which allows the public to have an idea of the value both of the lobbyist and the lobbying campaign. We see that nothing is provided in Bill C-15 for this third principle.

We had also suggested that any sort of conditional payments be banned. Let us assume that I am being hired to obtain a sponsorship from the federal government and that I will receive 25% of the amount of that sponsorship. We have seen this in the previous sponsorship program. Nothing is provided in the bill about this. We think that this is deplorable. This mainly penalizes small organizations that need sponsorships.

In the last few months, major changes have been made to the sponsorship program. These organizations can now deal directly with the government, and this is desirable. However, the fact still remains that Bill C-15 should have banned this practice outright. As members will see, this ban is provided in the Quebec legislation.

The Quebec legislation says, and I quote:

> No consultant lobbyist or corporate lobbyist may carry out their activities in exchange for a fee conditional on getting a result or subject to the degree of success of their activities.

The government could have listened to our proposals, could have included in the bill the provisions that exist in Quebec and could have ensured that the public and the organizations that are dealing with the federal government are protected from certain lobbyists.

The fifth principle that we had stated in the June 2001 report dealt with the divulging by consultant lobbyists and in-house lobbyists of corresponding positions and periods of employment within the federal public service. We think that it is extremely important that the public be informed of the fact that a lobbyist has worked within the federal public service.

We should force lobbyists to divulge the position they held, if they held one in the federal public service, and for how long they did.

● (1635)

We believe the same should apply to federal political parties as well as to unpaid management positions in federal political parties.

Personally, I was the vice president of the Bloc Quebecois for a few years. Should I ever become a lobbyist here, in Ottawa—which is highly unlikely because I have no desire to be a lobbyist—I would have to disclose that I held this office, even though I was not paid for it. I would be required to inform both the registrar and the public of this fact, because it changes things.

As far as the Bloc Quebecois is concerned, we know that our high standards of ethics place us above suspicion. But it is a different story for a party that was returned to office too often during the last century, as the distinctions between political activities and administrative activities may not be all that clear in people's minds.

Whether such and such a lobbyist once held a position in a federal political party is something the public should be made aware of.

Similarly, the public should be made aware of the number of hours of volunteer work performed, in excess of 40 hours per year. Whether this volunteer work was for a party, a leadership candidate for a party, or a riding association, any significant political activity, be it volunteer or not, should indeed be included in the report submitted by lobbyists.

Of course, the mandates as elected representatives at the federal level should be included in this report, as well as the election campaigns they took part in, including unsuccessful ones, and how much they contributed to the various federal political parties and candidates.

We think it is extremely important that the public have access to all this information, to be able to assess, as I indicated at the beginning of my remarks, the intensity of the lobbying carried out by this organization or that individual. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the bill about that.

This week, an amendment was adopted against the wishes of the Prime Minister and of a number of cabinet members. It is a step in the right direction, but is definitely not enough to meet the expectations of the Bloc Quebecois, and, more importantly, the expectations of the people of Canada and Quebec.

If we compare it with Quebec's legislation, we can see how embryonic Bill C-15 really is and how it brings only very minor changes to the current legislation, as I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks.

In Quebec, consultant lobbyists are required to disclose, in their initial return, the nature and the duration of any public office they may have held in the two years preceding the date of their commitment to their client. These are extremely strict rules. As for in-house lobbyists employed by corporations and organizations, they also have to disclose the nature and the duration of any public office they may have held in the two years preceding their hiring by the corporation or organization.

That is the kind of big picture that would allow Canadians and Quebeckers to measure the intensity of lobbying activities.

As I was saying, this week, the Bloc Quebecois supported an amendment put forward by a Liberal member. However, that does not change a thing to the fundamental nature of this bill, which is too embryonic to deserve our support and the support of Canadians and Quebeckers.

Finally, in its June 2001 report, the Bloc Quebecois proposed a sixth principle, which read as follows:

> That the Code for Public Office Holders be made a statutory instrument, and that the Code be revised by a committee of the House of Commons to safeguard against abuses. For example, the post-employment cooling-off period for holders of public office, discussed by the Committee, would become subject to penalty in the event of violation.

One would have thought that the code of conduct for public office holders would be a statutory instrument that would lead to penalties. There is nothing to that effect in Bill C-15.

● (1640)

So, contrary to what the government has maintained, Bill C-15 can, symbolically, seem like a step in the right direction. However, upon closer examination of what is and is not in the bill, it is clear that this is only a facade intended to let the current Prime Minister give the impression as he finishes his reign that he wanted to do something about ethics.

For all these reasons, as at first and second readings, the Bloc Quebecois will vote against Bill C-15.

Before I conclude, I would like to expand somewhat on that thought. Of course, in talking about lobbying and ethics, we are talking about democracy and the process by which parliamentarians, especially members, work. It seems to me that it would be beneficial to spend as much time debating the framework in which lobbyists operate.

I greatly respect the work they do. This is not about criticizing them. Lobbying is not a crime, far from it. We all agree on that.

However, I think we should, as parliamentarians, spend as much, if not more time thinking about ways to better reflect the concerns of those who do not have a voice. Again, quite rightly, we are trying to provide a framework for the work of professionals who are the spokespeople for interests or interest groups or companies. They are able to be heard by parliamentarians, the government and the Prime Minister.

How can we ensure that people who do not have the opportunity to use lobbyists—because they are individuals or groups who do not have the means that companies or major lobby groups have in Canada or Quebec—have the same equal access to parliamentarians, the government and the Prime Minister? I really wonder about this.

I look at the role that banks can play and the place they occupy in the debate about mergers, for instance. I think it is great that we can hear their concerns and that they can defend their interests in committee and in all aspects of life on Parliament Hill; I think this is entirely acceptable. This is not a problem.

However, I am concerned about the clients and workers of these banks, who have little say in committees and with all parliamentarians, and are not part of the debate. I am sure that any bank CEO has a lot more influence than a petition by 10,000 consumers complaining that low cost accounts are inaccessible to most of the population.

I feel this needs to be considered. It is just as, if not more important than the discussions surrounding Bill C-15, especially since the bill does not respond to the public's expectations or our expectations and our proposals to the committee.

For these reasons, the Bloc Quebecois will vote against Bill C-15.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Windsor West, Kyoto Protocol; the hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair, Automobile industry.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with regard to Bill C-15, an act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act, it is important to note that it really ties to government and transparency and confidence of the public.

The Speech from the Throne referred to the lobbyists act, which we are dealing with today, as well as an independent ethics commissioner and a code of ethics as a package of amendments to look at in terms of Canadian democracy. I think the intent is to try to build people's confidence, to instill some virtues and values once again.

There have been a lot of episodes that have undermined public confidence. I will not go through all of them as I want to focus on the bill itself and also make some reflections, but they have very much distanced people from government. Part of the problem with Bill C-15 is it does not go far enough. It does not provide the confidence that we will have a good package of changes at the end of the day. That is really important because of the transition that is happening in Canadian democracy.

Parties are going through leadership campaigns. Some have already gone through that process and there are still more that have to go through it. There is a sense of renewal, a new stage in terms of our country as things are changing. For that reason, Bill C-15 has missed the opportunity to participate to a fuller extent on that renewal process and public confidence building.

With regard to the bill itself, there is one thing I would like to highlight for the public, and it is important to do so from my perspective of being new to the Hill. It is the actual culture and the involvement of lobbyists on a day to day basis, their position and role and the influence that is sought out. It is not always for ill intentions. Most times it is to make sure they get their point across, that members have access to information, are able to reach people with contacts, and more important, are able to do their work in a comprehensive way.

That also lends itself to a situation where people become vulnerable or situations develop where bad judgments happen. That undermines our democracy.

I can say that since being here, people who would never have wanted to talk to me before suddenly want access to me and my office to espouse their positions. There are some question marks in that process.

Often I have been pleasantly surprised about the way people have approached the issues. It has been very beneficial, even when I do not agree with their position. I have been willing to meet with individuals who have been paid on behalf of an organization, a group or a company to meet with me, and other people who have done it on a voluntary basis, to get their issue to the forefront.

At the same time, without set rules of conduct and penalties, and a significant focus on the whole accountability process, it leads to positions that become dangerously subject to interpretations and situations that influence Parliament. Even members of the government have indicated through public statements that lobbying, especially by people in the corporate sector, has taken place in these halls. They make sure there are changes or at least try to have an influence on the legislation that affects so many Canadians. That is a concern.

I want to outline the actual process and some of the categories of lobbyists. The act defines lobbyists as individuals paid to make representations with the goal of influencing federal public office holders. Three different types of lobbyists are distinguished.

● (1645)

The first is a consultant lobbyist, an individual who lobbies on behalf of a client. That is an individual who is paid outright. The individual may contact members of Parliament on behalf of several organizations and for specific situations. One of the problems with this bill is that individuals in the public service who serve the citizens of our country and have contact with them to advance their positions, whether they be for a corporate interest or other interests in terms of government legislation and resources.

The second is an in-house lobbyist who is an employee of a corporation whose job involves spending a significant amount, and 20% or more is the definition, of his or her time lobbying for the employer. That is where we get some of the cross-distinction of a person's responsibilities. An individual might be going to several different organizations and companies on their behalf.

The third is an in-house lobbyist who is an employee of an organization. The organization must register and the total lobbying duties of all employees taken together constitute a significant part, 20% or more, of the duties of all employees. Once again it is a definition, but the fact is that the organization is developing a strategy, some type of system to have influence on the public system.

The legislation is aimed only at disclosing lobbying efforts. It does not attempt to regulate lobbyists or the manner in which lobbying is conducted. That is one of the difficulties with the legislation, the manner in which the lobbying is being conducted. If there were particular elements that could be prescribed in terms of those lobbying efforts, it might make it easier and once again more transparent for Canadians to understand the context in which lobbying is done.

There are many situations that lobbyists will use, for example, sporting events, dinners and general contacts with an MP's office. They make phone calls and write letters. All those different things come into the context of lobbying. There have also been trips involved. It gets into problematic issues in respect of transparency.

Once we develop the actual game plan or the stream in which the lobbying takes place, there will be more confidence in the actual system here and how it is influenced in terms of the members and the bureaucracy or the public servants who are serving Canadians.

With respect to registration, the bill requires the lobbyist to submit prescribed information and notify the registrar of any changes to information previously submitted, including termination of lobbying activity. The onus of providing the information will fall on that individual person.

Responsibility for administration of the information, disclosure, provisions of the act and the maintenance of the public registry is assigned to the registrar of lobbyists, a position designated by the Registrar General of Canada, being the Minister of Industry. The registrar heads the lobbyists registration branch. The registrar has no powers to investigate under the act. Matters requiring investigation are turned over to the RCMP.

That concerns me. It is good that eventually some files that are not appropriate would be handed over to the RCMP for investigation. We have seen that Groupaction and several other files certainly have not instilled public confidence, but we wonder how much could actually be investigated by the RCMP with regard to its resources. That gives me some concern. If there is not some provision or empowerment in the legislation, there might be some prescreening. There might also be the situation where the registration branch would have an idea of past behaviour, symptoms of some pattern of behaviour. That would certainly be an improvement to the situation.

Simply turning the files over to the RCMP concerns me because there will not be the prioritization which is important with regard to the work that needs to be done. We do not want the RCMP having to select issues or put other issues on a lower priority simply because it does not have the background, the knowledge or the wherewithal, the means and resources, to prioritize those issues. That is a concern. The creation of a data bank, so to speak, of the ongoing issues and also of the individuals and the organizations, would be a benefit in the long run.

Another weakness is the lobbyists code of conduct. The act does not prescribe penalties for the breach of the code, nor does it specify how Parliament is to respond to a reported breach of the code. I find that problematic because once again the transparency is not there. It certainly will not lead to public confidence if we do not know where to proceed at that moment in time. That will be a big issue with our constituents especially with respect to the transparency of things.

● (1650)

What is helpful is that the ethics counsellor, after a breach or something has happened and an investigation, is going to turn the report back to Parliament. We have seen what has happened to several reports here. Once again this does not lead to the changes in the situation that I think we need to have happen.

With regard to improving the act, there are several things that were suggested. I was part of the process on the registration, coming into it as it was partly done in terms of committee work. There are certain suggestions that I think would be important and certainly would help out with regard to the transparency.

One that has been suggested by Democracy Watch is that lobbyists should be required to disclose how much money they spend on lobbying campaigns and their past work with candidates, political parties and governments. I think this is something that should be there and accountable in the system.

We have the data management capabilities to keep track of that. Once again, once we start to create that infrastructure as a reporting system we are going to be able to maintain it quite effectively. We will also see whether or not there are connections. Once again, connections are about transparency, which is really important. That involves the candidates, the political parties and the governments, because they are related in many aspects. The Canadian public knows there are going to be connections, especially if there is a transition of governments. Once again, there is nothing wrong with being transparent and up front about that, because people then can answer questions.

The second suggestion is that lobbyists should be prohibited from working in senior campaign positions for any party, politician or candidate and from working for the government or having business ties to anyone who works for the government. I think that is important, especially with this government where there is consolidation and centrification of power in the cabinet, which is making those decisions. It certainly is very important to make sure that people working on behalf of those individuals are doing it for sincere interest and understand that their work and commitment to the actual political process do not necessarily translate into rewards.

Unfortunately, we have seen significant examples of that not being the case, with some tremendous advantages that have happened with regard to the actual positioning out by being part of something, creating a candidate, creating a minister, or whatever it might be at the end of the day, as related to themselves.

A third suggestion is that the prohibition on lobbying the government for ex-ministers and ex-senior public officials should be increased to five years. I actually discussed this a little in committee work. Right now we have individuals who virtually can work through the public service or who can actually have represented people in Parliament and then very quickly take over in terms of a lobbying position. They literally use their vacation time, so to speak, to move from one job to the next.

I think it is important to note that when public servants and officials are working on behalf of constituents, their knowledge and information should not necessarily be transferable to advance other causes that might be against the will of individuals or competing business interests that are going to be looking at public policy and government expenditures and, more important, the movement of our democracy. It is something that could be changed with regard to the five years; it would create some type of a distancing between the individual files that they worked on and what they are actually going to be lobbying for. I know of specific situations where this has certainly created problems.

We have difficulty supporting the bill because there is going to be a lack of transparency at the end of the day with regard to instilling public confidence. We would like to believe that there would be some elements that would improve the situation. There actually are. There are some modest improvements and we believe they are going to be important, but they are not enough. This is an incredible opportunity. It is a historic change in time that we have right now with regard to a transition of leadership in the country. At the same time we are faced with all these challenges. The bill as it stands is not going to meet the test of improving public confidence in the institutions here. For those reasons, we cannot support the bill.

● (1655)

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1700)

[*Translation*]

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier today, the recorded division is deferred until Monday, March 17, 2003, at the end of government orders.

Mr. Jacques Saada: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I ask that you seek the consent of the House to defer the division scheduled for Monday, March 17, at the end of government orders, until March 18, at the end of government orders.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from February 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, an act to amend the Criminal Code (protection of children and other vulnerable persons) and the Canada Evidence Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am not pleased to speak on the bill because I wish that we did not have to. I wish that the Liberals would have long ago taken some serious action toward the protection of children. They have not done so. They have been dilly-dallying.

I cannot believe that instead decisive action what we get from the government is an endless line of excuse making as to why it cannot do this and why it cannot do that. It keeps going on and on without ever coming to an end. I think that is frankly rather deplorable. I do not think it is justifiable. I think that members on the government side should hang their heads in shame. To think that they cannot solve a problem such as this is just really incredible.

I have to say that when it comes to issues of protecting our children, it is very important that we do it right. We have in our country right now a charter, a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and we defend that charter. It has a lot of good things in it.

Having been raised in a family that escaped from a country where there was very little personal freedom, very little opportunity for personal expression, and where there was no opportunity for political dissent, I very much value the ability to be in a country where there is freedom of speech. We must remember that the first reason for freedom of speech was the freedom to actually criticize the king. It used to be that if people criticized the king they got their heads clubbed off.

Interestingly, we have the symbol of that club as the symbol of authority, even in the House. If we look at the table over there, we see the mace, and we dare not touch it because it shows the symbol of the king, of the authority. We of course all respect that very seriously. We will not challenge that authority. It is right that there be authority of the government.

However, those freedoms and the freedom of expression do have limitations. It is absolutely certain that there are occasions where that freedom is to be abridged, and it is abridged.

● (1705)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. We were just checking *Hansard* and we discovered that the hon. member has already spoken, both on Bill C-20 and on the amendment. Therefore I am going to call debate again.

The hon. member for Yellowhead.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is certainly a privilege and a pleasure to be able to stand on behalf of my constituents and represent them with regard to this legislation.

It is very important to understand that we live in a country for which we fought long and hard to gain, and to regain, the freedoms we all enjoy. So often we take those freedoms for granted, but when we really look at the freedoms we have, we see that they come with the need to be responsible.

So when we look at legislation, or look at a country that has worked and fought hard to be able to obtain the freedoms that we enjoy, we see that the freedom to be able to vote is one of them. I would use that as an example of one of our freedoms that we have even abused somewhat in the sense that we do not take advantage of it. In the last election, 40% of the people in this country even refused to take it seriously enough to turn out at the polls, to give their voices for freedom, to express who they would like to represent them in making the laws of the country. We sense that perhaps people have taken for granted freedoms that they have.

It is important that we discern the freedoms we have and see that they are there not only to be appreciated. In this country, we are a democracy. We have a government of the people which is there in the best interests of the country and in the best interests of the individuals it serves. We should not take that for granted. We should also understand and discern the responsibility that comes with freedom. I say responsibility because with freedom comes the opportunity not only to take that freedom for granted but to abuse that freedom.

In so many cases, such as the Sharpe case, we see what is supposedly freedom taken to an extreme. In every country, there are the vulnerable. There are those who cannot protect themselves and have to in some ways be protected. It is important that as a society we say collectively that our freedoms perhaps need to be pulled in somewhat in cases where we need to protect those who are very vulnerable. It is very important to do that and very important to bring forward legislation, debate it in the House and make rules and laws that put some limits on those freedoms.

That is really the kind of magic of where we are right now, even if we look at the unrest around the world and at some of the other legislation we brought into this place in the last year. The golden balance between the two becomes this: Do we allow all of our freedoms or do we become paralyzed because of terrorist attacks? Do we bring in laws that stifle our freedoms and destroy even what we are fighting for? Therein is a paradigm or a dilemma that we have as a nation. We come into this building and we make laws for the country that we hope will find the golden balance between the two.

It is important to understand first that we must have some responsibility when we are given those freedoms. What I grew up with, and what my father taught me at a very early age, was that what we abused we would lose. For us it was very easy; I grew up in a larger family with four brothers and a sister and for us it was very simple. The rules were very limited. In fact, there were no problems or arguments about when we teenagers would go out in the evenings and maybe come in beyond the time that was expected. I cannot ever remember curfew, but I remember very vividly the one rule: What we abused we would lose. That rule was enforced and there was very little abuse.

● (1710)

We live in a country where our laws and our courts have become quite soft on some of the issues. They have become quite soft particularly when it comes to sex offenders and those who break the rules. We lose the edge, the discipline and the golden balance. As a society, when we lose that golden balance, we are in danger of falling into a very dangerous situation. We have those that are the most vulnerable in our society who cannot protect themselves and they become abused.

That is where we come in. As lawmakers we have to be in the position where we make the best laws in the best interests of the people we serve.

I am only one voice of 301. I serve the constituency of Yellowhead which is about 100,000 people. There are all kinds of views and opinions on every issue by the people of Yellowhead. For me to come to this place, I have to discern the majority of those people's views.

It is very important that I am not just a Canadian Alliance member of Parliament for those 100,000. The people on the other side of the House are not just Liberals members for the constituents they represent. We have to understand that in this place we are the voice of the full 100,000 who make up all different views. We have to respect each and every one of those. When we respect one another's views we truly can make laws that are in the best interests of them collectively.

So often in this place, as I have seen over the last two years, we forget that. It becomes something that we take for granted. This is similar to what I said earlier about voting, Many people forget the opportunity and take for granted the opportunity to come and vote for representatives in this place.

When it comes to making laws that are very important with regard to this legislation, we have to be sure we protect the most vulnerable in our society. Although we respect the freedoms that we enjoy, with that comes a tremendous amount of responsibility.

Like the rule I grew up with, what we abuse, we lose, we should also ensure that same principle happens with regard to the laws of this land and our courts would need to respect that.

I would like to move an amendment at this time, that the amendment be amended by adding: "and that the committee report back its recommendations to the House no later than December 3, 2003".

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I will rule on this is a few minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Saada: Madam Speaker, unless I am mistaken, I do not think that there is an amendment to this bill currently before the House. So, I do not see how we can consider an amendment to an amendment when there is no amendment to start with.

● (1715)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): We are not talking about an amendment to an amendment, but about an amendment to the main motion. We have already voted on the amendment.

I would like, if I may, to get back to the House on this issue, because I have not reached a decision yet.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, we are dealing with Bill C-20 and—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I am told that you also spoke on the main motion. I have not ruled on the amendment. Therefore, you cannot have the floor. The only members who can have the floor are those who did not speak on the main motion until I have ruled on the amendment.

The hon. member for Edmonton Southwest on the main motion.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, if you check the record, you will see that I have not yet had the opportunity to speak to Bill C-20.

As my colleague from Yellowhead pointed out, this is one of the most important bills that we will deal with in this Parliament because it deals with one of the most fundamental issues of any state or society, which is the protection of children.

We know that the most fundamental purpose of any state, according to any political philosopher throughout history, is the protection of it citizens. The protection of citizens and their property is the foundation of civilization and the first purpose of any state. We can take that further. The protection of the most vulnerable citizens of society is even more important.

I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-20, which is an act to amend the criminal code, protection of children and other vulnerable persons and the Canada Evidence Act.

For the record, I would like to go through exactly what the bill would do. To be fair, we in the opposition should recognize that there are some good intentions behind the bill in trying to address the protection of children. However, we obviously feel that the bill does not go far enough in truly addressing those needs. Therefore, I would like to describe what the bill does.

The bill amends the Criminal Code to, first, amend the child pornography provisions with respect to the type of written material that constitutes child pornography and child pornography defences. This is an issue that has certainly risen to the public's attention in accordance with many of the recent court cases in which people feel that people are using defences that should not be used in the possession of child pornography. On this side of the House, we feel that even the possession of child pornography is exploitation of children and that should not be allowed to happen.

Second, the bill amends the Criminal Code to add a new category to the offence of sexual exploitation of young persons and makes additional amendments to further protect children from sexual exploitation.

Third, the bill increases the maximum penalty for child sexual offences, for failing to provide the necessaries of life and for abandoning a child.

Fourth, it makes child abuse an aggregating factor for the purpose of sentencing.

Fifth, it amends and clarifies the applicable tests and criteria that need to be met for the use of testimonial aids, for excluding the public, for imposing a publication ban, for using video recorded evidence for appointing council or for a self-represented accused to conduct cross examination of certain witnesses.

Finally, it creates an offence of voyeurism and the distribution of voyeuristic materials.

We in the Canadian Alliance have a few main problems with the bill. The legislation is complex and needs to be studied in detail, which I am sure members will do at committee.

We have two main concerns. First, there is no substantial difference between the existing defence of child pornography which, for the record, is artistic merit, educational, scientific or medical purpose and public good. What the legislation does is reduce it to the single broad defence of public good. In our view, this is not sufficient. The previous defence of the community standards test was not sufficient and was in fact rendered ineffective by the Supreme Court in the 1992 Butler case . We think this is the most serious flaw in the legislation because it is not addressed.

The community standards test, just like the public good defence, was concerned primarily with the risk of harm to individuals in society. There is no positive benefit in recycling laws that have already been discredited by the courts.

That raises the important relationship between Parliament, where we make laws, pass laws, debate and amend them and the judiciary, which interprets the law. Therefore, when the judiciary has already rendered a decision on one law and found it to be ineffective, we in Parliament should take that as counsel that we ought not to then use the same type of defence.

● (1720)

The courts in this case have made a decision. One can agree or disagree with that decision, but we certainly have to respect it and with this legislation obviously move beyond that defence to be truly fulfilling the purpose of protecting children.

The second concern I want to raise is this. It is clear that the artistic merit defence, while it may have been eliminated on paper or may be missing on paper, may still apply in practice. We obviously have some serious concerns with people using that defence for the possession of child pornography. In our view the minister has simply renamed and repackaged the artistic merit defence.

Additionally, I want to raise a point about the age of sexual consent because the bill does not raise the age of consent for sexual activity between children and adults, and it is important to be specific. The bill creates a category of sexual exploitation with the intended aim of protection of children between the ages of 14 and 18, but it does not raise the age of consent for sexual activity between children and adults. On this point, I do not understand the government's hesitancy in introducing age of sexual consent between children and adults and moving it up to 16. I do not understand the opposition to this.

We have raised this during question period many times. I see the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice is here. Some of the defences I do not understand, such as the concern about how it would impact cultural considerations in different cultural communities and that we would have to take this into account. I was astounded and did not understand that response to that series of answers by the justice minister and others.

In conclusion the bill does not go far enough, particularly with regard to the artistic merit defence in the possession of child pornography and the age of sexual consent. We need to go much further if we are to fulfill the basic responsibility of the state to protect its citizens, particularly the most vulnerable, our children.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The Chair is prepared to rule on the amendment that was moved by the hon. member for Yellowhead. The fact is that it was worded as an amendment, “be amended”. A subamendment cannot be applied to an amendment that has already been negated by the House.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-20 because I am pleased to be recorded as standing up for the young people in this country. They are wonderful, naive, innocent and darling young people. They are cherished, not all the time, but most of the time our children are that way. We go through the terrible two's and stuff like that, but apart from that we want to protect our children because they are innocent and vulnerable.

There are perverts out there who take advantage of our young people in the most despicable ways. They do despicable acts against our children. They make videos, photographs, and other material so they can continue in their warped, senseless mind to derive some kind of enjoyment from what they perpetrate on these innocent young people. It is shocking. I have never seen any of that stuff myself. I have only heard that it exists. I cannot imagine how bad that stuff is, and how shocking and revolting it must be.

One would think that in a democratic society that cherishes the values and the human rights of our people, and the fact that we have a charter of human rights which guarantees our freedoms and protects us, there would not be a debate in the House about protecting our children. My colleague from Wild Rose has worked on this issue for many years. He has been trying to get the government to move the agenda forward. This has been worse than pulling teeth for my friend from Wild Rose. The government then comes along with a little bill that, when analyzed by our critic, is neutral on the family impact assessment. It does not move the ball forward and it does not move it back; it is neutral. That is shocking.

We depend upon the courts to protect society. There was a case in Vancouver a couple of years ago where the pervert who produced child pornography was told by the court that because it was artistic merit it was okay for him to possess it.

Photographs, videos and all that stuff was created by some little kid's pain. It was created to give some guy with a warped mind some kind of titillating enjoyment. I cannot understand why we must keep asking to shut this down. We should just shut it down. It is fairly clear to me that if there is some kind of offence against a child, be it a photograph or a video depicting a child in some kind of demeaning situation, be it violent or brutal or some kind of sexual exploitation, that is wrong and illegal. The individual involved should be prosecuted and sent away for a long time. It seems fairly straightforward.

As responsible adults we have been charged with writing the laws for this country. Why do we have this big problem with protecting our children? The perpetrators know it is wrong. We know it is wrong and the courts know it is wrong. Somehow or another the courts did get it wrong because they said this guy's rights were violated because he was being prosecuted for owning this stuff. How many kids were violated in order for him to produce that stuff? It was artistic merit so therefore he was entitled to keep it.

We have allowed this society to get pretty sick. Maybe society is getting a bit too perverted and tolerant of the anything goes lifestyle where any kind of sexual lifestyle is tolerated. Perhaps we are even going to give it the blessing of some kind of legal status. If we end up with same sex unions and other kinds of unions, the next thing we know it would be polygamy and people would say it is their right to have two wives, five wives or ten wives.

● (1725)

If it is okay for people of the same sex to have some kind of legal union, what is wrong with people saying that they would like to have two or three wives? They would say it is their right to have that too. The court would say yes, and then we would have turned full circle. We would be right back to exploitation and domination of women which I had thought we had left behind.

I cannot understand why the government cannot just say if it involves kids, it is pornography. It is wrong and illegal, and that is it. There is no defence. It is that simple. We must protect our kids and I hope the government gets the message.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ) moved:

> That, in the opinion of the House, the government should take the necessary steps to ratify the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today to Motion M-239, which asks that the federal government take the necessary steps, as soon as possible, to ratify the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

On January 20, 2000, the final text of the Cartagena protocol on the prevention of biotechnological risks related to the Convention on Biological Diversity was agreed to during an extraordinary conference of the parties to the convention.

The objective of the Cartagena protocol is to protect the environment and to ensure the safe transfer, handling and use of living genetically modified organisms resulting from biotechnology, according to the precautionary approach.

Moreover, the protocol would allow countries to implement rules and procedures holding developers accountable for the costs and responsibilities of potential damage to health and the environment.

Finally, it would establish controls, as well as advanced agreement procedures on international exchanges of GMOs.

The adoption of the final text took more than four years of difficult negotiations and is a major move toward protecting global biodiversity. So far, 44 countries have ratified the Cartagena protocol; the number of countries necessary for the agreement to take effect is 50.

We must condemn Canada's attitude throughout these negotiations. The Canadian organization for civil societies said, and I quote:

> As the main speaker for the Miami Group, which includes six member countries, Canada has given the impression that it valued its perceived economic interests in the export of genetically modified agricultural products more than the protection of world biodiversity and public health. This attitude significantly tarnished Canada's reputation among convention signatories and, more generally, among members of the United Nations Environment Program.

So far, the main producers, namely those of the Miami Group, have preferred to react with a surprising move forward. So, in the absence of rigorous biosafety requirements, over the past six years, they have multiplied by 30 the areas set aside for transgenic crops, from 1.7 million hectares in 1996, to 52.6 million in 2001. In 2000, already close to 16% of the world's cultivated areas were transgenic, with 30 million hectares in the United States, nine million in Argentina and three million in Canada.

Moreover, since these first generation GMOs are primarily made up of soybean, with 58%, corn, with 23% and canola, with 6%, they were introduced as oil, lecithin or starch in over 60% of North America's industrial foods, this unbeknownst to consumers, who are becoming increasingly suspicious.

I should also mention that genetically modified wheat will soon be introduced, even though its development and marketing have taken longer than those of the other major crops, namely corn, canola or soybean.

While many types of transgenic corn are currently being developed, it is the Monsanto wheat, called spring wheat, which could be the first one to be marketed. Incidentally, Monsanto recently applied to Agriculture Canada for approval.

There is already a major movement opposing the introduction of transgenic wheat, including spring wheat. That movement includes, among others, a number of stakeholders who are known for their moderate views.

● (1735)

Many farmers are strongly opposed, furthermore, to the introduction of Roundup Ready wheat. They fear having serious problems with weed control despite the claim that Roundup Ready wheat will make weed control easier. Consumer and environmental advocacy groups are worried about potential damage to health and the environment.

Implementation of the Cartagena protocol would also help connect the distribution of genetically modified organisms or living modified organisms to the precautionary principle in order to allow countries to ban GMO imports, if they believe that there are health and environmental risks.

Many countries including Croatia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Korea have been threatened by the United States with trade sanctions from the World Trade Organization for having included the precautionary approach in their GMO import legislation.

More recently, the United States asked for Canada's support in a future challenge of the World Trade Organization following the European Union's banning of GMO imports. We believe that, in considering the possibility of teaming up with the United States, the federal government is working against the interests of farmers and consumers in Quebec and Canada.

What the Americans are trying to do is block implementation of the Cartagena protocol, which is not under the auspices of the World Trade Organization and which the United States never needed. The United States tried to bypass negotiations on biosafety and to get trade in GMO products to go through the World Trade Organization.

Attempts by both the United States and the Miami Group failed. Implementation of the Cartagena protocol would prevent threats of WTO challenges by certain countries against others wishing to ban GMO imports based on the precautionary principle.

On November 2, 2000, the Quebec ministers of the environment revenue, and the national capital region, as well as its international relations minister, Louise Beaudoin, announced the Quebec government's decision to support Canada's signing of the Cartagena protocol on biosafety.

Both ministers also announced that work has started in order to provide Quebec with a strategy for enforcing this protocol. Noting Quebec's commitment to implement the Cartagena protocol quickly, the minister at the time, Mr. Bégin, said: “Today the Government of Quebec is the first government in Canada to formally indicate its support for signing the protocol, and implement a concrete mechanism for developing a government strategy to prevent biotechnological risks”.

Minister Beaudoin said that “the Government of Quebec intends to implement the protocol in Quebec, in addition to playing a prominent role in the final stages of this important international agreement that sets out rules governing the circulation, manipulation and use of genetically modified organisms”.

Moreover, Quebec's Department of the Environment has been given responsibility for coordinating the work of the Interdepartmental Committee on Biodiversity.

Today, with strong support from the Réseau québécois contre les OGM and Greenpeace, I am calling on Canada to ratify the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, as proposed in the motion which I am sponsoring and which is being debated today in the House.

● (1740)

By ratifying the protocol, the federal government will acquire an effective legal tool for regulating the manipulation of living organisms modified in Canada and guaranteeing the accountability of developers for possible harm caused to health and the environment.

There is currently no rigorous biosafety legislation in Canada, while genetically modified crops cover an area of 3 million hectares. It is extremely difficult to guarantee full segregation of GM crops that can contaminate neighbouring crops at any time during transportation, handling or cross pollination.

Implementation of the Cartagena protocol will help decrease the risks of contamination caused by GM crops.

Motion M-239 being debated today is supported by Greenpeace, as I indicated, and the Réseau québécois contre les OGM, which is a network of roughly twenty organizations. Eric Darier, the network's spokesperson, said this morning:

> —that the federal government must not be as hesitant about ratifying the Cartagena protocol as it was with the Kyoto protocol.

He is right.

Mr. Darier added:

> —that the Prime Minister will add ratification of the Kyoto protocol on biosafety to his political legacy. It is important to put an end to the dissemination of GMOs in Canada. In the meantime, the government could start by imposing mandatory labelling of GMO containing foods, as 90% of Canadians are demanding.

In this connection, I would like to remind hon. members that, on October 18, 1999, my colleague, the hon. Bloc Quebecois member for Louis-Hébert, Hélène Alarie, got a parliamentary motion adopted calling upon the government to make the labelling of genetically modified foods mandatory and to carry out indepth studies on their long term effect on health and the environment. This was a first in the Canadian Parliament and opened up a debate among MPs on this issue so vital to environmental health.

A few years later, with his Bill C-287, the hon. member for Davenport hearkened back to the position of the Bloc Quebecois. We are in favour of mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods so that the consumer can have freedom of choice. As well, inspection and in depth testing to assess the long term effects of GMOs on human health and the environment are necessary. Finally, there needs to be strict legislation on the safe use of GMOs and an independent structure of public information and education.

On January 20, 2000, the Minister of the Environment made the following statement:

> We believe that a strong Biosafety Protocol under the Biodiversity Convention is in the interests of all nations.

He added:

> Canada wants a system that allows every country to feel secure as these technologies develop. All nations should be able and encouraged to make their own decisions regarding the importation of living modified organisms or LMOs with the help of a strong protocol.

That is what the Minister of Environment Canada had to say on January 20, 2000.

I will close by making it clear that the government has a unique opportunity today to honour the commitments it made in January 2000 on the occasion of the signing of the Cartagena protocol. It has a unique opportunity to honour its commitments by supporting my Motion M-239, which calls upon the government to ratify the Cartagena protocol on biosafety.

● (1745)

[*English*]

Mr. Alan Tonks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion and I thank the hon. member for putting the motion forward.

The government is definitely supporting the Cartagena protocol on biosafety, its objective of protecting biodiversity, and its value to the global community. The protocol focuses on transboundary movement of living modifying organisms, or LMOs.

As evidence of our support, Canada signed the protocol in April 2001. The protocol is not yet in force. However, it has been signed by 110 countries and ratified by 43. It will enter into force 90 days after 50 countries have ratified it, probably some time in 2003.

Biotechnology holds great promise for the well-being of man, but as with any new technology there are risks to be managed, so it is critical to maintain public confidence in our regulatory system and in the benefits that these technologies, including biotechnology, bring to Canadians.

Increasingly we see a world concerned with global scale effects on the environment. One such example is the degradation of our biodiversity and the resultant negative impact on the social, cultural and economic fabric of communities, just the opposite direction of where we should be going.

Canada played a major role in the development and negotiation of this protocol. Canada did so by finding pragmatic solutions to problems and by bridging the gaps between the different points of view brought to the table.

Our objective was to develop a protocol that could be supported by Canadians. This protocol is a win-win result for both the environment and the sustainable use of this transformative technology. The core of the protocol is advanced informed agreement prior to importation for intentional introduction of LMOs into the environment, for example, spraying or planting. The protocol ensures that an importing country has the information and the capacity necessary to reach an informed decision on the LMO prior to importation.

Developing countries showed us that grains and oilseeds imported for food, feed or processing often wind up being planted by their farmers. Therefore the protocol calls for documentation on these products.

The protocol must be implemented by the countries that ratify it in their domestic legislation and regulations. Canada already has a world class biotechnology regulatory system to protect our environment. We will continue to use our current regulatory regime to make decisions to protect our environment and biodiversity.

We already do more than the protocol calls for and we are continuously improving our regulatory system. We do so by acting on the advice of expert bodies such as the Royal Society of Canada and the Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee. Other countries look with envy to the system we have put in place. Our biodiversity is already protected. We would, however, have to put in place regulations to implement our obligations with respect to our exports, such as for advanced informed agreement and documentation.

Since the protocol was adopted in January 2000, Canada has worked very hard to ensure that it will be both workable and effective in meeting its objective of protecting biodiversity. However we must ensure, and I am sure the member would agree, that this does not come at the cost of an unjustified impact on trade. Canada has participated actively and in many instances played a leading role in the many meetings to prepare for the entry into force.

● (1750)

In 2001 Canada co-hosted with Cuba the formative workshop on capacity building. At this workshop, developing countries, donor countries and international development assistance agencies such as the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility and the United Nations agencies all developed an action plan to enable developing countries to implement their biosafety frameworks and the protocol.

Canada has supported the implementation of the protocol by developing countries through our contributions to the Global Environment Facility and the leading multilateral fund for global environmental issues. The third replenishment of the Global Environment Facility concluded in August 2002 with the largest ever replenishment in its history. Canada has agreed to provide nearly $180 million Canadian over four years to the Global Environment Facility, a substantial increase from our last contribution, which was $122 million over four years. We are doing our share.

The biosafety clearing house and the international information exchange mechanism are at the core of the protocol. Canada has been very active in the development of the clearing house and we are not waiting for the ratification to move ahead on this important element. We are in the process of making operational the Canadian part of the biosafety clearing house. Documentation to accompany transboundary movements, that is, trade of commodity LMOs intended for food or feed or processing, has been the most difficult aspect of this protocol.

Canada has taken the lead in finding an approach that is acceptable to all stakeholders. Canada proposed and hosted jointly with France a series of expert meetings on documentation. At these meetings, experts from several countries provided for consideration their best advice on how the documentation provisions should be implemented.

Both the Canadian government and the Canadian industry agreed with this advice. This government promised that we would ask Canadians for their views before we reached a decision on the next steps. Throughout the month of September, the government held public consultations in six cities across Canada. Over 300 organizations representing industry, academia, public advocacy groups, aboriginal organizations and the public were invited to participate. In addition, we established an open Internet-based website and asked the public to provide us with their views on the question of ratification as well as on the draft regulations required to put the protocol into effect upon ratification.

We also consulted with provincial and territorial governments to obtain their views. We have heard a range of views from those who participated in these consultations. Unfortunately, despite the hard work since adoption of the protocol, there still remain legitimate concerns on some issues. The protocol is not a finished piece. There is a need for greater certainty on some of the key issues that could affect what Canadians have to do once the protocol enters into force.

Some issues will be considered for a decision in the immediate future at the first meeting of the parties to the protocol, which will be held after the protocol enters into force, probably in the spring of 2004. We are continuing to work on these issues with a view to providing the level of clarity that we need and that the stakeholders have demanded.

The government is proceeding with an action plan to establish support for Canadian positions and to influence prospective parties to reach decisions on implementing the protocol in a manner that attains its objective but is both pragmatic and effective.

Other issues of concern relating to implementation of the protocol are longer term and will only be resolved over the next several years through the ongoing intergovernmental process. The government will consider adoption and ratification of decisions on these issues at the appropriate time.

Canada, quite correctly, is viewed as a society that cares about protection of biodiversity and that applies reason to our decisions. On reaching a decision on ratification, and for the reasons that I have just given, the government is taking the appropriate amount of time to reach the right decision in collaboration with the best advice that it can get from all stakeholders.

● (1755)

We are still consulting with Canadians to develop solutions to address their concerns. We continue to work with the international community and with our major trading partners to achieve a higher degree of clarity on the issues on which we still face uncertainty and which could have a significant effect.

I hope that this has met some of the concerns that the member has raised and that he is now fully aware that we are—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The hon. member for Yellowhead.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak on this important motion as the health critic for the Canadian Alliance. When we look at this from a health perspective, we must say that we have to protect our citizens as much as we possibly can. As for the whole area of what has happened in biodiversity and with the genetically modified foods, we look at it with some degree of skepticism because we are not 100% sure that all that is out there is safe. Yet on the other side of it, we have to take a due diligence look and find out for sure whether that is in fact the truth or if that is just a phobia that we sort of build upon.

When we look at this protocol we have to look at all the factors. Is it a safety issue? Is it a health issue? Does it have economic impacts? Could it be used as a weapon against us as far as trade barriers are concerned? All of these have to be looked at.

I would like to look at those three issues in particular, individually, to try to discern whether we should carry on and ratify a protocol that we have initiated, started and signed. If we are going to ratify, I think it is very important to first understand the repercussions it might have on the agriculture industry in Canada, which is one of the number one drivers of our economies from coast to coast to coast but is going through a very difficult time. In 2001, agrifood exports from this country were worth $26.5 billion. That is not a small number. That is a significant number. It is a significant part of the driver of our economy. In fact, we are the third largest agrifood exporter behind the United States and the European Union, so we have to discern how this protocol will affect us.

It is interesting to hear my colleagues across the way say that they consulted with a number of groups from across the country. I know that Canada's Agri-Food Chain, an umbrella organization representing numerous Canadian agriculture organizations, has issued a letter to the Minister of Agriculture outlining several concerns with the protocol. I am hoping their plight and their recommendations are listened to, because it is very important that we not stomp, let us say, on our agriculture community any more than we as a country probably have already. It is very important that we support this industry because it is very fragile, particularly at this time.

I come from an area in western Canada where we went through one of the most significant droughts in history. We are dealing with the foreign subsidies that are plaguing our ability to compete on an international stage with our exports as it is. We have seen the government really just turn its back on agriculture in so many ways. That is certainly the feeling of the people in my riding and in western Canada, and I am sure it is the same in agricultural communities across the country.

We had a drought last year that was so significant and so severe and we saw a government that really just turned a blind eye and allowed the agriculture industry itself to ship hay west so we would be able to deal with the significant drought. Yet with a massive surplus, we hoped we would see in the budget more injections of cash into the whole area of agriculture to support an industry that is going through its most difficult time in history. Yet when we look at this budget we see that there is actually a cut of a half billion dollars this year compared to years past. Half a billion dollars less: It is unbelievable.

Let us look at how it might affect us and affect the industry internationally. Our largest trading partner, the United States, has not signed on to the Cartagena protocol, nor have Australia or Argentina, all significant competitors or trading partners of Canada when it comes to the whole area of agriculture. If we are going to move ahead and actually ratify something, we surely have to look at the repercussions it will have.

● (1800)

Is economics the only thing that should drive our decision? Absolutely not. We absolutely have to look at whether this is a health risk, whether genetically modified foods are a health risk, even as far as growing them within our own boundaries is concerned. In fact, many members were very concerned about this, such that last year about this time the health committee received a letter written by three different ministers who suggested that the health committee take a look at genetically modified foods to see whether they are truly safe and whether we should be labelling them or what we should be doing with regard to easing the feeling in the general population about whether this was a safety issue or not.

That is actually what happened. We did a very extensive study. Many witnesses came forward to describe to the committee exactly what they felt were the risk factors in genetically modified foods. Witness after witness came forward and said that there is not a genetically modified food now on our tables in Canada that is any kind of a health risk whatsoever.

Looking ahead at some of the things that could potentially be modified, I think we have to walk very carefully and be very prudent about due diligence in allowing those things to come on the market without affecting the health and safety of Canadians, absolutely. This is taking place at the present time and it is very important that we continue to do that.

However, when it comes to the economic driver that agriculture is to our economy and how this protocol might affect that, we certainly have to look at whether it is something that we would want to sign.

When it comes to these genetically modified foods that the committee looked at, it was interesting, because at about the same time another piece of legislation was dropped in the committee's lap: the pesticides review bill. It was the first time since 1966 that this bill was even looked at, so there was a review of pesticides at the same time that we were dealing with genetically modified foods.

I grew up in an agricultural background. I farm at the present time. My son has taken over the family farm. I have grown genetically modified foods. I have grown conventional foods and organic foods. I am aware of all of that and more, and I can tell the House with every assurance that if I have a fear of whether a genetically modified food or a pesticide is a safety issue, I would come down on the side that genetically modified foods are much safer than the use of pesticides on our foods.

In regard to the pesticides and the review of some of the chemicals we are using, although there are safer ones that need to come on to the market faster than they are, and even though the pesticides we are using now are deemed to be safe by certain standards, we know that they are not totally safe. I know that when I use some of those pesticides I sense that these are dangerous products and we had better respect them. Using genetically modified foods reduces the amount of pesticides that has to be applied. In fact, the pesticides that go onto genetically modified foods are not only less product but a much safer product.

We have to take a good look at the whole idea of genetically modified foods. We know that in Canada over 75% of processed foods have some degree of genetically modified foods. I agree with the whole idea that consumers should be allowed to understand and have labelling so that they understand whether a food is genetically modified, but I think the only way to achieve that is to identify products that have absolutely no genetically modified foods, so we would label the organic food products. This is a growing industry and I applaud them. I think there is nothing wrong with that. It gives true choice to the consumer.

When it comes to genetically modified foods, we have to make sure that they are safe. From a safety perspective that is the way we should proceed. Many people will say that genetically modified foods have not been tested enough, that we do not know whether they are safe or not. I think that is absolutely false. I think there were studies that came out of Europe last year, one a 15 year study, saying that they are even safer than the conventional foods because of the pesticides, as I said. There is a precautionary approach in the Cartagena protocol and we have to be very careful that it is not used as a weapon, to be a trade barrier.

In closing, I think of these three things: the economic impact on our agriculture industry, the safety of the GMOs that are grown in this country, and the caution that the precautionary approach under this protocol does not destroy us and get used as an international trade weapon rather than what it really should be. To that end, I would say that we should be cautious as we move forward and we should not be ratifying this protocol at this time.

● (1805)

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to enter remarks on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada on the motion before the House at this time which has been brought forth by the young and articulate environment critic of the Bloc Québécois, my friend from the riding of Rosemont.

The motion states that in the opinion of the House the government should take the necessary steps to ratify the Cartagena protocol on biosafety.

The language that the member has used with respect to the necessary steps is very measured. It is language that indeed can be supported. However, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment has pointed out, there is a fair amount of work that needs to be done from a domestic perspective for us to be in a position to ratify the accord. However, having a motion that engages the public policy makers is a constructive initiative.

This relates very much to the debate on the mandatory labelling of GMO foods in a Canadian context. We are all aware that the future success of biotechnology depends upon an informed and supportive public. Measures are urgently required to build public trust and gain the public's confidence in the safety of food made using genetically modified plants and animals.

The Progressive Conservative Party of Canada has made a commitment to helping further the much needed public debate about the labelling of genetically modified foods in a Canadian context. We stated in the 2000 election platform that:

> A Progressive Conservative government would initiate broader public discussion of the ethical issues of biotechnology and ensure greater public consultation in the setting of biotechnology policy and regulations.
>
> A Progressive Conservative government would work toward a law requiring the labelling of all genetically modified foodstuffs and products for human consumption.
>
> A Progressive Conservative government would continue its tradition of working closely with provincial partners, industry and the large number of consumer stakeholders interested in the question of biotechnology generally, and genetically modified organisms in particular, to find ways to reconcile and address the industry's needs and the public's real concerns about the health and environmental safety of genetically modified foods.

When it comes down to mandatory labelling, it could only occur if it is done in a cost effective way in concert with food labelling policies of other major producing and trading countries. That is where the protocol comes into play.

We believe biotechnology, or mandatory labelling of foodstuffs, is not a matter of concern from a human health perspective but is a right for consumer choice. If we have confidence in the product from a biotechnology perspective, that it is safe for human health, which we believe is the case, then we should have the courage to actually label it. There is nothing wrong with taking that very measured approach in that regard.

The member from the Canadian Alliance who spoke a few moments ago pointed out that we, as an exporting nation, one that has fostered a very vibrant biotechnology industry, have an obligation to protect our farming community that utilizes these crops. In order to do that we must ensure that before we ratify the Cartagena protocol itself we build an alliance, a coalition. We note that no major exporting countries are expected to ratify the protocol at this time. Canada must form an alliance with these countries to resolve the outstanding issues in the protocol before we proceed with ratification.

There are some issues that we need to approach. One theme that we need to deal with with respect to genetically modified foods is segregation.

● (1810)

We have a responsibility to ensure that we maintain and preserve biodiversity from a crop perspective by adding a capacity to only use grains and oilseeds that would not jeopardize the biotechnology or the biological integrity of other crops. We must have a process to ensure that, in fact, that segregation and separation occurs.

Also on that theme, we must ensure that we have the physical infrastructure in Canada to separate GMO grains and oilseeds from non-GMO grains and oilseeds. Until that infrastructure is put in place, it is very difficult for us to go down the track that would follow the exact approach that the biosafety protocol provides. It contains rules that apply to the transboundary movement, transit and handling, and the use of all living GMO foods that may have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking into account the risk to human health.

In short, we know this is where Canadians are at. There is a clear consensus that Canadians want to have confidence in their food products. They want to have that choice. Most polls indicate that 90% of Canadians want to have mandatory labelling of GMO foods. The labelling aspect is a component of the protocol itself. It is our responsibility to move fast and develop that law, work with industry partners, and develop the infrastructure and the Canadian context to do that. It reflects to an item our party had in our platform in November of 2000.

Mandatory labelling is the track that we must follow. We must build more public and broader support for the biotech industry itself, which is done by having the courage to label. If the product is safe, label it. We must ensure that we do that in the context of an international standard, which the European Union is developing and which is a component of the protocol itself.

Given that the motion at the moment is not votable the measured language the member used when he stated that the government should take the necessary steps to ratify the Cartagena protocol on biosafety is a reasonable approach, but there is much work to be done before we can actually ratify. That means investments in infrastructure for our farming and industry individuals. We must ensure that we have an international regime in place so that we can have mandatory labelling as well.

I would encourage the Government of Canada to move fast on fulfilling the obligations of the protocol, but above all, the message I would like to send to the government is that before we ratify the accord, we must ensure we do not put any more arduous or regulatory burdens on our farming community who have been battered and bruised by a myriad of factors, whether it is mother nature with the unprecedented drought in our western provinces, or that many of our trading partners have an obscene level of subsidy with respect to their agricultural products which jeopardizes our capacity to be competitive from an agricultural perspective.

The last thing we want to do is inflict an arduous process on our farming community. From a domestic perspective, the first thing we should do is have the courage to have mandatory labelling of GMO foods done in concert with the industry. A lot of work must be done in order to do that. It should not be a made in Ottawa solution. It should be done in concert with our industry partners, but it also has to be an international regime which speaks to the spirit of the protocol itself.

● (1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from the Bloc Quebecois, the member for Rosemont—Petite-Patrie. He has done a lot of work on the environment and it is good work. The motion that he has moved tonight in the House is an example of this.

[*English*]

Some of the other parties this evening have been giving justification for going slow or doing nothing, which has actually been the approach of the government for some time on this issue. The protocol and the debate around it in the country remind me of what we went through with the Kyoto protocol.

We have to be clear that Canada has committed to it. We signed on and expressed our intent to proceed with this. The expectation around the globe was that this would be done in 2003, that it would be completed and the 50 countries required to sign on would have signed on by now.

We have an international commitment that has to be met. Further dallying is no longer justified. It is also not justified on the basis that because we are doing nothing, because we are not proceeding with mandatory labelling or with the prohibition or the regulation of GMOs, we are exposing our farming communities to the very serious risk of being shut out of international markets. Europe has already done that in effect. It appears that India has or will. We do not have the luxury of sitting on the sidelines. We have to take an active role.

If we look at what has happened with other countries, we are not exactly alone in our concern if we ratify. India has ratified. The European community has ratified. In fact a number of countries that are major exporters, whose economies are based on exports as much as Canada's economy is, have already signed on, such as Sweden, Norway, the whole European Union, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Forty-three countries have come on side. I believe these numbers are up to date as of this week. We are only seven away. Canada should be one of the seven.

The protocol itself is one with which Canada should be proud to be involved. It provides a regulatory framework at the international level to deal with modified organisms. It provides a framework within which the international community is capable of dealing with these organisms country to country. It also has a very important precautionary principle to be used as a guideline when dealing with the organisms within the country and within the international market.

Also important is it is one of the few times that the environment and sustainability, the purpose of the protocol, is not, I repeat not, subordinate to the World Trade Organization. By putting that provision in, the international community is saying it is one of the few times that international trade, profit and money are not to be the guiding principles, but that the protection of human health, natural ecosystems and the environment generally will take priority. None of these organisms, however modified, will be allowed into the natural environment. None of these organisms will be allowed to be exposed to the human species or other species, unless we are absolutely certain it will not cause harm to human health or to the natural environment.

● (1820)

It is a major step forward. It is one that we need to apply both domestically in this country and in a number of other protocols.

It was interesting this past summer, when my colleague and I were in Johannesburg, that the use of the precautionary principle came up repeatedly. We could see that there were a number of attempts by multinational corporations that had a financial interest in turning back the clock and preventing the use of that principle. They were constantly trying to change some of the protocols that we were working on so that the precautionary principle would not apply and that monetary and economic issues would continue to be primary. They had mixed success and we as the human species as a result had mixed success in fighting them over that principle.

There are a couple of more issues that the protocol addresses. It provides for the provision of assessment of liability and compensation should communities be negatively impacted with these organisms. That again is a major step forward. I believe it is the effective way of controlling and regulating the use of these organisms in the economic sphere. It is a way of saying to companies or even countries that if they are to use these organisms, they must understand that if they cause damage, they will have to compensate the victims of that damage. Again, that is a very important principle to be applied.

In interpreting both the precautionary principle and the risk assessment, which is one of the tools that will be used to assess whether these organisms will be allowed into the international market, there is a provision in the protocol that socioeconomic considerations be taken into account. The importance there is that it is socio and economic. It is not just economic.

Therefore, if it will have a major negative impact to a society, for example if a country is emerging from poverty and it will negatively impact on its development because the use of these organisms will destroy part of its farm crops, that will be taken into account as to whether the organism will be allowed into the country. I believe for the purposes of the countries that are underdeveloped, it is a major step forward in terms of applying that type of principle.

Following along the same lines, it allows and encourages the wealthy part of the international community to assist in capacity building so that countries that are underdeveloped or undeveloped will be provided with services and resources from the developed world to assist them to move ahead in developing their economies.

We only need 50 signatories on this protocol. We have 43. As I said earlier, Canada must be one of those other seven and it must do it now.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will use my five minutes to comment on my colleagues' speeches. I want first to comment on what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment said. He told us during the debate that it was important to clarify a number of things before ratifying the protocol.

I want to warn the government, because we must keep in mind that 44 countries of 50 required have now ratified the Cartagena protocol, Cameroon being the latest. If six other countries were added to the list, the protocol would take effect. This would mean that, if Canada had not ratified it, it would be excluded from the first conference of the parties to the Cartagena protocol.

I am truly convinced that Canada must not be absent from this first conference of the parties. I cwarn the government that, if it does not confirm the ratification of the protocol, it might be excluded from the first conference of the parties on the Cartagena protocol. The parliamentary secretary told me that his measures are based on information provided by the Royal Society of Canada.

The government is doing exactly the opposite, since the research on the impact on the health and the environment is all being conducted by the private sector. Yet, the Royal Society of Canada has told us that Canada or Health Canada should commission independent studies to truly judge the potential impact of the use of living modified organisms on the health and environment. But no, the government would rather let private studies shape the government decision making process. It is rather disturbing.

There is also another aspect. The burden on trade should not be too great. What the Cartagena protocol tries to do is distinguish between a conventional and a transgenic product. Inasmuch as Canada respects the precautionary principle, as it did in Rio in 1992, it has to act in a consistent way and ratify the protocol, which favours the precautionary principle.

The government has also told us that it contributed greatly to the signing of the Cartagena protocol on biosafety. Nothing could be further from the truth. Canada was the mouthpiece for the six grain exporting countries in the Miami Group, which has done all it could to slow down the negotiations on the Convention on biosafety and the negotiations leading up to the protocol.

To the contrary, as I said in my remarks, civil society in Canada has condemned the attitude of the Canadian government in this matter, since it was the mouthpiece of the six countries of the Miami group.

My Canadian Alliance colleague told us the economic dimension should be taken into consideration. He is right. We should take into account the economic dimension of agriculture, because different markets and countries want assurances concerning the products already on the market.

What foreign countries want, especially in Asia, is wheat that is safe, and not the transgenic wheat being considered for approval by the government.

I think the precautionary principle is essential, and should inform the government's decisions. It is included in the Cartagena protocol and we would like the government to take that into consideration.

To conclude, I would like ask for the unanimous consent of the House to make Motion M-239 a votable item.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Does the Hon. member for Rosemont—Petite-Patrie have the unanimous consent of the House to deem Motion M-239 votable?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos: The hour provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired.

[*English*]

As the motion has not been designated as a votable item, the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

● (1830)

[*English*]

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise to elaborate on a question that I asked in the House of Commons with regard to Kyoto and the auto industry. In particular I want to note the question with regard to the auto industry continuing to lose jobs and not having the support from the government in terms of a specific plan to deal with the auto industry. We are losing plant opportunities.

The minister's response was very deficient and that goes back to several other platforms. More important, work still has not come forward. We originally met in June for the new auto strategy. We are still waiting. The minister even noted in his response to me that they would look at a 10 year time frame when rolling out a program.

If we look back in the last 10 years, we have lost every greenfield opportunity. With regard to the auto industry itself, the United States and Mexico have gone into a system where they offer incentives and packages, and are stealing Canadian jobs. They are taking opportunities away from us. It has gone even from the creation of brand new facilities and plants to also refurbishing existing plants. That is very concerning. This is something we addressed under NAFTA, at least our party did, as a vulnerable spot. It allows for this subsidization and the stealing of jobs. It certainly is something that will affect Canada because one in seven jobs in Canada, one in six in Ontario, relate to the auto industry.

The Kyoto protocol is an excellent opportunity to create new sustainable environmentally friendly vehicles and, more important, address issues of Kyoto and have an auto strategy that rolls out new employment. The CAW as well as municipalities have even noted that. The CAW as well has talked about initiatives with auto recycling that go hand and hand with regard to a new strategy and a new deal.

Today the minister was pressed again about his stance. The fact is we are still waiting for a plan. We have nothing. In Windsor we have an actual plant that can be constructed and created. The Province of Ontario announced an initiative yesterday for a plant that would improve conditions, yet the minister still does not have a plan. As well, last summer we lost a bid for a sprinter plant because the government had no plan, and it still does not.

I would like to see something in writing from the government on how it will deal with it. If we do not use the new emissions, especially the changes that are happening with the price of gasoline and the degradation caused by some of the vehicles, as a time, or place or moment to create the assembly plants, we will lose out on an opportunity and we continually will see our jobs go south.

I want to know why the government has taken a full year. Why is the government sticking to a trade deal that is allowing the situation? Very specifically, what is it going to do for my constituency to protect the auto jobs in Windsor as well as in Ontario and in the rest of Canada before it is too late? Why is Kyoto not used as an opportunity to shift the resources to better planning and future, especially because the traditions of the country are so much developed on the auto industry?

● (1835)

Mr. Alan Tonks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to address the member's question in a broader context and hopefully my colleague will also apply in a more specific context.

The original question was what was happening with respect to the action plan as it related to Kyoto and whether Kyoto had been ratified and what progress had been accomplished.

I want to say that there really are two larger questions that should be addressed. First, what is the Government of Canada doing to build on its actions to address climate change? Second, what is the Government of Canada doing to help Canada meet its Kyoto protocol commitments? Those commitments also obviously are tremendously important as they relate to the automobile sector.

Still, and just for the record, let me state quite clearly that the Government of Canada formally ratified the Kyoto protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on December 17, 2002.

Canada has a proud tradition of working with other nations toward common goals and we are committed to leadership on these international challenges. By ratifying Kyoto, we are part of the international effort to address an issue that knows no boundaries and affects us all.

Let me turn to the important issues of what happens next under the Climate Change Plan for Canada.

The plan maps out short term actions and a longer term perspective on how Canadians can meet our climate change objectives. It offers a national goal, that Canadians be the most sophisticated and efficient consumers and producers of energy in the world.

In relation to the automotive sector, it has been obvious that the innovation agenda and the take up that is coming from Canadians automobile producers is that they feel comfortable with the approach that the Canadian government has taken with respect to developing cleaner technologies and more efficient technologies in the automotive sector.

It recognizes that as individual Canadians we also can cut greenhouse gas emissions by a tonne a year from the more than five tonnes for which each of us is responsible.

The climate change plan recognizes that we can get results in transportation and through improved energy efficiency in our housing, commercial and institutional buildings. It moves us forward in a co-operative manner with large industrial emitters of greenhouse gases to reduce those emissions.

However, as the member is aware, the automotive sector was not considered one of the large emission emitters. Much to the chagrin of others who criticized the position of the government, the automotive sector was challenged to produce more efficient engines and concentrate on the tailpipe emissions through more effective use of the newer innovative approaches to engine construction.

Finally, the protocol builds and the plan builds on our work to date for international emissions reductions. We can take great pride in the fact that the automobile sector is compliant and is a strong supporter with respect to the Kyoto protocol and moving ahead with the implementation plan that the government has put forward.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I want to point out one thing that is important. The smokestack emissions from the plants was something different and was something on which the emissions were changed. We are still at the tailpipe, and it is still a major contributor to greenhouse gases in emissions and also pollution.

I want to point out that the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Industry have not worked together. Look at the Natural Resources Canada web page. A number of different vehicles are identified as being the highest fuel efficiency in 2003.

I will read the vehicle name and where it is assembled: Insight, Japan; New Beetle, Mexico; Cooper, England; Sentra, Mexico; Celica, Japan; Prius, Japan; Corolla Matrix, Japan, coming to Canada soon; Vibe, California; Impala, Canada; Jetta, Germany; Focus Wagon, U.S. and Mexico; Ranger, U.S.; B2300, U.S.; Escape, U.S.; Tribute, U.S.; the Ventura, Montana, Silhouette, all vans, U.S.; Dodge Caravan, U.S. and my home town of Windsor, Ontario.

Out of 19 vehicles that the government promotes as the highest efficiency ones for consumers to buy, only three are produced in Canada. Why would the government not use part of the $1.7 billion to entice the plants that create the real jobs for Canadians and spur economic development by ensuring those vehicles are produced in our country? Why would the government not create Canadian jobs? Why would the government not encourage Canadians to buy vehicles that were produced in our communities, instead of encouraging them to buy vehicles produced overseas?

● (1840)

Mr. Alan Tonks: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the commitment that the member is making to the automobile industry. I am sure that the implementation plan, in association and partnership through Industry Canada, will incubate the kinds of technologies that will make Canadian automobile producers more productive and more energy efficient.

We live in a free society where people exercise their rights to purchase the automobile that will make the largest impact on the legacy of clean air that we all believe in.

I would say that the Canadian automobile industry is making great progress. There is no question that we have a longer way to go but let us talk positive, and that is not the way the member is speaking. Let us work with the automobile industry to make sure—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair.

AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Madam Speaker, my question for the Minister of Industry was along the lines of why so much investing was going into the United States and Mexico and why out of the last 19 assembly plants that were built in North America only one had come to Canada.

I do not want to give the minister a lot of credit but I want to read his response to the investment climate. He said:

> Canada has the most attractive investment climate in the world. Given our economic circumstances, lowering taxes, stable and low interest rates, low inflation, productive workforce, it is a great place to invest.

I will give him some credit because there is some value to that. However we still only have one of the assembly plants. In the last 12 months we have been on the verge of losing three assembly plants, one in my hometown of Windsor, one in Oakville and one in Sainte-Thérèse.

There is an opportunity for us to save the plant in Windsor, which is to replace it with a new, modern assembly plant, and there is an opportunity to save the production in the plant in Oakville, but the government has to move.

I have a report that was prepared by the industry department. It is called U.S. State Programs for New Investment. It has about 20 pages. It was prepared during the early part of December 2002. At the back of the report is a chart showing the percentage of investments in the plant, both in brownfield and greenfield plants, greenfield being new production and brownfield being existing production with expansion going on.

If we go down the chart we see that it has a list of all of the new plants that I mentioned, plus a number of plants that were being expanded or added on to.

What we see in this is that in spite of that investment climate that the minister spoke about, the reality is that we are being more than matched and, in fact, out-classed by the U.S. and Mexico.

We see that one plant, a brownfield site actually in Alabama, received a 66% investment from state and local governments. We are not even in the ball park.

We lost a production line for Windsor this past summer, DaimlerChrysler. It went down to Georgia and Georgia invested 43% in that plant. It did not matter that we had medicare in this country, that the health costs for labour were lower here and that our dollar was lower. That is something this department has to learn.

We have to get on to this or we are going to lose those two plants, the one in Windsor and the one in Oakville.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Marcil (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there has just been some confusion concerning the question from my colleague from Windsor West which concretely addressed the auto industry.

I shall, however, return to the question from by colleague from Windsor—St. Clair. Much has been accomplished through the Department of Industry as far as the auto industry is concerned. This is a sector that has experienced some hard times. He was referring to his own area, but I can also speak of ours in Quebec, where the GM plant has been shut down.

There is fierce competition in the international sector, however, but we have taken certain steps. We have, for instance, created a Canadian Automotive Partnership Council, bringing together all industry stakeholders. We are totally convinced that, collectively and cooperatively, we will find ways to ensure that support for auto initiatives is linked with the government's priorities of innovation, skills development and infrastructure.

The Government of Canada remains committed to improving the investment climate for all sectors of Canada. We will continue to work with CAPC on automotive specific issues to ensure the industry remains viable and prospers. We continue our efforts to develop a national automotive strategy and will make an announcement in due course.

There has been much discussion recently on what the various governments ought to be doing to attract new investment to the automotive sector in Canada. I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to this today.

First, let me be clear that we too want to see as much new automotive investment come to Canada as possible. This is one of the main reasons why the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council was created, to develop shared industry-government strategies to help ensure the long-term growth and prosperity of Canada's automotive sector. We are working through CAPC with the assemblers, parts manufacturers, labour and the provinces to develop a cooperative approach to addressing industry issues.

The hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair has suggested that Canada should be matching the incentives offered by certain American States to attract new greenfield automotive investments. it is much too easy to say that Canada has lost automotive plants to competing jurisdictions, due to the absence of direct government assistance. Rather, we need to look at a whole range of factors which enter into such investment decisions, whether they be economic, public policy, or other factors. All levels of government are important players, and we are working in many areas at the federal level, such as infrastructure and innovation programs.

Canada's auto sector is very strong, internationally competitive, and highly productive. More than $5 billion has been invested in the auto sector in the past five years. Every one of our assemblers has current reinvestment plans. Over the past decade, average annual growth in Canada's auto sector was 7%, compared to 3% for the economy as a whole. During this same period, light vehicle production in Canada increased by 570,000 units. This is the equivalent of two or three typical assembly plants. I think this is impressive, given that while Canada accounts for only 8% of North American vehicle sales, our share of total North American production has consistently been about 16% in this time period.

● (1845)

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, the only reason those committee meetings are being held is that the CAW, that national union, and the municipalities where some of these plants are located put extensive long term pressure on the department, the minister and his predecessor to finally get them to move. In fact, hardly anything has come out of them, because again, the department does not realize what is going on in the auto industry.

Let me just give the House one example. Up to two years ago we used to build two cars for every one that Canadians bought in this country. The ratio right now is somewhere around 1:5. If we lose those two assembly plants, the one in Oakville and the one in Windsor, we will fall down to a ratio of 1:1. At the rate we are going, we will fall below 1:1 in the next three to five years. That is the history of the government.

The government put us in this position. It signed us into those trade deals. It let the auto pact go. If we had not signed on to the free trade agreement—

● (1850)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry.

Mr. Serge Marcil: Madam Speaker, I am convinced the member for Windsor—St. Clair will agree that public policy making should be based on facts, on a solid indepth analysis.

In the auto sector partnership council, we continuously look at the overall competitiveness of Canadian jurisdictions as compared to that of other jurisdictions in North America with regard to attracting investments in the auto sector.

Our analysis of the situation and the council's valued insights will enlighten the auto sector's decision-making process, which will also help us focus our collective efforts on the growth of this key sector. The government is committed to acting as quickly as possible to implement the recommendations made by the auto sector partnership council.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.50 p.m.)

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